

Youth at Senior High Retreat learn about God's grace and gift of relationships and sexuality

By DEB HORST

This year, with no Conference Youth Minister to work at coordinating the Senior High retreat, four youth pastors from the Harrisonburg area took on the task of planning the VMC Senior High Retreat held at Highland Retreat on Feb 7-9. Assisted by Conference staff, Brad Kolb (Grace Mennonite Church), Deb Horst (Lindale), Ross Erb (Park View), and Michael Harnish (Weavers), planned a weekend of worship, learning, and recreation for youth from across Virginia Mennonite Conference. Ninety-eight youth from 11 different congregations within VMC gathered to explore the area of relationships, including God's good gift of sexuality.



Youth and sponsors from Lindale Mennonite Church discuss content from the sessions and address questions.

The speakers, Duane Beck and Lana Miller, shared from their hearts and their Biblically-based convictions about healthy sexuality, which is a gift from God. The guiding text for the weekend was Luke 7:36-50; the story of the woman anointing Jesus' feet with expensive perfume.

Lana and Duane had three guiding prayers for the sessions: "God, give me the heart to love myself like you love me. God,

give me the heart to love others as you love them. God, give me the heart to love you like you love me." As we looked at each of these prayers set in the context of the story, we noticed foundational guidelines for healthy sexuality. First, to love ourselves like Jesus loved that woman even



Lana Miller and Duane Beck shared from their hearts and Scripture about healthy sexuality, a gift of God. Photos courtesy of author

with sins too unforgivable to mention in the Bible. Secondly, to notice how Simon reacted to this woman and to rid ourselves of our own judgmental hearts towards others. Lastly, to intimately love God, who created us to love him like the woman showed Jesus lavish love.

Beyond that narrative, we entered into group discussion of what culture might tell us about human relationships and how that compares to what the Church should be saying about relationships. Furthermore, in our church group discussion times, we took time to address questions and comments regarding the content shared in the large group sessions. Finally, on Sunday morning, we had an anointing service for those

Amazing Grace

Our Relationships, Our Sexuality

who desired God's forgiveness, healing, or for those who wanted to recommit to living healthily in human relationships.

VMC covers a huge geographical area, and the youth in our congregations have little opportunity to spend time with other youth from across the conference. This weekend is one time where that opportunity exists. In a camp setting, with a focus on healthy, godly relationships, it was encouraging to see youth mixing and connecting, learning and having fun, and worshipping the God who created us for relationships.

We are grateful to the worship team from Weavers for leading us in music, to Highland Retreat for the use of space, to Duane and Lana, to the Virginia Mennonite Conference staff for their assistance in logistics, and to the sponsors and pastors for bringing their youth to this event. Praise be to God who created us to be in relationship with both the Creator and creation!



Youth listen and engage in a main session.



Deb is Associate Pastor of Christian Formation & Youth at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va.

Offering love to the degree essential for relationship!

By CLYDE G. KRATZ



Rapid social change and our responses to those changes create chaotic environments in culture and the life of the faith community.

I have been enamored by the story of the compassionate father in Luke 15. In this famous parable titled “The Prodigal Son,” or “Prodigal Sons,” we see a dad seeking to make sense of the changing realities of his family. His youngest son confronts dad with a request for an early inheritance, thus communicating—*I wish you were dead! I want your money now!* The son leaves home with no expectation of returning.

But he returns, and on that day, his dad is in the field. He spots his son at a distance and with excitement runs through the village to meet him. Overwhelmed by the renewed relationship, he throws a feast in his honor with all the customary symbols of restored relationship.

However, his eldest son fails to see the goodwill in dad’s abandonment of custom and practice, and thus refuses to come to the party. Both sons humiliate their dad to the local folks, yet dad discovers a way to be in relationship with both sons regardless of custom.

Family systems are strange relational entities. On the one hand, a family provides care, nurture, and a place to gain identity and instill values.

