

Four affirmations of faith in Trinidad

By **RICHARD KEELER**

Pastor, Gospel Lighthouse MC

Photos courtesy of Ramesh and Babes Jaimani

Between 45 and 50 people met on the beach at Manzanilla, on the east coast of Trinidad at noon on November 25, following the usual morning worship service, for the baptism of four believers. We gathered together in the shade of a palm tree, sang and had a short message on the meaning of baptism, then went into the sea. Two women between 30 and 40 years of age, and two teenagers made up the class.

We arranged for the grandfather to assist me in baptizing his grandson, Michael; the believing husband to assist in the baptism of his wife, Michelle; an elder to assist in the baptism of the other teenager, Kristi; and Margaret assisted in the baptism of Bibi, whose husband is not a believer. There was much joy and also some tears shed on this momentous occasion.

Bibi has been through much abuse, but has found joy and peace in Christ. Her face and her attitudes show the changes that God has made in her life. Michelle had been baptized as an infant, and came to faith in Christ a few years ago, but was not baptized following that



(above) The four believers: Michael, Kristi, Bibi, and Michelle, that were baptized in November in Trinidad.

(below) The four with their families and Richard and Margaret Keeler, long-time mission workers with Virginia Mennonite Missions.



event. Recently, she and her husband began attending our congregation. Both wanted to become active members in our church. In our discussion with her we learned that she had not been baptized as a believer. When the Biblical position on baptism was explained to her, she willingly accepted it and made preparation for becoming an "Anabaptist." Kristi was raised by her Christian mother and Michael was raised by his

Christian grandparents, who are elders in the church. It was a joyous occasion for his grandparents to see him affirming his faith in this way.

Please pray for these newly-baptized believers that their faith may grow daily and that Jesus Christ will live through them.



Skip and Carol Tobin (r) talk with two women in their community.

Lifted out of shame by the Gospel

By **SKIP AND CAROL TOBIN**

Mission workers in Southeast Asia

Our Isaan friends understand the gospel in terms of shame. Bae, a part-time employee with EMM's micro-economic development program says, "People used to look at our family like we were scum. My father was an alcoholic, my mother an emotional wreck. And we kids, we were trouble from the word 'go.' But, now people look at my husband and me differently. They admire our family for the fact that our 18-year-old daughter is well-behaved and respectful."

Grandfather Extra remembers, "The village was ready to turn me out. I had to work hard to prove that I was a benefit to the community, because, with a demon-possessed daughter, our family was a threat to the well-being of the whole village. If anything bad happened, I knew that we would be blamed for it. Now, look what happened with Grandfather Wild Ox and Moon Glory? They came looking for us to pray for them. God is using me to spread his good news even in new districts!

"Lifted out of shame" continued on page 5

It is as it was

I recently participated in a Christmas service that began with a reading from the gospel of Matthew about Jesus' family becoming refugees and the ensuing terror reigned upon Bethlehem by Herod. I was the reader and my first thoughts were that the planners had asked me to read the wrong passage. Alternating between readings we sang the familiar sweet refrains of Christmas that I had come to know and love.

Juxtapositioned, the beautiful music and the stark readings seemed a mismatch. Then it occurred to me. It is as it was.

Earlene and I visited Bethlehem this past year for the first time. There we saw the poverty from oppression and heard the despair coming from fear—from both sides. In the midst of this sobering reality, I visited the Church of the Nativity and remembered again the beautiful story of the incarnation of our Savior Jesus as a little baby 2,000 years ago. My own memory of Christmas's past and the reality



Loren Horst
President of VMM

of Bethlehem present didn't seem to match. Then it occurred to me. It is as it was.

I grew up in an extended family of modest financial means but of incredible spiritual wealth. Stories of faithfulness in the midst of adversity have sifted down to me from previous generations and the warm home congregation of my youth kept most darkness at bay, or so I thought. It troubles me then to hear from my mother just a few years ago additional details of the sin and brokenness that caused pain and church split in my own childhood. The two stories didn't match. It occurs to me. It is as it was.

It is as it was. The world today seems no different than 2,000 years ago. The darkness, sin, and pain of the biblical stories are replayed over and over throughout the generations down to the present. We read them, note their similarity, and seem powerless to break the inexorable cycle.

