

Children and youth enjoy Assembly

By **JOYCE HOSTETTER**
 Assembly childrens' program coordinator

Virginia Conference Assembly offered a treasure trove for families this year! Thirty children signed up for events which centered around the theme of *Jesus, My Treasure*. They enjoyed Bible stories and treasure hunts that illustrated how Jesus searches for us and how priceless He is! Singing, snacks, crafts, and clown skits all reinforced this theme.

Especially valuable to us, was a visit from two VMM missionaries who talked about encouragement. Nancy Marshall, school teacher and church leader for the Deaf in Belize, showed slides from her ministry, including one of a van purchased through the Penny Power project last year!

Dawn Waltman, our other visitor, spent three months (along with husband Brian and their four children) at Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica. She taught us a song in sign language and shared ways her children were able to encourage Jamaican youngsters.

Toddlers and preschoolers enjoyed stories, crafts, and free play. Preschoolers also participated with older students in clown skits and a trip to a science museum.

It was a weekend packed with precious gems - creative activities, lively children, friendship, and learning! An experience to treasure!



Children recite Bible verses during the Friday evening worship service at Assembly.

By **SARAH BIXLER**
 Interim Conference Youth Minister

The energy of 47 youth and sponsors sparkled throughout Assembly this year, as students in grades 6-12 attended from nine VMC congregations. These youth participated in evening worship, shared their dreams for the church during a joint workshop with adults, and enjoyed other special events designed just for youth.

The weekend's activities put "Our Christ-centered Faith" into action through service in the local community. Youth shared skits, worship music and games at the Hickory Hmong Mennonite Church's Bible School. Afterwards church members provided a meal of authentic Hmong food. The exchange of cultures and sharing of faith was an enriching experience for everyone.

The youth also assisted in providing food to local families. Through Hickory

Mennonite Church's Angel Food Ministry, they helped community persons purchase groceries at a discounted price. At Cooperative Christian Ministries, youth unpacked canned goods and filled grocery bags which will be distributed in the community. Many youth were inspired to return to their home communities and serve in a similar way. Some groups even expressed interest in starting a food ministry at their church!

Steve Pardini challenged the youth to practice peace in their daily lives through scripture and stories. Matt Trost hosted a Bible quiz match where teams answered questions about concepts they had learned throughout the weekend. Throughout all of these activities, the youth formed meaningful friendships and gained a new perspective on faith to enhance their spiritual journey.

Martins return to Italy on mission team

By **EVA EBERLY**
 Mediterreanean Regional Assistant

Two years ago Centro Koinonia and the missionaries in Bari, Italy, tearfully said goodbye to Jason and Donna Martin and their three children. Although convinced that their autistic son, Luca, needed the special care found in Canada, we were devastated to lose our "friendship evangelists" who'd so successfully made friends with many people. In answer to much prayer, Luca has made astonishing progress in his development and will begin first grade this fall with his age group in a regular classroom!

When Centro Koinonia invited the Martin family to assist this summer with their annual "Settimana Felice," (Happy Week) VBS outreach, they eagerly accepted, but wondered how Luca would respond. "Far exceeding our expectations, he has calmly participated in all the children's activities and visits with

Courtesy of Willard Eberly



Donna, Sara, Emily, Luca, and Jason Martin.

• See **Martins**, page 3

A "let us salad" enjoyed this summer

Hebrews 10:19-25 is a "let us salad" that nourishes and encourages us, at least that is what the text says. The fourth of the five ingredients is "let us not give up meeting together." I obeyed that verse in July. I attended two family reunions, my 40th high school reunion, and two Mennonite church conferences (MC USA Convention in San Jose and Virginia Conference Assembly in Hickory.)

Along the way, I also attended my small group, enjoyed four picnics, attended two board meetings, and Earlene and I hosted folks for meals and overnight lodging. I think I've had enough "let us" for a while.

I enjoyed it all, though! The conferences were highlights of an already interesting summer. Special at both San Jose 2007 and Virginia Conference Assembly were the worship services and the renewed relationships. The church is experiencing energy and missional passion at multi-



Loren Horst
President of VMM

ple levels. I was encouraged, as Hebrews suggests I should be.

I enjoyed the family and social events. A 40th high school anniversary is a sobering event. We used to witness them from afar, and now we are there. Everyone else had changed so much, except, really, they hadn't. Same shyness, same talkativeness, same stories. We'll probably just play a tape for our 50th. We talked about our children and grandchildren. We shared a bit about God's leading through the years and I was encouraged.

