

## The Table congregation joins Virginia Conference Church receives grant from Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

By N. GERALD SHENK

On July 25, 2008, the new congregation known as “The Table” was formally received into full participation with Virginia Mennonite Conference, through the Harrisonburg District. Meeting regularly on Sunday mornings since January 2007 at the Discipleship Center on the campus of Eastern Mennonite University, the group formed around hopes for renewal in worship, music, and expressions of hospitality that might attract persons who are not currently participating in church.

Attempting to live into table practices that Jesus demonstrated with his disciples, The Table features creative presentations of Scripture, and reflection on lectionary texts. New music and ancient prayers sometimes bring out the theme of the Scriptures for a given week. Most services include an open space for



Members and attenders of The Table meet in each other's homes for dinner following the morning service. Photos courtesy of The Table

individual meditation, artistic expression and group discussion in response to the Scriptures.

Participants are also invited to the Table of the Lord each Sunday, where grace is offered and makes its claims on our lives as followers of Jesus. Each week seems to bring a different strand of the eucharist to the forefront, in relation to events in our world and to the particular Scriptures highlighted in that week's lectionary.

Another practice which generates significant interaction is the weekly invitation to a meal and conversation in homes of members immediately following the service. The household setting facilitates far-ranging discussion of current events and our everyday lives.

The Table recently received a grant awarded by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Grand Rapids, Michigan,

with funds provided by Lilly Endowment Inc. Directed by Sara Wenger Shenk and Mike Metzler, the grant will make it possible for The Table to offer several public workshops for the broader community. Watch for announcements about workshops

tentatively entitled: The Ancient-Future Practice of the Lord's Supper, Arts and Iconic Worship, Hospitable and Missional Worship, and a Festival of Lord's Supper Musical Settings and Prayers. About twelve Table leaders recently met for a Visioning Retreat during which they spent significant time in Luke, Acts and I Corinthians, examining Jesus' table practices and the experience of a Lord's supper among the early Christians.

Contact Gerald for more info at [shenkng@emu.edu](mailto:shenkng@emu.edu)



# What do we do when we aren't paid, hungry, or sleeping?



**Loren Horst**  
President of VMM

Upon meeting someone for the first time we sometimes hear or ask the question, "What do you do?" Usually that means, "How are you gainfully

employed?" or "What is your job or profession?" I'm sure the answers to such questions are meaningful or we wouldn't ask them. Sometimes they are probably just "filler" in conversation when we are not quite sure what else to say.

Let's try another approach. Let's ask each other the same question and exclude one's work or livelihood (what we do because we are paid to do it). After we are "off the clock" what do we do? Let's eliminate two other categories too. Let's eliminate from our answers that we eat (too much) and we sleep (too little). Now, what do we do? Perhaps what we do when we're not paid, hungry or sleeping is a better barometer of our character and commitment.

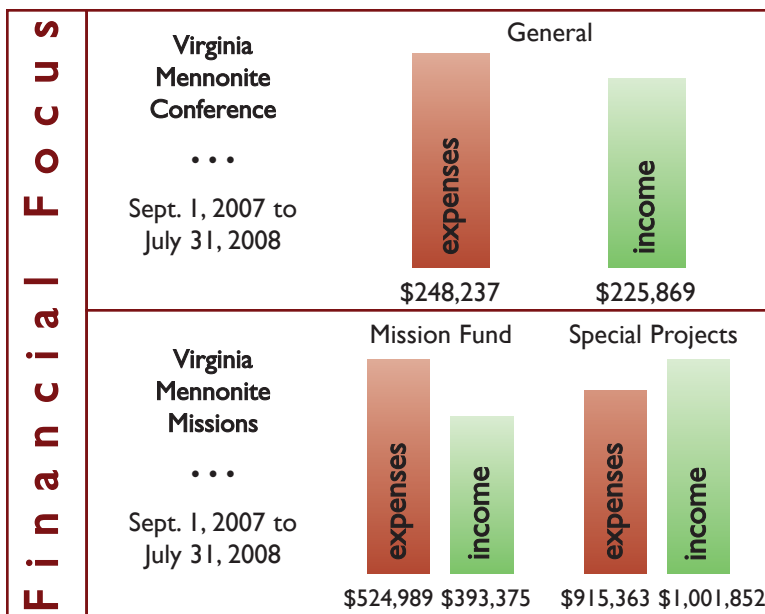
These are things I observe:

