

## Building houses and building trust in North Korea

By **EARL MARTIN**  
Shalom Mennonite Church

North Korea has burst into our awareness again recently with the death of their president, Kim Jong Il.

The world has watched as his young son, Kim Jong Eun, is being elevated into leadership. This is a good time for us to be reminded that God's Spirit is alive and present with the people of North Korea through these turbulent times.

I visited North Korea just 10 days before their president's death. I joined five other volunteer builders from the Georgia-based Fuller Center for Housing. The intent of our mission was to build houses for the workers in a large tree nursery in the countryside outside of the capital Pyongyang. The Fuller Center had imported large building blocks made of concrete and recycled polystyrene which would yield highly insulated walls for the cold winters. While Fuller has projected to build many houses, the deeper goals are also to build trust and to build peace between us and the people of North Korea.

Virginia Mennonite Missions has been supporting this project with prayers, counsel, and the channeling of some funds. Anyone interested in offering support should contact VMM.

Our team discovered a spare, wintry countryside with many people walking to and from work on foot. Heating fuel is in short supply, so some of our meetings were held in frigid rooms. But the spirit we sensed from people there was warm and eager for friendship. When we offered the Korean greeting, "Anyong hasimika," we received many curious gazes and warm smiles.

As it turned out, when we were there, the weather was too cold to permit our

pouring concrete footers for houses, so we had to settle for demonstrating how to cut and stack the imported blocks like huge Lego blocks. Our hosts of the Academy of Architecture seemed quite pleased with the new technology. We hope other teams will carry the project forward.

In this very controlled society, we were surprised that they granted our request to visit a local market in the capital city. Being surrounded by hundreds of shoppers—ordinary folks buying their noodles or tofu for supper, their gloves or pliers for their work—my heart was moved deeply for the people of this isolated and little-understood land.

My eyes met the eyes of a smiling red-smocked sales woman and I wondered, "What had her father experienced during the Korean War back in the early 1950's?" Pyongyang, and all the towns and cities of North Korea, were leveled by bombs and napalm at that time. Thousands of American soldiers and several million Korean people died during that war. And now here are the children and grandchildren of the survivors of that war. "Oh God, I pray, never, never, never again let their be warfare between our people."

We were unable to visit the one or two Protestant congregations in Pyongyang since our stay was shortened by a visa



David West, member of the Fuller Center team, demonstrates the insulated concrete blocks to members of the North Korean academy of architecture. From center left: civil engineer Kim Yung Jing, structural engineer Pak Un Hong, architect Ri Il O, and translator Jon Chang Hyon. Courtesy of author

delay. But our hosts knew that our visit was sponsored by people of faith who believe that God intends goodness and wholeness for all people.

Sometimes our nations seem to believe that increased fear and threats will elicit respect and good behavior from others. But more often we see that a climate of fear only prompts defensive or even dangerous responses. This mission to reach out, people-to-people, assumes the opposite premise: that a reduction in the climate of fear and suspicion may allow us to find new paths of trust and working together for the well-being of us all.

*Earl Martin, a Harrisonburg carpenter, worked many years in Asia with Mennonite Central Committee, and is member of Shalom Mennonite Congregation.*

# A married man and the monks of Mount Athos

“Mount Athos is situated in the entire third, eastern and most beautiful peninsula of Halkidiki, called the peninsula of Athos. It is the only place in Greece that is completely dedicated to prayer and worship of God.”

[www.inathos.gr/athos/en/](http://www.inathos.gr/athos/en/)

Over the Christmas and New Year’s break, I happened upon a CBS *60 Minutes* documentary about the Eastern Orthodox monasteries which own the entire peninsula noted above. And, on New Year’s Eve, Ruth Ann and I celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary. (We were duly honored by our family and friends. Thanks to all for your kind greetings.)

The images of these monks gathered for their traditional prayers at 3 a.m. (yes, that’s three in the morning) every day, year round—prayers which continue for seven or eight hours a day—has stuck with me. And, there were images of gardeners whose lips are constantly moving in prayer, most likely the Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

A repeated refrain in interviews was, “we are preparing for the life to come.”

The shocking news is that no women are allowed on the peninsula. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the most exalted of



Owen Burkholder  
Conference Minister

women, is, of course, honored and revered.