I enjoyed the business of being with people. Mostly, I

was reminded, God's people are doing good things, are well-intentioned, and are likeable folks. Meeting together reminds me of that. Earlene reminds me to "practice being nice." It wears well. I was shown plenty of examples in July and I was encouraged.

There was a down side to July. I hardly worshipped or fellowshiped with my home congregation, Zion Hill Mennonite Church. I was reminded of my own admonition that it is healthier to be nourished by a real congregation, warts and all, than to feed exclusively at the table of TV preaching and professional Christians, as good as some of them are. My church still knows me, and warmly welcomed me when I went back the first Sunday of August. I was encouraged—to do better.

Loren Horst

Donate your vehicle to VMC

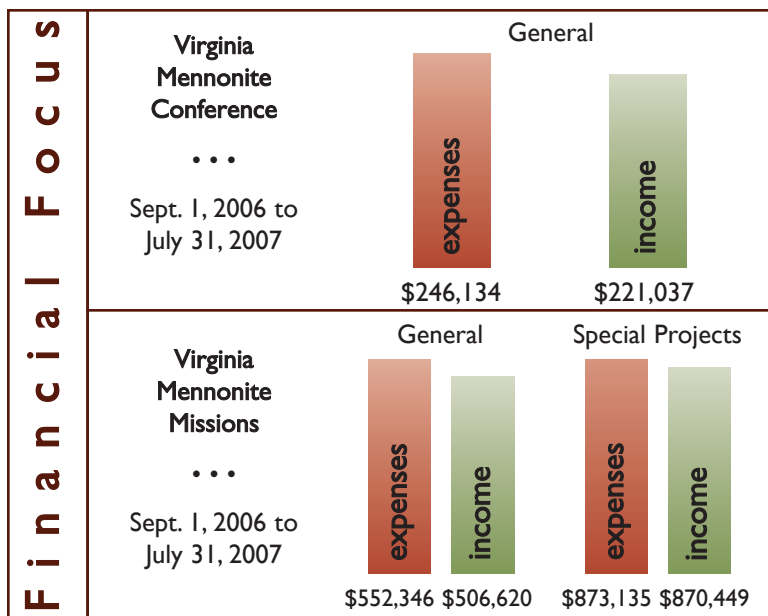


Courtesy web

By **STEVE CARPENTER**
Conference Coordinator

You can benefit yourself and Virginia Mennonite Conference by donating your still running, older vehicle. If you have been in the market for a new car lately, you know dealers give you very little when you "trade in" your old car. In most cases, you can do much better financially if you donate your car to Virginia Mennonite Conference through me, Steve Carpenter. I research your car's true value, advertise and show it, then transact its sale, acting as your agent. Once sold, you can decide if you want to donate the entire sales price to VMC and/or VMM, taking a tax deduction for that amount, or keep the "trade in value," applying it towards the purchase of another car, while donating the balance to charity.

If you'd like to discuss this further, call me at 800-707-5535.



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Whose disciple are you?

As told by DENNIS KUHNS
Written by David Powell

“You are here to be inducted into the Army of the United States of America.” The sergeant’s piercing words raised red flags of fear in my mind, and echoed through my conscience. How did I get here? Am I going to have to take a stand for my faith? I was a conscientious objector (CO), but here I was in a pre-induction Station at the New Cumberland Army Depot. I had only come here for a physical at the instruction of my draft board.

So I followed the rest of the group that day in the line for a physical, but I stopped and told the sergeant that I was here for a pre-induction physical and that I was going to be going into alternative service as a CO in Brazil. He said, “I don’t know anything about that, you go on down and get your physical.” So I went for the physical. At the end, I sat down with a major/medical doctor, who was taking my medical history. I told him the dilemma and showed him my letter from the draft board. He directed me to another sergeant who took the letter and instructed me to wait. When he came back, he said that I was right. They had been told that there were no pre-inductees there that day. Due to all of the waiting, it was already too late that day for the mental test I still needed to take.

I was asking myself through this whole process: at what point will I need to take a stand; and will I end up in jail? I was faced with the reality that my stand for peace might cost me something. Although unpre-

pared to spend the night, I stayed in an old hotel with the enlistees and the next morning returned on the bus to the Army Depot. I waited a lot, took my mental test, and then was finally released to make my way home.