Unless, it is as it was! Unless the declarations of countless angels and a single old man are still true. "Peace on earth on whom God's favor rests." "Your salvation has been prepared in the sight of all people, a light to the Gentiles." It is as it was! It will be now too in 2008! God has, is, and will be visiting us with his changing Presence! Let's pay attention.

Today I read of two groups in a congregation who had been alienated from each other. They met with each other, asked each other's forgiveness, and were reconciled. It is as it was!

Loren Horst

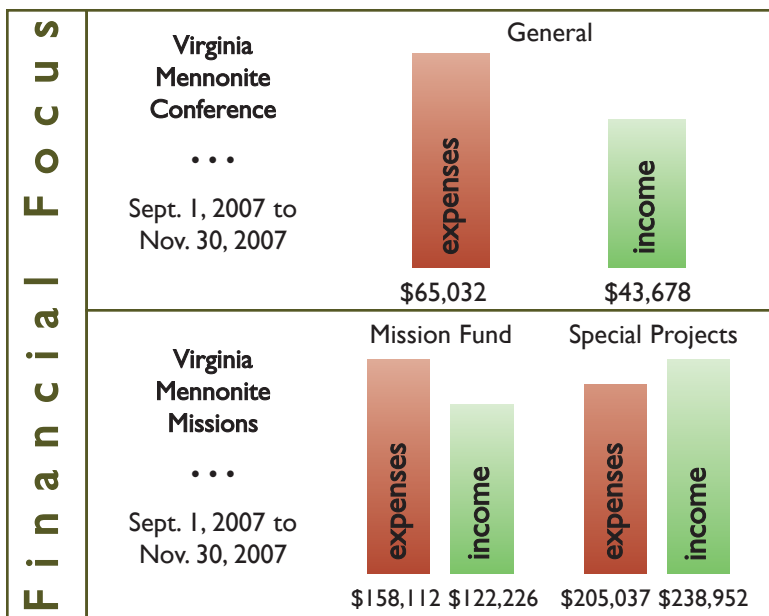
Virginia Mennonite Missions thanks Weaver for logo work



Marcia Rempel Weaver gave leadership to the process of a new identity

for Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions. During 2006-2007, Marcia gathered ideas from various groups of people and provided several drafts to the Board of VMBM. The end result is the logo, name and tagline that are now becoming familiar to our constituency.

Marcia graduated from EMU as an art major in 1994, worked as graphic designer at EMU for two years and as a freelance designer since that time. She worked with artisans in Brazil for three years with MCC to help develop and market their products. In spring 2008, Marcia will graduate from Eastern Mennonite Seminary with a Master of Arts in Church Leadership with a concentration in worship, especially working with worship arts. She and her husband John and two children attend the Ridgeway Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.



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A mountaintop experience

By LES HORNING

Pastor, Christiansburg Mennonite Church

If you are a fan of alternative Christian music, you have perhaps heard of an annual music festival known simply as “The Purple Door.” It’s held each August in Central Pennsylvania at a ski resort, Ski Roundtop. In 2006 it just so happened that one of the headlining groups was a band based in Philadelphia with the theologically profound name, *mewithoutyou*. At one point, while *mewithoutyou* was performing, they stopped playing and singing long enough to introduce themselves to the audience. As the leader was introducing one of the band members, he said this, “He’s a Mennonite. And if you ever get the chance to hook-up with Mennonites, do it. They’re awesome because they believe Jesus actually meant what he said when he said, ‘Love your enemies.’” That is not an exact quote, but close enough. While many of us may hear that and move into an “aw, shucks, we’re not that special,” mode, those words were like a breath of fresh air for a certain young man who had driven all the way from Pulaski, Va., (about seven hours one way) to attend the festival.