On the other hand, a family can cause the most pain to a person’s experience when abuse, rejection, or abandonment

occurs. Family systems function differently based on the key players in the family and their interactions with the other members.

In patriarchal cultures, it matters what dad believes, how he relates to others, and to whom he extends or withholds love. In matriarchal cultures, it matters what mom believes, how she relates to others, and to whom she extends or withholds love.

Recognizing dad in the compassionate father story in a patriarchal culture, it is fascinating he extends love to his sons to the degree that is essential for the wellbeing of both sons.

As a faith community, we are caught on the horns of a dilemma. In the midst of our discussions about same gender attraction-relationships-lifestyle, we find persons separating at the point of disagreement. Hostile conversations emerge about who is right and who is wrong. Power issues emerge as people organize for advantage and implement social change prematurely.

As the faith community embarks on a period of discernment about same gender issues, let us model the behavior of the dad in the story of the prodigal sons. He met each child in such a way that his love was evident to the community.

The focus of the story is ultimately about lost and found, but Dad’s compassion is the one variable that makes all the difference in the world! It is the variable that is equated with how God responds to us and expects us to respond to others.

Clyde G. Kratz
Executive Conference Minister
Virginia Mennonite Conference

STAFF TRANSITION



Gloria L. Lehman

This is the last issue of *Connections* that I am editing. I am retiring on May 30 from my position as VMM *Director of Public Relations*.

As I reflect on the past years of serving Virginia Mennonite Missions and Virginia Mennonite Conference as the editor of *Connections*, I remember what it was like in September 2001 when I began this role. The publication was two-color, eight pages, with the prayer calendar on page seven just as it is now.

It has grown since that time. It is now full-color, and some issues are expanded to 12 pages or more. Comments have been received about *Connections* being one of the best conference newsletters in the denomination—that makes us happy and humbly proud!

I have been inspired by the stories and pictures that a wide variety of people have submitted for publication over the years. Their passion for the Kingdom of God and the work of the Church has, I trust, inspired our readers. How blessed I have been to engage in this means of spreading the Good News!

Farewell to you, faithful readers. Continue to read and be inspired.

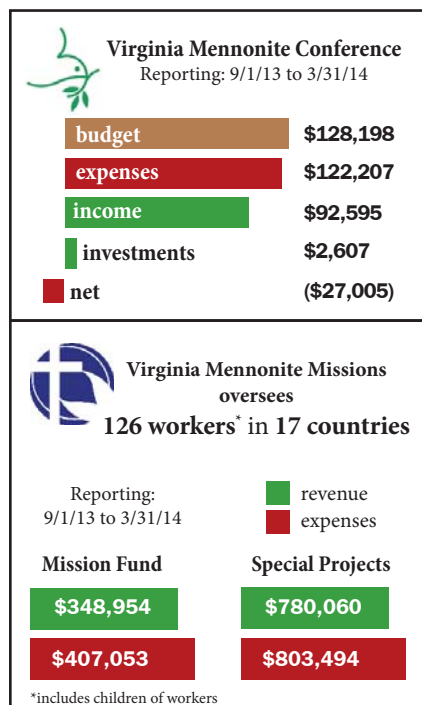
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Conference welcomes McCracken as new Administrative Services Manager



Virginia Mennonite Conference hired Anieta McCracken as Administrative Services Manager, a newly-created role that assists the Executive Conference Minister in variety of

projects, serves as event coordinator, and manages the documents and files of the Conference. She began April 21.

McCracken, a certified paralegal, has worked as an office assistant in the Juvenile Justice system and as a legal secretary in the Shenandoah Valley. She has also been an adjunct professor at National College, Harrisonburg, Va., where she also chaired the paralegal department; and a freelance writer, researcher, and copy editor. She served as executive secretary of a church organization for five years, organizing and planning annual conferences. She brings a wealth of relational and administrative skills to her role, as well as professional experience.

She has two daughters, AnnaMaria Johnson, of Broadway, Va., a teacher at Eastern Mennonite School, and Ana Updyke, a homemaker in the Finger Lakes region of New York, and four grandchildren.

