

Kanagy examines VMC data at Winter Delegate Session

By JON TROTTER

As Virginia Mennonite Conference works among the debates affecting Mennonite Church USA (and many other denominations) over same-gender relationships in the church, one of the unexpected themes to emerge from Winter Delegate Session on February 7 was *hopefulness*.

It may not be easy to see a path forward when 50% of credentialed persons responding to an August 2014 survey of Mennonite Church USA leaders support “progressive” positions on inclusion of LGBTQ persons in church membership, and 50% support “traditional” positions, those aligning with statements on marriage and church membership in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995).

But as analysis of the survey data found, there is a “glue” that holds us together fairly strongly: VMC seems to rank especially high in its sense of identity, its level of healthy interdependence among congregations, and its ability to provide avenues for shared projects, such as missions and relief, that brings diverse people together. There is also evidence of a relatively high satisfaction with VMC services and a relatively large “middle” of persons (79%) who desire to live together in unity. Delegates were seated at tables with a diversity of voices and engaged several questions respectfully, hearing from each person.

Executive Conference Minister Clyde Kratz welcomed the delegates and introduced Conrad Kanagy, associate professor of sociology at Elizabethtown College, staff member of Lancaster Mennonite Conference, and a Mennonite pastor with a gift for analyzing sociological data from a spiritual perspective. Kanagy led the morning

session at Waynesboro Mennonite Church, assessing the survey of Mennonite Church USA credentialed leaders, 66.2% (1,323) of whom responded. Of that number, 60.4% (799) are in congregational assignments. One hundred and twenty-nine Virginia Conference leaders responded, of whom 70 (54.3%) are in congregational assignments, the remainder being in other assignments or retired. The purpose of the survey was “to provide feedback about a variety of benefits ranging from broader affiliation to denominational and agency services, beliefs about homosexuality and same-sex relations, and alternative organizational arrangements for the denomination.”

Kanagy began by providing an opportunity for a brief table discussion responding to Philippians 2:1-11.

“The goal of the day is for each participant to lay aside personal views on sexuality and concentrate on understanding those around the table.”

“The goal of the day is for each participant to lay aside personal views on sexuality and concentrate on understanding those around the table. My assumptions are tentative; we are all learning together and from one another. I am pretty sure that most of us are not going to change our views about human sexuality,” he said.

He shared that our views on sexuality do not stand alone but are also reflected in our views on other issues. Each of us comes from particular cultural streams, but



Clyde G. Kratz, Executive Conference Minister, leads a prayer for Conrad Kanagy before his presentation to the delegates. Photo: Jon Trotter

there are two broader general narratives; and this issue has become paramount because it taps into personal and social areas (such as family, religion, cultural identity) at a deep level. These cultural streams also shape our theology: our understandings of Jesus, scriptural authority, mission, evangelism, personal piety, and commitment to nonviolence among other things. Delegates were asked, “What do we do with Jesus?”

While many demographics parallel the larger church, Virginia leaders are slightly older, slightly more male, more highly educated and more urban than Mennonite Church USA as a whole.

After Kanagy’s presentation, delegates enjoyed lunch and had an afternoon business meeting with reports from the Executive Conference Minister, the Gifts & Appointments Committee, and Virginia Mennonite Missions, with delegates tasked with discernment and feedback on proposed Core Values and Guiding Principles for the agency.



Jon is the Communications Associate for VMC and Virginia Mennonite Missions.

Renewing our Connections

By CLYDE G. KRATZ and AARON KAUFFMAN



Clyde G. Kratz
Executive Conference
Minister, Virginia
Mennonite Conference



Aaron Kauffman
President, Virginia
Mennonite Missions

For the past 25 years, Virginia Mennonite Conference (VMC) and Virginia Mennonite Missions (VMMissions) have shared the publication, *Connections*. In this editorial, Clyde Kratz, VMC Executive Conference Minister, and Aaron Kauffman, VMMissions President, discuss the challenges and the dreams that have emerged about this communication tool.