Tim had grown up in church, but it was a church where participation in the military was lauded as one of the godly responsibilities of a Christian in America. As Tim continued to study Scripture, he, on his own, came to the

conviction that following Jesus called for an uncompromising commitment to a life of peace and non-violence. Once he reached that conclusion, he began to search for a church which would support and encourage him in this newfound conviction. It was, for some time, a fruitless and discouraging search. Then he made that divinely appointed trip to The Purple Door music festival on a mountaintop in Pennsylvania. Tim had not heard of Mennonites before that day, but as soon as he got back home to Pulaski he began searching, courtesy of Google, and discovered to his delight that there was a Mennonite congregation only 30 minutes away. Tim showed up the next Sunday morning at Christiansburg Mennonite Fellowship (CMF), grateful for a group of Jesus’ followers who “...believe Jesus actually meant what he said when he said, ‘Love your enemies.’”

We at CMF are not perfect peacemakers. We do not always live out clearly our commitment to peace, to the Prince of Peace, but in this instance we were glad to be able to be part of the fresh air that was blowing in Tim’s life; to be a place where his commitment to a radical, lived peace would be celebrated and not condemned. This is just one story, but I know there are other sisters and brothers who are hungering and thirsting for other followers of Jesus who embrace the call to passionate peace-living.

Concord Mennonite develops cross-cultural relationships

By MARY LOU MATTESON

Congregational Peace Advocate for
Concord Mennonite Church

For the past 8-10 years, Concord Mennonite Church has helped to sponsor and plan a Summer Peacebuilding Institute in the Knoxville, Tennessee area. This event “borrows” international students from the EMU Summer Peacebuilding Institute during their breaks. They come to Knoxville for a four/five day conference. While staying in local homes, they keep very busy by: attending meetings where they introduce themselves and their country through personal peace stories; participating in living room discussions where everyone shares how they are working for peace in their local situations; sharing meals and recreational time with local participants; attending a cultural evening event where they share their own culture (through music, dance, stories, etc.); spending Sunday morning with host churches; and then meeting for a final potluck at a central location.

The entire event is ecumenical, with at least six local churches involved.

According to Mary Lou Matteson of Concord Mennonite, “the first couple of hours are usually somewhat awkward as we learn to trust one another; then the final couple of hours are painful as we anticipate the farewells. We are always surprised by the intensity of emotions that are felt in such a short period of time. No matter what our faith backgrounds, we are bound together because of the opportunity to know one another on more than just a superficial level.”

Mary Lou reports that the international participants often recommend the trip to co-workers who come the next year for the training at EMU. One of her favorite comments heard from local participants afterwards is that “you can never listen to the news in quite the same way—now you know people who are directly affected by the conflict, famine, or natural disaster that is being reported.”

First impressions of Sicily

By ARDI SHAHINI

transSend participant in Palermo, Italy

On my first day in Palermo, I was delighted in everything I saw. There are different road signs, driving, people, language, but the people in Centro Agape have the same kind of love for God.

Everyone has been so very helpful. The youth have been coming to the church to cook and eat with me almost every Saturday night. I love the togetherness of the whole group. I have been getting to know all of them, spending individual time as often as I can.

“First impressions” continued on page 4

Record numbers experience Nazareth Village's light

By RYAN MILLER
Mennonite Mission Network

At the end of their tour, Nazareth Village visitors climb three steps and enter a small building made of straw and mud. Inside, rows of lamps on a tiered ledge burn olive oil to cast light on a single image of a man carrying a lamp.

Beside the man, the words of Jesus are printed in Arabic, Hebrew and English: "I am the light of the world. He who follows me will never walk in darkness."

In October and November, record numbers of visitors experienced the light of Jesus at Nazareth Village. According to Shirley Roth, executive director of Nazareth Village through Mennonite Mission Network and Virginia Mennonite Missions, more than 6,000 people toured the village in October and nearly 5,400 came in November.

Both figures eclipsed the village's previous record for attendance in a month, set in March 2007.

Interest in the recreation of first-century life often increases during the region's November olive festival. Many November visitors came to watch the village's first-century olive press: a donkey turning a heavy stone to crush the olives

Photo courtesy of Anita Rhodes



that visitors place on a pestle.

Roth said Nazareth residents still use olives for food, economic exports, soap, perfume and curative balms. First-century residents also would have used the oil for religious ceremonies and their lamps and burned the pits for light and heat.

The olive oil used for the tour-ending room of light ties together the November olive festival with the December celebration of Jesus' birth.