Conference thanks Diane Bowman for her seven years as Staff Assistant



Diane Bowman will complete seven years of employment with Virginia Mennonite Conference. She served as the Staff Assistant providing

support to the key leaders and leadership committees of Virginia Mennonite Conference. Her organizational gifts, attention to detail on many fronts, and connecting information to people has been greatly appreciated. Thank you, Diane, for your service to Virginia Mennonite Conference.

Pastoral leaders invited to second Consultation event

The second in a series of *Pastoral Leadership Consultations* is being planned by the Leadership Enrichment Committee of VMC's Faith and Life Commission. The topic of discussion at this consultation will be on the *meaning of baptism and membership in the church*. Lead pastors, overseers, and credentialed leaders who are currently serving in pastoral roles in VMC congregations are invited to attend. Take this opportunity to give and receive counsel as ministers facing the challenges of our day.

The *Consultation* will be Friday, May 2, at Powhatan Mennonite Church, from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Lunch will be provided; a \$7 suggested donation will be collected to offset the cost of the meal provided by the congregation. Please RSVP to info@virginiaconference.org by noon on Monday, April 28, to indicate your intent to participate. (If you are not planning to attend, no RSVP is necessary.)

Eastside Church uses five discipleship strategies

By MATT SCHWARTZ

Peter Eberly, Eastside congregation lead pastor, recently received an *Innovative Ministry* award given by Blue Ridge Architects, Harrisonburg. When asked how Eastside works at "making disciples in the way of Christ," Eastside Associate Pastor Matt Schwartz shared five strategies for thinking about discipleship based on Acts 3:1-16.

- 1. Do What You Do:** Peter and John went to the temple because they were Jewish men doing what Jewish men did. We have to begin to view our jobs, hobbies, social circles, and leisure activities as places where discipleship happens. It's not only for ministry professionals.
- 2. Make Connection:** When everyone else is trying to avoid eye contact, Peter and John made sure to engage.



(left) Eastside's vision, represented visually. Courtesy of author



- 3. Know Who Is Getting Credit.** When the man clung to Peter and John and the crowds rushed toward them in amazement, they made sure that Jesus Christ of Nazareth received credit.
- 4. Direct Expectation, Naming God's Movement:** The crippled man expected something; I'm guessing money. Peter directed his expectation and helped the crippled man and the crowd understand that God was acting.

- 5. Don't Miss Out On Joy:** Joy is not explicitly named in this passage, but the healed cripple certainly displays joy. Joy resulting from discipleship relationships is present all through the New Testament. (*2 Corinthians 2:3, Philippians 2:2, 1 Thessalonians 2:20, 2 Timothy 1:4, 1 John 1:3-4*)

For a more complete exploration, see: www.eastsideharrisonburg.org/sermons/witness/



Matt is associate pastor at Eastside Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

Children's program at Jesus' Deaf Church blesses parents

By NANCY MARSHALL

Children are the spice of life. By being demanding, they teach us how to focus on issues other than our own. They make us laugh and, with their dependency, they remind us of what total trust in the Father means. I thank God for these blessings.

When God started Jesus' Deaf Church eight and a half years ago, the church was entirely made up of children and youth. Some were in high school while others were in primary school. Now many of those "children" are having their own children. So our church is again flooded with little feet running around and filled with a joy that makes us adults wonder how to again feel such abandon.

Although we use drama and power point slides to keep everyone's attention during the sermon,



Chelsea Kobylarz (photo at left) and Kathy Miller work with the children's Sunday school at Jesus' Deaf Church. Photos by Gloria Lehman

stands at the door to the Sunday School room eager to go in and play. The adults are also happier. Selena Gomez remarked, "I can pay attention now!"

