

## A true presence for the Kingdom of God in Albania

By **ESTHER AUGSBURGER**

Former art teacher, Eastern Mennonite School

Flying into the beautiful mountains of Albania on October 11, we knew we were there for a new kind of mission. Esther was asked by the board of Lezha Academic Center (LAC) to stimulate an interest in an art program in the school. Myron was asked by VMM to meet with church leaders and speak in churches.

We were welcomed by LAC principal, Klementina and Dini Shahini, Allen Umble, VMM mission worker, and three students in their blue and white uniforms greeting us with lovely flowers. The next day, Esther met with group of mothers of LAC students, introducing them to the God-given gift of creativity and giving examples of how God uses art in the lives of persons. Their warm response was most gratifying. The following day Klementina and Esther met with artists in the city.

Monday Esther met with the whole student body, expressing her calling as a Christian artist through a power-point presentation. The following three days Esther met in two-hour class periods, each involving half the student body, introducing water-color painting and guiding

the students into creating lovely paintings, followed by two-hour periods of working with clay.

Two of the teachers sent by VMM joined each of the classes to help and get involved in painting and sculpting with the students. It was a joy to see them excitedly exploring both paint and clay.

The first Sunday we attended the Lezha Mennonite Church where Myron preached to a warm gathering of people. He met several times in the two weeks with leaders of four different churches in Lezha, including the Mennonite, challenging them as interpreters of a Biblical faith and answering questions. He was the school's first-time chapel service speaker.

We were very impressed with the dedication of the church leaders, Dini Shahini and Rafael Tartari and our friend, Allen

Umble. The five very fine LAC teachers are working hard, identifying well with the people and culture, and giving tirelessly of themselves in God's service. They are Caleb Benner, Justin Rittenhouse, Jessica Hedrick, Kaitlyn Bontrager and Ermal Zylaj (an Albanian-American).

Our last Sunday was an exciting time as four

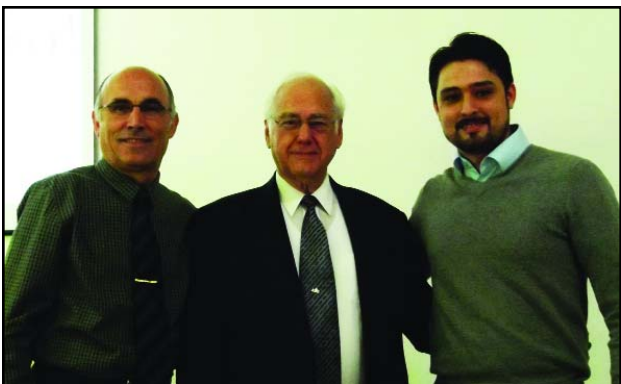


Esther Augsburgberger helps students work with clay in a pottery class. Courtesy of author

different churches which include around 150 persons met together in the main room of LAC for morning worship. The Mennonite group led the singing with accompanying instruments from a different congregation and another church provided a four-girl dance troupe in red long dresses leading the congregation in praise. Myron preached and Klementina translated. A light lunch followed in the court-yard. It was a warm and stimulating time together.

We were able to spend two days in Tirana meeting with the church leaders there and also with an artist friend of many years and her brother who is country official and lawyer. They introduced us to the Vice President of the country and several other officials to talk about the possibility of creating a peace sculpture for the city. This was exciting!

In these two weeks we surely saw God at work in the school and the church, a true presence for the Kingdom of God in Albania. We are grateful for this opportunity to see it.



Myron Augsburgberger joins church leaders Dini Shahini and Rafael Tartari in discussions of leadership. Courtesy of author

# The consequence of Christmas



**Loren Horst**  
President of VMM

When I think of consequences my mind first goes a rather negative direction. We call it the fear of consequences and are reminded that we reap what we sow, or are warned, “be sure your sins will find you out.” This may be due to a particular kind of upbringing that believed that stern warning equals good deterrence, that and a healthy dose of discipline. For some of us, it helped. For others, not so much.