First impressions continued

Roberto, 23, has an amazing testimony and he seems to be the younger kids' favorite guy. He gives them advice when they ask for it, encourages them when they are down, and listens to them when they need to talk. As I was playing ping pong with him this week I came to the realization that we hang out and talk like we've known each other for years. This is the sort of friendship only God can provide.

We went to Cefalu which is a nearby town for a Mega Incontro--literal translation would be Mega Meeting. It was an all day meeting at a church with youth invited from all the Christian churches in Sicily. There were games, worship, a good message, and a nice walk to the beautiful beach during the lunch break. A sense of unity between the youth was demonstrated as everyone laid out what they had brought for lunch, so that anyone can help themselves.

I am starting to teach some English classes soon here at the church. One of the

girls, Fabiola, a linguistics major, is going to help me. I am looking forward to opening the class to all the neighborhood people. I will encourage the youth to invite their friends to join the class, not because I am a great teacher, but because this creates an opportunity to meet people and witness to them. I am hoping this class will open opportunities of witness for the church members involved in the class. It will provide a chance for them to share their love for Christ with the people they know through school or work.

Anita Rhodes, *transSend* participant, is a tour guide at Nazareth Village.

, an Arab Christian who coordinates children's activities at Nazareth Village, said the room of light reminds visitors that Jesus opens doors in the darkness and draws us to the light—a light that must be shared.

Rani Espanioli, an Arab Christian tour guide at Nazareth Village, said scriptural references to light, including Jesus' Sermon on the Mount instructions to set lamps on stands so they might give light to all in the house, are clearer when visitors see the darkness that existed in first-century homes.

Espanioli said each visitor receives an oil lamp at the end of the tour, reminding them that all are called to live as lights that Jesus calls us to be.

“Lifted out of shame” continued from cover

As for Grandmother Mouse, I used to groan when I'd see her shuffling up to us after meetings, with a mournful look in her eyes, a hand extended and a fresh tale of the woes of her poverty. She still lives in the same dilapidated stilt house, and the grandchild she is raising is old enough now to be causing no end of headaches. But, now her eyes are clear and her head is lifted high. Her simple testimony during a Sunday gathering: “I don't really have much to say; if I said “I'm happy,” would that count as a testimony?”

Joy for these friends comes in seeing that they can devote themselves to God's purposes. They have things to give! Grandmother Mouse has gifts of healing in her strong hands that bring welcome relief to those she touches. Fruitful and his wife Bae do their fieldwork on the side so that they can devote themselves to the work of the church, not as salaried workers, but as volunteers. They'd rather face the shame of being poor, than hold back from doing what God has put in their hearts to do!



The Tobin family

Last week Bae and Jantaun went to Mr. Sompau's village, Nong Muang. They have initiated MED projects in the village

and thus have been able to maintain contact with the few who have come to faith there since the accident that took an EMM worker's life 2 ½ years ago. Suddenly, Sompau's sister, Lamyai, showed up. She had been unable to sleep or eat for three days; she (and everyone else) was convinced that it was a demonic attack. Throwing herself at Bae's feet, she pleaded for help. After wisely securing prayer support from other believers, and insisting that she remove all of her amulets, they offered to pray for the distraught woman, pledging in faith to stay with her until she slept! As they prayed, they lovingly rubbed her back - hardly the typical village exorcism procedure! Soon, Lamyai was sleeping peacefully, and even Sompau's wife began chattering excitedly to the curious onlookers about “her husband's God.”

Bae and Jantaun were ecstatic that they could be used to bring honor to God's name in that particular village! “We used to just be spectators, but now God is using even us!”



Photo courtesy of Gloria Lehman

A chorus of men's voices

By **GLORIA LEHMAN**
VMMissions Director of Public Relations

On November 4, the sixth annual Festival of Praise, featuring nine men's a cappella groups was held in the Eastern Mennonite School auditorium, Harrisonburg. Jay Hartzler directed the mass choir. The uplifting harmonious music has become a favorite for

many in the community. Willard Eberly described the offering project—the support of Phil and Marcia Lehman and family in Italy, with a special emphasis on Crystal Lehman's education at Black Forest Academy in Germany. The offering amounted to \$3,164. Thank you to everyone who supported this missionary family in this way.