Our Friday night Deaf Women's Bible study has grown to about 15 people. Half of them have little children. For a while we let the children play in the center of the circle, but their movement distracted our Deaf eyes. Kathy and Chelsea suggested they take all of the children to Kathy's apartment (right next door) to play while the women study the Bible. That has not only helped the mothers to focus but has given them a nice break from child care.

Is this sustainable? Not the way it is currently set up, but children are constantly growing and changing. For now, Kathy and Chelsea provide an awesome reprieve from our little blessings.



Kathy Miller, serving with *Partners*.

it's hard to stay focused with two- and three-year-olds running circles around the pews. It's even harder to keep them in their seats. So when Kathy Miller came with *Partners* in January, she suggested that she and Chelsea Kobylarz, a *tranSender*, start a Sunday School for the children in one of the adjoining rooms.

Kathy and Chelsea alternate being the teacher and remaining in worship. Now when Joshue (age 2) arrives at church he



Nancy is the pastor of Jesus' Deaf Church, Orange Walk Town, Belize.

Sharing the Messiah of the real New Age

By ROBERT RUSSO

With a deep yearning for the end of wars, selfishness, poverty and environmental destruction, Asheville becomes a southeastern mecca for those hoping for the *new age*. The area is filled with people who love the mountains, organic food, peace, and seeking to connect spiritually with the universe, find inner healing and world transformation—perfect for an Anabaptist movement!

It is in this context that we share the personal love of God, the transformation by the Holy Spirit and the Gospel of the servant King Jesus Messiah who is bringing in the true new age to come, setting all things back into right relationship and wholeness with Him.

Jessi and I are greatly appreciating the mentoring partnership with Pastor Sanford Yoder and Asheville Mennonite Church (AMC) through VMM's *tranSend* program.

I serve on a monthly preaching rotation and Jessi is actively helping develop new outreach ideas to young families. The women of AMC hosted their first Parents' Night Out on April 11, where young parents can drop off their children and enjoy a date night. AMC is putting together an introduction to understanding the different sections of the Bible for some of the early new believers in the area. Some of these came to AMC as a result of last years' Alpha course.

Both Jessi and I are connecting with people on the edge of faith through the week and with believers in a small group for women and a men's Life Transformation Group on Saturday mornings. The groups have really deepened relationships, forming an extended missional community. From these relationships, we are developing new missional events to connect with the neo-indigenous community from a Kingdom of God perspective. As the weath-



Weekly Friday night drum circle is a great space for connecting and conversation. Courtesy of author

er is warming up, it is an exciting time to be out sharing life and the Messiah with people in downtown and in the mountains.

Please pray for our friends that haven't yet made the commitment to Jesus, for the various missional events, and that we may develop deep relationships with new people. May the people of Asheville see the face of a gracious loving God through the church.



Robert and Jessica serve in Asheville, N.C., with VMM's *tranSend* program. blueridgerecreations.blogspot.com

Nancy Marshall ordained for pastoral ministry in Belize

By MARTIN RHODES

The van bounces through the dusty streets of Orange Walk Town, empty except for Nancy Marshall and me. Nancy is the pastor of Jesus' Deaf Church in this small town in the Central American country of Belize. On this Saturday evening, we are returning home after dropping off several men and boys from the "Boyz Bible study" that she hosts in her home each week. Suddenly, Nancy brings the van to a halt, quickly shifts into reverse and backs up 200 feet to greet two young men walking in the street. A lengthy conversation ensues and ends with an invitation to Bible study and church. After we pull away, Nancy explains that she taught one of the boys in school some time ago and remembered him on sight. I am reminded of Jesus' description of His mission to "seek

and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10) and am struck by the warmth and conviction in Nancy's sharing of the Gospel with these young men.

