

How we've learned to make disciples at Eastside Church

By PETER EBERLY

In March, we celebrated five years of ministry. I marvel at what has happened. As I look back here is what I think we got right.

1. Major in plagiarism

I often joke about the church planting courses I avoided like the plague in seminary. I had *no plans* to be a church planter! Whoops! So when the call to plant came, it arrived with a profound awareness that I didn't know anything about church planting! I had to become a learner!

I recognized that I knew little, so I studied and stole liberally from other church planters. I majored in plagiarism: I read everything I could, I trusted those who had planted successfully since I didn't have my own prior knowledge, and I copied their strategies like a boss. I talked to and visited with church planters. Most of our best strategies are copied from someone else.

I felt a tremendous weight as we began. I knew that new churches reach the lost, disenfranchised and institutionally abused; a new church might be their last chance. They deserved my absolute best effort.

2. Study your location and target

I researched census information, had conversations with school administrators and spent eight years researching my city. Just knowing the demographics of our city transformed my understanding of who was marginalized and absent from other churches in the town. I always had a hunch that churches were not reaching those 20 to 45-year-olds, but research proved it.

We were going after un-churched, de-churched and any other people who were not already attending. I studied the



Eastside Church recently celebrated the baptism of a JMU student. Researching local demographics and learning the best strategies for reaching the under-reached has enabled Eastside better walk with new disciples. Photo courtesy of Peter Eberly

From the beginning we put people in charge of anything they were, or were willing to be, passionate about.

un-churched even more than I did church planting. I wanted to know who they were, where they were, and why they didn't come. That continues today—I love reading new studies and often spend hours trying to understand what they are sharing. I still listen to stories, but knowing the research helps to distinguish the antidotal from seismic shifts.

3. Build a stable

Studying the location and learning the best strategies enabled us to cast a very clear vision. That vision attracted a few well-formed leaders who longed to join in

God's action and collaborate with us. We committed to training and walking with anyone who had a desire to grow. We made room for leaders who were tired of attending churches that their un-churched friends wouldn't attend. We also encouraged folks who weren't sold on the vision to attend somewhere else.

From the beginning we put people in charge of anything they were, or were willing to be, passionate about. Disciples are learners, so when you start from scratch you have the opportunity to work with lots of disciples. What better opportunity to train fellow learners than providing immediate opportunity. We continue to be committed to training and walking with other disciples and recently made a huge budget shift in order to reflect that. I have massive

Eastside Church (continued on page 3)

Disciples are companions

By ISAAC VILLEGAS

When I arrive at the Intensive Care Unit, the ICU, the doctor tells me that Cameron is unresponsive and that he would die soon, very soon, perhaps that night.

I stare, through the sliding-glass door, at him, lying on a bed with tubes and wires connecting his body to machines and translucent bags of fluids—morphine and saline, the doctor briefs me, to keep him hydrated and to dull his pain. As I slide open the door, I hear a beep coming from a monitor suspended above him, a monotonous tone, keeping time with his heart’s pulse, reminding doctors and nurses and me that he’s still alive, despite the lifelessness of his glazed eyes.

Sitting beside his bed, my tears dripping on his sheets, I reach my hand to his, and my fingers quiver as we touch. I expect the warmth of my palm to awaken life in his. I expect his hand to grasp ahold of mine in return—the unspoken rule of handholding, of mutual recognition, the instinctual acknowledgement of touch. But his hand is limp, and his skin cold and dry.

Words from Sebastian Moore, a Benedictine monk, flash into my head: “We must look forward to the moment when all the mysteries of God will be revealed in the clasp of your brother’s hand.” With both my hands I clasp Cameron’s and I wait for revelations, for his flesh to unveil the mystery of death, the secrets of the God. I look into his half-open eyes for a sign, but his

blank stare gazes through me, beyond me, at nothing.

I tell him that I love him, that I’m going to miss him, and I whisper a prayer, asking God to comfort his body and keep watch for his soul. I murmur jumbled words while hospital machines buzz and drone around me, and Cameron’s chest rattles with every dying breath.

As the night staff begins their shift, I slide my iPhone from my pocket and thumb an email to our congregation, to let them know that Cameron would die soon. If they want to say goodbye, they should visit him now.

The next day, in the morning, I return to the hospital, to sit with Cameron, because I know he has always hated being alone and I can’t bear to leave him companionless as he dies.

