

## Timeless stories of God's transforming power and grace Virginia Mennonite Conference Middle School Retreat gathers at Smith Mountain Lake

By BRAD KOLB

The weather was nearly perfect when middle school students, youth workers, and youth pastors from Virginia Mennonite Conference gathered at the Smith Mountain Lake 4-H Retreat Center in Wirtz, Va., on September 20 and 21 for the conference's annual Middle School Retreat.

With full sunshine and temperatures in the upper 50s, both the youth and the adults enjoyed a leisurely Saturday afternoon of kayaking, canoeing, soccer, basketball, frisbee, archery, rock climbing on the climbing wall, playing card games, relaxing and laughing.

At night, we were treated to a campfire, snacks, and songs, followed by a game of *Persecution*, an Anabaptist history game of sneaking, hiding, and visiting the seven "churches" to assemble a secret message, all while trying to find miracles (glo-sticks) and avoiding "the destroyer" (adults with flashlights).

Each of the three large group sessions began with fun songs and worship led by Seth Crissman and Greg Yoder of The Walking Roots Band. Their musical gifts had us both laughing and enjoying times of meaningful connection with God.

But the real highlight of the weekend came after the games and songs were done and Kent Kauffman, executive director of Highland Retreat, brought us a message from the Word, entitled "The Story of Your Life."

Youth enjoy kayaking in Smith Mountain Lake.



Kent Kauffman tells the story of Louis Zamperini's powerful encounter with God in a POW camp. Photos courtesy of Deb Horst

Using the story of Olympic track star Louis Zamperini, Kent had a large room full of middle school students and youth workers (a group not known for sitting still) on the edge of their seats and holding their breath.

Louis went from a childhood of stealing to fame as a track superstar. His bomber plane crashed into the Pacific Ocean during World War II, and he spent 47 days lost at sea on a small raft. When the Japanese navy picked up Louis and one other survivor, they spent the next two years in a brutal prisoner-of-war camp.

Kent's storytelling and teaching was absolutely captivating. Yet far from being a glorification of war or a celebration of human resilience, Kent showed us how Louis had an incredible and transforming encounter with God which allowed him to have hope, show love to his

enemies, and later seek forgiveness with his oppressors.

One of that last parts of the story that Kent told was a beautiful description of Louis traveling back to Japan after the war was over and hugging the prisoner-of-war camp officer who had treated him with cruelty. It was a marvelous, Jesus-centered story of healing and hope.



A participant prays and reflects during a quiet time built into the program.

After the large group sessions, we broke out into small groups. The power of the story and the accompanying scripture verses that Kent used in his message allowed us to enter into wonderful conversations

about hope, gifts, and the power of God's transforming grace in our lives.



Brad is youth pastor at Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Lacey Spring, Va.

# Giving ourselves away

By AARON KAUFFMAN



*“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.”*  
*Mark 8:35 (NIV)*

I recently read about a congregation in Texas that has routinely given away some of its best leaders, most committed members and significant financial resources in its first decade of existence. The result? *It has multiplied itself four times over.*

Though not at the same rate, something similar has occurred in Eastern Carolina District (ECD) over the past 45 years. I learned a bit of this history on a recent weekend trip to North Carolina.

Durham Mennonite Church emerged in 1970 under the leadership of Frank and Evelyn Nice. Sixteen years later, Durham commissioned a core group to start Raleigh Mennonite Church. Then again in 2001, Raleigh released some of its members to begin holding services in Chapel Hill.

The district partnered with Virginia Mennonite Missions to start Greensboro Mennonite Fellowship in 1988, which has since gone on to start Outlet 10:27, a house fellowship in nearby Graham. Through giving themselves away, our brothers and sisters in ECD have multiplied into five vibrant Anabaptist communities.

In a season of uncertainty for our denomination, it's easy to adopt a mentality of scarcity. While health and growth are the experience of some congregations—ECD is a great example—many of our congregations are feeling the pinch of decline. There may not be enough to go around, we think, so we'd better keep our resources of time, money and people close. The problem with this kind of thinking, according to Jesus, is that in

keeping our lives to ourselves, we'll actually end up losing them. Self-preservation may be a natural instinct, but it's not a gospel mentality.