Now, what is a happily married man supposed to do with this? Is there any hope that one whose life includes so very many distractions (including the television on which these images were projected) could possibly “be ready for the life to come?”

It focuses the question of the core purpose; intentionality; indeed, the very center of one’s being. “How do we live in an open, responsive relationship with God?” At least one of the contributions of our Anabaptist forbearers was to bring the life of discipleship out of the monasteries. All who were baptized were expected to walk daily in fellowship with Christ.

Perhaps the Jesus Prayer is the place to start. It is a statement of faith and a statement of need. It acknowledges that life with God now and in the life to come is possible through Jesus. It demonstrates our awareness that we fall so unworthily short of God’s expectations and our only hope is in God’s mercy.

The only thing needed, then, is to pray such a prayer, inviting the merciful presence

of Jesus into our daily distractions. How does that prayer sound when I’m mowing my lawn, filling out my taxes, belittling my wife, watching sports on television, washing my automobiles, emailing my children and grandchildren, signing end of life documents, reading the newspaper, or playing video games? (What are your distractions and how does praying fit into them?)

May it be said that there are more people and places in the world than the monks on one peninsula in Greece that are, “completely dedicated to prayer and worship of God.”

*Owen Burkholder*



One of 20 monasteries on the peninsula of Athos, Greece. CC license photo

<b>Financial Focus</b>	<b>Virginia Mennonite Conference</b>		<b>budget</b>	\$93,541
			<b>expenses</b>	\$77,622
			<b>income</b>	\$72,467
			<b>investments</b>	\$1,211
	Sept. 1, 2011 to Dec. 31, 2011		<b>net</b>	-\$3,944
			<b>Mission Fund</b>	
			<b>Special Projects</b>	
	<b>Virginia Mennonite Missions</b>		<b>total revenue</b>	\$73,624
			<b>expenses</b>	\$167,798
	Sept. 1, 2011 to Dec. 31, 2011		<b>total revenue</b>	\$223,909
		<b>expenses</b>	\$315,075	

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# A Bender family, Mississippi bombing and a reconciled church (Part 2)

Adapted from DON, MILDRED  
AND TITUS BENDER

Turbulent violence embroiled the Deep South in the summer of 1964. Courts and people in the streets challenged segregation. Nearly one thousand trained students went to help mobilize the African-American community to vote, receive education, and pressure for political changes to the accepted ways of racism during “Mississippi Freedom Summer.”

Many white people felt threatened and the KKK rapidly gained momentum, burning 70 church buildings across the state in the ensuing years—usually of African-American or mixed congregations or those who raised questions about racial violence and isolation.

In the face of these racial “dividing walls of hostility,” the Choctaw Nation in Mississippi struggled to hold on to their

identity, to remember who they truly were. Despite the opposition, Nevin, Sr. and Esther Bender and the Nanih Waiya (“Great Spirit”) Mennonite Church continued accepting and relating to all peoples. The years ahead were to be ones of both great “pain and triumph” for the church.

Violence came to the community in June 1964 when three student civil rights activists were murdered near the Bender home. In mid-September, the church was dynamited early one morning. Esther wrote in her journal, “It was a total loss. Who could have done it and why we do not know. The Lord alone knows, and we humbly bow to our all-wise God. The Lord has given grace.” The sheriff and his deputy eventually came to investigate but appeared to take joy in the catastrophe (these same men were later linked to the murder of the three civil rights workers).

Yet Nevin refused to lose heart at their attitude or the bombing itself. Plans for rebuilding the church were quickly started, clearly conveying the family’s intention to stay with the whole community—Choctaw and Euro-American.

Church members from around the state and Ohio stood with the Benders and Choctaw community, pitching in to clear the debris and rebuild. In less than a month, the building was re-constructed enough for a celebration that “love and hope are stronger than violence.” Esther, Nevin and their adult children redoubled their commitment to explain to the community their family’s calling in coming to Mississippi—even to the Sheriff with whom trust gradually grew.