- Probably over 500 different people attended part or most of Virginia Conference Assembly (although according to my criteria, that doesn't count for those paid to be there like Conference and Missions staff.)
- More than that attended the annual meeting of our local credit union (although we ate there; should we include this on our list?)
- Many more will attend the VA Relief Sale. We enjoy fellowship, raising money for a good cause, and where else can you eat a big meal and help hungry people around the world, all in one sitting? Oh, there we are, eating again.
- Most of us are taking a vacation this summer, although maybe nearer to home because of gas prices.
- Nearly 10,000 by my estimate, are usually in church on Sunday morning in Virginia Conference.
- We exercise, sometimes by jogging, sometimes by mowing our own lawns, and sometimes...too little.
- We pray, very much from what I hear. Sometimes we also become the instruments through whom God

answers prayer.

- We spend time with family and friends almost every day.
- We spend countless (and sometimes, thankless) hours volunteering for ministries we believe in.

Yesterday I spent time with Pastors Bruce Hankee and Brett Perrett and heard about Greenmonte and Stuarts Draft Mennonite churches. I heard how they work together, support and encourage each other, and come together regularly to pray, worship, and serve God together. What those two congregations do when they are not paid, hungry or sleeping is changing the face of their communities and the lives of many people. It describes their character and commitment.



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## The value of voluntary service



By **EARL MONROE**

Pastor of Mountain View Mennonite, Lyndhurst, Virginia

When I graduated from high school, the Vietnam War was going strong. I entered voluntary service (VS) to fulfill my alternative service requirement. I was a country boy, and the last place I wanted to go was the inner city. But I ended up in Southside Chicago, at Engelwood Mennonite Church. The church and the community were entirely African-American, a completely new world for me. I never thought about being prejudiced when I went there, but I was.

Our VS unit became involved in the lives of the local community. I helped an elderly lady, Mattie Smith, as she took care of her terminally-ill husband. I was there when her husband passed away. Mother Smith ministered to me as much as I helped her. In fact, she paid for me to take night classes at Moody Bible Institute.

We worked directly with gang members and provided programs for the youth. I remember Cornell Wallis, banging on our door at 2:30 a.m. Cornell was not a gang member, which made him a target. As I opened the door, I barely recognized him because he was beaten so badly. His words were, "Earl, you all always teach to turn the other cheek. Well, I turned the other cheek." He was fortunate to survive, but he also became a success story, going on to Hesston College.

Through these experiences, I learned to love and appreciate the people deeply, and understand the struggles they faced. The blessing of meeting people and learning to know and love them gave my time in VS a purpose.

Our VS unit developed a camaraderie that was most meaningful. Together we shared meals, studied the Bible, and played practical jokes on each other. This was a formative time in my life. VS provided the platform for me to grow in my faith, develop leadership skills, learn how to work with people, and appreciate differences in ideas and theology. VS was



Danny Kiser, Jamie Allen, and Gerald Hershey grill hot dogs at Waynesboro Mennonite's community picnic. Photo courtesy of Waynesboro Mennonite Church

## Waynesboro Mennonite Church responds to gang-related vandalism

By **GINNY HARTZLER**

Waynesboro Mennonite Church

On June 2, the building and property of Waynesboro Mennonite Church were spray painted (or "tagged," as it is called) with gang-type graffiti. The police were called and the graffiti was soon removed. Pastor Howard Miller quickly put into action a plan that was non-threatening and inclusive of our community. We hoped to be a Christian example in our responses with no anger or bitterness displayed. Pastor Howard suggested we have a community picnic with grilled hot dogs and gang forum with speakers who are experts on gang activities.

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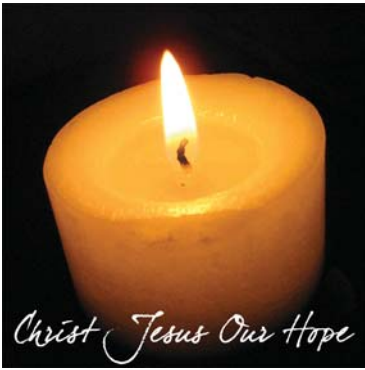
where I met my wife, Joy. I am deeply grateful for this experience.

I feel for young people today who do not have these kinds of experiences. This can have a tremendous impact on individuals; the Mennonite Church should be promoting this more. I long for and encourage our young people to take the opportunity to serve.

They would give us information, a slide show, and have a question and answer session.