As a youth, I had been blessed with good teaching at my Mennonite church. Peace was tied to what it meant to experience new birth in Christ and to acknowledge Christ as Savior and Lord. Sometimes today, it seems that we talk about peace not as a fruit or outgrowth of faith, but more as a separate issue. That makes it almost ideological rather than theological.

My comments to any 18-year-old today is that each of us needs to decide whose disciple we are. The fact is that we will each be somebody’s disciple. You can choose to be a disciple of the state, where they are going to re-make you into a fighting machine, into their definition of what a man or woman is. You could choose to become a disciple of your peer group, where you just follow along and do or say whatever your gang does or says. Or you can decide that you are going to be a disciple of Jesus, to live your life as Jesus would live it if he were you. And that becomes the foundation for conscientious objection. A good way to make the word disciple more practical is to change the word disciple to apprentice. Decide that you are going to become Jesus’ apprentice. We all must decide whose apprentice we will be, and live every day according to that role.

Jason and Donna Martin family return for “Settimana Felice” week in Italy



Emily and Sara Martin’s friends with their mothers and Maurita Eberly (right center). Photo courtesy of Willard Eberly.

• continued from cover

friends, in spite of the language difference!” Jason and Donna report. “It’s been thrilling to reconnect with our friends and sense that our relationships with them are still strong, almost as if we never left Italy!”

Of the 24 children attending “Settimana Felice,” five participated as a direct result of friendship with the Martin family. Jason taught the middle school class, while Donna assisted with the younger children, as well as with craft activities, all of which centered around

the “Chronicles of Narnia.” They came well armed with ideas for intriguing games and gifts of love for each child. God united their energies with those of Centro Koinonia to create the best ever “Happy Week.”

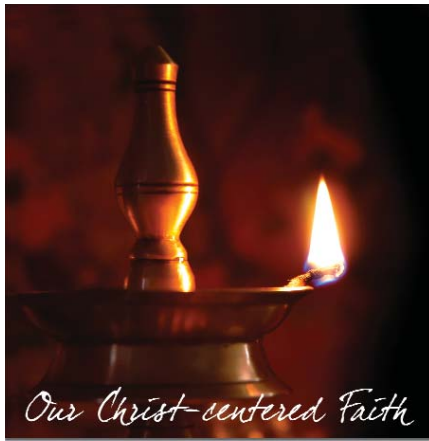
Cristina (Sara’s friend) welcomes all to enter the wardrobe and the world of Namia. Photo courtesy of Willard Eberly.



Our Christ-centered Faith

Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly

July 26-28, 2007



Photos by Steve Carpenter and Gloria Lehman



(above) **Cindy Voht** preaches Friday evening on the subject "Faith for a Lifetime."

(at right) **Ed Godshall**, from Mt. View (N.C.) Mennonite Church, leads a hymn during a worship service.

(below) Children enjoy an inflatable castle, a fun aspect of their program, "Jesus, my heart's treasure."



By **STEVE CARPENTER**
Conference Coordinator

The Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly, hosted by the Tennessee/Carolina/Kentucky District at Lenoir-Rhyne College in Hickory, N.C. July 26-28, was a wonderful time of worship, Bible study, fellowship, learning, church business, good food, and

lots of wholesome fun. The theme, "Our Christ-centered Faith," began a four-year series focused on being "Centered in Christ" using the topics of *hope* (2008), *peace* (2009), and *love* (2010).

The VMC Assembly was last held in Hickory in 2000 when delegates decided to join Mennonite Church USA (MC USA). It

was great to be back. We experienced warm hospitality from Bishop Ed Godshall, pastors Jim Roth, Chaiya Hadtasunsern and Chuck Hostetter from the Hickory,

Hickory Hmong, and Mt. View Mennonite churches respectively. Many other volunteers, including people from Ashville Mennonite Church, contributed greatly to the Assembly's success.

Delegates discussed two major items. The first,

"How are your churches teaching/supporting VMC's understanding of MC USA's peace position?" included a review of Article 22 of the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective and VMC's 1996 position on church membership and military personnel. Delegates took action to reaffirm VMC's 1996 policy but expressed interest in having it reviewed and updated.

The second discussion involved a recommendation from VMC's Task Force on Polity to establish a "collegial membership" category as a place of invitation for congregations wishing to explore full membership. Feedback



2007 Assembly at a Glance

343 participants

264 adults,
47 youth and sponsors
32 children

117 delegates present from

46 of VMC's 66 churches

70% of VMC churches represented





(left) **Chatterbox (Sonya Schweighardt) and Will Rejoice (Anthony Schweighardt)** performed skits for the children's program, including one during Friday evening worship.