Hmong meal a delicious success

By **GLORIA LEHMAN**
VMMissions Director of Public Relations

Nancy Vang, Choua Lee, and Houa Lee performed traditional dances to Christian Hmong songs during the Hmong meal served at the Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, on November 3. Twenty members of the Hickory (N.C.) Hmong Mennonite Church came to Harrisonburg with large pots and ingredients, and prepared delicious Hmong food. Approximately 75 people came to

taste and enjoy the meal, to hear about the Hmong Church and to watch the dances. Donations for the Church amounted to \$2,050.



Photo courtesy of Gloria Lehman

Eastern Mennonite University celebrates cross-cultural anniversary

By JIM BISHOP

Public Information Officer, EMU

Eastern Mennonite University is celebrating two milestones this school year - its 90th anniversary as well as the 25th year of providing "life-changing experiences" through its cross-cultural study program.

The latter was noted unpretentiously in an International Education Week "Celebrate the Vision" chapel held Nov. 14, 2007.

Several EMU faculty members who helped to shape the school's cross-cultural study program reflected on the vision and process that led to the university formally making cross-cultural study, either stateside or abroad, a required part of its general education curriculum in 1982.

"EMU's program was on the 'cutting edge' when it became a required general education component for incoming students," said



(left to right) Vernon Jantzi, Ann Graber Hershberger, Kenneth J. Nafziger, Calvin E. Shenk and Marie S. Morris enjoy a lighter moment in reflecting on and celebrating the 25th anniversary of the cross-cultural study program at EMU. Photo by Jim Bishop

Marie S. Morris, vice president and undergraduate academic dean in introductory remarks.

Vernon Jantzi, professor of sociology at EMU, noted that the school offered cross-cultural studies as electives for some 11 years prior to this date.

Dr. Jantzi credited Albert N. Keim, long-time history professor who was serving as academic dean during this

period, with "really helping faculty brainstorm the best ways to package the program to make it truly international and a two-way learning experience. The entire faculty was deeply involved in the whole process."

He also noted that Calvin E. Shenk, professor emeritus, wrote a paper on cross-cultural learning, many components of which are part EMU's program today.

Dr. Keim appointed Jantzi, Shenk, Kenneth J. Nafziger, professor of music; and Ann G. Hershberger, professor of nursing to work at implementing the program. All four had earlier spent considerable time serving and leading study seminars in other countries.

"At that time, 70 percent of the EMU faculty had studied or worked in other countries," Jantzi noted.

"We spent considerable time hashing out some thorny questions," Jantzi noted.

"How long should the experience be? Several weeks? A year? What countries to be involved? Should there be a service component?"

Today, EMU offers three-and-a-half week cross-cultural seminars during May-early June along with semester-long programs and the year-long Washington (DC) Community Scholars Center program.

Congregational Resource Center

Plan Early for the Lenten Season

The Congregational Resource Center has dozens of resources to help you as you plan for Lent and Easter.

Many congregations offer small group spiritual growth studies during this time. The CRC has men's, women's and general small group adult study materials. New items include:

"Small Group Ministry in the 21st Century"

This encyclopedia of practical ideas includes Bible studies, spiritual growth, service projects, and special events.

"Quiet Strength: Men's Bible Study" by Tony Dungy, this 6-session study is about discovering God's game plan for a winning life.

"Couple's Night Out: Two to Tango" - This date night hosted by your church helps couples build teamwork in their marriage. They gather at the church for 20 minutes, leave the children, and head out for a two-hour date to the location of their choice with some discussion questions in hand.

"Couple's Night Out: Listen Up" - This date night is in the same format and focuses on enhancing communication in marriage.

Visit us in person or via the online catalog to see what else is new. www.emu.edu/seminary/crc and "Search the Catalog" or visit Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Room 110.

The CRC Director is available to help you Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m., and by email at other times. Linda Alley, CRC Director, 540.432.4219

JANUARY 2008

Connections

Prayer Calendar

Sunday

"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him..."

6 Conf Min. Owen Burkholder preaches today at Gospel Hill MC. Pray for Owen's ministry throughout the conference and invite God's blessing on VMC pastors as they lead their congregations this epiphany season.