A church members' meeting was held, and everyone was enthusiastic to help. We formed committees for food, advertising, speakers, and child care. Flyers were printed and handed out door-to-door and to other area churches. The entire community was invited. This was exciting for us.

Barely a month later, on July 9, our plans were realized. Rain during the day cleared up just in time for the forum. It was an evening of great food and balmy breezes. Speakers from the local police department and area experts on gang activity provided lots of good information and answered all our questions. The local TV station filmed our forum and showed it on the local news. As everyone packed up to leave, a gentle drizzle started again, but our spirits were not dampened, for, as St. Francis of Assisi said, "A single sunbeam is enough to drive away many shadows."



# Christ Jesus Our Hope

## Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly Eastern Mennonite School • July 24-26, 2008

Photos by Galen Lehman, Gloria Lehman, Steve Carpenter, Jon Trotter

“Christ Jesus Our Hope” is second in a four-part series on “Centered in Christ.” In 2009, the theme will be centered on peace.

By **STEVE CARPENTER**  
Conference Coordinator

It’s easy to get caught up in superlatives which quickly lose their meaning.



(above) **Owen Burkholder** leads the Friday evening benediction with candles representing the hope of Christ as a light in darkness.

(at right) **Kathy Hochstedler** leads a workshop entitled *Empty Religion or Integrated Faith?*

(below) Youth play the Anabaptist Persecution game in Park Woods.



Nonetheless, from my perspective, Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly was a glorious event! It focused on Christ Jesus, brought many diverse elements of the conference

together and was a source of inspiration and encouragement to many.

The three-day event, hosted by Eastern Mennonite School, July 24-26, drew 273 registered participants including 128 delegates representing each

of VMC’s 10 districts. It included: youth and children’s activities, a “Taste of Missions” tent, 11 workshops, three evenings of worship, a commissioning for pastors and mission workers, 31 church and agency displays, two Bible studies based on the book of Romans, 7.5 hours of church business meetings, a Bible quiz competition between youth and adults, a showing of



Mennonite Media’s film “Embracing Aging,” men’s and women’s breakfasts, an MMA sponsored pastor’s breakfast, an historical skit depicting the first women’s sewing circle begun at Weavers Mennonite Church 100

years ago, a celebration of Highland Retreat’s 50th anniversary, a coffee house with singer/song writer Katie Grove, good food and great fellowship.

The delegates took action to release Chestnut Ridge Mennonite

### Conference Assembly 2008 at a Glance

- 264 participants**
- 242 adults
- 8 youth registered
- 14 children
- 127 delegates present**

**Delegates** discuss agenda items as a table during a discussion session.







(far left) **Communion** was celebrated as part of the Saturday evening worship service. Led by Aaron Boggs, the service highlighted three emerging ministries in VMC.

(above) Members of the **Hickory Hmong Mennonite Church** cooked and served a Hmong meal on Saturday.

(below) **Angie Clemens** and **Katie Derstine** lead songs during worship Thursday night.

Church to Ohio Mennonite Conference. They accepted "The Table," an emerging church in Harrisonburg, to VMC. By ballot they reappointed Lois Shank as Secretary and elected/appointed 4 people to commission positions. There was a lengthy table group discussion about "What a healthy relationship between a church and a



ed the commissioning. As its conclusion, 350 people lit candles and sang "my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness." I got goose bumps.

Space does not allow for a complete retelling of



(above) **Skip** and **Carol Tobin** share about their ministry in Southeast Asia during a delegate session.

(left) **Norma Teles** shares during a meeting. She serves with VMM in Albania.

Assembly. However, VMC's staff compiled a five-minute overview presentation which was e-mailed to each church for use in congregations.



(above) **A volunteer** assists with children's activities, which were coordinated by **Amanda Swartley**.

conference-related ministry looks like." Linford King, MC USA's Denominational Minister and Brian Boettger, a member of MC USA's Executive Board, discussed the denominational reorganization proposal and answered questions posed by delegates.

For me, the highlight was the Friday evening worship service, which had a missions focus and includ-



Assembly isn't just for delegates. Plan to join us at Eastern Mennonite High School again next year on July 23-26. The theme will be "Our Christ-centered Peace."

(below at left) **Women of Weavers Mennonite Church** performed a skit recreating the story of the first women's sewing circle which began at Weavers church 100 years ago, and which later became Mennonite Women of Va.