Clyde: I value the joint effort by VMC and VMMissions to put forth a quality publication in order to minimize the duplication of services and share the financial burden. One of the by-products of this joint adventure, however, is the confusion of identity that the constituency has experienced. I have heard questions like, “What is the difference between VMC and VMMissions?” “Are you the same entity with different roles?” “Who are VMC and VMMissions?” A degree of enmeshment has obscured our distinct identities and missions.

Aaron: I have also witnessed this same confusion of identity, both here in the US and among our international partners. Additionally, The Board of VMMissions has asked staff to tell the story in ways that reach and inspire our entire constituency. As we have considered how to do this, two key limitations of *Connections* have

surfaced. First, VMMissions has a base of support both within VMC and beyond VMC. Nearly half of our mission workers come from outside the conference, and we need a way to communicate with their sending communities. A joint publication makes that difficult. Second, the current format of *Connections* is hard to convert to electronic and social media, limiting our ability to reach younger readers.

Clyde: Starting in April, the new model for publication will be three separate pieces each with their own function. Still as a monthly joint publication, *Connections* will move to one page, with announcements on one side and the prayer calendar on the back. Then later this spring, VMC will begin publishing a quarterly magazine that will seek to highlight the powerful stories of God’s work in congregations and conference owned or related ministries. Each issue will explore a specific theme that ties together the various stories.

Aaron: On an alternating schedule with VMC’s magazine, VMMissions will launch its own quarterly magazine focused on stories of people and churches engaged in God’s mission, both here in the US and around the world. Look for the first issue of *Transformations* in April. This creative solution emerged through extensive conversation between our organizations and with our governing bodies over the past year.

Clyde: As we were thinking about this new model, we discovered the anxiety of division that has appeared within Mennonite Church USA. We want to assure you that launching separate publications is not about disagreement, but about gaining clarity of identity for each organization. I value my abiding friendship with Aaron and his leadership at VMMissions. I learned to know

Aaron when I was the pastor of Zion Mennonite Church. My friendship with Aaron continues to grow as we work together on various projects, giving and receiving counsel on matters that impact our ministries. I remain committed to VMMissions because it is vital to the health of VMC and its congregations. I bless VMMissions as they seek to engage innovatively in local and global missions and tell their story in new ways.

Aaron: I cherish the collaborative relationship that VMMissions and VMC have nurtured over the past 96 years. VMC is and will remain VMMissions’ primary constituency and partner in mission. I’m also grateful for my ongoing friendship with Clyde. He encouraged me as a young leader at Zion, dedicated two of my children, and commissioned our family into a mission assignment in Colombia. I deeply appreciate his courageous leadership of VMC and pray for him as he seeks God’s will for our family of churches in the years to come.

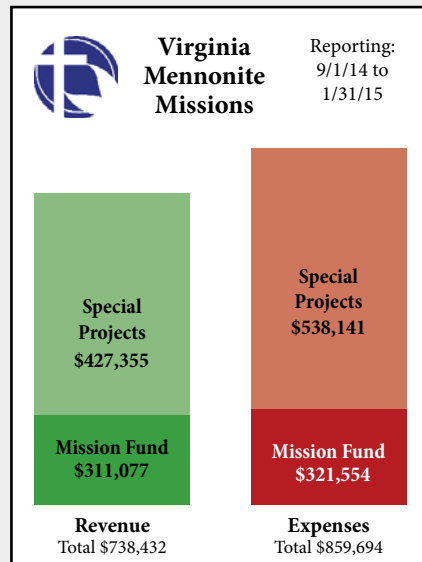
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Mission Fund (general giving by households and churches)
Special Projects (giving toward specific mission workers or ministries)

Gospel openings but few workers in Hmong villages

By JONAH YANG

Last December, I was part of a team that took 730 pairs of glasses and two pair of hearing aids that were donated to the Lion's Club to Thailand. These were distributed among seven villages (six were Hmong and one was non-Hmong). The majority of the people who received the glasses were non-Christians, and it gave us a good opportunity to live and share the gospel.