*Follow the rest of the story next month. (The full story of Esther and Nevin Bender, Sr. can be found in Without the Loss*

## A “missions trip” in Harrisonburg

By FERNE BOWMAN  
VMM Italy Field Director

So where did the idea of a Missions Trip in Harrisonburg come from? “It was the kids’ idea,” Andrew said. Andrew and Erika Gascho are junior youth sponsors at Ridgeway Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va. While at a Conference Retreat the youth got the idea of doing something like a missions trip right here at home.

The idea evolved into a week long event last summer, and was a highlight for the Gaschos and the youth. They worked all over the Harrisonburg community—stream cleanup at Purcell Park, cleaning and playing with the kids at Roberta Webb Child Care Center, weeding and mulching at Gift & Thrift. But what proved to be the most meaningful for everyone, was the time spent with the children right around the church. The playground and basketball court at the church are natural attractions for the community children, so it didn’t

take much planning to initiate activities. Gaschos and the youth camped out in the church basement; then during the day, went outside to play, and neighborhood kids soon showed up. They enjoyed games like Slip & Slide, water balloon games, soccer, and basketball.

After the week was over Andrew and Erika thought, “What do we do now? We can’t let the kids down.” They both came up with an idea at the same time. “Maybe we could live in the parsonage.” As it turned out, the church parsonage was available because of other derailed plans. So now, following what they believe is God’s leading, Andrew and Erika are happily getting settled in their new home in the parsonage right next door to the church. Coming from a small two room apartment, this house feels spacious. There will be rooms for youth activities.



Children in the neighborhood around the Ridgeway church enjoy the Slip & Slides. Courtesy photo

Andrew continues playing with the neighborhood kids. He and Erika have always enjoyed sports and now are using these talents in kingdom work. Andrew said, “It’s amazing what playing soccer and basketball does for kids. There is less fighting when a responsible person is with them.” Regarding their work as youth sponsors Erika said, “I didn’t think I would enjoy it as much as I do.”

The Gascho’s plans for the future are not clearly defined. They want to be a presence in the church community, and follow where God leads.



# Maranatha School for the Deaf celebrates Christmas with program

By **GLORIA LEHMAN**  
VMM Caribbean Regional Assistant

The poinsettia plants and Christmas bushes filled with white flowers bloom profusely along the roadsides, in gardens of well-kept homes and on the rough mountainsides. It's Christmas time in Jamaica! There are fewer decorated houses and shorter celebrations on this Caribbean island, but the spirit of Christmas is wide spread. Everyone loves to give and receive gifts during this season.

At the end of November, the teachers begin planning for the Christmas program at the Maranatha School for the Deaf. It is important to hold a good program so that the parents, grandparents, aunts and cousins who attend will feel like the



Camille and Omar played the roles of Mary and Joseph in the Christmas program.



Students joyfully sign together after the play "Christmas Hope." Photos courtesy of Galen Lehman

students have presented the true meaning of Christmas and have done well. Eve Knepp, VMM *tranSender*, gave leadership to the program planning. After 6-year-old Audia welcomed all the attenders with careful signs, the youngest students performed "Joy to the World." Each grade level did a song: "Silent Night," "Away in a Manger," and "O Come all ye Faithful." Then all the students acted out the

Christmas story as Shamoye, playing a grandmother role, explained the story to her "grandchildren."

Masks with animal faces and costumes for shepherds and angels depicted the account of Jesus' birth. A culminating piece was "O Holy Night" signed by the oldest students--quite moving! Pastor Christopher Kennedy moderated the program.

William George Broughton, chair of the Maranatha School board, thanked the teachers and staff for their good work with the students. Gifts from the students' sponsors were given to the students and they were received with great anticipation and happiness! Everyone--students, staff, teachers and Board members--are grateful for the strong support they experience from their friends in the US. Every Christmas is memorable because of the love and care shown to "the least of these."

*Audia, and 4 other students need sponsors. Can you share \$40 a month to assist with good nutrition, strong Biblical teaching, and appropriate academics?*

*If you can join the 20 other sponsors in this endeavor, please contact Gloria Lehman at [gloria.lehman@vmmissions.org](mailto:gloria.lehman@vmmissions.org) or (540) 434-9727 or (800) 707-5535.*

## Seeing in the New Year in Belize among the Deaf community

By **GLORIA LEHMAN**  
VMM Caribbean Regional Assistant

On December 31, all of Orange Walk, a tiny village in northern Belize, was preparing for welcoming in the New Year. Lots of people were shopping for food and drinks. The intermittent showers made us wonder if there really would be fireworks put off at midnight.