This Advent and Christmas season is a perfect time to realign our lives with God's kingdom of abundance, which grows as we give ourselves away. After all, that's the example God set for us in Christ. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son...” Or, as the camp song puts it, “Love is something if you give it away, you end up having more.”

What would happen if we adopted this same self-giving attitude in our lives, both as individuals and as congregations? How might we practice reckless generosity for the sake of God's kingdom? Here are a few suggestions for you to consider this Christmas season:

- Give your resources away by buying an alternative Christmas gift for a loved one: [vmmissions.org/support/alternative-christmas-gifts/](http://vmmissions.org/support/alternative-christmas-gifts/)
- Give your love away by sponsoring a child at one of the two Christian schools that VMissions supports: [vmmissions.org/schools/](http://vmmissions.org/schools/)
- Give your time away by starting a Life Transformation Group with others who want to grow as disciples of Jesus: [vmmissions.org/learn/life-transformation-groups/](http://vmmissions.org/learn/life-transformation-groups/)
- Give your life away by serving in an assignment with VMissions: [vmmissions.org/serve/](http://vmmissions.org/serve/)
- Give your community away by inviting VMissions to help your congregation move toward missional multiplication: [skip.tobin@vmmissions.org](mailto:skip.tobin@vmmissions.org)

The list of ways to give ourselves away this Christmas could go on and on. Be creative! What have you got to lose?

Aaron Kauffman  
 President, Virginia Mennonite Missions

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# Investing in future kingdom communities

**C**hristmas is a time to celebrate new birth: The birth of Jesus Christ, the firstborn of the new creation, new birth in our own lives through the Spirit's transformation, and the birth of new expressions of God's kingdom among us.

Starting faith communities is a lot like giving birth. There is discomfort and pain, as well as excitement and joy. Nurture, care and patience are essential for growth.

In the past few years Virginia Mennonite Missions has helped conceive new church planting ventures in Albania, Belize, Italy, Kosovo and Thailand, with plans underway for the United States and Germany.

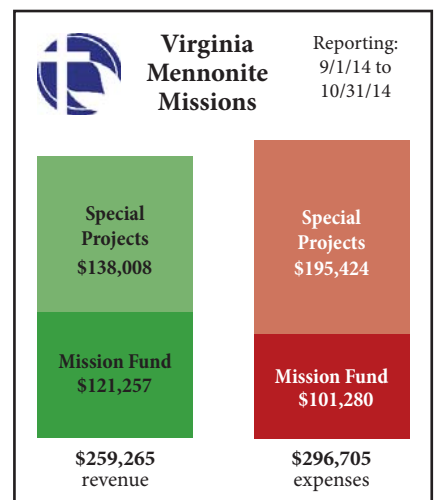
We depend on your prayers and support to see these newborn communities through to maturity.

This Christmas, we invite you to celebrate new birth by investing in these future kingdom communities. **Prayerfully consider how you can partner with VMissions in raising \$50,000 this Christmas season.**

You may donate online at [vmmissions.org](http://vmmissions.org) or send your check to 901 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg, VA 22802.



Sherah-Leigh is Director of Advancement for Virginia Mennonite Missions.



# Celebrating 40 years of God's faithfulness in Trinidad

By DEOLAL RAMDIAL

God has been in control of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago (MCTT) from its inception. The work that began in 1974 has led to a total of five congregations: Diego Martin, Charlieville, Chaguanas, Esperanza, and Sangre Grande. MCTT celebrated its 40th anniversary in a blessed and uplifting weekend, October 16-19, with the theme, "A Broken Alabaster Jar."

For this huge milestone in the life of the Trinidadian church, attendance included 26 fraternal guests from the United States and one from Jamaica to join in this happy occasion.