On Sunday morning, the Deaf believers and their families, the leaders of the Belize Evangelical Mennonite Church, and representatives of VM Missions gather at Jesus' Deaf Church to confirm God's call on Nancy's life by ordaining her as a minister of the Gospel. The Gospel is preached in 3 languages (American Sign Language, Spanish, and English), songs of praise are sung, testimonies are given, vows are made, and a church embraces the one whom they have called to be their servant leader. As we part ways at the end of the day, Nancy says that her desire and joy is to make disciples and



Nancy Marshall with Fernando Blanco, president of the Belize Evangelical Mennonite Church, and Tomás Torres, lay leader, during her ordination service. Photo: Galen Lehman

to raise up leaders for the church in Belize. May God continue to equip and bless her for this good work!

See a video of the ordination service at <http://vimeo.com/90360178>. Nancy's blog is at jesus-deafchurch.blogspot.com



Martin is Short-term Missions Coach and MST Coach for Virginia Mennonite Missions.

Couple serves with MCC in Lesotho amidst winds of change

By CLAIRE DEBRUN

The wind is always a force to be reckoned with in the high and dry nation of the Basotho. It whips up the red dust from the hard, dry earth. The children who are walking and running to school exude an enthusiasm that belies the severe drought. This is the Maphutseng Valley; a remote, mountainous, agrarian area thinly populated with small, bucolic villages. The people are beautiful, friendly, generous in spirit, and resilient.

We hear the children singing and see them lining up in the school yard. MeMa-Lintle, the principal, leads in the Lord's Prayer and they file into their classrooms. This is the primary school where MCC was invited and where we, my husband Harlan and I, were sent to work as Peace Educat-

ors. Corporal punishment (CP) is culturally acceptable in many parts of the world, including Lesotho. It occurs with impunity and there is no consistent accountability. The United Nations noticed the widespread use of CP and passed a resolution to universally end it. Lesotho, as well as many other



Harlan and Claire visiting the home of a pastor and friend with whom they worked in 1985 in Lesotho. Courtesy of author

nations, signed this resolution and outlawed the use of CP in Lesotho's schools. MCC has also taken notice of CP and its detrimental effects on learners, teachers, and society at large. Our MCC service assignment was designated as a pilot project to help the school move from CP to

Positive Discipline (PD), which is a non-violent alternative to CP.

We devised a three-prong approach:

1. *Preach (share and discuss):* We used the teachings of Jesus regarding children, peace, and non-violent conflict resolution as our model and the scaffolding for our teacher training and central message. We also employed solid educational, philosophical, theological, and behavioral principles as a base for our teacher training content.
2. *Teach educational best practice* strategies, principles, and specific classroom management techniques of PD.
3. *Reach the children's parents and the school board* to equip them with non-violent and effective methods of discipline at home. We led workshops and training sessions, worked with teachers individually, taught in the classrooms, and held Parenting Skills Conferences with the parents and school

Lesotho continued on page 6

Lesotho continued from page 5

board in the village. We were able to incorporate Bible study, prayer, and worship in our work with the school and the community. It was exciting to see the changes from CP to PD happen.

After the Parenting Skills Conferences and at the end of the school year, there was

a meeting with the parents to explain the rules and agenda for the next school year. After the principal finished, a woman said, "I think we need to beat the children for them to behave." The wise principal asked the audience of parents and school board members what they thought about this. One mother said in a weighty voice, "We will no longer beat our children at school." The rest of the audience voiced their

mutual agreement with her. The meeting ended with a strong and positive statement for PD. People filed out of the meeting with the wind at their backs; they recognized the wind of change was blowing that day.



Claire is a member of Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

CONFERENCE ENDORSED MINISTRIES

Rachel Held Evans: Millennials need church to be a 'safe place to wrestle with tough questions,' honor differences

By LAUREN JEFFERSON

When popular Christian author and blogger Rachel Held Evans came to Eastern Mennonite University last week, one student cleared her schedule. First-year seminarian Lindsay Davis was at each of Evans' appearances: morning chapel, an afternoon reading and discussion with an undergraduate Anabaptist Biblical Values class and an evening lecture.

Reprising themes she explores in her books, *Evolving in Monkeytown* (Zondervan, 2010) and *The Year of Biblical Womanhood* (Thomas Nelson, 2012), and on



Rachel Held Evans

her popular blog, Evans repeatedly urged faith communities to nurture diversity and honor differences. That message was one that Davis also wanted to celebrate.