7 Pray for Pastor James Rhee and the Stephens City Korean Community Church as it ministers to 30 or more people who come for Sunday worship, and also the other Koreans with whom they keep in touch.

13 Pray for the commissioning service today that will be held for Chris and MaryBeth Moore, sent from Springdale to raise awareness of, and to help with Deaf ministry, at the Community Fellowship Church, Staunton.

14 Remember Steve & Betsy Dintaman, Lithuana Christian College, as they fill their roles in this academic setting. May Christ be seen in their lives.

20 Eastern Mennonite Seminary's School for Leadership Training (SLT) begins tomorrow on the theme, *Embodying Sexual Wholeness in a Broken World*. Pray that all who will attend may be challenged and encouraged.

21 Pray for Pastor Les Christiansburg MC, as he leads a workshop at the SLT tomorrow called *Singing the Song of Sacred Sexuality: Reclaiming the Song of Solomon*.

27 This evening VMC will hold a community hymn sing at the EMS auditorium using the new hymnal supplement *Sing the Story*. Pray for Ken Nafziger, Jim and Angie Clemens as they lead.

28 The remodeling of Our Community Place in Harrisonburg will soon be completed. Pray that under the leadership of Ron Copeland this will be a center of health and healing for those in need.

Monday

1 In November, Charlottesville MC in Trinidad expressed appreciation for Pastor Ramesh Jaimani's six years of ministry with this congregation. His service has been a blessing to many. He is now in a job training program.

8 In November, Aaron Kauffman assisted with the baptism of 2 women in the holistic church planting project in Anapoimonia, Colombia. Pray that they will grow strong in their faith while they face daily challenges.

15 Patrick Weaver, *TransSend* participant, aids in organizing teams to serve with Pura Vita, Costa Rica. Ask God to empower him with good insight and also warm compassion in his responsibilities.

22 Nicholas Jefferson, associate pastor at Calvary Community Church, will preach tomorrow at the SLT on Righteousness and Sexuality. Pray for God's anointing on him as he speaks.

29 *TransSend* participant, Ardi Shanni, has many opportunities to interact with youth and their parents. Ask for Christ's love to flow through him during these experiences.

Tuesday

2 God has provided a teacher of Arabic for Anita Rhodes, *TransSend* participant. Thank Him that she is enthusiastic about learning this language and that it will continue to go well.

9 The Faith & Life Commission meets January 10-11. Pray for Chair Joe Longacher and the bishops/overseers as they work with leadership challenges in VMC.

16 Sometime this month the delegates of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad & Tobago will meet and choose a new president for the General Church Council. Ask for God's clear direction and affirmation of this person.

23 Risha Kallou is serving as the secretary of the General Church Council of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad & Tobago. Ask God to bless her in this role and thank Him for her availability.

30 Thank God for the agencies that assist persons in healing from mental illness. Ask for deep insight into these perplexing issues and ask Him what you can do to aid in someone's recovery.

Wednesday

3 Southern District Council meets this evening to celebrate the oversight ministry of Howard Miller for the past four years. Pray for the overseer search process in Eastern Carolina, Potomac and Southern Districts.

10 Pray for VMC's staff and officers as they prepare for Conference Council this weekend and for the delegate session on Feb. 2. Pray specifically for Beryl Jantzi, moderator, and Steven Brown, assistant moderator.

17 Pray for VMC youth workers who attend the annual Youthworkers' Retreat in Williamsburg. May this retreat provide reflection on current ministry, team-building, and growth for the pastors and sponsors who work in VMC.

24 Thank God for the RAD team of 5 young women working along with Aaron & Laura Kauffman in Colombia. Families have opened their homes and hearts to the team members. Ask God to guide and bless the many interactions.

31 Norma Teles, mission worker in Albania, is currently on home leave in Brazil. Ask God to bless her with good contacts in churches and with renewal in body and spirit.

Thursday

4 Pray with Danny Yoder & Tara Kreider, *TransSend* participants in Nazareth Village, that tourists will continue visiting the Village. A large number of tourists came through in November.

11 This evening a Trinidad meal is being served in the Lindale MC fellowship hall, donations will benefit Richard and Margaret Keelers' ministry in Trinidad. If you have made reservations, come and enjoy the delicious food.