The first day's gathering was held at the Charlieville Mennonite Church (CMC), which is celebrating 30 years. Deolal Ramdial, MCTT President, had a radiant launch as balloons and bubbles arose in the sanctuary symbolizing the supreme God who is and has been in control of the church. "We celebrate the goodness and faithfulness of

God's mighty acts and wonderful works in the ministry of MCTT for 40 years. We celebrate this milestone because we want to



Deolal Ramdial, MCTT president, presents a token to Aaron Kauffman, president of VM Missions, during the 40th anniversary celebrations. Courtesy photo



Ganese Gunpath, MCTT overseer (left) and Navin Benny, pastor of Hope Mennonite Church (right) stand beside Paul Kniss, whose spiritual nurture and financial support brought into fruition the Hope Mennonite Church, both in its physical building and in its development as a congregation. Photo by Galen R. Lehman

preserve this history by making it known to all generations," he said with a jubilant voice.

On Friday, very lively and high-spirit worship filled the atmosphere, led by youth who shared in songs, drama and chorale readings at the Sangre Grande Mennonite Church.

On Saturday, there was a Fair Day at the Diego Martin Mennonite Church, the first congregation, depicting each church's history with food and delicacy samples in keeping with culture and tradition. There was also singing, drama and fun games for all including a chow throw and Jeopardy, organized by Ganesh and Risha Kalloo.

The celebration culminated with a Sunday morning worship service led by Pastor Ramesh Jaimani with approximately 300 people gathered at Hope Mennonite Church. During a special dedication of the

congregation by MCTT overseer and pastor Ganese Gunpath, his family released doves indicating the power of the Holy Spirit at work.

Recognition was given to Virginia Mennonite Missions for sending various missionaries to this island. I must emphasize how thankful we are to God for this work. There was also recognition for Galen and Gloria Lehman, who served

as Caribbean Regional Director and Assistant for over sixteen years. There was a video greeting by Richard Keeler, who initiated the missionary movement for MCTT, having served as a doctor for those afflicted with Hansen's Disease (leprosy), and Paul and Evelyn Kratz, the first pastoral couple.

Now God is moving our church forward into local leadership. Pastor Navin Benny delivered the message, drawing from the alabaster jar of *devotion, submission, obedience* and *love* as we journey together in Christ.

The president commissioned everyone to carry out the vision and mission of MCTT with an eternal inner flame. "We shall never go out in the name of Jesus Christ, the true flame!" he proclaimed.

Deolal is president of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad & Tobago.



## Third Conference Pastors' Leadership Consultation

Pastors and credentialed leaders from throughout Virginia Mennonite Conference gathered on Friday, November 14, for the third *Pastors' Leadership Consultation*. This consultation was entitled, "The Role of the Bible in the 21st Century," discussing Scripture's authority and the wide spectrum of biblical interpretation in an effort to understand varying points of view. Weavers Mennonite Church, in Harrisonburg, Va., hosted the event at the Shady Oak facility.



Participants at the Anabaptist gathering in Thailand this year. Photo by Edd Russell

## Testimonies shared of suffering and deliverance

By SARAH SCHOENHALS

Lek's\* life has had no shortage of suffering. Prior to his believing in Jesus, ten of his fifteen children died. After he became a Christian, his children stopped dying. People in his village noticed! Lek shared the gospel in his village, where several other families became believers as well. But evangelism is illegal in his country, and soon afterward, he was imprisoned for his faith in Jesus. While in prison, Lek continued to tell others about Jesus, and after his release, the church in his area continued to grow.

Lek was imprisoned two more times. During these times of tremendous suffering, he remained committed to loving his enemies. Prisoners in his country receive only the food that family and friends bring to

them. On multiple occasions, Lek chose to share his rice with the prison officials. The last time he was imprisoned, Lek was badly beaten and had severe head injuries. The prison officials thought he was dead, but he recovered. After his recovery, the daughter of one of the officials who had imprisoned Lek was sick. The official came to Lek and asked him to pray for his sick daughter. Lek found it very difficult to respond to this request from one who was clearly an enemy, but he prayed, and the girl was healed.