In the village of Mae Sok, a man declared that his sight has been restored. This man has been a great shaman in his village for the last 40 years. He couldn't see clearly, and has been searching for help, but didn't have enough money to pay doctor fees. He had heard that I was going to his village to share the word of God. He then made time to come to greet me, and hoped that I could help him.

During our conversation he said, "Pastor Jonah, I hope that you have something good for me to take home." My answer was, "I hope so." He began to tell me his personal story of talking with several Hmong pastors in Thailand, and also with those who came from the U.S. But none of them had spoken like me. He wondered, why was I different from the others?

I told him that there was really no huge differences between me and those before me, but that I am a Mennonite. We all worship the same God, believe in the same Jesus Christ, and the same Holy Spirit. The man instantly became curious to know about these Mennonites who had

supported my trip to Thailand, and why I was taking over 700 pairs of glasses to the Hmong people. He asked who paid for these and if he would have to pay to get some.

He got a pair of glasses for free. After our 30 minute conversation, the man thought about converting from his ancestors' religion to Christianity. "But how?" he asked. "Who will lead me after I convert, and who will teach me the Bible?"

My response to him was, first, he must really think about walking a new path. What he had practiced in the past he cannot take with him. He must learn how to pray to God, obey His commands, find a church and faithfully attend. The man said, "I have over 20 relatives in the village, and they all depend on me. If I convert to Christianity, almost everyone will follow, but what is going to happen to those who do not want to become Christian? So I will wait awhile to learn more about Christianity."

I wondered how long the man is going to wait. The time is here and now.



Hmong villagers sort through piles of donated glasses from a North Carolina chapter of the Lion's Club. Photo: Jonah Yang

Who knows what is going to happen tomorrow? It's not his fault. We share responsibility. I wish we could send someone to this place in Thailand to teach them about God and the Bible. It is our fault that we often fail to share the gospel with the needy, or resources to send workers.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (NIV) I pray and hope that one day God will send someone to lead this man and his relatives to Christ.



Jonah is pastor of Hickory Hmong Mennonite Church, Hickory, N.C.

PASTORS AND CREDENTIALLED LEADERS

Time to register for the fourth Pastoral Leadership Consultation

Pastors and credentialed leaders in Virginia Mennonite Conference are invited to the fourth Pastoral Leadership Consultation on May 15 at Mountain View Mennonite Church, Hickory, N.C.

David and Shana Boshart will present from their research, writings and experiences on "God's Gift of Sexuality."

This will begin at 10:00 a.m. and will end at 4:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided by the church; there is a suggested \$10 donation to cover the meal. Coordinate your own transportation. The Conference will identify persons with vans or capacity for passengers for your convenience.

Contact Anieta McCracken to confirm your attendance at anieta.mccracken@virginiainconference.org or (540) 434-9727.



Potomac District Council met on January 10 at Washington Community Fellowship. Sixteen people gathered, including Potomac District Council Church pastors and delegates. District Minister Luke Schrock-Hurst led a devotion. Aaron Kauffman, President of Virginia Mennonite Missions, shared the global and local mission of VMissions. Photo: Sang Choi



Persons who participated in an intensive study on the book of Acts through the Anabaptist Biblical Institute (IBA) hold their certificates of completion. The intensive course was held at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, January 16-18. Participants represented six Harrisonburg, Virginia-area Latino churches with whom Mennonite Hispanic Initiative has cultivated relationships. IBA has been involved in promoting theological education. Courtesy of Marvin Lorenzana

Making disciples through Life Transformation Groups

By SARAH SHOWALTER

“A Life Transformation Group (LTG) has probably been the most powerful discipleship process I’ve ever experienced. It has given me a context to share deeply and come to terms with my own sin and sin patterns. It has given me motivation to stay in Scripture with people on the same journey as I. It has helped me internalize both self-reflective questions and a rhythm of confession with others that keep me coming back to God for grace and strength,” says Melissa Weaver. She, along with 36 other church leaders and interested

on Saturday, January 31, at Park View Mennonite Church. Participants learned more about LTGs and how to use them as a tool for encouraging and spreading discipleship in churches and communities. Marvin Lorenzana invited church leaders to partner with Mennonite Mission Network’s Missional Discipleship Initiative, a program aimed at fostering a culture of discipling that would introduce LTGs to congregations and church groups.