I murmur jumbled words while hospital machines buzz and drone around me, and Cameron’s chest rattles with every dying breath.

As I walk through the ICU, toward Cameron’s room — as I get closer, I hear singing, I hear four-part harmonies, Mennonite singing, echoing from his room. A dozen members from our church are there, all of them standing beside his bed, filling his room with their voices, encircling him



Wikimedia Commons

with the music of heaven, engulfing him with the sounds of the Holy Spirit, embracing him in the love of Christ’s body, drawing him into communion with us and with God.

For our last song we sang one of our congregation’s favorites, a benedictory hymn: “God be with you till we meet again, May the Shepherd’s care enfold you, God be with you till we meet again.”

Two hours after we finish singing, Cameron stops breathing. Lifting my hand to his forehead, I trace a cross on his skin, “From ashes to ashes,” I whisper, “from dust to dust.”



Isaac Villegas is Pastor of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, Chapel Hill, N.C.

Pastoral transitions

Matthew Bucher, licensed for lead pastoral role at Immanuel Mennonite Church (7/1)

Russ Eanes, Executive Director of MennoMedia, ordination transferred

Seth Hankee, licensed as lead pastor at Greenmonte

Rene Hostetter, license transferred for lead pastoral role at Big Spring

Floyd “Matt” Matteson, TCK District, retired after more than 20 years of service

MaryBeth Moore, licensed for lead pastoral role at Signs of Life Fellowship (CIF)

Carl S. Stauffer, ordination reactivated for faculty role at Eastern Mennonite University

Financial report

Reporting: September 1, 2014 to May 31, 2015

budget	\$191,350
expenses	\$187,064
income	\$151,601
investments	(\$1,456)
net	(\$34,007)

Note: Usual giving in the fourth quarter is around \$88,000. For this fiscal year, \$100,000 is needed by August 31 to finish without a deficit.

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limitations but I decided early on to invite others to fill the gap.

4. Small groups

We began meeting in small groups months before corporate worship. We gathered in homes, met for meals and studied the word. That is essential to our core identity. We regularly say from the pulpit, “If you are not in a small group, we really can’t help you.”

Small groups have steep learning curves. Some groups were home runs but most have adapted and evolved. We are committed to small groups so we discovered we had to be flexible with how they function. How we meet, what we studied, and our basic structures are constantly in flux. We are committed to small groups, so we are equally committed to be flexible in how they work.

5. Aim for who you hope to be

We know the Church is always growing, so we planned to be a growing worshiping community. We structured ourselves to grow—we didn’t want to limit anyone from becoming a disciple of Jesus! A simple example is our weekly worship gathering. We planned for growth, so we found a space

that could accommodate 80 and 400. This enabled us to shift as we saw the growth and attendance swells. Our main problem was aiming too low. Traditional churches are constantly stuck in facilities that limit their size, scope and ministry. The great commission is for the *world*—we didn’t want to be limited by our foresight, imagination or facilities.

6. Clarity of vision, clarity of vision!

Clarify your vision statement! If it isn’t clear, people can’t use it. Hab 2:2 says “Write the vision, make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.” We have a repeatable and profoundly simple mission statement. Everyone hears it at least one time and sees it at least three times each Sunday. We talk about it in our messages, elders meetings and small groups. We are on guard for mission drift (when repeatable patterns, carriers of history, a building and a budget determine direction). Our plan is to have every regular attender learn our vision and how they can join in it. Our budget, ministry and language is determined by our vision and mission so that we are flexible and adaptive.

7. My wife is a saint!

The best piece of advice I ever received about church planting was to make sure my wife was on board. I’m married and my wife is the best. However, planting a church is spiritually, emotionally, physically and financially difficult. Planting has been hard (a joy at least 85% of the time) but a challenge. If I had dragged her into this, she would have left the church or me. When I felt the call I shared the vision with her and waited. I repeatedly assured her that if God didn’t speak to her, then I had heard wrong.

Sure enough, God began to lay a passion for those outside the church on her heart. She meets new people far easier than I do. She has that face you meet in the grocery store and the next thing you know, you are sharing your most intimate joys and pains with them.

The pastor’s family will be attacked when you plant—mix that with the challenges of serving—and it is a recipe for challenge. If God calls you, He called your spouse too.