"I was raised Pentecostal, attended a Brethren college, go to a Methodist church, and study at a Mennonite seminary," Davis said. "When I found Rachel's blog, I was struggling with faith and doubt and being a woman wanting to pursue pastoral leadership yet being told I couldn't. What she

talks about has resonated with me and inspired me."

Similar feelings brought audience members to Harrisonburg from as far away as Pennsylvania and Indiana.

Evans' thoughtful, often humorous explorations of her evangelical faith and the Christian tradition have earned her both controversy and acclaim.

To read the full article visit: emu.edu/now/news/?p=19683

Lauren is a writer for the *Daily News-Record* (Harrisonburg, Va.)

FLRC seeks wholeness through mental health counseling

By ANDREA BIEBER



In my new role as Administrative Coordinator for Family Life Resource Center (FLRC), I have been pleased, yet surprised, at how many opportunities I have had to introduce who we are as an agency.

Though we have locally provided mental health services for more than the last 25 years, many in our churches and community are still unacquainted with our agency.

FLRC is a nonprofit counseling agency, birthed from the Virginia Mennonite Conference in 1987, which strives to meet the behavioral health needs of individuals, couples, families, businesses, church, and community groups.

Working from a Christian perspective, clinicians at FLRC are committed to helping people pursue mental health and wholeness as individuals. Further, in partnering with pastors, congregations, and the community to promote awareness and understanding of mental health issues, we seek to strengthen and equip these entities

to better support their own group dynamic with regard to mental health needs.

Individual counseling, educational and support groups, consultations with churches and other organizations, and public programs are among the services offered at FLRC.

Learn more about the clinicians, upcoming psycho-educational groups and workshops, newsletter subscriptions and more at our newly-updated website: www.flrc.org

Andrea is Administrative Coordinator for FLRC.