"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit."
John 15:5



intimate relationship with God, building supportive relationships with God’s people, and engaging compassionately with the world God loves. The goal of LTGs is to not only inspire growth in disciples, but to make new ones - a movement of disciples who make disciples. Skip Tobin describes LTGs as “a way of acting or practicing discipleship that then shapes our thinking and ultimately our believing.”

You can download the LTG brochure at

vmmissions.org/learn/life-transformation-groups.

Skip Tobin is available to bring this workshop to your congregation or leadership group. For more information about how to start your own LTG or for congregational resourcing, contact Skip Tobin at skip.tobin@vmmissions.org 540-434-9727 or Marvin Lorenzana at marvinl@mennonitemission.net



Skip Tobin leads an LTG workshop session. Courtesy photo

learners, attended the workshop, “Making Disciples through Life Transformation Groups,” hosted by Virginia Mennonite Missions and Mennonite Mission Network,

a weekly rhythm of Bible reading, meeting for mutual accountability, and prayerfully joining God’s work in the world. Groups follow the example of Jesus cultivating an



Sarah is the Administrative Assistant for Virginia Mennonite Missions.

Excitement building for a new music program in Peru

By **BROOK HOSTETTER**

Over the past year, I had the privilege of teaching and serving at PROMESA, a small Mennonite school located in Cusco, Peru. Each morning, I awoke to a handwritten verse that hung from the ceiling, “I lie down and sleep; I wake again because the Lord sustains me.” (Psalm 3:5). I would ask God for strength each day and then be about my way.

I enjoyed a peaceful, yet vibrant walk through thin Andean air. I enjoyed familiar neighborly smiles and I recognized many dogs that laid on their ‘assigned’ street corners. Morning walks always finished with a step through big blue gates into a school yard full of laughing and screaming children.

Each day I’d prepare my English teaching materials, place them inside my green teaching basket, and carry them into one of my four classrooms: 5th grade A, 5th grade B, 6th grade, or advanced high school. Each day brought new stories of both joy and sorrow.

One late October day I had finished my high school English lesson a bit early. With the extra time at the end of class I

decided to teach the students how to sing a three-part song in English. Surprisingly, the students thoroughly enjoyed the musical experience! They were enamored by the sound of their voices and joy radiated from their hearts as they sang together. As the class period ended, I gathered my things together and overheard one boy say to another, “If Ms. Brook teaches music next year, it’s going to be awesome!”

Although I had only planned on staying in Cusco for one year, enough affirmation led me to commit to a second year of service at PROMESA. In March, I will return to begin a music program at the school. Many emotions arise as I think of this commitment. Sometimes I remember the difficulties I experienced over the last year and wonder, “Why have I chosen to do this again?” Other times I remember how God led me to this position and the excitement I’ve felt when I envision myself teaching Peruvian children how to sing.

My hope in returning for another year of service in Peru is that relationships will become stronger, teaching will flow more smoothly, and that my understanding of the culture and language will grow deeper. God has opened the door for me to stay a



Brook serves in Peru at PROMESA, a Christian school in Cuzco. Courtesy of Brook Hostetter

second year, and I feel that this will provide opportunity for continued growth and discipleship.

Please join me in prayer, that I may have strength, knowledge, and confidence in the classroom. Pray for the faculty and children that I work with, and that God’s presence would be known.



Brook serves in Cuzco, Peru, with Eastern Mennonite Missions, as an approved ministry of VMissions.

The hand clasp

By **ALLEN UMBLE**

“Come in,” Liria said as I hurried down the stairs on my way to the men’s Bible study at church. I entered the room and clasped Leksi’s hand. He could barely whisper anymore and his breathing was labored. I hastened to go, but he was not ready to release my hand.