Peter Eberly is lead pastor at Eastside Church, Harrisonburg, VA.

A common purpose: our witness and our with-ness

By JAKE LEE

Over the past couple of years, Harrisonburg Mennonite Church has sought become more, not less, religious.

Religion gets a bad rap these days. We often hear people say, “I’m spiritual, but not religious”, or, “I’m for Jesus, but against religion.”

But we believe that to be spiritual, to be “for” Jesus, is to embrace religion. The word comes from the Latin *religare*, which was used to describe sticks bundled together for fuel. It is where we get the word “ligament.” Essentially, it means to be bundled together for a common purpose.

This is where we have discovered that fruitful discipleship happens. It happens, not only as an individual pursuit, or only in a stagnant classroom. For us, discipleship has been most fruitful as we have partnered

together to follow Jesus within our community.

Our focus this year has been on *With-ness*: that is, to be the church is to live life with each other, and to be together with our broader community. This has looked like:

- Hosting a Christmas Eve service and putting on VBS events in the local apartment complex parking lot
- Joining with neighboring churches to send food home to struggling families,
- Bringing encouragement meals to staff at the local elementary school
- Working with the community to expand a community garden and clean up a neighborhood walking path
- Busing neighborhood kids to our

facility for a weekly meal and encounter with Jesus

- Discovering ways we can resource nearby refugee families.

In all these ways we are seeking to be religious in the best sense of the term: being bound together for a common purpose, learning to follow Jesus by embodying His kingdom as a community of faith (with each other) in the midst of our community (with our neighbor).

Our witness is taking shape through our with-ness.



Jake Lee is a pastor at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, VA

Mara Chin connections culminate in Charlotte church

By SKIP & CAROL TOBIN

Our Conference demographic has just experienced a change of no small significance. The Tennessee Carolina Kentucky District has recently welcomed a vibrant group of young refugee families whose passionate Christian faith has enabled them to endure the throes of transition from Burma to Malaysia to the US.

The Chin are a large minority people numbering about three million, found mostly in the Chin State located in western Myanmar, but also in the eastern Indian state of Mizoram and in Bangladesh. Their homeland, the all but inaccessible Chindwin valley, serves as a border between these three countries. There are many different mutually unintelligible Chin dialects and sub-cultures, one of which is Mara. Hundreds of thousands of Chin people have been granted asylum in the US and Canada, as they have fled the double blows of religious and ethnic oppression under Burmese's militant Buddhist rule. They tell stories of being under a stranglehold of neglect, forced conscription, and sexual violence. They have lived with much armed conflict and are seeking another way.

Their journey began to intersect with ours in early 2013 when Gene Miller, Conference Minister of New York Conference connected me, Skip Tobin, with Pastor Jehu, a respected Christian leader to Chin people in North America. Pastor Jehu asked me to help a group of Mara Chin believers in Halethorpe, Md., find a meeting place and to encourage them toward a Mennonite relationship. I met with two leaders from the Halethorpe congregation. These leaders explained their family relationships to Chin Mennonite congregations in Buffalo, N.Y., and Kitchener, Ont. They expressed clearly that they would like to pursue relationship with Mennonites in the United States.

Their interest led them to send a delegation of over a dozen committed church members to Harrisonburg later that spring where they had the opportunity to meet Ervin Stutzman and several conference leaders. Realizing among ourselves that the Maryland Mara group is located quite close to Lancaster Mennonite Conference



Young adults lead worship at the Mara Christian Church of Charlotte. Photo courtesy of author

bishop Glenn Kauffman's area, I followed up by introducing the church leadership team to Glenn. That congregation has since been incorporated as the Mara Christian Church and is a full member of Lancaster Mennonite Conference (LMC).

However, within a few short weeks, I was being called upon to meet and visit a sister group in Charlotte, NC. They wanted to know what it might mean to be Mennonite as well!

At that point, the Charlotte group, the Maryland group and another sister group in Indianapolis met together in Charlotte for a leadership resourcing time. A Canadian Mara Chin Mennonite pastor named Joseph was their resource speaker. I was encouraged to be present so that there would be a local Mennonite connection; I fielded the many questions that came my way about who Mennonites are, what Mennonites believe, and how these fellowships might relate to Mennonite Church USA. Prominent in their hearts is the question of how they can engage missionally with other Chin refugee groups to plant new churches and how God can use them to bring the gospel to the Buddhists in Burma!