At 8 p.m., Nancy Marshall's house became "the place to be" to celebrate the arrival of 2012. Young people arrived and enjoyed the food that Nancy had prepared--fresh tortilla chips with cheese dip, vegetables and pizza. Then the fun began with a game of charades. Deaf people dramatize

very well, and soon all were entertained by various antics. Each charade was the name of a movie and there were lots of laughs as it became evident which movie was being described in actions.

Close to midnight, the group went downtown to the center of Orange Walk and the countdown began: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1--Happy New Year! All around fireworks exploded on the ground and in the air! There wasn't a central location for the fireworks show; everyone put off fireworks as they wanted.

Nancy was concerned that perhaps all the late festivities could keep persons from Jesus' Deaf Church on Sunday morning. Thankfully, a strong group of Deaf



At the New Year's Eve party with the Jesus' Deaf Church, Sulmi dramatizes a movie title while Nancy Marshall and others observe closely. Photo courtesy of Galen Lehman.

attended the worship service and praised God together for the New Year.

## “GAMEO it!”

By **PAUL J. YODER**  
VMC Historical Committee

The phrase “Google it” has worked into everyday language, and even appears in some dictionaries. “Googling” means to search for information on an internet search engine. The integration of such a term into our general lexicon highlights the increasing use of the internet. So where can internet surfers go for all things Mennonite and Anabaptist? Since 1996 the answer has been to GAMEO it!

In response to the growing significance of virtual sources, the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada began the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO). GAMEO ([www.gameo.org](http://www.gameo.org)) builds on the reference materials of the Mennonite Encyclopedia, published in the 1950s and 1990. A growing number of partners including Mennonite World Conference and



John R. Mumaw, past president of Eastern Mennonite College, VMC moderator and pastor, is one of the historical persons found at [gameo.org](http://gameo.org). Courtesy of authors

Mennonite Central Committee have contributed to GAMEO’s growth since 1996.

Elwood Yoder teaches at Eastern Mennonite High School, where he sees the importance of web-based resources. He names GAMEO as a vital source because of its easy accessibility. “Most people look on the internet for information, and if their church or institution page is up-to-date it helps people learn more and do good research.”

Elwood and Jim Hershberger have led the initiative to increase the number of GAMEO articles highlighting leaders and congregations in Virginia. Both are involved in the joint effort of the VMC

Historical Committee and the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians to engage Steve Nolt, history professor at Goshen College, to write the history of Virginia Mennonites. While Steve’s previous commitments mean the project will be a few years in the making, Elwood reports that “updated church, institutional, and congregational leader pages will be valuable” in the research process.

A brief presentation at the Winter Delegate Session in February will outline how congregational historians can update their church’s GAMEO entries. Biographical sketches for Mennonite leaders are also needed. Paul J. Yoder, member of the Conference Historical Committee, will serve as coordinator and copy editor for Virginia-related GAMEO submissions. Paul can be reached at [pjyoder@gmail.com](mailto:pjyoder@gmail.com). Direct additional questions to Elwood: [elyoder@gmail.com](mailto:elyoder@gmail.com)

## Eastern Carolina District joins to build a house in Louisiana

By **THOMAS LEHMAN**  
Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

Last fall the four churches of the Eastern Carolina District: Chapel Hill, Durham, Greensboro and Raleigh—took on the challenge of building a house in Cameron, Louisiana for Mennonite Disaster Service.

Cameron is on the coast 40 miles east of the Texas border, a two-day drive from central North Carolina. The area was severely damaged by Hurricane Rita in 2005, three weeks after the more infamous Hurricane Katrina tore up New Orleans and the surrounding area. MDS has built many houses in Cameron Parish. The building code in Cameron requires foundation piers 15 feet high to provide some protection if the Gulf of Mexico is blown ashore by another hurricane. The piers were built before the MDS work began. Thus from the start the construction had to be done from scaffolding until the floor and stairs of the one-story house were built.

The house was very nearly built to completion in the six weeks of scheduled work. A few final tasks were finished by a Louisiana contractor.