There are, however, good consequences. I recently heard Bill and Lynne Hybels’ daughter Shauna tell of the unconditional love of her parents and how they provided an unwavering beacon through her rebellious years. Her current life and ministry are, in part, a consequence of that love. I’ve read and heard the testimony of Klementina Shahini, how she first heard the words “God” and “Bible” in 1991 and how those realities changed her life. Lezha Academic Center is, in part, a consequence of the gospel being shared with Klementina. I am almost daily reminded of the ministry of congregations in their communities and in the world, and resulting consequences. Monthly reports,

prayer letters and blogs of VM Missions workers are filled with stories of consequences in the world.

Christmas is the promise and hope of consequences. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. In Jesus, salvation is found and as followers of Jesus we live out our lives in confidence and hope. The fundamental declaration of Christmas is that God did not give up. Jesus was his bail-out plan and we have greater confidence in the consequences, present and ultimate, than any other bail-out plan attempted.

This confidence in the consequence of Christmas is the motivation for what we do and hope to do as we enter a new year.

- We plant new churches, or as we say, “nurture a movement of missional communities.”
- We gather weekly for worship, knowing that our worship both guides and reflects our lives.
- We express confidence that God has not given up even when people’s choices result in incarceration.
- We extend biblical hospitality and welcome to new immigrants in the confusing array of immigration issues.
- We nurture the faith of young people who “hear” through their

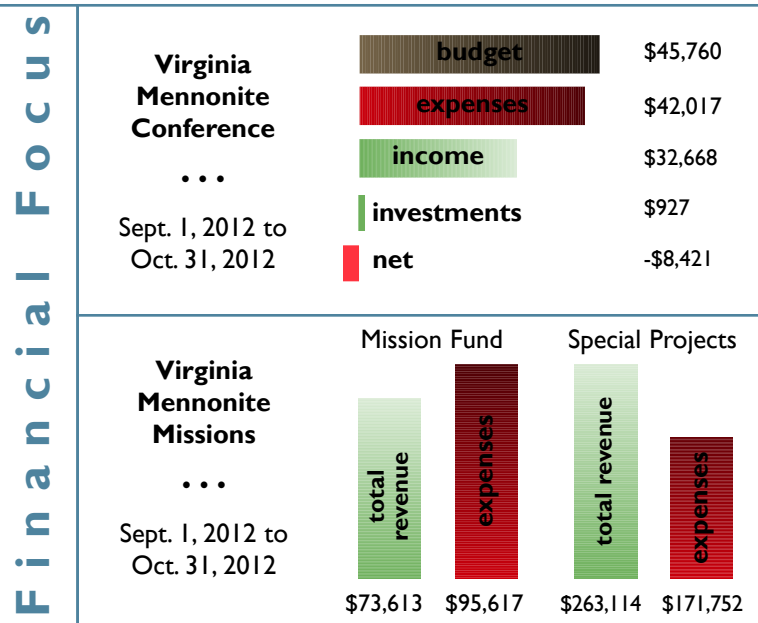
hands, facial expressions, and gestures.

- We go to the “utmost parts” to teach school in cultures that have only recently even been allowed to hear the Christmas story.

Like our desire for instant gratification, we need to be warned that immediate consequences are not guaranteed. Ultimate consequences are assured. We pay attention to God’s real story going on all around us, fully expecting that His kingdom is the only one that matters.

May such confidence in the consequence of Christmas inform this season, and this new year.

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# Ministry Inquiry participant at IDA mentored by *El Pastor*

By **JOSSIMAR DIAZ-CASTRO**  
Member of Iglesia Discipular Anabaptista

I have stopped counting the number of young followers of Jesus in the Latino church who yearn for mentors. The largeness of the number is excessive to continuously bear. Yet, hope today continues to shed light on a corner of the faith I personally attempt to bodily, intellectually, and vocally profess. Hope today is alive partly because I was gifted with a mentor. Pastor Byron Pellecer, "*El Pastor*" as we refer to him with endearment in our congregation, became a mentor to me as part of the Ministry Inquiry Program summer internship I held with Iglesia Discipular Anabaptista (IDA).

Pastor Byron was hospitable from this internship's beginning to its closure. He affirmatively expressed, "I will offer you the little I can give. It will be up to you what you do with it." I explored pastoral care, theological teaching, and preaching, through a fascinating path which became intimate, challenging, and fruitful.