The TCK district and Virginia Conference relationship has continued to strengthen over the last two years, thanks to the keen attention shown by District overseer Chuck Hostetter and regular warm connection with Charlotte residents,

Dan and Lois Yoder. When a tragic accident took the lives of several wage earners in their community, TCK District responded with an outpouring of financial assistance; we were on hand to join over 3,000 Mara Chin who traveled across the country to show solidarity with their Mara brothers and sisters.

Our visits to the Charlotte church take Carol and me back to our days in Asia - the long services where you don't understand a word but are nevertheless invited to preach, the inscrutable music - some obviously ethnic and some faintly reminiscent of a century old hymn, the women in their colorful sarongs with their babies slung on their hips, and most notably, the fervor of the Spirit in their prayer. We come away enriched by their uniqueness, ... feeling like we have been in the presence of God.

We are in awe of what has already come from this small thread of connection. But more is to come: There are other groups of Chin people who are in the process of affiliation with different Mennonite conferences—in Atlanta, New York, and Texas. Let's be sure that we give these dear brothers and sisters a heartfelt welcome into our circle of fellowship!



Skip Tobin is USA Ministries Director, a shared position with Virginia Mennonite Missions. Carol Tobin contributed editing.

Continual transformation

Manantial de Vida coaches with discipleship classes

By JUAN CARLOS & WENDY MALVAEZ

From this moment on, we face one of our biggest challenges as the Body of Christ; to make true disciples of Jesus.

At Manantial De Vida (Fountain of Life), we are committed to walk through this process with any person who joins this ministry. The process of following up, teaching, and mentoring are key to spiritual growth.

In discipleship, we teach the precepts of the Bible and Christian living which is a call to total rendition, holiness, an attitude and heart that worships Jesus in all aspects of life. It is a life pursuit of an in-depth and committed life of continual spiritual growth.

Prior to starting the process of discipleship in each individual, inner healing and deliverance are foundational and critical in order for the believer to walk in victory and free from any bondage. We organize a retreat; a Spirit-empowered time of heal-



Juan Carlos Malvaez leads a session in discipleship class at Manantial de Vida. Photo courtesy of author

ing and deliverance. The focus is to identify unhealed emotional and spiritual areas, such as trauma, abuse, unforgiveness, generational patterns of destruction, oppression, affliction, and other influences. The believer is re-positioned to receive Jesus' loving embrace by the freedom and benefits released at the Cross.

He said, "Therefore, as you go, disciple people in all nations."

Matthew 28:19

After the retreat, the believer begins a year-long discipleship training where they learn the foundations of Christian life that teaches a lifestyle of continual transforma-

tion. During this time, they receive impartation and are empowered and trained to disciple others.

The process continues with courses designed to train, teach, and equip our leaders. They are sent to manifest God's transforming power through healing, delivering and mentoring.

We have witnessed the transformation of entire families in our community. Our purpose is to raise up a generation with revelation of God's transforming power.



Juan Carlos and Wendy Malvaez are pastors of Manantial de Vida, Harrisonburg, Va.

In action: How Harrisonburg District is making disciples

By ROY HANGE

The spiritual dance of disciple-making takes many forms in, among and beyond the Harrisonburg District churches:

Invitations to faith and baptism—

One of my greatest joys in walking with pastors is seeing the smiles on their faces when they tell the stories of persons coming to faith in Jesus Christ and recent baptisms. I have also heard stories of persons becoming a church member with the common phrase: "Finally I have found church where I can feel at home as a follower of Jesus." Making disciples through invitation and welcome is still the joy of our churches.

Inner healing—A number of churches have active inner healing ministries where the spirit of God works for the transformation of brokenness to release persons

giftedness in church life and mission. In various churches there are growing movements of involvement in spiritual direction, Gestalt pastoral care, healing retreats for men and women, centering prayer... The vine of connection to the being of God in Christ is thickening and bearing more fruit.

Missional transformation—A number of congregations have had new community children's ministries turn them inside out missionally. One of these churches even has some of the children who've come through their outreach program entering their junior youth program. Little disciples are welcome also! The body of Christ is speaking through our churches saying "let the little children come unto me."

