

Steiners seek Albania Christian school

By **DON AND RITA STEINER**
 Park View Mennonite Church
 Photo courtesy of the Steiners

We, Don and Rita Steiner, traveled with Klementina Shahini and Jackie and Curt Hartman to Albania in late May on behalf of the Virginia Mennonite Missions (VMM) to explore the possibility of establishing a Christian school in Lezhe to further the work of mission outreach. Lezhe, located in the northern part of the country along the Adriatic Sea, is a city of 60,000. Virginia Mennonite Missions and Eastern Mennonite Missions have had a presence in Albania for approximately 15 years. Today, Lezhe is served by mission workers Paul and June Kropf, Norma Teles, and the Leon Zimmerman family.

Klementina Shahini, a native Albanian, lives in Chesapeake, Virginia, with her husband Dini. She currently serves as chair of the English department at Portsmouth High School. Her energy and enthusiasm for a new Christian school in Lezhe is extraordinary and she's committed to moving back to Lezhe with her husband to administer the school once it is built. She envisions developing a school similar to Eastern Mennonite School with a curriculum taught in English and Albanian. Klementina is a visionary, but one who recognizes the challenges of such a project. The Hartmans, members of Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, developed a business plan while we consulted on curriculum issues.

We were exposed to about as much as possible within a 5-6 day period including consultations with mission workers, local educators, government officials, an engineer, and others, yet had time to enjoy conversations over cappuccino or Turkish



Curt and Jackie Hartman, Klementina Shahini, and Don and Rita Steiner on the shores of the Adriatic Sea.

coffee. Our visit to the public school revealed overcrowding, large class sizes, plus inadequate educational resources.

Using her networking skills, Klementina arranged for our group to meet with Prime Minister Sali Berisha at the dedication of a fish processing plant in Lezhe, a joint venture between Albania and Italy. Upon speaking to the prime minister she then set an appointment for us to meet with Dr. Pollo, the Albanian minister of education whose office is in Tirana, the capital city about a one-hour drive from Lezhe. This serendipitous development was astonishing given the fact these same dignitaries hosted President Bush approximately a week later and could be recognized in Associated Press photos.

Much interest for a quality private high school was expressed by families, local officials, Prime Minister Berisha, and Dr. Pollo. Both Virginia Mennonite Missions and Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) have affirmed and encouraged this vision with the Shahini's remaining central to this ministry. Funding will initially come from private donors who have a vision for such a school as part of a broader plan for missions in Albania.

Umble considers returning to Albania

By **ALLEN UMBLE**



Bible stories we have heard many times still speak to us in new ways because we are in new seasons of

life. I was going through transitions this past fall as we studied the story of Joseph in the uniform Sunday school lessons.

Let your mind go back a few thousand years to the sight of nine weary brothers returning to their aged father Jacob. The satisfaction of food on the table again was mixed with unnerving news about the imprisonment of Simeon, the money returned in their sacks, and no possibility of getting grain again unless Benjamin was along. "Everything is against me!" muttered Father Jacob. "My son will not go down there with you!"

With no options feeling right, Jacob holds off on sending his sons to Egypt again until there is no choice. However, Judah has to remind Jacob twice that the man in Egypt said, "You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you!"

When options look bleak, the "why" questions begin. "Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?" Judah responded by taking personal responsibility for the safe return of Benjamin, willing to bear the blame before Jacob his father forever.

"Umble considers returning" continued on page 4

Light for February

It's February and winter lingers. Perhaps it has crept into our souls. The hope and resolve expressed at the turn of the year may have already faded as the world rushes on.

It was one of those days for Jesus and a woman. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until



Owen Burkholder
Conference Minister

only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:3-11)

This story of sin, judgment, and redemption, appears just before the great proclamation of Jesus, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Whether ours is the winter of grief, despair, accusation,

self-loathing, fear, or general malaise, let us turn again to Jesus, the light of the world. Here in the light that is love we can come to a genuine understanding of ourselves that may be devastating for a time. As we linger in the presence of Jesus there will always be a way that leads to hope.