Personal testimonies, such as Lek's, were a highlight for those attending the second-ever gathering of Anabaptists Christians in Thailand this fall. The sharing included both the intense struggle, and the powerful witness, of loving enemies—

often the very people who are persecuting them. Following the conference, Life Enrichment Church leader Somjai Panta (Pastor Joi) said that he was amazed at the way in which those who gave testimonies were able to persevere in loving their enemies, even through extended persecution and torture. It shows, he said, that "whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for [Jesus] will find it." (Matt. 16:25).

\*names have been changed



Sarah serves with her husband Mark and two daughters in Det Udom, Thailand, with VM Missions and Eastern Mennonite Missions.

## New team in training to coordinate Quito refugee project

By DAVID SHENK

Work with the refugee project never ceases to be an enormously busy task with tough challenges in trying to stay on top of hundreds of complicated and difficult cases of families that continually arrive, mostly from Colombia.

During the past year alone, I interviewed 333 refugee families and followed up on many of their cases through our different aid programs and personal accompaniment. It continues to amaze me how many refugee families find their way to our small church looking for help. Almost more amazing is how much the refugee project and the church are able to accompany, support, improve and transform family situations.

On a daily basis, refugees arrive on the church's doorstep who have no food to eat, place to sleep, medicine to treat their health conditions, or hope for a brighter tomorrow. It no longer surprises me when people arrive in desperate situations; our church is place of constant refuge.

It is difficult to put into words what this has meant for my own life and for the church, but I am convinced that our work forms a small part of the giant global network that struggles each day to tangibly build the Kingdom of God among us.

Another source of hope is the new refugee coordination team. After several years of working by myself in the tiring task of coordinating the project, it is a source of much joy and relief to have fresh

faces and minds. I am confident that the refugee project will thrive with the new team. Over the past month, I've been immersed in a busy time of transition with the new coordination team, teaching them the ins and outs of how things function in the project, in Quito, and in refugee circles.

In the course of training the new team, I've realized how much I have learned and how much I will miss working with the refugee population when I am gone. It has been one of the richest experiences of my life.



David serves in Quito, Ecuador, with Virginia Mennonite Missions, in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network.

## Relationships over accomplishments

By CALEB KIEFER

Things here have been wonderful, terrible, emotional, lonely, but yet peaceful all at the same time. It is hard to explain all the emotions. Each day brings a new challenge.

The handy man work or feeding the chickens isn't the challenge. What's challenging is to never get done what I set out to accomplish during the day. Whether it is getting distracted by the students or by a neighbor who is excited to tell me everything he knows about Pennsylvania, something always gets in the way.

It has been frustrating for me because I love a plan. When I eat my breakfast, I

make "the plan." I think, "First, I will paint the steps of the church, then move the broiler chicks, then give some attention to that leaky gutter." My whole day is already scheduled before I even leave the house. But the plan usually doesn't work out, and I'm left feeling like I didn't accomplish much.

God has been working on me, though. He has been showing me that serving is not about me or the amount of work I am able to accomplish. Instead, it is about me making relationships. So I have been practicing purposely not making a plan for the day. It



Caleb roasts marshmallows over a fire with youth from the Ridge church in Jamaica, after a Bible study. Courtesy photo

sounds crazy, but not having a plan actually makes the day move more smoothly.



Caleb serves through tranSend with his wife Roni at the Maranatha School for the Deaf, St. Elizabeth, Jamaica.

## A day in the life of Nancy Marshall



Sulmi, Nancy's adopted daughter.



Students read and study in the library where Nancy works. Photos by Nancy Marshall.



Nancy teaches a young student American Sign Language (ASL).

*Nancy Marshall lives and works in Orange Walk Town Belize She shares a window into a typical day for her as she juggles pastoring the Jesus' Deaf Church, parenting, and tutoring.*

**5:00 A** I wish I were running, but I can't seem to get up this early! (Please pray about this for me.) By 6:00, I'm in the shower; Sulmi is up and ironing her uniform, then a shower and we eat breakfast.