(right) The **Hmong dancers and singers** who entertained during the World Neighbors Mission Festival.

from the delegates will be used to further refine this new structure.

The excellent preaching by Conference Minister Owen Burkholder and Cindy Voth, Lindale Mennonite Church's Minister of Youth and Family Life, anchored our worship. The participation of so many youth and children, and the excellent programs put on for them, was another highlight of our time together (see front page article).

The offerings, over two nights of worship, were \$5,147. Half was given to the Hickory Hmong Mennonite Church. The rest will be used for Assembly expenses. If any remains it will be split between VMC and Virginia Mennonite Missions. Thank you for giving generously. Both agencies depend on your financial and prayer support.

Please mark your calendars now for VMC's next Assembly, at Eastern Mennonite School in Harrisonburg, July 24-28, 2008.



(above) **Holly and Adam McDaniel** sing a song he composed during worship Friday night.



Phil Kniss, Myron Augsburger, George Brunk III, and David Lehman in a small group during a delegate breakout session.

(right) **Steve Carpenter, Beryl Jantzi, Steve Brown, Lois Shank, and Diane Bowman** lead and record the delegate sessions.



(bottom right) **Chaiya Hadtasunern**, pastor of the Hickory Hmong Mennonite Church, with others from his church at their display table.



(left) **Keith and Tami Nice** share with the delegates about the mission and journey of Outlet 10.27 in Graham, N.C.



(at left on opposite page) **Sarah Bixler and Justin Kurtz** lead a joint youth/adult workshop, "Dreaming About the Church Together."

(right) The **worship musicians** lead the theme song of Assembly, *Open the eyes of my heart*.



Exploring God's word and world at Highland Retreat

By PAUL BEILER
Highland Retreat Executive Director

The squirrel runs up a tree to get a better look. A couple of rabbits scurry from bush to bush in excitement. The surprised groundhog scrambles madly from the lawn to a collection of large rocks along the embankment. The skunk family, affectionately known as the camp kitties, hurriedly runs deeper into the woods to hide until just the right moment to make their grand entrance. Spring has melted into summer at Highland Retreat and the campers are coming. The long months of planning, hiring and praying have come to a fruitful climax: it's the end of June and the first of the summer campers have arrived.

For seven weeks campers ages 5-18 happily roam Highland's property. Some bring their friends and a few bring their parents, but many are coming for the first time. They are greeted by the staff who direct them through the check-in line on Sunday afternoon. Some highlights of a typical week at camp include the silly morning songs and



Courtesy of Paul Beiler

cooking over a fire, singing at morning worship, participating in various skill groups, hiking on one of the designated trails. Others include counselor-led Bible studies, swimming in the pool, coming up with something creative to do as a cabin during free time, playing all-camp games, eating amazing snacks, and probably most important, being spiritually fed at the evening firesides. It is amazing what

God has done in the hearts and lives of the young people, as well as the staff, here at Highland.

The snake slithers from his hiding place to rest on a warm rock in peace. The deer raises its head to the realization that no one is pointing, whispering or taking its picture. The fish looks up to the surface of the creek to notice that there are no more small camper-made boats floating up above. All is

quiet and still. Summer has moved to Fall and although the campers have gone back to school, the memories of Highland Retreat live on in their hearts. The turtle, who was still making its way back to the woods seemed to smile as he heard the last camper sigh to her parents: "May I come back next summer?"

You certainly may. Highland Retreat will be ready.

Photo by Jeanette Heatwole



Ed Heatwole, pastor of New Beginnings Church, dedicates the land during a groundbreaking ceremony on June 10. The property is located along Route 11 south of Harrisonburg, Va. The church currently meets in the Turner Ashby High School auditorium.

Enjoy the scenic Shenandoah Valley **50** 100th ANNIVERSARY 1908-2007

Bike Shenandoah 2007

September 22, 2007

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801 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, Virginia

Choose one of five courses: (5 miles - 100 miles)

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SEPTEMBER 2007

Connections

Prayer Calendar

Sunday

30 Pray for a continual growth in the lives of the youth who have been encouraged and challenged during the recent summer camp in Italy.

Monday

3 Maranatha School for the Deaf, Jamaica, opens the new school year today. Pray for Precious Kennedy, head teacher, and other staff members as they lead the students into new learning experiences and demonstrate Christ's love.