The four congregations sent volunteer carpenters, tradesmen, and cooks, typically for a week of work. But volunteers reached out to others, so that the total worker list, including cooks, came to 31 persons from 11 churches in five states. Two of the crew, recent college graduates from Berne, Indiana, had volunteered for a semester of MDS work, and spent the entire six weeks on this project. Steve Jolley, a licensed contractor from Durham, directed the construction. One woman, Ruth Martin, of Greensboro, carpentered alongside the men.

The owner of the house is a retired shrimp fisherman who had lived since the hurricane in an old house trailer on the property. His near neighbors are still in house trailers or manufactured homes, all



The house in Cameron, La., that four Eastern Carolina District Mennonite churches built. Courtesy of author

near the ground. Shrimp fishing is popular in Cameron, with many people “shrimping” as an occupation, or for extra income. Workers were housed in the First Baptist Church of Cameron, whose sanctuary was destroyed in the storm. When the church was rebuilt the congregation added space that accommodates guest workers quite comfortably.



# Volunteerism abounds at Gift & Thrift, Inc.

By **DEBRA A. KING**  
General Manager, Gift and Thrift, Inc.

“Stressing that volunteerism contributes to the well-being of individuals, communities and society, a new United Nations report released [December 5, 2011] urges countries not to forget this largely untapped asset. The State of the World’s Volunteerism Report by UN Volunteers (UNV) presents for the first time empirical evidence of the importance and contribution of volunteerism on a global scale.”

We have repeatedly expressed that volunteers are the lifeblood of Harrisonburg Gift & Thrift, Inc. Throughout our three divisions we incorporate more than 250 volunteers throughout the week, many of whom offer three hours or more of their time. Volunteers

work at sorting, pricing, displaying, processing Internet orders, and cashiering.

Our volunteers are invested in their work— they not only take pride in a job well done, but continually propose ideas for new ways to display beautiful merchandise and more efficient methods to process donated items. Volunteers give of their time and talents because they care about the mission of the organization, but also because it gives them a feeling of worth. One of our volunteers is often heard saying that her time here is the best day of her week. We want



Gift & Thrift volunteers sort through and price items at A World of Good Thrift Shop. Courtesy of author

to publicly thank all of our wonderful volunteers who make every day the best day of our week!

## Mennonite Women attend Missions Day

By **PAM DE YOUNG**  
President, Mennonite Women of Virginia

Mennonite Women of Virginia encourages Christian growth in women through Bible study, use of our spiritual gifts, and understanding and applying Anabaptist beliefs as we follow Jesus. Our constitution encourages us to be conscious that as we share Christ, we are responsible not only to our local community but to the world.

In 2011 our Missions Day which supports our Virginia Conference missionaries had the theme “Missions: One in the Spirit.” Because of our generous congregations, we were able to give gifts to all our missionaries. The Missions Day this year will be held on Saturday, May 5th, location to be announced. The event will be in the morning and end by 12:30.

Treziah Ndlovu spoke about “The Impact and Challenges of Church Women’s Ministry in Zimbabwe” at the Virginia Conference women’s prayer breakfast in July. God is working through God’s people in this country with desperate physical and spiritual needs.



The 2011 women’s retreat, *More than Water*, with speaker April Gunderson, was a meaningful experience for 160 women. The 2012 retreat will be facilitated with the help of Mennonite Women USA. It will be in September with the date to be announced.

In this era when our pace is continuously increasing, finding women to help with our work is challenging. Consider how you might support Mennonite Women of Virginia; it is your ministry.



## Alternative Christmas gifts top \$2,595

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

Thanks to 21 different families and groups, the alternative Christmas gift projects available through Virginia Mennonite Missions raised \$2,595 for items that VMM workers requested. These items will help them achieve their ministry goals. A five-year-old boy bought two baby chicks and a local congregation gave a total of \$376, with lots of amounts in between. We thank each of you heartily for your interest in these projects and for your care of the workers who will receive these gifts.

# FEBRUARY 2012 Prayer Calendar

Connections

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

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This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by:

**4** This weekend Centro Koinonia, Bari, Italy sponsors a family conference-4 sessions with Christian family counselors. Pray fervently for effective outreach to the surrounding community.