Having dealt responsibly with the darkness, we will be prepared for another word about light. Jesus also said to his disciples, "You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14)

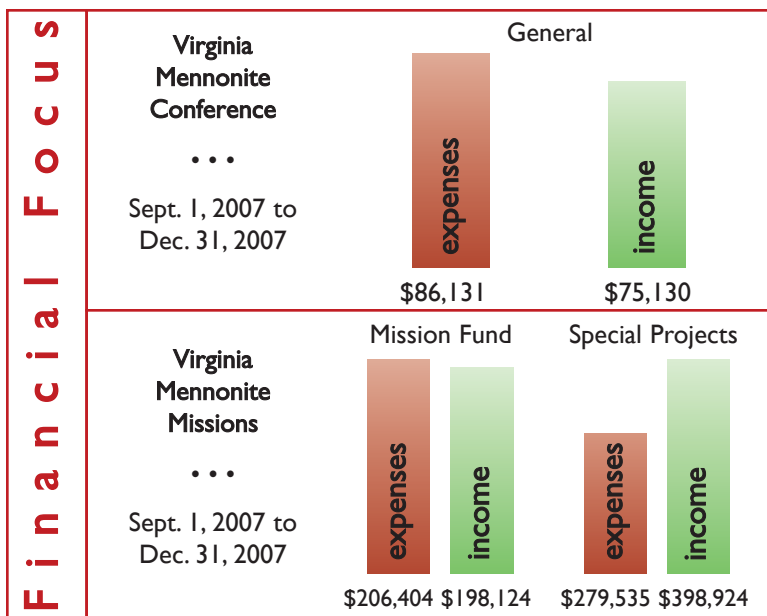
"I am the light of the world...You are the light of the world." Which way is it, Jesus? In this case we can have it both ways. Ours is the reflected light. "The true light that enlightens everyone (has come) into the world." (John 1:9)

We are invited into partnership with Jesus! There, there is the answer to life's winter.

Sarah Mumbauer serving in Guatemala



On January 7, Sarah Mumbauer arrived for a year of service with *tranSend* at *Esperanza de Vida* (Hope of Life Ministries) near the village of Llano Verde, Guatemala. She will serve in the K-12 school, the orphanage and the nutrition center. Here they minister to malnourished children who come from either extreme poverty or are orphaned. Sarah's home congregation is Trissels Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va.



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Editor
Gloria Lehman
Assistant Editor
Jon Trotter

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Phone (540) 434-9727
(800) 707-5535
E-mail info@vmmissions.org
info@vmconf.org
Web www.vmmissions.org
www.vmconf.org

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A soldier in seminary

By **DANIEL SEIFERT**
student at Eastern Mennonite Seminary



photo by Woods Pierce

After September 11, 2001, I joined the National Guard. As a former Air Force technician I didn't imagine that it would cause a theological crisis, but at 42 years old, I was a different person than at age 18. I had a vague sense of patriotism felt by a lot at the time. After joining, I realized I couldn't carry a weapon and I'd never be able to kill another person. Assigned to a military unit, I was in the chaplain corps, training for a security role because I was unable to find a deployable chaplain available to mentor me. This sent me into a temporary crisis. Fortunately, a senior chaplain did find me, and I was able to work in a stateside chaplain team. I listened to many soldiers. I received an award for being able to identify several suicidal soldiers and help them get the proper treatment. Yet, underneath I was still uncomfortable with the military culture. A long-standing mental model that accommodated military service as a Christian began to fragment.

After deployment I entered seminary, and nonviolence became a significant issue for me. I had come to see that military service was incompatible with Christian existence,

although my response at the time was to endure through the remainder of my contract. However, things changed rapidly and I needed to respond with more certitude. Orders to Iraq were coming down all over my brigade. I realized I had to be honest with myself about who I was and Christ's call to live peaceably. I also had to be honest with the military and let them know that I wasn't going to kill.

I looked carefully at scripture, at myself, and my United Methodist tradition. The United Methodist confession of faith says, "War and bloodshed are contrary to the teaching and spirit of Christ." What I had discovered about living peaceably with my enemies through Scripture was confirmed by the church. Resources and people at EMS helped along the way. I began the legal process to obtain a discharge as a conscientious objector in April of 2007. I wrote a fifteen-page application required to be discharged. Even though I was advised that it could take 12-18 months for the entire process, I received an honorable discharge in just seven months.

Today I celebrate being shaped by the Christian narrative of living peaceably. I see myself being transformed to live out this Christian virtue thoroughly. It's not just about refusing to support military service; it's about being at peace with my spouse and making peace with people in my community.