Tuesday

If you would like to sponsor the prayer calendar, write to gloria.lehman@vmmissions.org or call 800-707-5535.

4 Praise God that VBS at a Graham, N.C., apartment complex in July saw an average attendance of 50 kids! Leaders Keith and Tami Nice report that this is twice the number than in previous years. May sown seeds produce growth.

Wednesday

5 In this "back to school" month, pray for church leaders in many places in the world who carry heavy ministry loads while engaging in further training to strengthen their ability to serve their churches.

Thursday

"Don't wish for a better day. Be glad and use the one you're in. Fear God and do exactly what He says. That's what matters, All else fades like the flowers."
Rebecca St. James, "That's What Matters," 1996

6 An excellent group of seven interns are again going out under VMM's one-year *trainSend* program, this time to Italy, Israel, Jamaica, and Costa Rica. Pray for the third "class" of *trainSend*.

Friday

7 Tomorrow many youth from throughout VMC will gather at the Yoder Barn for a "Peace Jam" celebrating the music and message of the Prince of Peace. Pray for all who will participate.

Saturday

1 Pray for Jason Gerlach, Youth Minister at Community Mennonite Church, as he assumes new responsibilities as VMC's Conference Youth Minister. Both are half-time positions.

8 Recently, Ed Bontrager, VMM USA Ministries Director, met with a fellowship group of Anabaptist related persons in Charlotte, NC. Pray that the desire to begin a Mennonite fellowship there will become reality.

9 This month Ardi Shahini and Emily Huffman are taking a YWAM course on teaching English as mission outreach. Pray that this will be an effective tool in their *trainSend* assignments in Italy.

10 Thank God for an anonymous donor family who set up a Missions Endowment Fund, with the Mennonite Foundation, to support mission efforts in Virginia and beyond.

11 Obtaining religious visas and sojourn permits to work in Italy has become increasingly difficult. Pray that God will open these legal doors for Ardi Shahini and Emily Huffman.

12 Pray for Carlos and Wendy Malvaez, as they pastor a congregation of 40 at the *Iglesia Vida Nueva*. They have been meeting Sunday afternoons at Ridgeway Mennonite in Harrisonburg.

13 VMC's Finance Committee will meet tomorrow and welcome Curt Hartman as a new member, appointed by Conference Council. Pray that the committee will serve wisely.

14 Remember Adam and Micah Riddle as they begin first and third grade in an Italian school this fall. Pray for language acquisition and for positive experiences in making friends.

15 Francesco Picone, President of CEMI, spent most of July in a rehabilitation clinic close to Rome for physical therapy. Will a knee replacement be possible in the future? Ask God to heal him.

16 Early in August, Skip and Carol Tobin returned to Thailand after being on home leave for several months. They express anticipation of expanded work in the next months. Pray for them and their ministry there.

17 Nazareth Village has emerged as a significant witness to Jesus in a Jewish/Christian/Muslim context. Pray for Shirley Roth, who serves as Executive Director, jointly appointed by Mission Network and VMMissions.

18 Richard and Margaret Keeler have moved to Sangre Chiquita, Trinidad, to be closer to the Gospel Lighthouse MC. Pray that this will result in more persons coming to know Christ through their witness in this town.

19 Chris and Melody Riddle need your prayers as they continue language learning and acculturation and find their unique place of ministry in the Italian church.

20 This year, Nancy Marshall is the lead teacher in the Deaf classroom in the Anglican school in Orange Walk, Belize. Thank God for her continued enthusiasm for leading students into new learning experiences and sharing God's love with them.

21 A charity ride for Shenandoah, is held tomorrow, with funds raised for MCC, Mennonite Media, VMM, and Patchwork Pantry. Pray for safety for the riders and for dollars raised for these agencies.

22 Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community's board meets tomorrow for their annual retreat. Several representatives from VMC will join them. Pray for wisdom in their discussions and discernment.

23 Thank God for the witness of the Chapel Hill (NC) Mennonite Church, pastored by Isaac Villegas, which is celebrating their fifth anniversary this weekend.

24 Remember Norma Teles today as she begins a new school year in her kindergarten for gypsy children in Lezhe, Albania. Pray for adequate funding and the Albanian staff that assists her.

25 Pray for Pino and Rosanna, pastoral couple at Shalom in Palermo, Italy. May God give them needed spiritual and physical strength to face all of their many responsibilities of church work and family life.