**3** Invite God's Spirit to be present at tomorrow's VMC Winter Delegate Session. May our delegates experience unity in Jesus Christ as they worship together and engage the topics of Christian community and scriptural discernment.

**2** A medical team led by Dr. Dennis Hatter is serving in rural Haiti since Jan. 26. Thank God for their intense work and for the blessing that they bring to the people in this island country who experience many difficulties.

**1** Pray for Harry Kraus as he serves many people in Kenya and the neighboring country as a surgeon and as a witness for Christ. Ask God to protect him in every way.

**5** Praise God for European Mennonite conferences who are promoting relief and school kit projects among their churches this year for the Roma population in Serbia and Albania.

**6** In Det Udom, Thailand, Mark & Sarah Schoenhals ask us to pray that their family regains good health after several bouts of illness. Thank God for his watchful care over them.

**7** Rafael & Solange Tartari are presently on "home assignment." Pray for them as they travel throughout Brazil visiting churches and sharing their vision for missions in Albania.

**8** EMM/VMM worker, Emily Gingrich serves in Prague, Czech Republic, teaching English mentoring youth and teaching Bible studies. Ask God to bless her abundantly today.

**9** During February, students from religion classes at Micah Riddle's middle school will make "field trips" to Centro Koinonia to learn what Evangelicals believe. Pray for this significant opportunity!

**10** This weekend at the Senior High Retreat, speaker Kevin Gasser will challenge the high school youth as they discover "Who(se) Am I?" to learn about Christian identity. Pray for continuing faith formation in these youth.

**11** Thank God for the growing participation of new youth including professional soccer players in youth activities led by Giovanni & Fiorella Greco in central Italy. Pray their enthusiasm will be contagious!

**12** As we approach the Lenten season, invite God's Spirit to infuse the worship planning in your congregation, so it may be a meaningful time of reflection and spiritual awakening.

**13** Phil & Terry Witmer, MMN/VMM workers in La Mesa, Colombia, ask us to pray that their family will reflect the light of Christ in their new neighborhood, in the broader community and in the church and school.

**14** "The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell! O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forevermore endure the saints' and angels' song."  
Sing the Journey #44

**15** Invite God's blessing on tomorrow's "Ministry with the Aging" seminar, a joint presentation from VMC and VMRC. Pastors and congregational caregiving teams will participate in this resource event.

**16** In Southeast Asia, Grace Schrock-Hurst experiences the spectrum of life in her new house in her new neighborhood. She claims the Light of Life for this community. Pray for her health, stamina and persistence in this place.

**17** In Trinidad, join Richard & Margaret Keeler in thanking God for the transformation of a believer who shared a strong, positive testimony at the Old Year's Night service last month. Pray for him and for the church as they worship together.

**18** Saturdays for Rodney & Eve Knepp, VMM *Travel Senders*, often bring the opportunity to unwind from a busy week. Thank God for their work at the Maranatha School in Jamaica and ask for His guidance and blessing each day.

**19** Chris Riddle has been elected VP of the Parent Association of the local middle school in Italy. Praise God for 7 couples who are meeting twice a month with Chris and Melody to discuss John Drescher's book, *Seven Things Children Need*.

**20** In South Asia, Jacob & Hosanna have moved into a smaller apartment, living above another family. They have many opportunities to relate to their neighbors and landlord. Thank God for their consistent witness in this place.

**21** Mark & Sarah Schoenhals are excited to be in a new unit of language study, Christian communications, to enable them to lead Bible studies and prayer, and in sharing their testimonies. Ask God for His grace as they learn.

**22** On this first day of Lent, open your heart and mind to what God wants to do in your life. How is God calling you to repent, reaffirm, and respond?

**23** Pray God's continued blessing over the "after-school" tutoring program sponsored by Centro Koinonia. Middle and high school students find friendship and encouragement as well as assistance in their studies.

**24** Families gather on Friday evenings for fun and relaxation. Pray for strong marriages and family relationships of all kinds; these strengthen the church and shows a good witness to those who are watching Christians' lives.

**25** Shawn & Laura Green and Steve & Laura Campbell are preparing for missionary service in Italy and Montenegro. Pray that in spite of the financial recession these committed couples can be deployed to fulfill their call.