Assembly participants enjoy the **Taste of Missions** event under a tent, sampling foods of VMMI's ministry areas.

# Lao believers confront media use in a culture of excess

By HARVEY YODER

Family Life Resource Center  
Photos courtesy of Mark Keller

I hesitated at first when asked to lead a discussion on media with the Lao church at Harrisonburg Mennonite. For some, there would be a language barrier. I was also unsure about where to start, with most having grown up with little electronic media.

We did find common ground, though, my having been born before the age of television—and when it did arrive my family and congregation shunned it like the plague. So with my Laotian friends, I remembered lots of family times around a table rather than around a TV set.

Like me, the Laotians lamented the resulting loss of family interaction. They also expressed concerns about today's youth feeling entitled to round-the-clock entertainment in the form of DVD's, video games, and access to countless TV channels and Internet sites. I asked, "If parents can limit children's intake of junk food for their bodies, why not restrict the junk food aimed at their minds?" For



example, while we can't expect children to never indulge in cholesterol- or sugar-laden fare, we can at least seriously limit what we keep in our cupboards and refrigerators. And since none of us install soda or candy machines in our children's bedrooms, shall we provide them with their own entertainment centers?

A part of our parental job description, we concluded, is to serve as door keepers, setting boundaries with our children as to the influences we welcome into our homes and into our lives. I stepped to the door of the classroom to illustrate. Whenever we use our remotes, I noted, we are making decisions about whether, when or to whom we will "open our door"



The Lao believers class meets at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church each week.

to allow outsiders in. So why not screen out questionable media entertainers, along with the barrage of unwelcome sales pitches aimed at getting us to buy ever more "stuff"? Together we agreed that our children's well-being depended on our making hard choices about how to cope with a culture of media excess.

At the Family Life Resource Center, we help arrange workshops on media use, often involving outside resource persons. These have been held at FLRC, a local civic club, and numerous area churches.

Contact us at (540) 434-8450 or [services@flrc.org](mailto:services@flrc.org) if we can help in this critical area.

## Congregational Resource Center

### New acquisitions in the Congregational Resource Center

As you plan your fall ministry, remember that resources are available to assist you. Checkout for most materials is three weeks, and renewals up to three times are possible for longer study resources.

### The CRC recently added many new titles, including:

**Be Still: Designing and Leading Contemplative Retreats** - Jane E. Vennard

**A Praying Congregation: The Art of Teaching Spiritual Practice** - Jane E. Vennard

### Women's Retreats: A Creative Planning Guide

**The Retreat Leader's Manual: A Complete Guide**

**Changing Paradigms: Punishment & Restorative Discipline** - Paul Redekop

**Praying With Body and Soul: A Way to Intimacy With God** (prayer involving movement)

**A Labyrinth Year: Walking the Seasons of the Church** - Richard A. Kautz

**Pondering the Labyrinth: Questions to Pray on the Path** - Jill Kimberly Hartwell Geoffrion

We have dozens of possibilities for your small group/Sunday School class. Some include videos. "Plenty Good Room," a six-session Bible study based on African American Spirituals, is one that may capture attention. Ten copies of the student guide are available.

**CRC Hours: Mon. - Fri. 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; other times by arrangement.**

**Call Linda Alley, Director, at (540) 432.4698.**

**Online Catalog: [www.emu.edu/seminary/crc](http://www.emu.edu/seminary/crc).**



# SEPTEMBER 2008

## Connections

## Prayer Calendar

### Sunday

If you would like to sponsor the prayer calendar, please contact Gloria Lehman at (540) 434-9727 or (800) 505-7735

### Monday

**1** The first class meeting of *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* is held tomorrow at Eastern Mennonite Seminary. Come and join the class if possible. Pray for the participants and the leaders.

### Tuesday

**2** Pray for Steve and Laura Campbell as they leave today for a *TravelSend* assignment in Montenegro, first full-time VMM personnel to serve in the capital city of Podgorica. Many challenges await them!

### Wednesday

**3** The new school year at Maranatha School for the Deaf, Jamaica, has opened. Pray for the teachers who are striving to meet the educational needs of a variety of students, some with multiple disabilities.

### Thursday

**4** The management team for COMB, MC USA pastors' health care plan, will hold a conference call tomorrow to set rates and policies for the coming year. Pray for wisdom and discernment.

### Friday

**5** On Friday afternoons, Richard Keeler frequently visits in homes in Sangre Grande, Trinidad. Thank God for Richard's compassion for people and for his dedication to enlarging God's Kingdom.