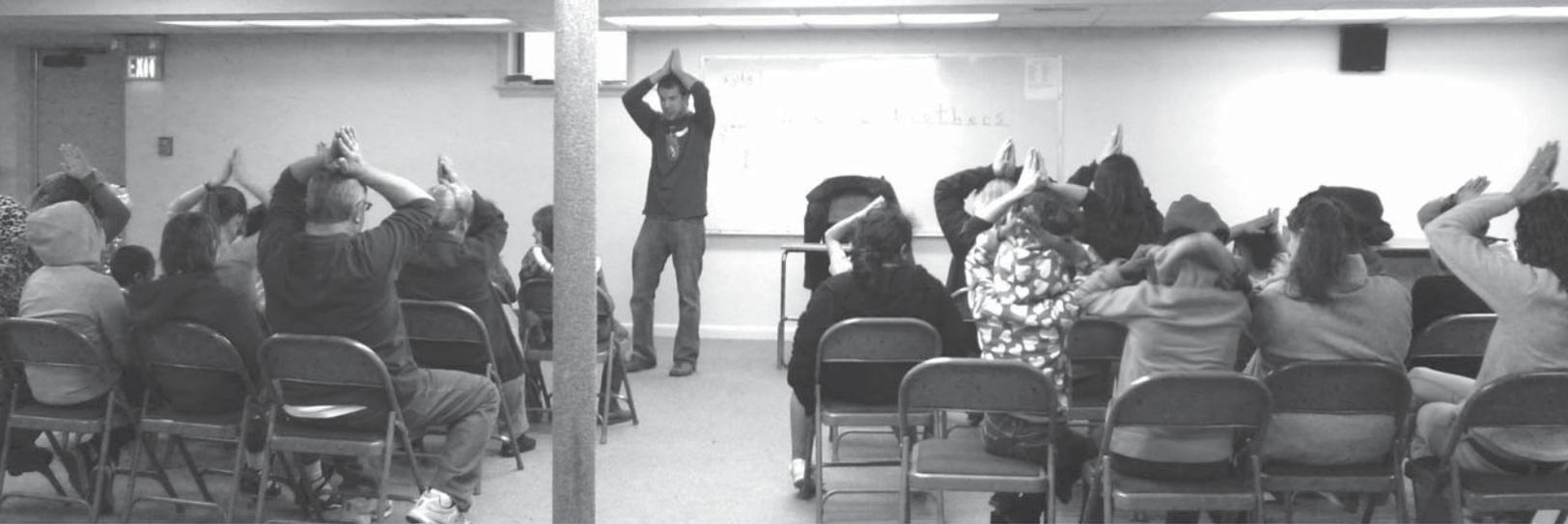
Creative peacemaking and justice building—Many of our churches have been

active in creative expressions of peacemaking in our violent and broken world echoing the apostle Peter's sitting down for a meal with the Centurion Cornelius. A group of churches is actively establishing a justice ministry in Harrisonburg called Faith in Action, inspired by a network of 28 congregations acting together for justice in Charlottesville. Many persons from our churches were involved in a recent Harrisonburg initiative on restorative justice.

Through our faithfulness together we see our hope transforming the powers in the Spirit of Christ.



Roy Hange is Harrisonburg District Minister and is co-pastor of Charlottesville Mennonite Church, Charlottesville, Va.



Seth Crissman leads an activity at Kids Club in one of the Harrisonburg-area churches partnering to bring a wider reach to this ministry. Courtesy of authors

WALKING WITH USA MINISTRIES

A snapshot of Kids Club with Seth and Theresa Crissman

By SKIP TOBIN & SETH CRISSMAN

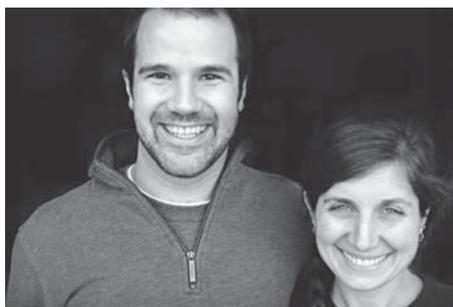
Katie waited on her porch, waiting to get picked up for Kids Club, like every Monday evening. Kids Club is her favorite part of the week.

She was among the first to come when Kids Club started in May. Leaders from Early Church and Immanuel Mennonite Church met with Seth and Theresa Crissman to listen, pray and launch a new way of sharing God's love in their local neighborhoods. Three years ago, Seth and Theresa worked for Eastside Church, beginning a Kids Club partnership with Ridgeway to do the same thing: share God's love in their neighborhood.