*El Pastor* radically welcomed all of me: the important parts, gifts I attempt to vest, and flaws I attempt to hide in the closet. Dwelling in such safe space, he then challenged me to extend who I am.

My relations to time were one instance of our fruitful engagement. *El Pastor* empathized with my fluid engagement of time, always serving me *cafecito*—delicious black coffee—at the start of our meetings in spite of my significant tardiness. Once both having inhabited such space of basic trust, he then would call me, patiently yet boldly, to learn new cultural ways of becoming—in this case, to become skilled in the ways of linear, marked conceptions of time. He would prophetically say, "You need to learn the system, if you ever want to transform the system."

In a number of enriching forms, mentorship became an intimate, practical reality. I am inspired to share more in mentorship from both sides of the spectrum: as a mentee and, in God's favor, also a mentor.



Standing with a local Latino family during a summer IDA gathering, Jossimar Diaz-Castro speaks about spiritual enrichment and immigrant rights. Courtesy of author

As my friend, *El Pastor*, consistently attempted to inculcate in me: "By grace we receive, and thus, by grace we also give."

*A student at Eastern Mennonite University, Jossimar Diaz-Castro is a part of IDA and participated in the Ministry Inquiry Program during the summer of 2012.*

# Sam and Sarah Weaver chosen for Lifetime Service Award

By **MARY GOLDEN HUGHES**  
Eastern Mennonite School

During Homecoming 2012, the Alumni Board of Eastern Mennonite School proudly honored Sam and the late Sarah Alderfer Weaver ('52) as this year's Lifetime Service Award winners. Sam's visionary spirit, keen business acumen and engaging leadership in his position as principal of EMHS and throughout his career, was richly augmented by Sarah's grace and intuitive sense of truly understanding how to best connect with others.

Along with restoring EMHS to fiscal stability, stressing academic excellence in all areas, and emphasizing the commitment to sacrifice in order to sustain through programs such as Christmas Fund Drive, Sam and Sarah Weaver were instrumental in forming the school identity of partnership between home, church and school. The imagery described in Ecclesiastes 4:12, "a cord of three strands



Former EMHS Principal Sam Weaver accepts the award from EMS Alumni Board Vice President Matt Weaver. Sam and his late wife, Sarah Alderfer Weaver, were honored at this year's Homecoming. Pictured to the left of Sam is his daughter Doris Weaver Leaman, who joined her father in accepting the award on Sarah's behalf. Courtesy of author

is not quickly broken" guided the Weavers in shaping the school culture into one where all facets of student life are interwoven to ensure strength.

True partners through marriage, work, parenting and prayer, Sam was Sarah's faithful friend and greatest admirer up through the moment she departed this life on October 6, 2012. Sam and Sarah were

greatly humbled by the generous support given to an endowment named in their honor. Quickly surpassing its initial goal of \$60,000 and still growing, this endowment will

ensure that student financial aid is available to future generations of students who seek the school experience that Sam and Sarah helped shape.

"We don't feel worthy of this response," Sam humbly uttered recently. "We were simply doing our jobs; responding and doing the work that God called us to do."

# 'Sweet sorrow' as Eberlys retire from Italy mission and ministry

By **CHRIS RIDDLE**  
VMM worker in Italy

*"You were like a Mother and a Father to me."*

*"Your friendship was important and precious."*

*"Your commitment over the years has been a great example for us."*

*"You have been faithful to us, the church and God."*

*"You showed us love."*

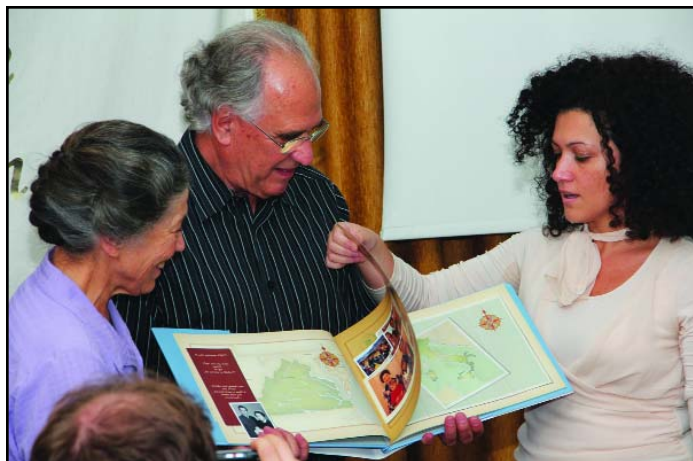
On September 22, members of Centro Koinonia, friends from the community and colleagues from other churches said these comments about Willard and Eva Eberly. It was a celebration of over 40 years of service Willard and Eva gave to the church in Italy.