Just two days before I had taken my computer down to his room and was playing his favorite worship songs in Albanian including: “I am thirsty for You” and “I see Angels Around Your Throne.”

After moving here in 2008, as Leksi sat behind his house cutting up food scraps for his six chickens, I would crank up the stereo, open my window and back door, and let the beautiful strains of his favorite songs float down. Leksi, his wife, and their son were amazed at the wealth of knowl-



Included as part of Leksi’s family, Allen Umble enjoys an Easter feast with him. Courtesy of Allen Umble

edge they were learning after they started to regularly attend a weekly chronological study of the Bible in my third floor apartment.

But the hand clasp those last days of his life impressed me. He had the security of family in his room night and day the last months of his life. He told me that he was at peace. I told him that Jesus was preparing

a place for him and waiting for him. Was it because Leksi had come to sense the presence of God with them after I moved into their house, as he would sometimes say? Was it because he did not want to leave the familiar and enter into the unknown?

The next day, December 19, 2014, I was about to get ready for bed when I heard the sliding of chairs being rearranged in the apartment below. I went right down. Already some neighbors were in the house and Leksi’s body dressed in his best suit and shoes. After the funeral director came, we gently lifted Leksi’s body into the casket which was carried to the room where Liria and other women would sit all night until his burial the next day.



Allen serves in Lushnje, Albania, as the Albanian Mennonite Mission Team leader.

Mennonite Women update: gratitude for fall, hope for spring

By LYUBOV SLASHCHEVA

Mennonite Women of Virginia rejoices that 127 women participated in the 2014 Annual Fall Retreat in Richmond, Va. We are grateful to each church and family that encouraged women to join our time of worship and fellowship as we deepened our claim on “Being Positive Women in a Negative World” from Proverbs 31.

Planning for the 2015 annual Mennonite Women’s Fall Retreat is already underway, and we await your presence either as a returning or especially as a first-time retreat participant.



Eve Knepp

Our 2015 Annual Missions Day will be held on Saturday, May 2 at Trissels Mennonite Church in Broad-

way, Va. Coffee and fellowship will begin at 9 a.m. and the morning will include worship, the mission needs auction, a business meeting, and a fellowship meal.

Eve Knepp will reflect on the importance of trusting God, as experienced through her family’s ministry with VMissions at Maranatha School for the Deaf, in Jamaica.

Those serving with VMissions will be blessed as we gather to offer our prayers and financial gifts to meet special needs, such as e-magazine subscriptions, kitchen gadgets, and other ordinary objects that are an integral part of the sacred ministry in which each of us takes part when we commit to missional living.

An annual report and this year’s plans will be discussed during the business meeting, encouraging us to actively minister to one another as Mennonite Women of Virginia. We hope you’ll join us in this call!

“Like” our Facebook page: [facebook.com/mwofva](https://www.facebook.com/mwofva) to receive announcements.



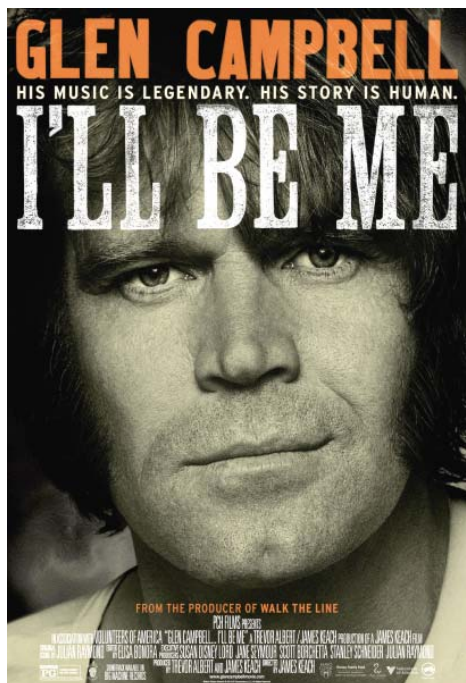
Lyubov is MWV Publicity Secretary and a member of the Retreat Committee.