Last May, when volunteers from Immanuel and Early Church invited their neighborhood to come, Katie was there, curiously peering through the screen door. First Katie invited her sister because she didn't want her to miss out. What happened at Kids Club was just too good not to share.

After a few weeks Katie invited her next door neighbors and they started coming. A few weeks later she showed volunteers where her friends the next street over lived. Over the next several months, Katie seemed to invite the whole neighborhood.

But one family wasn't allowed to come no matter how many times Katie invited them. Katie would ask the adults walking with her, if they could stop and invite them and week after week they gave different reasons for not coming; it was shopping, or



Seth and Theresa Crissman

busy, just going out. But Katie kept inviting.

One week, after another rejection, a volunteer noticed tears coming down Katie's cheeks and asked why Katie was crying. "It's not true! Why can't they come?" Katie cried. But, two invitations later, Katie finally received a "yes." She was ecstatic, like the shepherd who had found their lost lamb. And, much to Katie's joy, they've been coming every since.

Every Monday evening at Immanuel you can find a dozen volunteers in blue tee-shirts from several congregations with around 40 children, Pre-K through 8th grade. Together, they sing, act out and retell stories from the Bible, eat and play together as they learn to give and receive God's Love with each other.

Seth and Theresa Crissman are beginning a two-year term with VMissions as local missionaries, providing direction and coaching to congregations interested in sharing God's love in their own communities through Kids Clubs. They bring their expertise and enthusiasm to equip congregations to engage and interpret their local

context as mission shaped communities. They are currently in a fundraising stage, hoping for a fall 2015 launch pending adequate funding.

Please contact me at skip.tobin@vmmissions.org or (540) 434-9727 for more information on how you can participate and support Kids Club and Seth and Theresa.



Skip Tobin is USA Ministries Director for Virginia Mennonite Conference and Virginia Mennonite Missions.

Kids Club: a local My Coins Count project

Virginia Mennonite Missions has designated Kids Club as one of its 2015 *My Coins Count* projects. This program, formerly known as *Penny Power*, will help provide the material resources for this ministry.

As part of the Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale, *My Coins Count* donations are divided evenly between Mennonite Central Committee and VMissions. Learn about the other designated projects at vmmissions.org/support/my-coins-count



Conference Archives seeks church records for preservation

By HAROLD HUBER

Congregations are busy with many activities that require their attention, but it is important for them to preserve the historical record of God's work in and through their congregational life and ministries.

Every congregation should have an historian who regularly collects, organizes and sends their records to the Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives for preservation and historical purposes. Although digital records are becoming more popular, at this point we still prefer paper copies.

The most important kinds of records to send to the Archives are:

1. Weekly worship bulletins
2. Newsletters, including birthday and church calendars
3. Church business meeting minutes and reports

4. Minutes and accompanying paperwork from (a) church council, (b) pastoral or elders team, (c) pastoral transition committees, (d) women's activities, children and youth activities, MYF, etc., (e) worship, music, stewardship, outreach, and other committees
5. Mission and vision statements, church constitution, manuals, handbooks
6. Annual budget and financial reports (summaries are preferred)
7. Records of a major building or renovation project or a large purchase
8. Membership rolls, lists of regular attenders, church directories
9. Sunday School and Vacation Bible School records (summaries)

Please be assured that sensitive materials will be marked "restricted" or "closed." The VMC Archivist will work with researchers if they have good reasons to use restricted materials. They will be required to use the information responsibly.

In my fall article, I will highlight some less important but still valuable data and records that we would like to receive from congregations.

If you have questions, please contact me: harold.huber@virginiacommunity.org or (540) 432-4169. Archives location and hours is at virginiacommunity.org/about/conference-archives/.



Harold Huber is the Virginia Mennonite Conference Archivist.

EMU: Making disciples through the Ministry Inquiry Program

By MIKE ZUCCONI

Answering a call. Following a hunch. Listening to your heart. Four Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) students, each with a different way of expressing what they are heeding in their faith journey, will spend this summer exploring the ministry profession through the Ministry Inquiry Program (MIP). The students are rising seniors Wes Wilder, Daniel Barnhart, and Rachel Schrock, and rising junior Jeremiah Knott (not pictured).