The evening was filled with singing songs together that are favorites of Willard and Eva, a video tribute to their

service and gifts for them to remember all that they have accomplished and the hearts they have impacted. The most moving time was people sharing their memories about the influence that this couple has had on them and many others over the years.

Afterwards, we gathered in the garden of our church facilities with food and friends one last time with mixed emotions: joy and sorrow. Greetings were given with smiles and tears but they were not good-byes, it was to say *arrivederci* (we will see each other again).

Willard and Eva served in Italy with great energy and passion for the Word of



Mara Colonna (right) presents Eva and Willard with a photo book celebrating the many years and lives touched at Centro Koinonia. Photo courtesy of author

God. They gave much of their lives to the growth and development of the church and its members. It has been a labor of love and the people understood what they were saying and doing. Thank you, Willard and Eva, for your faithful service to Christ's church here in Italy!

## Eberlys honored at Palermo for many years of mission service

By **MARTHA PICONE**  
Centro Agape, Palermo, Italy

The Mennonite churches in Palermo, Sicily, planned and carried out a celebration in honor of the Willard & Eva Eberly's years of service to the Lord among us.

On Sunday morning, July 29 the Centro Agape congregation, the first congregation they pastored, were graced with the presence of Willard and Eva, Maurita, Mike and Priska and 2 children. Eva's challenging words, especially to the youth, and Willard's sermon blessed us all.

The afternoon service organized by the Italian Ministerial Council (IMC) in honor of the Eberlys was filled with music, and smiles as a power point presentation with pictures from the past, some 20-40 years ago. These pictures brought back many memories.

Martha Picone shared how her first two years in Italy, living with the Eberlys had a lasting effect upon her life, both spiritually and personally. Tony Ceraulo, now a

pastor, told of a childhood experience he remembers as the beginning of Willard's ministry in his life. He along with others expressed their gratitude to the Eberlys for the counsel, teaching and encouragement they received through the example of family living with love and respect for each other.

One brother, now a pastor, shared how God used Willard to bring him to understand his need for salvation; later Willard mentored and encouraged him and has remained a close friend. Another brother expressed his feelings in three words: servant, faithful and far-reaching.

The various congregations presented love gifts to them. Rosolino and Franca Picone, among the very first members in the Italian Mennonite Church, were chosen to give the Eberlys the gift from Centro Agape.

In closing, the IMC gave Willard and Eva a plaque in memory of their many years of faithful and untiring service to the Lord among us. A tasty buffet offered in the church social hall gave the opportunity to fellowship together.

We are all happy that the Eberlys plan to continue living in Italy for some time, certain that we will see them at Palermo.

THE EBERLY MISSIONARY SUPPORT TEAM INVITES YOU TO A

## Celebration of Ministry

GIVING THANKS TO GOD FOR WILLARD & EVA EBERLY

In celebration for 40 years of ministry in Italy with Virginia Mennonite Missions, we want to thank and bless Willard & Eva as they retire from mission service.

Thursday, December 27  
6:30 p.m.  
Dayton Mennonite Church  
4887 John Wayland Highway  
Dayton, Va.

A program will be followed by a taste of Italian desserts.  
No RSVP needed; just come and celebrate with us!  
An offering will be received.

# Equipped for caring ministry

By DEONA LANDES HOUFF

Retreat Committee Member, Mennonite Women of Va.

“As believers, we have the power to push back the darkness,” was the message some 130 sisters received during the annual Virginia Mennonite Conference Women’s Retreat Sept. 21-23 in Lynchburg. Guest speakers Carolyn Heggen and Rhoda Keener presented “Sister Care: Equipping Women for Caring Ministry,” which explored claiming identity as God’s beloved, caring for self and others, compassionate listening, and transforming loss and grief. The seminars are a ministry of Mennonite Women USA.