Mennonite women celebrated communion together during the 2014 Annual Fall Retreat in Richmond. Courtesy of Lyubov Slashcheva

VMRC to share country singer’s story with Alzheimer’s

By MAUREEN PEARSON



Promotional poster of “I’ll Be Me.”
Courtesy of PCH Films

Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community will be one of the first senior living communities in central and western Virginia to host screenings of “I’ll Be Me.” The film documents country singer-songwriter Glen Campbell’s journey with Alzheimer’s disease.

Diagnosed with the disease in 2011, Glen and his family embarked on what they thought would be a five-week farewell tour. Instead, the show toured for over a year and a half and produced 151 sold out concerts. During the tour, the disease progressed in the singer from stage 2 to stage 4.

VMRC in conjunction with the Alzheimer’s Association of Central & Western Virginia, is offering the screenings at 7 p.m. April 9, and 2 p.m. April 12 at Court Square Theater in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Tickets for the screenings are available at the Court Square Box Office, by calling

(540) 433-9189 or online at valleyarts.org/court-square-theater

“This film demonstrates one family’s ability to capture moments of joy in their journey with Alzheimer’s and a deep desire to share their journey with others,” said Diane G. Weaver, chief marketing officer for VMRC. VMRC is the exclusive corporate partner of the Central and Western Virginia Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association.

More than 42,000 people live with Alzheimer’s diseases or dementia in Central and Western Virginia, according to the Alzheimer’s Association.



Maureen is Public Relations Director and Media Liaison for VMRC.

MARCH 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Pray for James Åkerson as he leads Beldor Mennonite Church's mission to engage in discipleship practices and participate in mission work in the rural community of Beldor.	2 PROMESA, the Mennonite school in Peru, begins classes today for the 2015 school year. Pray for Brook Hostetter as she shares her love of music with students.	3 Pray for Richard and Elsie Bowman as they transition back to life and work in Albania. Ask God to continue Richard's healing and make them both a wise and steady presence at Lezha Academic Center.	4 Pray for renewal efforts in the South German Mennonite churches. Pray that the network begun by Dave and Rebekka Stutzman will be a place of support and resourcing for those involved in missional initiatives.	5 Praise God for Pii Eve, a young Thai believer, who has been looking after the Bangkok team children during team meetings and worship times.	6 Pray for the Ramellas as they continue to study language and culture in Kosovo. Ask God to increase their opportunities to invest in relationship with people in their community.	7 Thank God for the nurture and discipleship that Nancy Marshall gives to members of Jesus' Deaf Church in Belize. Pray for their continued growth as disciples of Jesus.
8 Pray for Mark Conley, pastor of Hebron Mennonite Church in Fulks Run, as he provides leadership in discipleship practices and participation in mission work in the rural community of Fulks Run.	9 As transSender Josh Kirkman teaches students at the Lezha Academic Center, ask God to continue teaching Josh what it means to be a follower of Christ.	10 Join VMissions staff in praying for our brothers and sisters in Nigeria as the EYN church experiences great persecution from the Boko Haram.	11 Pray for Ronnie Pride as he provides pastoral leadership to Fellowship of Christ in Rocky Mount, NC.	12 Pray that transSender Whitney Specht will be a blessing to farmers as she serves at a milk processing plant in Kosovo.	13 Pray for Steve Horst and Bethany Tobin as they give leadership to the team in Bangkok. Ask God to give them vision, wisdom, and confidence in their role.	14 Continue to pray for the Riddle family as they transition back to the culture and flow of life in the USA. Ask God to guide them step by step.
15 Pray for Bruce Hanke, pastor of the Greenmonte Fellowship in Stuarts Draft, Va., as he provides leadership to know God and make God known to the world.	16 Praise God for the child that Shawn and Laura Green are expecting this summer. Ask God to begin knitting them together as a family of five on mission.	17 Pray for health for Jeanette Strode who has faced much sickness in the last several months. Ask God to keep her body strong as she continues language and culture study in Bangkok.	18 Lift up Allen Umble and the leadership that he provides to the mission in Albania. Ask God to make him a source of wisdom, vision, and encouragement for other workers.	19 As Mitch and Lauren Yoder teach in Nicaragua, pray for an increase in their Spanish abilities, relationships with students, and confidence in God's call on them.	20 Give thanks for Justin Rittenhouse's genuine and sincere heart as he teaches and serves at the Lezha Academic Center in Albania. Ask God to give him wisdom and grace for each day.	21 As transSender Jonathan Cranston continues to advocate for peace through his journalism and work with PeaceBuilders, pray that he will find hope in the Prince of Peace.
22 Pray for Sang Jim Choi, pastor of Fourth Street Community Fellowship in Washington, DC, as he provides pastoral leadership to his faith community.	23 Pray that transSenders Caleb and Roni Kiefer will continue to find strength and joy in the Lord as they serve at Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica.	24 Pray that God will raise up members of the church in Albania to be active in discipling others and serving as leaders in the church.	25 Pray for David Mishler, pastor of Huntington Mennonite Church, as he guides the congregation to embrace God and to rescue, rebuild, and release others to do the same.	26 As people leave Kosovo by the thousands in search of better life in other countries, pray with the Ramellas for Christ to bring hope in the midst of a struggling economy.	27 Lift up the mission workers gathering for the Southeast Asia Anabaptist Retreat. Pray that their spirits will be refreshed and renewed as they worship, pray, and share with each other.	28 Pray that God will continue growing transSender Katrina Schmid, both as a teacher and as a disciple of Jesus.
29 Pray for Justiniano Cruz, pastor of Iglesia Del Evangelio Completo Alfa & Omega, as he provides Spirit-led leadership to his congregation and the Latino community in Hyattsville, Md.	30 Praise God for the lives of new believers at the Life Enrichment Church in Det Udom, Thailand, that are being transformed by the Good News of Jesus.	31 As political situations greatly affect people's lives, pray for functional world governments that seek justice and peace for their countries.	<p>Prayer calendar underwritten by: An Anonymous Sponsor</p> <p>“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”</p> <p>1 John 3:16-18</p>			