"I am excited about the unique gifts and talents of each MIP student, and about their opportunities this summer," said Carmen Schrock-Hurst, MIP director and professor of Bible and religion at EMU. "Ministry gifts and skills are best tested, explored, and learned within the context of real life, not simply in a classroom."

Wilder, of Hesston, Kansas, a double major in psychology and Bible and religion, will spend time at Journey Mennonite Church in South Hutchinson, Kansas, joining the youth for the trip to the Mennonite Church USA convention. His home congregation is Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston.

Barnhart, from Grottoes, Virginia, is a congregation and youth ministries major who will be serving with his home congregation of Mt. Olive Brethren Church in McGaheysville. He has been interning this last semester with RISE, a United Methodist faith community in Harrisonburg.

Knott, a professional musician, will work in his home congregation, Faith Alive Fellowship in Elkton, Virginia, as well as the church he was raised in, Bethel United Church of Christ.

Schrock, an art major, will head home to Iowa to divide her time between Crooked Creek Christian Camp in Washington and her home congregation of First Mennonite Church of Iowa City.

More than 300 students have participated in the MIP program, which is normally a partnership of the student's respective Mennonite college, the student's home congregation, the student's home and host area conferences, the congregation where the student is in ministry and Mennonite Church USA Denominational Ministry.

At the end of the program, each student receives a scholarship of up to \$2,000



Eastern Mennonite University rising seniors (from left) Wes Wilder, Daniel Barnhart and Rachel Schrock will participate in the Ministry Inquiry Program this summer, with rising junior Jeremiah Knott (not pictured). Photo by Lindsey Kolb

toward tuition costs at a Mennonite college or seminary for the next academic year, along with a \$500 stipend for living expenses from the host congregation.



Mike Zucconi is the News Bureau Director for Eastern Mennonite University.



VIRGINIA Mennonite Relief Sale

By LISA LEHMAN

Mark your calendars now for the 49th Annual Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale on Oct. 2-3 at the Rockingham County Fair Grounds!

All your favorite foods and activities will be back again, so you can already be looking forward to the delicious food, 5k Race for Relief, sporting clay shoot, auction, farmer's market, children's activities, silent auction, craft items, and of course catching up with friends and family!



The quilt auction is one of the Relief Sale highlights and attractions. Photo: Jim Bishop

This year the sale will benefit the following organizations and projects (in addition to Mennonite Central Committee):

- Mercy House: feeding, clothing, and housing homeless families with dependent children in the Harrisonburg, Va., area.
- Valley Mission – a faith based non-profit in Staunton, VA offering shelter support, hope, and God's love to the homeless.
- My Coins Count (formerly Penny Power) funds will help fund: two projects in MCC's Global Family program, and three projects of Virginia Mennonite Missions: the Joshua Center (Albania), Maranatha School for the Deaf (Jamaica), and Kids Club in Harrisonburg, Va.



Relief Sale volunteers sell hamburgers/hot dogs and fries at their stand. Photo: Jim Bishop

Now is the time for you to get involved! Start collecting coins for *My Coins Count*, finish those projects to donate to the live or silent auctions, form plans to make some baked goods with friends, volunteer with applesauce making or apple butter boiling, or help with set-up and tear down.

There are numerous volunteer opportunities for all! If you have questions about how to get involved, please contact your church Relief Sale representative.

Pictures of auction items will soon be on the website, so check for updates.

For more information or to sign up to receive a monthly e-newsletter update, go to www.vareliefsale.com and follow us on Facebook!

Lisa Lehman is Publicity Director for the Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale.

Volunteers celebrated at VMRC

By MAUREEN PEARSON

VMRC awarded its Distinguished Service Award for volunteerism to Catherine 'Katie' Ray during a recent ceremony. The Claude Hess Distinguished Service Award is given to the volunteer who builds community spirit through faithful Christian Service.

According to Emily Weller, volunteer services manager, Katie was nominated for her deep faith which exemplifies the spirit of joy and compassion which is the heart of VMRC's mission.

Katie Ray volunteers in direct resident service roles at VMRC, in leadership roles for her community of Park Village, and has served on the VMRC Resident Association Council.

Annually in April, volunteers are honored at VMRC during National Volunteer Month. VMRC has nearly 600 volunteers. In the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015,



Catherine 'Katie' Ray holds her award plaque. Photo courtesy of author

volunteers contributed more than 44,200 recorded hours—an increase of more than 5,000 hours from the previous fiscal year. The dollar value of free service contributed by volunteers is more than \$1 million—a number not attained previously at VMRC.