Held at the beautiful wooded Eagle Eyrie Baptist Conference Center, the retreat gave attendees ample chance to bond with sisters from their own congregations and make new friends. Many congregations stayed together in lodges,

while retreaters were encouraged to spread out during sessions and sit with women they’d never met before. Near the retreat’s end, sisters gathered by congregation to begin discussing how the lessons of “Sister Care” could be applied at home.

Talented members of Harrisonburg Mennonite Church led worship music at each session, while others offered their own talent at a Saturday evening coffeehouse. Saturday afternoon provided a break from the intense retreat topic with optional activities, including hiking, knitting and knotting, music, Zumba, silent meditation, scavenger hunt and using foods and spices to heal and promote



Mennonite Women retreat participants gather in worship. Photo courtesy of author

health. The variety of activities and input was valued by participants.

The offerings totaled \$1,618; half supports the Mennonite Women USA International Women’s Fund and half supports Nancy Marshall’s “Girl’s Night Out” ministry among the deaf community in Orange Walk, Belize. Book Savers raised \$507.48 for MCC, which also received two quilts knotted on Saturday afternoon.

## Retiring from VMM service, Keelers are honored for servant leadership

By GLORIA L. LEHMAN

VMM Caribbean Regional Assistant

On August 26, about 200 people gathered in the Ridgeway Mennonite Church to honor Richard & Margaret Keeler for years of service in Trinidad through Virginia Mennonite Missions.

Upbeat worship songs opened the program. Galen Lehman, Caribbean Regional Director, gave an overview of their

ministry with photos which brought back memories of past years. Pastor Ben Risser gave a meditation, and the Keeler daughters, Mary Beth, Sharon, Miriam and Kathryn, sang two songs.

A clear tribute was given by Paul Kniss who worked with the Keelers in Trinidad. Each member of the Missionary Support Team gave a lit candle to the Keelers symbolizing some aspect of their ministry. Paul & Evelyn Kratz gathered family and friends around Richard and Margaret and prayed a prayer of blessing over them. Joining in “To God be the Glory” expressed the overall thanks to God for what He has done through Richard and Margaret.

Refreshments were served—some items came from Trinidad, including sweetbread baked by Babes Jaimani. Richard & Margaret greeted well-wishers who

## 17,000 coins add up to a successful Penny Power!

Once again, the congregations in Virginia Mennonite Conference gathered coins, paper bills and checks to benefit the projects selected by Mennonite Central Committee and Virginia Mennonite Missions. This year, 39 congregations brought their money jugs to the Virginia Relief Sale. There the employees of Park View Federal Credit Union donated their time and resources to count 17,000 coins!

A total of \$34,000 was raised for designated projects.

The funds are divided between VMM’s project of tornado destruction relief in West Liberty, Kentucky, and MCC’s project of aid to Syrian refugees. A hearty thank you to everyone who participated in *Penny Power 2012!*

came to share with them.

Richard & Margaret have returned home to Trinidad where Richard serves as the Mennonite Church of Trinidad & Tobago president and Margaret continues with the Friendship Bible Coffee ministry.



Lloyd Weaver presents a candle to Margaret and Richard, symbolizing a facet of their ministry. Photo by Gloria Lehman

# Warwick River Christian School celebrates 70th anniversary

By **MARTHA NELSON**, Principal  
and **LINDA CLARK**, assistant

On Saturday morning, September 22, the halls of the school began filling with excited voices as former students and patrons arrived for Warwick River Christian School's 70th anniversary celebration.

It was fun to watch as groups of alumni looked at pictures posted on the walls from the first class in 1942 to the present classes of 2012. Laughter as alumni reminisced about school days could be heard around the tables at meal times and reunion meetings throughout the weekend. Another highlight of the weekend was the program Saturday evening. Milton Shenk led congregational singing with selections like "Grandfather Clock" and

"Twilight Is Stealing." Jeri Field led the Children's Chorus in two songs. She invited former Children's Chorus participants to join them. Alumni joined the Middle School Chorus for a special presentation of music accompanied by the Shenk Strings. Lucas Creek Band performed and also led in congregational singing. A memorable finale was Ann Driver's yodeling.