Huffman progressing in Italian language

By **EMILY HUFFMAN**
transSend intern serving in Bari, Italy

Recently I returned to Palermo, Sicily, to participate in the annual conference of the Italian Mennonite Church. I hadn't been there since June of 2006 and although that had been my third visit with a short-term team, I still couldn't speak Italian. On this occasion, I could! My friends in Palermo were impressed. It was strange and wonderful to be able to communicate and carry on meaningful conversations with them for the first time. So many prayers have gone up for this, and God is answering. I continue to trust that God will provide more answers regarding other things for which I pray.

I pray for Stefania that she'll get through the shock of her boyfriend's death and hold onto God more than ever before. I pray for Isabella that she will come to church again, realizing that life without God is void of joy and security. I continue to pray for Nicola that someday he'll receive the love and salvation God has for him.

I praise God that there are some great young people in the Palermo churches. Lisa and Marco (pictured)

are full of passion for God with a deep hunger to know Him more each day. Being with them again was such a blessing. I'm thankful there are some great national leaders in the Sicilian churches, young and old. What a blessing to see Centro Agape filled to the brim on Sunday with people from all the Mennonite churches in Italy joined together for the annual conference. I pray that the future brings more fruit to these church bodies and glory to God.



courtesy of Emily Huffman

I'm thankful for the two American missionary families I traveled with and with whom I will be working. The Riddles and Lehmans totally take care of me; we're like one big missionary family.

After being away almost a week, I got a warm welcome at the Bible School in Rome where I'm studying the language. The students there keep saying how much they'll miss me when I don't return after Christmas. I'll miss them too! It feels like I now have three homes in Italy: Rome, Bari and Palermo.

What's in a gift bag?

By **GLORIA LEHMAN**
Caribbean Regional Assistant

It was suppertime when Galen and I arrived at the Maranatha School for the Deaf in Top Hill, Jamaica on December 13. The dorm students met us with huge smiles and hugs, and hands flying with signs: *Christmas tomorrow? Gifts?* Teasingly, I told that that I forgot the gifts, and left them at my home in America. Faces dropped, so I quickly explained that I was just teasing, and yes, there were gifts. *Christmas tomorrow?* No, Christmas on Sunday after the program.



expectations. The teachers need extreme patience as they guide young lives into polite, likeable human beings. Most of the students come from families that struggle with the harsh realities of the Jamaican depressed economy. A Christmas gift is very special indeed.

During the Christmas program, the students demonstrated that they are capable of memorizing lines of a poem, march to a rhythm, move hoops with ribbons to a beat, and wave streamers to an expressive song. When the students formed the nativity scene, with the youngest boys playing the part of sheep, and the girls, including 4-year-old Audia playing the role of angels, the earthy story of Jesus' birth in a stable comes to life. These students, though deaf, have heard the true Christmas story, and are active in playing it out.



Teacher Verica Senior helps 4-year-old Javel Allen get his gift bag from his sponsor. Gloria Lehman applauds his polite "thank you."

From the youngest to the oldest student, the anticipation of receiving a gift from their sponsor in the US is very real. Sponsors in Virginia and Pennsylvania contribute \$350 per school year for the nurture of a student at the Maranatha School. In addition to remembering the student's birthday, the sponsors choose age-appropriate gifts for "their" student. Each student receives practical clothing, a toy or fun item, a bag of candy and a Christmas card.

Currently at the school there are a large number of very young students who are learning the basic signs, basic concepts like numbers and colors, and basic behavioral

And then came the gifts! What is in a gift bag besides clothes, a toy or puzzle, candy and a card? In there, interest, concern, love and hope nestle in the corners. The eager hands pull out the items, and along with them comes the love and prayers from a sponsor far away.

The students colored a Christmas card for their sponsor. The sponsor received that along with a picture of the student when I returned to Virginia. My hope is that the sponsor also received the love and appreciation that the students sent their way.

If you want to participate in this student sponsorship program, contact Gloria Lehman at gloria.lehman@vmmissions.org or (540) 434-9727.

"Umble considers the risk" continued from cover

Jacob feels caught, as Janet Gehman writes in *Rejoice!* November 14, 2007, and needs to make a decision: risk seeing the rest of his family starve; or, risk losing Benjamin, the brother of his favorite son Joseph and son of his dear Rachel. The brothers gently push Jacob to take the risk that will mean food for many. "Jacob has no idea of the wonderful surprise God has waiting for him. He will not know it until he takes the risk of losing something very precious."