18 A Celebration of Missions is held this evening at Warwick River MC. VMM opens opportunities for service both in the US and internationally. If you have pre-registered, come and see what God is doing around the world.

25 Paul & Evelyn Kratz had participated in prayer meetings asking for God's will to be done in the national election in Trinidad in November. Prayers for a peaceful election were answered.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."
John 1:10-11,14 (NIV)

Saturday

5 Skip & Carol Tobin, Ubon Province, Thailand, ask us to pray that God will bless the results of the Church Enrichment Church as they reach out to new villages and new districts.

12 Emily Huffman, *TransSend* participant in Italy says, "Pray for Rome. Pray for Italy. Pray for God's glory to shine through even though the harvest is plentiful and the workers few."

19 A Celebration of Missions is held this evening at Powhatan MC. God calls and his people respond with service and offerings. If you have pre-registered, come and see what God is doing around the world through VMM.

26 Thank God for the long service of retiring Tenn/Carolina/Kentucky District Overseer Ed Godshall and pray for Incoming Overseer Art Smoker who is being installed at a TCK District meeting today.

Announcements

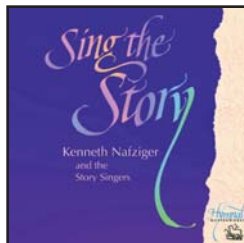
Experience the tastes of the tropics in mid-winter! Come and enjoy a Trinidad meal prepared by Lavonne Lehman, on Friday, January 11, 5-6:30 p.m., at the Lindale Mennonite Church fellowship hall, 6255 Jesse Bennett Way, Linville, Va. Donations will be received to support Richard & Margaret Keeler's ministry in Trinidad. Reserve your meal by contacting VMM before January 7 at (540) 434-9727 or info@vmmissions.org.

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.apcfdc.mennonite.net for details on this hymn sing and reviews of past hymn sings!

Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center will host its first **Quilters Retreat** from January 11-13. Quilters should bring their own projects on which to work. For those new to quilting, a beginning workshop will be held. The retreat focuses on quilting, connecting, and growing in faith. For more information, contact WCRC at 757-566-2256 or programs@wcrc.info

Sister Care Prep, a pilot program to teach congregational women to effectively care for other women, will be held Feb. 1-2.

The Mennonite Women of Virginia Executive Committee will host this exciting training program at the Harrisonburg Holiday Inn, and Rhoda Keener, Executive Director of Mennonite Women USA, will facilitate. At least two women are encouraged to attend from each congregation. The cost for the weekend is only \$30 each, based on four women per room. For a registration form or more information contact Beth Pease at (540) 560-4737 or peasebv@jmu.edu.



A Sing the Story Hymn Sing with Ken Nafziger, Professor of Music at EMU, and Jim Clemens, pianist and

hymn writer, will be held January 27 at 6:30 p.m. at the Eastern Mennonite School auditorium. The hymn sing will use the latest song book supplement to *Hymnal: A Worship Book*.

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.

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

Join tour leaders Ed and Edie Bontrager on a **Mission Fellowship Tour to Trinidad**, April 29 - May 7, 2008. The price has been reduced to \$1448.

- Visit VMM mission workers and national church leaders
- See the fascinating flora and fauna of Asa Wright Nature Center
- Enjoy a boat ride through Caroni Swamp Bird Sanctuary
- Observe leatherback turtles at nighttime egg-laying on the beach
- Stop at all six of our Mennonite churches
- Fellowship with our Trinidadian brothers and sisters

Contact Ed Bontrager at (540) 434-9727 or ed.bontrager@vmmissions.org. Group is limited to 22 persons.

Pastoral Transition



Isaac Villegas was ordained as pastor of the Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship on November 11, the sixth anniversary of the North Carolina congregation's first worship service. Duane Beck, pastor of the Raleigh Mennonite Church and mentor to Villegas, delivered the ordination sermon. Villegas began to serve CHMF in July of 2006, just after the Duke Divinity School awarded him the M.Div. degree. He previously graduated from Westmont College in Santa Barbara, Calif. Villegas had worshiped at CHMF throughout his three years of study.

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



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