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

Announcements

A **Women's Community Bible Study** is being offered at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church using Beth Moore's study: *Children of the Day: I & II Thessalonians*. Find encouragement for living the Christian life now and hope for when Christ returns. Sessions will be Tuesdays, March 3 through April 28. Morning sessions will be 9-11 and evening sessions will be 6:30-8:15. For registration details, contact Jeannie Smith at (540) 434-4361.

Attention men: Register now for the Men's Retreat at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center, March 27-29. This will be a time of meaningful worship, inspired teaching, great fellowship, and recreation. Our speaker is Leonard Dow, pastor of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia. He is a gifted and dynamic speaker. For more information or to register go to www.wcrc.info or call us at (757) 566-2256.

Refugee Sponsorship Grant: Harrisonburg District congregations are eligible to receive a grant from the district (\$200) if they are serving alone (or with another congregation) in sponsoring a local refugee household. For more information, please contact Mark Keller at mkeller@hmcchurch.org or Jennifer Davis Sensenig jennifer.davis.sensenig@cmcva.org of the Mission Advisory Committee.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY

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

UPCOMING TRIP

WCRC's Tour Retreat — Changing Tides will be May 18-21, 2015. Join us as we explore how the changing culture has influenced different aspects of life within the Tidewater area. Sites include: Shirley Plantation, The Spirit of Norfolk, Calvary Community Church, The Mariners' Museum, and the Norfolk Botanical Gardens. Our leaders Ed and Edie Bontrager were the pastoral couple at Huntington Mennonite for 10 years and have extensive experience leading tours through TravelVenture Tours. For more information, visit www.wcrc.info or contact Program Director, Jenn Hill: programs@wcrcc.info, (866) 566-9272.

If you are interested in sponsoring the prayer calendar, please contact Sarah Showalter at (540) 434-9727, sarah.showalter@vmmissions.org