WRCS 70th Committee thanks all who helped to make this an unforgettable time,



Administrators, faculty and staff of Warwick River Christian School hold a banner celebrating 70 years. Courtesy of authors.

a time of renewing friendship, as well as making new friends, a time for strengthening relationships, and of building community.

To order photographs: [throughmylens-photography.com/wrcs-70th-anniversary](http://throughmylens-photography.com/wrcs-70th-anniversary)

## WCRC introduces two family retreats in '13

By **BOB BRISCOE**  
Executive Director, WCRC

If you spend much time at the Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center (WCRC) you are likely to hear one of our staff members relate the story of our founding:

In the late 1970s, Bob Mast and Lloyd Weaver had some conversations about young people. They began to ask a question: "We used to give our hearts to the Lord at revivals. Where are young people making their decisions now?" The answer they often heard was "at camp." Their response: "Wow! If that's the way the Holy Spirit is working, then we need to make a place for the Holy Spirit to work."

Lloyd Weaver brought an additional emphasis to us a few years ago at the ground-breaking for our new Cabin Village. He said we need strong families raising kids to have a strong faith, and strong families make strong churches that can make a difference in the world.

We listened to Lloyd and in 2013, WCRC will introduce two family-strengthening retreats: *Rekindle: A Weekend for Married Couples*, and *Kaleidoscope Camp*



Lloyd Weaver speaking at the Cabin Village ground-breaking in 2009. Courtesy of WCRC

*Family Retreat*. Both are aimed at strengthening families in order to strengthen the church so that it can make an impact in the world.

We hope you'll try one of our retreats in 2013 here at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center, a place where the Holy Spirit is still at work. Visit our website: [www.wcrc.info](http://www.wcrc.info).

## Harrisonburg Greenhouse Church Planters Intensive

Partnering with Mennonite Hispanic Initiative, VMissions offered a Harrisonburg Greenhouse Church Planters Intensive with Neil Cole, renowned church planter, October 19-21.

The Greenhouse was a solid encouragement for us all to continue to move forward with God's agenda of extending the church. We experienced a healthy response of interested people, averaging about 45 each session. Half of our participants were Spanish-speaking.

Neil Cole has a humorous way of helping his hearers connect. My favorite Neil Cole quote shared in the context of the parable of the sower is, "Bad people make good soil; there is so much fertilizer in their lives!"

This Greenhouse is part of Christian Multiplication Association (CMA), a resourcing network ([cmaresources.org](http://cmaresources.org)). Many great tools are there, including Life Transformation Groups. VMM's USA Ministries hopes to continue to offer resources and events to help equip leaders to live into God's mission. We're glad to discuss your resourcing ideas for future partnering possibilities. Email [skip.tobin@vmmissions.org](mailto:skip.tobin@vmmissions.org)

# Connections DECEMBER 2012 Prayer Calendar

## Sunday

**30** Pastor of Jesus' Deaf Church, Nancy Marshall, guides the church group each Sunday. Today is special, closing the old year and welcoming the new. Pray for Nancy and those who worship together—may they be blessed.

**2** Pray a blessing on David & Rebekka Stutzman and son Immanuel as they minister in the Bammental Mennonite Church, Germany. Ask God to guide them in their roles, and to give them vision for their congregation's growth.

**9** Tonight in central Virginia, the youth of Powhatan Mennonite Church will present a live nativity. Pray that all in attendance will be inspired by this miraculous Biblical story and carols of faith.

**16** Today the students and teachers at Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica celebrate Christmas by giving a program and receiving gifts from the students' sponsors. Ask God to bless all parts of the festivities.

**23** A wide variety of Christians around the world celebrate Christ's birth today—some in large cathedrals and some in small huts. But all join in thanking God for salvation through Jesus and for life everlasting.

## Monday

**31** Sing and pray as the New Year comes in—and continue throughout the year!

**3** Today Norma Teles returns to Albania after being in Brazil and the US since June. She is eager to see the students at the Joshua Center! Pray for her travels and ask God to give her great love for the variety of people she relates to.

**10** Lift up VMC's churches in Durham, N.C. Chapel Hill celebrated its 10th anniversary and mentors Duke Divinity School interns. Durham's ministry includes a recent focus on nonviolence, and meals for the homeless.