This past year family decisions meant my giving up my role of caring for my mother as well as my place on the family farm, both of which were very dear to my heart. But just as Jacob finally said, "Take your brother and go back to the man at once. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved."

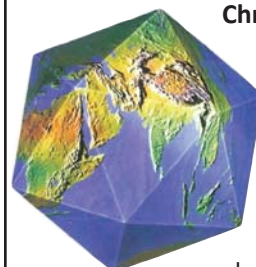
I realized that I too needed to get moving and decided to meet with Ken Horst to learn about the option of returning to Albania.

Later in the story when Jacob set out for Egypt with all that he had, he must have needed that extra boost from God who appeared to him in a vision encouraging him to move forward.

We cannot yet see the end of our stories, but we can look back at the end of Jacob's life as he tenderly takes Joseph's two sons upon his knees to bless them. Jacob acknowledged God as the God of his ancestors, God his protector from harm, and "the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day," even through that time when he was pushed to make a decision when he did not like any of the options and he risked giving up something very precious to him.

Through his decision not only was his son Benjamin safe, but Jacob was also reunited with his dearly beloved Joseph and was given a wonderful provision for his whole family. But, most important of all, God thus preserved the people through whom He would bring the promised Deliverer, Jesus Christ.

Perspectives on the World Christian Movement:



A survey of missions through biblical, historical, cultural, and strategic lenses will be offered in the Harrisonburg area this fall. Watch for details and plan to attend!

La Festa Natalizia Italiana (Italian Christmas Party)



By **GLORIA LEHMAN AND EVA EBERLY**
Director of Public Relations / Mediterranean Regional Assistant

The aroma of hot pasta with sauce filled the fellowship hall of Harrisonburg Mennonite Church on Thursday, December 27. Willard and Eva Eberly greeted more than 200 guests at the door—hugs and smiles spread through the room, and conversation flowed in true Mediterranean fashion.

Table hosts who had lived or served in cross-cultural missions (primarily in the Mediterranean region) placed interesting items on the tables and told stories of their significance. The delicious meal of pasta, herbed chicken, salad, and authentic Italian bread baked by Eva and Maurita Eberly, was enjoyed by all. The meal was topped off with *tiramisu* and *panettone*, a special Christmas cake.

Worship music performed by Maurita Eberly, Shawn Green, Alicia Horst and Steve Horst (pictured) lifted voices singing in both Italian and English.

Floyd Blosser organized a skit based on a true story of a Sicilian man who's lifestyle of petty crime was transformed when he met the missionaries and accepted Jesus. Patrick Horst played the main role. Floyd and Janet Blosser and Ken Horst also participated, bringing poignancy to the story.

Willard and Eva showed sample pictures of a year in ministry in the Mediterranean region. Eva shared a story illustrating the rich dividends of investing in people's lives by "passing on the blessing." Willard underscored the joys of serving God cross-culturally and challenged persons to consider missions as a meaningful way to invest their lives in extending God's Kingdom to the nations. Workers are needed; are you hearing His call?

The group responded to this need with hearts full of support and encouragement for Willard and Eva. They also graciously gave over \$9,000 for their support as missionaries and regional directors living in Bari, Italy. If you want to be a partner with Willard and Eva as they share the Good News in the Mediterranean region, contact VMissions.



Roti and curried chicken anyone?

By **GLORIA LEHMAN**
Director of Public Relations

On January 11, 130 people gathered in the fellowship hall of Lindale Mennonite Church for a Trinidad meal. The purpose of this meal is to enjoy the exotic tastes of Trinidad food, and to support the ministry of Richard and Margaret Keeler, mission workers in Sangre Chiquito, Trinidad.

A Trinidad meal has been offered to the community for about five years, and persons who have visited or served in Trinidad look forward to enjoying the foods that are unique to this country.

Dalpourri roti (flat bread with split peas), curried chicken, *aloo and chana* (curried potatoes and chick peas), spiced pumpkin, and limeade make up the menu.

Former missionary, Lavonne Lehman, begins preparing the food months in advance. Her relatives and friends help with the last minute details, and the result is a fine meal with a purpose. Keelers' Missionary Support Team and oth-

ers helped with decorations and clean up.

This year the Virginia Mennonite Conference Council met at the Lindale Church and took their supper break and enjoyed the meal and short program. Ben Risser, pastor of Ridgeway Mennonite Church, shared about his experience on a work team to Trinidad in February, and led the group in songs with a missions theme, including an original composition. Galen Lehman, VMM Caribbean Regional Director, prepared a slide show of the various churches and scenes, and Loren Horst, VMM President, led a prayer of blessing for the church in Trinidad, and for Richard and Margaret Keeler and Paul and Evelyn Kratz, mission workers.