**7:15 A** Sulmi leaves the house on a bike for a mile ride to school. I do devotions.

**8:00 A** I leave for school in the van. My classroom is in the library; it's great to be in the library. It's airy and clean. I like being surrounded by books. I open it about 8:05 and let the children come in to browse. It means lots of hugs and smiles, and I can take an interest in them and show them they are important. Some drop in just to chat. It's a good part of the day.

**8:30 A** I teach Morine Ayuso until 11:30. She is a deaf seven-year-old. Morine and I spend the morning reading high frequency word books and practicing spelling, writing stories with the words she knows, learning to add, subtract and tell time, along with other basic math skills. She likes to take the books home and retell the stories to her family. By doing that, her parents, grandma and aunt also learn the ASL vocabulary. She's doing fabulously, and it's so crucially helpful that her family is practicing ASL with her.

**11:30 A** I do lots of different things with the afternoon: catch up on paperwork, go food shopping, help someone from church. Thursday afternoons I spend preparing for Friday evening Bible study.

**3:15 P** Sulmi comes home from school; we chat a bit and then start on her homework. She continues working while I cook dinner. Some nights she is done before dinner and some nights we work until 9 p.m.

**6:30 P** In the evening we usually relax with TV or Facebook or a book—sometimes doing our own thing.

**9:00 P** Bedtime!



Nancy serves in Orange Walk, Belize, in partnership with Eastern Mennonite Missions.

## Bridging community, making connections

By ALICIA HORST

In August, a young woman described a difficult housing situation to Jaime Miller Gonzalez, our Case Manager. She and her husband moved their belongings into a double wide trailer with the intent of living there the next day.

Unfortunately, a fire burned the majority of the trailer on the night of the move. The young couple had paid for the trailer in full, but had not secured property insurance and was unable to afford demolition costs. Through the Mennonite Builders' Guild, Jaime was able to contact Partners Excavating, who donated heavy machinery demolition services on November 5. In addition, the Rockingham County landfill waived their fee.

We are so grateful for the churches and community members that help support immigrant families and individuals



Partners Excavating demolishes the damaged structure. Photo: Jaime Miller Gonzalez

that have experienced challenges and opportunities living in the Shenandoah Valley.



Alicia is Executive Director of NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center.



## Giving opportunity

Equipping and nurturing the leaders of congregations is at the heart of Virginia Mennonite Conference's work. We seek to grow towards the way of Christ not only in our personal life, but in our community connections that seek to represent significant impulses to be the body of Christ at work in the world.

**A charitable gift to VMC keeps the discipleship formation vision alive** among our churches, ministries and partnerships.

Donations designated for VMC may be sent to the Conference Office at 901 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg, VA 22802, or contributed online (with PayPal®) at [virginiaconference.org/donate](http://virginiaconference.org/donate)

## Church at the water's edge

By TAMI NICE

In summer, our Outlet 10.27 gatherings I move from our house to our backyard.

Summertime means food, fellowship and pool time. It makes for a great gateway for families to come get to know each other in a relaxed atmosphere. In addition to summer fun-time, we use this time to lead a discussion with the kids (and adults looking on).

This year I decided to lead the kids time in the "Seven Signs" in John, encouraging the kids to spend time each week reading the stories in John, and then reading them together on Sunday night and talking about what it says to us about people, about Jesus and about ourselves.

As you can imagine, it is sometimes hard to get a group of kids out of the pool and into meaningful discussion. The deck gets a bit crowded once everyone exits the water.

This last summer, I got the idea to put the kids on the side of the pool and wade out

into the water so I could more easily get and keep their attention.

We shared the story in Mark 4 where "Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge." We decided if it worked for Jesus, it may just work for us.