**26** In Orange Walk, Belize, Nancy Marshall is leading the Jesus Deaf Church this morning. Her teaching on Jesus and discipleship is resulting in committed Christians. Thank God for what He is doing in this church.

**27** Pray for the Jamaica Mennonite Church leaders as they plan for the 54th annual conference in Kingston this weekend. Thank God for the vitality of the church and the young pastors who are committed to enlarge God's Kingdom.

**28** Thank God for the rhythm of the seasons. Winter's dormancy gives nature a necessary time for rest, so spring can emerge vibrant. What spiritual lessons can our Creator's natural design teach us?

**29** Pray for the teachers and students of the Lezhe Academic Center, Albania, as they learn together each day. Many life lessons can be learned in and out of the classroom. May the students see Jesus in the staff members' lives.

**"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."**

Galatians 3: 26-28



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## Announcements

Plan to attend the **Annual Dinner & Meeting** of the CrossRoads Heritage Center on Friday, February 3, 6:30 p.m., at Shady Oak, Weavers Mennonite Church. In addition to a tasty meal prepared by the Rhodes Sisters, you'll enjoy a preview of the play, *Jordan's Stormy Banks*, set to run in the EMU Main Stage Theater in early June 2012.

### **VMRC Auxiliary's Winter Fest 2012**

The VMRC Auxiliary is asking anyone who enjoys baking and sharing to make your favorite pie, cake, bread, muffins, cinnamon rolls, brownies, fudge, cookies or anything else except no cream pies for a bake sale February 4 on Main Street in Park Gables! Bring them to the conference room next to the café on Friday, February 3 between 5 and 8 p.m., or on Saturday, February 4, between 7-9 a.m. Proceeds go toward the new wheelchair accessible bus for the VMRC residents.

The **Shenandoah Valley Men's Chorus**, under the direction of Ruel Burkholder, will begin its 2012 season with our first chorus practice on February 5, 2012, 2:30 p.m. at the Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Men ages 13-99, who enjoy singing *a cappella* music, are invited to join the group.

Subsequent practices are scheduled for Sunday afternoons in February and March, ending with two concerts, including benefit offerings for missions and service, planned for 7 p.m., on March 23, at Springdale Mennonite Church and 3:30 p.m., on March 25, at Dayton Mennonite Church. For more information contact Roman Miller at (540) 867-0854 or [roman.miller@northriver.coop](mailto:roman.miller@northriver.coop)

**Highland Retreat** will be holding its **Annual Benefit Auction** at Shady Oak next to Weavers Mennonite Church, Saturday, February 25, 2012. The silent auction will begin at 9 a.m. and the live auction at 9:30 a.m. with food available throughout. Beginning in February, an up-to-date, growing list of items and pictures can be seen at [www.highlandretreat.org](http://www.highlandretreat.org).

**Attention men:** Register now for the Men's Retreat, Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center, March 23-25. Meaningful worship, inspired teaching, great fellowship, and recreation for men of all ages are included. Kevin Clark, Professor and Seminary Pastor at Eastern Mennonite Seminary is the speaker. For more information, call 866-566-9272. To register online, go to [www.wcrc.info](http://www.wcrc.info).

**WCRC Tour Retreat—Experience Hampton Roads**, April 23-26, 2012. Using Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center for an idyllic anchor and lodging, board a motor coach to visit Denbigh Mennonite community, Virginia Air & Space Center, IMAX, Miss Hampton II Harbor Cruise, Peninsula Town Center, Calvary Community Church, and Jamestown Settlement. For brochure, contact Ed & Edie Bontrager, tour coordinators, at (540) 438-8304, [eebontrager@comcast.net](mailto:eebontrager@comcast.net) or the WCRC program director, Jenn Hill, at [programs@wcrc.info](mailto:programs@wcrc.info) or (866) 566-4875.

Join us for **"Peru—Land of the Inca,"** May 8-15, 2012. Visit Machu Picchu, voted in 2007 as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, and Lima, Cusco, Uruamba Valley, Sacsayhuaman, and Quenqu. Visit with Eastern Mennonite Mission workers and churches, and more. Contact Ed and Edie Bontrager, tour leaders, at [eebontrager@comcast.net](mailto:eebontrager@comcast.net) or at (540) 438-8304.