26 Aaron Kauffman teaches Anabaptist history to middle schoolers in Colegio Americano Menno in La Mesa, Colombia. This is a challenge, but rewarding! Pray for insight and for students' attentiveness.

27 Pray for the new contacts and friendships made by missionaries and believers in Montenegro this summer that the Holy Spirit will draw each person into fellowship with Jesus and His people.

28 Pray for VMC's middle school youth as they are gathered at Smith Mountain Lake for a retreat this weekend. Pray for physical safety and spiritual renewal, and pray for Nicholas Jefferson, resource person.

29 Pray for the pastoral team of Centro Agape, Palermo, as the leaders meet to organize the church activities for the following year.

Announcements

The annual **Ministry Retreat** for pastors/ministers will be held February 22-24, 2008, at the Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center. David Brubaker, assistant professor at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University, will be the resource person. His topic will be "Managing Conflict in the Congregation." Mark your calendars now!

"**Women of Worth—WOW!**" is the topic for the Mennonite Women of Virginia's annual retreat November 9-11 at Holiday Inn Koger South Hotel in Richmond. Angie Williams is the speaker for this dynamic event. Watch for registration information in church mailboxes this summer. Plan to join women in your congregation and from all around Virginia Mennonite Conference for worship and fellowship.

The annual **Harvest Day** at CrossRoads on Saturday, September 29, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., will offer something for the whole family, with a special focus on old-time fun for the children. Adults will enjoy stories, special music, boiling molasses, pressing cider, sawing logs with a crosscut, spinning and weaving, homemade foods, and more. Entry fee: \$8 per car. Come and bring some friends.

Be part of the audience for a live videotaping of Fish-Eyes and Creation Chronicles at the Eastern Mennonite School auditorium on Sept. 18, 20 and 21. Ted Swartz has assembled a cast of seasoned actors to play roles he had created with Lee Eshleman during their 20-year partnership as Ted & Lee TheaterWorks. Fish-Eyes will be performed on Sept. 18 at 4 and 7:30 p.m. Creation Chronicles will be given on Thurs., Sept. 20 and Friday, Sept. 21 at 7:30 p.m. each night. Tickets are \$5 at the door. Because of videotaping, the programs are appropriate for children ages 6 and up. Call 540-574-4877 for more information.

You're invited to join the conversation between young adults, pastors, and other church leaders at Eastern Mennonite Seminary. "Leading a Changing Church in a Changing World" will evaluate tradition and the impact of emerging churches and what is to come. This event will take place Friday, October 27, 7:30-9 p.m., and Saturday, October 28, 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m., at Martin Chapel, EMS.

2007 PENNY POWER

Your pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters and dollars make a difference!

- Highlight *Penny Power* during your Sunday morning worship service. Involve the children in your church.
- Bring jugs from your church/org. to the Relief Sale, October 5-6, at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds.
- Take your empty jugs back to your church and start collecting for next year's *Penny Power* projects!



At the Maranatha School for the Deaf, Jamaica, graduation was held on June 24. Pictured above are **Andre Hillary**, sponsored by Grace Mumaw; **Shaneen Falconer**, sponsored by Galen & Gloria Lehman; **Precious Kennedy**, Head Teacher; **Tonya Brooks**, sponsored by John & Mary Ann Heatwole and Lewis & Helen Burkholder; and **Carlos Shaw**, sponsored by David & Julia Alleman. **Will you sponsor a student for the 2007-2008 school year?** The cost is \$35 per month or \$350 per year. Contact Gloria Lehman, VMM Caribbean Regional Assistant, at 540-434-9727 or gloria.lehman@vmmmissions.org for more information. Photo by Galen Lehman.

Congregational Resource Center

NEW FALL RESOURCES

Need study material for an adult or youth class?
Small group or devotional studies?

The Congregational Resource Center has a number of new materials for all ages and situations, including: "**Is it insensitive to share your faith? Hard questions about Christian mission in a plural world**" by James R. Krabill

"**Now it Springs Up: Spiritual Insights for Every Day**" by Carol Duerksen, Michele Hershberger, and Laurie Oswald Robinson

"**Anna B.**" a children's book about an Anabaptist child and her experiences.

"**Plant a Seed of Peace**" by Rebecca Seiling; stories for children from four centuries about Anabaptists who modeled peace in their lives.

...and many more!

Go to www.emu.edu/seminary/crc and "Search the Catalog," or stop by the EMS building, room 110.

Summer Hours: 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Mon-Fri.
Linda Alley, CRC Director, 540.432.4219

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