MAY 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p><i>Prayer calendar sponsored</i></p> <p>in appreciation for Lloyd and Sarah Weaver and former and current missions staff members who lovingly put Christ's Kingdom first.</p>					
<p>4 Today the Children's Convention is held at the Good Tidings Mennonite Church in Kingston, Jamaica. Singing, contests, worship and teaching make a rewarding day for children and adult leaders. Ask for God's blessing on all.</p>	<p>5 In China, Joel expects a team to conduct a week-long English camp sometime this summer. He asks for us to pray for good planning for this endeavor. Martin Rhodes, VMM Partners director, is facilitating the planning here in Virginia.</p>	<p>6 Rafael & Solongi Tartari with son Paulo and daughter Sophia have returned to Lezhe, Albania, after months in their home country, Brazil. Thank God for their availability to serve the church in Lezhe, and their commitment to the ministry there.</p>	<p>7 In South Asia, occasionally Michael & Ruth and team members visit a nearby tuberculosis hospital to share and pray for healing for the patients. May God move mightily through His presence and the power of prayer.</p>	<p>8 Sid, Bradie, and Justin Ramella attend school in Istog, Kosovo, where they live with parents Vince & LaVonne. Pray for them as they face daily challenges in this cross-cultural setting. May God open ways for them to learn and make friends.</p>	<p>9 It's Friday, and teachers and students look forward to the weekend! Pray for the teachers at the Lezha Academic Center who strive for excellence in the classroom and demonstrate love and kindness to the students and co-workers.</p>	<p>10 Pray for Pat McFarren as he provides pastoral leadership to Knoxville (Tenn.) Mennonite Church.</p>
<p>11 Come to the VMM Family Missions Fest, 3-6:00 p.m. today, EMS campus. Engage in the activities and learn about cultures and people in the countries where VMM has workers. For more details, go to ymmissions.org</p>	<p>12 In Podgorica, Montenegro, Vladimir & Mariana Cizmanski have returned to their church leadership roles after a leave from the ministry there. We thank God for their commitment to this growing church; may all be encouraged and blessed.</p>	<p>13 On Tuesdays, Jay & Sheri Hartzler sing with the Roma children in the village of Tigmandru, Romania. The children love the songs with motions and the craft projects. These sessions are a blessing to the children who are needy in many ways.</p>	<p>14 Pray for Boyd Wyatt as he provides pastoral care and leadership to members of Lambert Mennonite Church, WYmer, West Virginia.</p>	<p>15 In South Asia, Jacob & Hosanna, Elias and Maia are enjoying a visit from Tobin grandparents who are interacting with the people in the church and community. Ask for double blessings for this family today.</p>	<p>16 Pray for Armando Sanchez as he provides pastoral leadership to Iglesia Enciende Una Luz, in Harrisonburg, Va.</p>	<p>17 Today the Jamaica Mennonite Church holds the annual Women's Convention. Pray for safety as the women travel from across the island, and that they will be encouraged for the roles they fill in church, home and work place.</p>
<p>18 Pray for Duane Yoder, pastor of Lindale Mennonite Church, as he provides innovative leadership to Anabaptist believers in the stream of God's love who are being released, empowered, and sent.</p>	<p>19 A new week begins at the Maranatha School for the Deaf, Jamaica, and Rodney & Eve Knepp will be involved in many tasks—teaching, mentoring, building, encouraging. Pray for them and their three children.</p>	<p>20 Pray for Gordon Zook, Administrative Cluster Overseer, as he provides inspirational leadership, thoughtful counsel, and steadfast presence for the work of Virginia Mennonite Conference.</p>	<p>21 Pray for Micah, Adam and Isaiah Riddle as they attend school in their community of Carbonara, Italy. Their days can be filled with challenges and become exhausting. May they have God's strength for each day.</p>	<p>22 Pray for Klementina Shahini as she directs the Lezha Academic Center, Albania, where there are problems to solve, achievements to celebrate and daily opportunities to enhance lives with spiritual truths.</p>	<p>23 Steve & Bethany Tobin Horst, Adam & Jeanette Strode and Skip & Carol Tobin are visiting in Det Udom, Thailand, for a few days, seeing Mark & Sarah Schoenhals and their ministry. Thank God for the deep devotion to Christ which spurs all of these workers on.</p>	<p>24 Thank God for Kathy Miller, VMM Partners worker, who serves as sign language interpreter for Sulmi in Orange Walk, Belize. Sulmi's learning is enhanced by Kathy's explanations and she is doing well. She is involved in the Jesus' Deaf Church.</p>
<p>25 Pray for Gordon Miller, pastor of Lynside Mennonite Church, as he provides pastoral care and leadership to the congregation. VMM's <i>Celebration of Missions</i> was recently hosted by the congregation.</p>	<p>26 Building strong relationships is one of Allen Umble's main goals as he lives and ministers in Lushnjë, Albania. People around him see the love of Christ in daily life as they relate to him. Ask God to bless these connections.</p>	<p>27 Pray for Dean Williams as he provides pastoral care and leadership to Mathias Mennonite Church, West Virginia.</p>	<p>28 Richard & Elsie Bowman have concluded their service at Lezha Academic Center. Thank God for the blessings they were to the students and staff in this unique learning institution.</p>	<p>29 Pray for Reuben Horst, associate pastor of New Beginnings Church, as he assists in fulfilling the vision "to know Christ and to make Him known."</p>	<p>30 Today, Nancy Marshall meets with a group of young men for "Boyz Night"—food for the body and food for the soul! This mentoring and nurturing helps the young men to grow in faith, and hopefully to grow into church leaders in the future.</p>	<p>31 <i>Penny Power</i> time! Promote this unique way of giving to missions by sharing the stories on the information sheets sent to each church, and by giving the children opportunities to collect coins and bills. The recipients will be blessed!</p>



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Announcements

Mennonite Women of Virginia invite women to **Annual Missions Day** on Saturday, May 3, at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church. Join women from throughout the Conference in worship, sharing and friendship-building, starting at 9 a.m. Sarah N. Schoenhals will be sharing with us about her service experience in Thailand with Virginia Mennonite Missions. Come and experience what the Lord is doing among us near and far.