**17** Pray for the pastoral searches at Lynside and Springdale Mennonite Churches near Waynesboro, Va. Invite the Spirit to bless their interim pastors and guide the process of calling new leaders to serve these congregations.

**24** "...it is the night of the dear Savior's birth." Let us take time to ponder this wonderful gift from God the Father!

## Tuesday

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by:

**Martha Miller**

in celebration of her birthday on December 24. She reminds us to give thanks to God for every good gift we have in life.

**4** This evening is the last *Perspectives* (H'burg) class, with Glenn Kauffman teaching "World Christian Discipleship." Thank God for working in each participant's life during the course and ask Him for His clear call as they move forward.

**11** Eve Knepp, teacher at Maranatha School for the Deaf, uses her creativity to organize the students for their Christmas program. Pray for patience and persistence for her as she seeks to enhance the students' talents.

**18** Who will David Shenk meet today as he works with Colombian refugees in Ecuador? He will see Christ in each one, and will welcome His presence.

**25** And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Luke 1:46-47  
Rejoice with Mary in the birth of Jesus Christ—God with us!

## Wednesday

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name." Luke 1:46-49 (NIV)

**5** Caleb Benner teaches in the Lezha Academic Center and serves on the administrative council where decisions are made regarding student life. Thank God for his insight and passion and ask God to strengthen him for his roles.

**12** In Montenegro this month through January 8, over 20,000 Samaritan's Purse shoeboxes are distributed and God's word is shared at each event. Pray for open hearts and people ready to be disciplined.

**19** The Joshua Center teachers and students celebrate Christmas today with songs, snacks and gifts from their sponsors. The eyes of the students shine with excitement! Thank God for this unique place where Roma children are loved.

**26** This 'second Christmas' day is a good time to look for those who may need an extra blessing during this season: warm gloves, good food, fuel for the house or car—and a message of love and care. Reach out today.

## Thursday

**6** Last month, Michael & Ruth and family moved to a large city in South Asia to continue witnessing in this part of the world. Ask God to give them an increased portion of His grace and strength as they are settling in there.

**13** Steve & Laura Campbell are involved with the distribution of the Samaritan's Purse shoeboxes. Ask for them to have the energy needed to meet hundreds of children and share the Good News with them.

**20** The Riddle family in Bari, Italy, is deep into the Christmas season with activities in the boys' school, in Centro Koinonia, and in the community. Pray for them to shine the light of Jesus to all they meet during this hectic time.

**27** This evening come to the Celebration of Ministry honoring Willard & Eva Eberly's long service in Italy, 6:30 p.m., Dayton Mennonite Church. Join the celebration and express your appreciation for Willard & Eva's ministry.

## Friday

**7** Three new officers are serving VMC. Pray for wisdom as Kevin Gasser, assistant moderator, Glen Kauffman, treasurer, and Cara Risser, secretary, meet today with Moderator Shirley Yoder Brubaker and provide leadership.

**14** Two VMC congregations are nestled in the hills of Broadway, Va.: Trissels and Zion Mennonite churches. Invite God's abiding presence to be known in their worship, fellowship and witness.

**21** As Harry, Kris and Sam Kraus observe Christmas in Kenya, pray that they will experience the great love of God, and give witness to the saving power of Jesus who came as a baby and lives to give new life.

**28** This week VMC bids farewell to Jason Gerlach, Conference Youth Minister, as he transitions into full-time ministry at Community Mennonite Church. Thank God for his five years of strong ministry leadership in VMC.

## Saturday

**1** Pray for Allen Umble who serves as missions team leader in Albania; he also relates warmly with the church members. May God grant Him wisdom and stamina for his ministry.

**8** Ask God to bless the ministries of Iglesia Alfa y Omega and the emerging No Longer Forsaken International Church, both in Maryland. May people of all languages and nationalities experience the living power of Jesus!

**15** In South Asia, Jacob & Hosanna are asked by parents to help them arrange marriages for their believing children. A large youth conference may introduce believing youth to each other. Ask God to direct any and all plans.

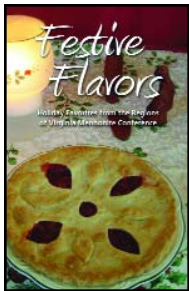
**22** In Thailand, Heidi & Hamah Schoenhals celebrate Christmas with their Thai friends and the Life Enrichment Church. May their family experience deep joy even though they are far from family members.