The offering in support of the Keelers was approximately \$3,000. The outpouring of support for this long-term missionary couple is heartwarming, and enables the Keelers to continue the work that God has called them to do.



Asret Gebre and Meseret Endeshaw anticipate a good meal served by David Lehman and Eileen Shenk. Asret will go to Trinidad with a work team from Mt. Clinton Mennonite Church, January 25 - February 5.

Photo courtesy of Gloria Lehman

Who pastors our pastors?

By **MARK L. SENSABAUGH**

Family Life Resource Center

When is the last time you read a media headline about a pastor who misused financial resources or was involved in some moral failing that necessitated their stepping down from leadership? Christian leaders are faced with temptations that are common to man but when they stumble, the implications not only involve themselves but their families, their faith community and the name of Christ. James 3:1 indicates that leaders will be held to a higher standard. Though having served fourteen years as a pastor, this past year I've shifted my ministry focus to counseling at Family Life Resource Center.

In ministry I've had many opportunities to experience the pressures of pastoring and walked alongside colleagues from other congregations who at times felt very weary, lonely and found few places to openly share their burdens.



courtesy Mark Sensabaugh

Pastors may carry personal burdens centered around finances, relationships or health. Professionally there can be complex combinations of expectations from elder boards, denominational leaders, congregants and even from the pastor themselves. Those expectations vary from how the pastor lives, to how they serve and lead.

There may be unique pressures that pastors labor under like: managing a difficult staff situation, stewarding

church resources, giving leadership to major efforts like building campaigns or ministry outreaches, wrestling with preparing a sensitive sermon topic or a complex counseling situation. Leadership at times involves that one carry a load or make difficult decisions alone. I often wonder "who pastors our pastors?" Some statistics suggest that 70% of pastors don't have a close friend. There is a passage nestled in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 that I

don't believe I've ever heard as a sermon focus. "Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and warn you against all that is wrong. Think highly of them and give them your wholehearted love because of their work. And remember to live peaceably with each other." Possibly pastors would see this sermon focus as self serving.

I recall attending a national Promise Keepers event in the early 1990's where pastors were given honor and received prayer. One of the seven promises of a Promise Keeper was to support the mission of his church by honoring and praying for his pastor. I remember pastors weeping and indicating that they often didn't feel that level of support. As we partner to pray for and encourage our pastors and church leaders today, there's no way of telling what may happen in our faith communities tomorrow.

Congregational Resource Center

Lent and Easter Resources

The Congregational Resource Center currently has on display several dozen resources for the Lenten/Easter season.

These items range from children's books to prayers and worship resources to a DVD called "The Easter Story." Many other materials for this season are on the shelves.

In addition there will be a special table display during School for Leadership Training Week (January 21-24, 2008) dealing with sexuality issues. The theme for SLT is "Embodying Sexual Wholeness in a Broken World."

Items on this topic that may be borrowed from the CRC include:

"Sexuality: God's Gift" - Hershberger;
"The Sexual Christian" - Stafford;
"Let's Talk About Love and Sex" video series - McDowell; and
"The 10 Commandments of Dating" - Young/Adams.

Many group study lessons on this topic are available on CRC shelves as well.

Take time to browse for the resources to enhance your ministry, or call Linda Alley, Director of the CRC, to request a special title. 540.432.4219. Email: crc@emu.edu. Location: Eastern Mennonite Seminary Room 110.

Visit us in person or via the online catalog to see what else is new. www.emu.edu/seminary/crc and "Search the Catalog."

The CRC Director is available to help you Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m., and by email at other times.

FEBRUARY 2008

Connections

Prayer Calendar

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by

Rawley & Esther Shank

who encourage all of us to pray for persons serving in missions around the world and in our own country.

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."

1 John 4:20-21 (NIV)

3 A work team from Mt. Clinton MC is worshipping with brothers and sisters in Trinidad today. Thank God for the team's energy for construction of the Hope MC, and for the opportunity to relate to the people in Esparanza.

4 Prior to Lent, the islands of Trinidad and Tobago celebrate "Carnival" which includes activities that Christians avoid. Pray for the Christians as they plan fun events which are wholesome. May they be a witness during this time.