Virginia Mennonite Missions invites you to "Around the World in a Big Balloon," a **Family Missions Festival** celebrating the people and ministries of VMM, on Sunday, May 11, 3-6 pm at the Eastern Mennonite School gym (801 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg.) Besides learning about the ministries and workers of VMM, other activities will include: a performance by members of The Walking Roots Band, a performance by an HMC children's choir, 'balloon twists & sleight of hand' by Wendell Shank, ethnic foods and games, tethered balloon rides, radio-controlled planes with Marty King, and soccer (five-player teams). This will be a great time for the whole family!

Soccer players! Form a five-player team with church or family members and register for the soccer tournament at the VMM Family Missions Fest, Sunday, May 11, 3-6 p.m. on the EMS soccer field. Teens and older are invited to play. To register, send your team name, the contact person and information to Eric Codding by May 7 via e-mail to eric.codding@emu.edu, and put 'VMM soccer' in the subject line. You will be informed of your game time. A \$10 registration fee will be collected at the tournament. Prizes will be given.

Please join **Family Life Resource Center** for an evening of great music by a *cappella* group **Good Company** at our annual fundraising dinner on Saturday, May 17 at 6 pm in VMRC's Hartman Dining Hall. RSVP to Marie at (540) 434-8450 or marie@flrc.org. Seating is limited so please call soon!

Register now for **Kaleidoscope Camp** at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center! Camps are available for ages 7 to 17 and run from June 24 through July 31. Bring a friend, make new friends, participate in exciting activities like zipline, archery, slingshot and high ropes while learning about Jesus! Also consider WCRC's **Family Retreat**, August 3-6, specifically designed to help you and your family connect with each other and with God. You'll enjoy our peaceful, wooded facility, comfortable lodging, great food, fun activities and recreation options, worship times and devotions to help your family focus on God. Register by July 20 and receive a \$20 discount. For more information or to register, go to www.wcrc.info or call us at (866) 566-9272.

Registration is now open for Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly 2014! Mark your calendar for July 24-26, and go to www.virginiacommunity.org/assembly for complete details and online registration. Our worship, work, and reflection will be guided by Jesus' Great Commission, on the theme of **Making Disciples As We Go!** Save the date and plan now to attend!

UPCOMING TRIPS

There's still time to join the next Tour-Magination trip to **Australia and New Zealand**, January 30-February 19, 2015. This outstanding three week tour will include: Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Alice Springs, Ayers Rock, the Great Barrier Reef and much more in Australia. The trip will conclude with six days on the South Island of New Zealand with visits to Christchurch, Dunedin, Queenstown, a lunch cruise on Milford Sound and much more. Wilmer and Janet Martin will lead the trip with co-hosts Dave & Joyce Eshleman. For full details, call (800) 565-0451 or email: office@tourmagination.com

Take a **"Bible Lands Tour"** to Israel/Palestine and Jordan, November 3 to 14, 2014. See Nazareth Village, Caesarea, Tiberias, Haifa, Cana, Dead Sea, Masada, Qumran, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and more. Optional trip to Jordan, featuring Jerash, Amman, Mt. Nebo, Petra. Contact Ed and Edie Bontrager at (540) 438-8304 or eebontrager@comcast.net. For itinerary and other tours, visit www.travelventuretours.com

Congregational Resource Center

OFFER TO VMC CHURCHES

Have you heard about the exciting new children's curriculum produced by Mennonite Church USA and the Church of the Brethren called **SHINE**? Would your church like to be the host location for an early look at the materials and a training session?

If so, please contact Linda Alley, Director of the Congregational Resource Center, to make plans at alleyl@emu.edu or (540) 432-4698.