### Saturday

**6** Pray for the pastors in the Jamaica Mennonite churches as they prepare for worship services tomorrow. Many congregations serve communion monthly, and this is a significant time of gratitude for God's gift of salvation through Jesus.

**7** The believers' church movement, still a small minority in Italy, faces subtle opposition and discrimination and struggles to survive and grow. Pray that these churches will be strengthened in commitment to Jesus Christ.

**8** This month Micah and Adam Riddle begin their first full year in an Italian school. Pray God's protection and blessing over them. School friends open doors for sharing the Gospel with new families.

**9** The instructor for this evening's class of *Perspectives* is Mary Thiessen Nation, "The Story of His Glory." Pray for Mary as she presents this important topic of bringing greater glory to God through the worship of all people.

**10** The Central District of VMC meets tomorrow in Christiansburg. Pray for chair Floyd Blosser, and overseers Richard Bowman and Robert Wenger as they encourage and work with pastors.

**11** On Thursdays, a hot cooked meal is prepared at Good Tidings MC, Kingston, Jamaica, and served to persons who do not have resources to buy food. Thank God for this act of love and mercy that meets needs in the community.

**12** Place before the Lord today the vision to establish a Christian school in Albania. Pray especially for Dini & Klementina Shahini and others who by faith desire to realize this project for God's glory.

**13** Our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe ask us to remember them in prayer as they face severe difficulties in their everyday lives. Ask God to grant them grace and mercy, and let them know we are standing with them.

**14** The euro and Albanian lek continue to grow stronger against the dollar, causing mission funding to lose value. Put this situation before the Lord today.

**15** Margaret Keeler attends a Friendship Bible Coffee on Mondays and encourages the leader and members of the group. Ask for God's double blessing for her and for the others as they study God's Word.

**16** The instructor for the *Perspectives* course this evening is James Rhodes presenting "Your Kingdom Come." Pray for the class and teacher to have a good exchange of insights.

**17** The Finance Committee of VMC meets today. Pray for Treasurer Jeff Souder as he leads the group. They will be looking at financial data ending VMC's fiscal year. Pray that God will be honored.

**18** This weekend, the leaders of Richmond's First Mennonite Church will continue a visioning process begun 18 months ago under the facilitation of Conference Coordinator Steve Carpenter. Pray for discernment.

**19** Tomorrow is the annual charity ride, Bike Shenandoah, which provides exercise and funds for Mennonite service agencies and the Harrisonburg Pregnancy Center. Come and ride, or sponsor a rider for this good cause.

**20** Phil Lehman, Bari, Italy, relates to a variety of people in an informal way—over coffee, chatting in the Christian bookstore, and in friends' homes. Thank God for his pastor's heart, and ask God to bless him today.

**21** Pray the Lord will use Shawn and Laura Green, *TravelSend* participants, to encourage the small congregation at Termini Imerese, Sicily as they serve alongside the leaders, Toni and Marilena Ceraulo.

**22** On Mondays, Paul Kratz frequently has meetings with church leaders of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad & Tobago. Ask God to give him keen insight as he gives oversight.

**23** Pray for unreached people groups around the world who have never heard of God's love through Jesus. Ask Him to send people into these places; is He calling you?

**24** Tomorrow Conference Minister Owen Burkholder and Conference Coordinator Steve Carpenter will be presenting VMC's vision to the Harrisonburg District. Pray the Spirit of Christ permeates the discussion.

**25** Pray for leaders of the Gospel Hill MC as they discern future leadership of the congregation.

**26** VMC's Conference Council meets this weekend on Friday night and Saturday morning at the Family Life Resource Center in Harrisonburg. Pray for Assistant Moderator Steven Brown as he travels from Hampton, Va.

**27** Pray for the annual board meeting of the Albanian Mennonite Foundation that meets today for reports and deliberations regarding the issues related to the legal and financial management of the Albania Mennonite mission.

**28** Worship services around the world focus on God's Word which lights our journey through life. Commit a verse to memory today and share it with others, spreading the light.

**29** Pearly Mast, from Greenwood (De.) MC is serving as a volunteer at Maranatha School for the Deaf. Ask God to give her wisdom and insight as she relates to the students and staff.

**30** The instructor for the *Perspectives* class this evening is Linford Stutzman on the topic "Unleashing the Gospel." The book of Acts speaks to ministry situations today. Pray that the students will absorb the truths that Linford will share.