It has been a lot of fun to see the mixture of kids relating to the stories: from those hearing the story for the first time, to our own applying how they see themselves in the story. We find some rich blessings



Tami Nice leads a poolside Bible study for kids that Outlet 10.27 connects with in Graham, N.C. Photo courtesy of author

in spending this relaxed time investing in relationships through the sharing of food, fun and just plenty of opportunity for conversations.



Tami is a leader of Outlet 10.27, a house-based church in formation in Graham, N.C., with her husband Keith.

# DECEMBER 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
<p><i>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.</i> John 1:14</p> <p>7 Pray for Robert Wenger, co-overseer of Central District, as he provides counsel and guidance to pastors in the rural communities of Virginia and West Virginia.</p>	<p>1 Alma, an 18-year-old from a Muslim family in Montenegro, met Jesus in a dream and became a believer. Pray for her faith to grow deep roots and for peace in the tense situation this creates with her family.</p> <p>8 Give thanks for the ministry of tranSenders Robert and Jessi Russo in connection with Asheville Mennonite Church. Pray for guidance as they look to continue their work for the Kingdom there.</p>	<p>2 Join Dave and Rebekka Stutzman in praising God for the first missional network gathering in Germany, for the sense of community and vision that was shared, and for the way that God is stirring.</p> <p>9 Join Michael and Ruthy as they declare God's promises of healing and restoration over their Muslim neighbors.</p>	<p>3 Pray for Lee Martin, pastor of Mount Clinton, as he provides leadership at Mt. Clinton Mennonite Church, a congregation seeking to help people experience God's grace and forgiveness in our world today.</p> <p>10 Pray for Klementina Shahini as she gives leadership to the staff and development of Lezha Academic Center. Ask God to fill her with His vision for the school.</p>	<p>4 Pray for health, strength and spiritual protection for the Horst and Strode families in Thailand as they seek to bring Christ's kingdom.</p> <p>11 Pray for Jerry Sebastian, pastor of Riverside Mennonite Church in Harman, W.Va, as he provides inspiration and spiritual insight to the congregation.</p>	<p>5 Give thanks for the humor, compassion, and dedication Justin Rittenhouse brings to the classroom at Lezha Academic Center. Ask God to increase his opportunities to speak truth into his students' lives.</p> <p>12 Nancy Marshall is pastor at Jesus' Deaf Church in Belize. Join her in asking God to raise up strong Belizean leaders for the congregation.</p>	<p>6 Pray for Brook Hostetter as she finishes the year teaching English in Peru and prepares to return in 2015 to teach music. Ask God to fill her with energy and excitement for this new task.</p> <p>13 The Riddle family leaves Italy at the end of this month. Ask God to cover Chris, Melody, Micah, Adam, and Isaiah in His grace and love during this time of significant transitions.</p>	
<p>14 Pray for Jim Mellinger, pastor of Greensboro Mennonite Fellowship (NC), as he provides leadership to explore what it means to live life in the way Jesus modeled.</p>	<p>15 Bangkok, Thailand, is a city of over eight million people. Ask God to lead Steve and Bethany to divine appointments with the people whose hearts He is stirring.</p>	<p>16 Join the Albanian team in asking God to expand His Kingdom in Albania, reaching many people with the Good News.</p>	<p>17 Ask God to continue walking with Adam and Jeanette Strode as they seek to follow Christ each day in Bangkok, Thailand.</p>	<p>18 Pray for Kevin Goertzen, pastor of Springdale Mennonite, as he provides leadership to grow the congregation's ministry to the local community.</p>	<p>19 Pray for Anton, a young Albanian man who Rafael Tartari connects with, as he studies in Bible School with a desire to serve the Lord.</p>	<p>20 tranSender Roni Kiefer works with the three youngest students at Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica. Pray that God would continue to encourage her and develop her gifts in teaching.</p>	
<p>21 Pray for Spencer Bradford, pastor of Durham Mennonite (NC), as he provides leadership in removing the dividing wall of hostility in all areas of life, seeking to create a new humanity focused upon Christ.</p>	<p>22 Pray that our workers around the world would have many opportunities to share with those around them the Good News of Christmas.</p>	<p>23 Pray for David Shenk as he trains a new three-person team to take over his role of working with refugees in Ecuador. Ask God to equip these new workers with strength and wisdom.</p>	<p>24 Praise God for Gracie and Yugo Prasetyo's dedication to seeing their community in Asia come to know Christ. Ask God to give them courage, words of wisdom, and a heart full of love for their neighbors.</p>	<p>25 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, a Savior has come. This is Good News! May we celebrate and share this Good News that is for all people.</p>	<p>26 Give thanks for the precious lives of the Roma children that Norma Teles teaches at the Joshua Center in Albania. Pray that God would pour out His love for them through this ministry.</p>	<p>27 Pray for the Christmas Celebration of the Life Enrichment Church in Det Udom, Thailand. Ask God to use this evangelism opportunity to open many hearts to the Good News of Jesus.</p>	
<p>28 Pray for EMU President Loren Swartzendruber as he seeks to provide executive leadership to a denominational ministry that is equipping young adults for leadership and service in a global environment from an Anabaptist faith perspective.</p>	<p>29 Praise God for tranSender Whitney Specht's dedication to learning language and culture in Kosova. Ask God to bless her learning so that she might be a blessing to others.</p>	<p>30 Pray for Morine, a 7-year-old deaf girl in Belize, as she works to catch up with her hearing classmates, and for Nancy Marshall as she encourages and tutors Morine each day.</p>	<p>31 Remember Allen Umble and the many good relationships he has with Albanians. Ask God to bless these relationships and reveal His love through Allen.</p>	<p>Prayer calendar sponsored by:</p>			<p><b>Bergey's Tire</b> <b>TIRE EXCELLENCE SINCE 1924</b> 190 Charles Street Harrisonburg, VA 22802 Phone 540-442-8473 <a href="http://www.bergeys.com">www.bergeys.com</a></p>