5 Pray for Nancy Marshall as Galen & Gloria Lehman are visiting her in Belize today. On Sunday they worshipped with the Jesus' Deaf Church, and interacted with the deaf youth and children who attend.

6 Pray for Ed Bontrager, VMM USA Ministries Director as he continues tonight with a series on welcoming and assimilating people in your congregation" for the Winter Bible School of Mt. View (N.C.) and Hickory Mennonite.

7 Willard & Eva Eberly returned to Bari, Italy, after "home leave" for a couple months. Thank God for their untiring commitment to the work of God in Italy, and ask Him to bless them with health, strength, and vision.

10 Galen & Gloria Lehman are visiting Aaron & Laura Kauffman in La Mesa, Colombia, today. Thank God for the opportunity they have to worship with the church there, and to see "first hand" the ministry of the Kauffmans.

11 In Italy English conversation classes are a non-threatening way for missionaries to establish friendships with new persons. Pray that God will bless these relationships and stir up a curiosity about the Gospel in these friends.

12 Pray for Mara and Dino, a Christian couple who are preparing for marriage this summer. Pray that God will open a job in Bari for Dino, as their presence and service are very needed at Centro Kooinia. Jobs are scarce!

13 Today the Mennonite mission agencies representatives are at EMU for conversation about opportunities to serve Christ in other locations. Stop by and visit with them and see where God is calling you to serve!

14 Surprise someone with an expression of love today! Follow Christ's example of "no greater love."

1 Pray for the Mennonite Women of Virginia who gather this weekend to consider embracing a "sister care" model of mutual encouragement. Pray for Barb Bontrager, president, as she gives leadership to this.

8 Pray for the "discipleship school" in Sicily as it is being reorganized with new leadership that it would continue to have a vital role in equipping all the believers for effective ministry in their setting.

15 Paul & Evelyn Kratz, Couva, Trinidad, members as they work together to form a unified church. Thank God for the insight which their years of experience provide for them.

2 The winter delegate session of VMC is held today at the Washington Community Fellowship. Pray for the energizing of the Holy Spirit to move upon the group as items are processed and decisions are made.

9 VMC's Adult Winter Bible School begins tomorrow evening in the EMHS auditorium. Pastor Duane Yoder will teach on "The Biblical Basis of Anabaptist Belief." Pray for all who attend and are enriched by this knowledge.

16 Memmofolk will present a concert of a cappella love songs tonight at Park View MC. As we celebrate the love between a husband and wife, pray that marriages will be strengthened.

17 Remember the great need in the world where natural disasters have wrecked people's lives. May hurting people find comfort both physically and spiritually. What is the little part you can play in relieving suffering?

18 Dan Hoopert is teaching at the Donetsk Christian University in Ukraine. The courses he teaches help to train pastors. Ask God to bless him and his students as they delve into God's Word together.

19 Women in Trinidad gather for "Friendship Bible Coffees" and enjoy fellowship and Bible study around a theme they choose. Many women's lives have been touched significantly through this; Margaret Keeler gives direction.

20 Remember Francesco, a young believer from Centro Kooinia, Bari, recently moved to Rome to begin a new job. May God lead him in finding new friends, a church fellowship and in making necessary adjustments.

21 Rejoice with the Korean Comm. Church: the first baptisms were held in December! Three people committed their lives to Christ and joined the fellowship. Ask God to strengthen their faith.

22 Pray for VMC high school youth who attend the first-ever Senior High Retreat this weekend at Highland Retreat. Pray for Pastor Cindy Voth as she presents on "Drastic Discipleship."

23 Give thanks to God for the effective ministry of Carlos & Wendy Malvaez as they pastor *Manatial de Vida* (Fountain of Life) Church. They meet Sunday afternoons at Ridgeway Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

24 Anita Rhodes, *ἡρω* *Send* participant in Nazareth Village, Israel, is taking a course "The Jesus Movement in the Early Context" through EMS which will benefit the library at NV. Thank God for this opportunity.

25 Pray for Emily Huffman, *ἡρω* *Send* mission intern located in Bari, Italy as she continues learning Italian language and culture, shares her faith, and serves at Centro Kooinia. May this be a significant year in her life.

26 Richard Keeler leads the Gospel Lighthouse MC in Sangre Grande, Trinidad, and encourages lay leaders in their roles. Ask God to bless this congregation in every way.