**29** In Southeast Asia, Grace Schrock-Hurst walks with the urban poor, sharing daily life events and praying for those who need healing and hope.



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

## Announcements



### **Festive Flavors: Holiday Favorites from the Regions of Virginia Mennonite Conference**

is again available for holiday gift-giving. Fifty-six attractive pages featuring recipes, photos and

stories, this unique cookbook is a wonderful way to experience the diverse geographical and cultural flavors throughout VMC. Order online for \$10 each at [virginiacommunity.org](http://virginiacommunity.org) or call the VMC offices at (540) 434-9727.

A **Celebration of Ministry for Willard & Eva Eberly's** long service in Italy will be held Thursday, Dec. 27, at Dayton Mennonite Church's fellowship hall at 6:30 p.m. Join them for a program followed with a dessert bar. Contact Janet Blosser with questions, at (540) 434-9727 or [janet.blosser@vmmissions.org](mailto:janet.blosser@vmmissions.org).

Enjoy an evening of music and mission at Eastern Mennonite Seminary Martin Chapel, Sat., Jan. 5, 7 p.m. Dr. Jonathan Keener will give a piano recital to benefit Steve and Bethany Horst's upcoming service in Bangkok, Thailand. Admission \$10; children ages 12 and under are free. A dessert reception follows the recital. A silent auction featuring Bethany's artwork will conclude the evening. Donations welcome.

"**The Christian Movement in the Mediterranean**" offers an opportunity to study with Linford Stutzman exploring the context of Acts in Turkey and Greece, May 16-June 1, 2013. For registration, visit [emu.edu/seminary/cross-cultural/Christian-movement/](http://emu.edu/seminary/cross-cultural/Christian-movement/)

The sixth annual **Sarasota Mennonite Male Voice Festival**, with director Lloyd Kauffman, will be Sunday, March 3, 2013, at Bahia Vista Mennonite Church in Sarasota, Florida, at 3:00 p.m. and again at 6:30 p.m. All men who enjoy singing to God's glory are invited to participate. Any questions, or a request for music and practice CD in advance, may be addressed to Lynn Miller, (941) 724-4057; or Lloyd Kauffman, (941) 379-3390.

**Zion Mennonite Church**, a Virginia Conference congregation, located seven miles outside of Harrisonburg, Virginia, is seeking a lead pastor. Zion has an average Sunday morning attendance of 150 that includes a balance of families with children, single adults, college students, middle aged couples and elderly members. Seminary degree and ministry experience is preferred. Interested candidates may contact the Pastoral Search Committee Chair, Doug Alderfer, at [dalderfer@rockingham.k12.va.us](mailto:dalderfer@rockingham.k12.va.us) or (540) 705-4623.

**Springdale Mennonite Church**, Waynesboro, Virginia, is looking for a full-time lead pastor or a husband/wife co-pastor team. This is our primary interest; however, all applications will be considered. Anticipated starting date is April 1, 2013. Membership is 160 and attendance around 120-130. We are looking for a candidate with strong skills in preaching, pastoral care and church leadership from an Anabaptist perspective. MC USA guidelines for salary and benefits will be followed. Website: [springdalemennonite.org](http://springdalemennonite.org). Contact Danny Showalter, Chair of Search Committee, at [dcs@ntelos.net](mailto:dcs@ntelos.net), or at (540) 943-2392.

**Celebrating our Savior's birth**

Virginia Mennonite Conference  
A conference of Mennonite Church USA

Virginia Mennonite Missions  
Called. Sent. Transformed.

**Far from the centers of power,  
 He came into the world in the  
 most humble of circumstances.**

**Good news has come to the poor,  
 freedom has come to the captives,  
 sight has come to the blind,  
 the oppressed have been released,  
 the year of the Lord's favor is now.**

**Virginia Mennonite Missions** is seeking applicants for an **MST Coach** and an **Administrative Assistant** beginning January 2, 2013. These part-time positions may be combined. Contact Lois Maust at (540) 434-9727 or [lois.maust@vmmissions.org](mailto:lois.maust@vmmissions.org).