This prayer calendar is sponsored by:



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**"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."**  
 Matthew 6:24 (NIV)

# Announcements

A peace building workshop entitled “**Can We Talk? A Christian/Muslim Dialogue**” will be held at Asheville Mennonite Church, Sat., Sept. 20 from 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. The workshop will be led by Pat H. Martin, recently retired director of the EMU Summer Peace Building Institute. She will be joined by three Muslim students representing various faces of Islam: Sunni, Shia and Ishmaeli. This event is sponsored by Asheville Peace Builders, a newly-formed group from AMC and City View Quaker Church. The workshop is free and lunch will be provided. Pre-registration is helpful, but not required. To register please go to [cityviewquakers.org/contact](http://cityviewquakers.org/contact). You may also contact Teresa Aeschliman at [Taesch@infionline.net](mailto:Taesch@infionline.net) or call 828-628-2293.

Plan to attend annual **Harvest Day** at CrossRoads, 1921 Heritage Center Way, Harrisonburg, Sat., September 27, 10 am - 3 pm. This festival offers something for the whole family, with special activities for children: old-time games and crafts, painting pumpkins and gourds, taking hayrides, shelling and grinding corn to feed barnyard animals, making pancakes and butter, fabricating toothpick and yarn dolls, etc. Adults enjoy Civil War-era stories, special music, boiling molasses, pressing cider, sawing logs with a cross-cut, spinning thread and quilting, eating homemade foods and more. Entry fee is \$10 per car; \$15 per large van, \$4 for walk-ins or bikers. [www.vbmhc.org](http://www.vbmhc.org), [info@vbmhc.org](mailto:info@vbmhc.org), (540) 438-1275.

Participants at **WCRC's Music Weekend** (October 24-26) will worship the Lord through singing works by Bach, Schubert and others. Marvin Miller, former Music Director at Eastern Mennonite High School, and Jeri Field, Choir Director at Warwick River Christian School, will lead the retreat which concludes with a concert. Visit [www.wcrc.info](http://www.wcrc.info) or call (757) 566-2256 for information.

The annual **Young Adult Fellowship Retreat** will be held Oct. 30 - Nov. 2, 2008 at Camp Overlook, Keezletown, Va. The theme is based on Philippians 2:1-11 entitled *Rise Up!* Young Adult Fellowship is a bi-national gathering of young adults from Canada and the United States. Registration information will be available soon. Contact Scott Hartman, [scotth@mennoniteusa.org](mailto:scotth@mennoniteusa.org), (574) 523-3049.

Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center's **Quilting Retreat** is planned for Nov. 14-16. Instructor Lorraine Moody will conduct workshops; quilters should also bring their own projects. Start quilting on Thursday for an additional fee. Registration deadline is November 10. Details available at [www.wcrc.info](http://www.wcrc.info) or call toll-free (866) 566-9272.



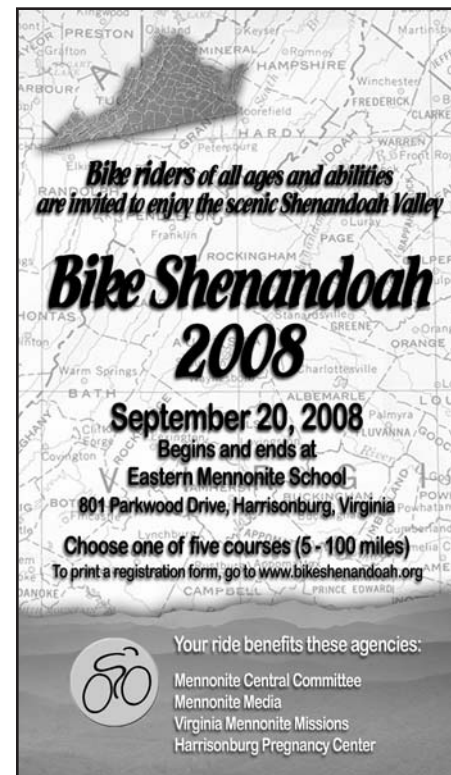
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Harrisonburg, VA 22802  
800-566-9272 • [info@vmm.org](mailto:info@vmm.org)

Mennonite Central Committee  
21 South 27th Street, PO Box 100  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0100  
1-800-522-2237 • [www.mcc.org](http://www.mcc.org)



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