27 Norma Teles is returning to Albania following 2 months of visiting family and Mennonite churches in Brazil. Pray that they will provide needed prayer and financial support. May Norma have renewed strength as she begins her responsibilities.

28 Steve Ganger, author and director of stewardship education for MMA will present "The Unhurried Family" at 7:00 p.m. in the EMHS auditorium today. Pray for all who attend.

29 One week from today, the Jamaica Mennonite Church begins its 50th anniversary celebration. Pray for church leaders as they plan, and for many who are traveling to participate in the joy of God's leading through the years.

If you would like to sponsor the prayer calendar, please contact Gloria Lehman at (540) 434-9727 (800) 707-5535 gloria.lehman@vmmmissions.org

Announcements

Marriage Maintenance - An Owner's Seminar is a series of four Monday sessions for couples, 7:00-8:30 p.m., beginning February 4 at the Family Life Resource Center and led by Harvey Yoder. Topics covered are based on his book, *Lasting Marriage, the Owner's Manual*: "We Invest More in Our Problem-Free Area," "We Focus on Changing Ourselves Rather Than Our Spouse," "We Argue Less and Listen More," and "We Learn to be Effective Problem Solvers." There is no charge, but a freewill offering will benefit FLRC. Register at (540) 434-8450 or harvey@flrc.org



You are invited to **Adult Winter Bible School** with pastor and Bible teacher Duane

Yoder, February 10 - March 9 at 6:30 pm in the Eastern Mennonite School Auditorium. This will be a topical presentation on "The Biblical Basis for Mennonite Beliefs" including a weekly biography of a famous Mennonite leader.



VMC and Mennofolk present **A cappella Love Songs** on Saturday, February 16, at

Connections (USPS 007-205)
Virginia Mennonite Missions
Virginia Mennonite Conference
901 Parkwood Drive
Harrisonburg, VA 22802-2498



Virginia Mennonite Missions

Called. Sent. Transformed.



Virginia Mennonite Conference
A conference of Mennonite Church USA

7:30 p.m. at Park View Mennonite Church featuring the male ensemble **Cantoré** and **Shekinah**, a female singing group. An offering will be received.

The **2008 Ministry Retreat** will be held at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center on February 22-24. David Brubaker, Assistant Professor of Organization Studies at the EMU Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, will be the resource person on the topic "Managing Conflict in the Congregation." Friday evening: "Managing Conflict in the Early Church" Saturday morning: "Managing Conflict Starts with Managing Oneself" Saturday evening: "Managing Conflict and Change in the Congregation" Sunday morning: "The Character of the Christian Peacebuilder" Worship Leaders: Ben & Kathy Risser

Mennonite Women of Virginia: Mark your calendars for the Annual Day meeting at Springdale Mennonite Church, Thursday, May 1. More details will be sent to churches.

Join us for a church leadership conference for pastors, church planters, and congregational leaders entitled "**Building a Church that Reaches into its Community**" led by Dennis Gingerich, from Cape Christian



Fellowship, Florida. This will be held April 5, 8:30-4:30 at Lindale Mennonite

Church. Register before March 1 for \$35 (includes lunch and breaks), after March 1 is \$40. Register three or more from one congregation for only \$20 each. This is sponsored by Virginia Mennonite Missions and Virginia Mennonite Conference. Call Ed Bontrager or Owen Burkholder at (540) 434-9727 for more information.

The **10th anniversary Hymn Sing For Peace** will take place April 12, 2008, in Washington, DC. Come join us in Washington as we celebrate 10 years of witnessing to Christ's message of peace and justice for the world. Festivities will include special guest song leaders and musical groups to help lead the singing. Sponsored by the Anabaptist Peace Center, Washington DC. Visit www.apcwdc.mennonite.net for details on this hymn sing and reviews of past hymn sings!



Highland Retreat celebrates 50 years in 2008! All former staff (summer and year-round) and board members are invited to a Reunion Weekend, June 20-22, 2008. See www.highlandretreat.org or call (540) 852-3226 for details.



Gloria Lehman

Sent from one congregation to another

On January 13, Chris and MaryBeth Moore, and their sons, Mynor and Mario, were commissioned at their home church, Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, to serve with the Community Fellowship Church in Staunton, Va. God has called them to work along with a team that will be developing a Deaf church with outreach to students and staff at Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind, and to Deaf community members. In the picture, Ed Bontrager blesses the Moore family as their Ministry Support Team, family, and friends surround them.