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# Announcements

**Come visit with Mark & Sarah Schoenhals** and their daughters Heidi and Hannah in Harrisonburg, while they are on home assignment from Thailand! The Schoenhals' MST will host an open house at Eastern Mennonite Seminary (upper level) on Saturday, December 6, from 4:30-7:30 p.m. This come-and-go event will include Thai snacks and a presentation by the Schoenhals family from 5:00-5:30 p.m. about their mission work alongside the believers in rural Thailand. Before and after the presentation, there will be time for informal connecting.

Join the **WCRC Marriage Retreat**, February 20-22. We invite you to a weekend getaway with lots of time to really connect with your spouse. Jim and Rosemary Hess of Transformation Ministries Center will be speaking and leading our sessions. For more information or to register online, go to [www.wcrc.info](http://www.wcrc.info). Contact WCRC Program Director, Jenn Hill—[programs@wrcr.info](mailto:programs@wrcr.info) or (866) 566-9272

**Big Spring Mennonite Church** is seeking a half-time pastor to lead a small, vibrant congregation in Luray, Va., known for our generosity and love for children. Big Spring seeks a pastoral candidate with an Anabaptist perspective who will lead/partner with us in nurturing spiritual growth, providing pastoral care, and building connections in our community. If this opportunity interests you, please contact Ed Rissler at (540) 833-2962 or at [jerissler@comcast.net](mailto:jerissler@comcast.net)

## UPCOMING TRIP

**Middle East travel opportunity:** Registration is now open for "Places, People, & Prayers"—April 30-May 23—an **Israel/Palestine study tour** sponsored through Eastern Mennonite Seminary and co-led by Dorothy Jean Weaver, Professor of New Testament, and Kevin A. Clark, Campus Pastor. This tour is open to all interested travelers, with the potential of 3 study hours of seminary credit for those who desire it. Interested pastors may apply for \$500 travel grants through the "Come and See" program of MC USA. Registrations will be accepted on a "first come, first served" basis. For more information and a brochure, contact Dorothy Jean Weaver at (540) 432-4276 or at [weaverdj@emu.edu](mailto:weaverdj@emu.edu)

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