"This record amount of free services from volunteers allows staff to accomplish so much more for residents living in our community," said Weller.

Maureen Pearson is Public Relations Director and Media Liaison for VMRC.

MDS: serving as a physical support to Kingdom work

By RICHARD RHODES

The Apostle Peter understood that Jesus followers have a spiritual life that is derived from Christ, the source of life. As Jesus is the foundational building element, believers also are being built into a living structure that glorifies God.

This spiritual metaphor is a continuing focus for Mennonite Disaster Service as a ministry part of the Mennonite Church. Numerous other humanitarian organizations are rebuilding homes, for persons affected by natural disaster. As a Christian faith based organization, we attempt to “respond, restore and rebuild” from the life-giving resources of Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

MDS of Va. (Eastern Va. Unit) continued support of the bi-national response in Crisfield, Maryland. This need arose after the damage, resulting from Hurricane Sandy. They also rebuilt a home in Belhaven, N.C., where a husband and wife and seven children had lost their previous home to a



tornado. Approximately six churches had persons that participated in each of these responses.

The Shenandoah Valley Unit completed a dwelling in Rainelle, West Va., after the previous home became inhabitable from the snow of “Sandy”. Several local churches continued to volunteer on Bi-National projects. One church group is presently, at this writing, in Jamestown, Co. Flooding in

September 2013 wiped out numerous homes in this small mountainous community. Local residents have spoken often of the hope that MDS and other organizations have given, when the mountain of work before them was overwhelming. The Jamestown Community Church expressed gratitude for the service ministry of MDS to their town, because they were unable to assist the needy in the way that MDS could. MDS becomes a physical support to Kingdom work. In this response, MDS is able to be a “spiritual stone” that complements the local church.

Thanks to the many VMC churches that see MDS of Va. as an important ministry, and continue to support through their annual budgets.

Richard Rhodes is President of Mennonite Disaster Service of Virginia.

Building a house, expanding the campus of CrossRoads

By JOAN L. DAGGETT

Have you noticed that we are building a house? Yes, our log house is nearing completion, but I’m talking about something more than walls, windows and a roof.

Surely, a house provides shelter and warmth, but it also provides space where children can grow and play, families can share and learn together, and old folks can reminisce and tell stories.

CrossRoads is a place where all this and more happens for the people who visit our campus each year—the 2000+ who come for tours, the 1,500+ school children on field trips, and numerous others who attend lectures, vespers and holiday events. So, in many ways, we are building a house here at CrossRoads—and more than just a physical one!

A house needs a solid foundation in order to withstand the weather and the changes that time brings. CrossRoads has a good foundation of leadership and financial support of persons like you and others in our Mennonite and Brethren congregations

who have given of their time and resources for this ministry—and for this support, we are truly thankful. The continuing development of our campus and program depends upon steady financial support and sustainable operations.

In 2015, we are meeting with innovative and visionary experts to develop a plan for sustainability through 2025. We want to be good caretakers of the gifts of land and artifacts that have been given to us. We invite you to join us in this effort as we construct and maintain physical houses and as we build a spiritual house to shelter and grow the faith of all those who enter CrossRoads.



The Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center (CrossRoads) nears completion on the log house. Photo courtesy of author

Joan Daggett is Executive Director at Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center.

Donated dollars at work

By STEVE CARPENTER



A child receives a copy of MennoMedia's new Spanish children's story Bible.

This picture, although a bit out of focus, captures the joy of a young Hispanic girl receiving her very own copy of *Resplandece*, a Spanish language children's story Bible.

This beautiful, full color book was developed by MennoMedia, partnering with Brethren Press, for use with the new Anabaptist Sunday school curriculum *Shine*. The children's Bible storybook is also useful as a standalone piece for parents and grandparents who want to read Bible stories to their elementary aged children and grandchildren.

However, the *Shine* Sunday school materials, from which *Resplandece* was derived, would not have been possible without the financial support we received from many churches and individuals. Once *Shine On*, the English version of the children's Bible storybook, was available, a grant from the Showalter Foundation of Kansas paid for its translation into Spanish, becoming *Resplandece* in Spanish.

Yet, even that may not have been enough for this young girl, who attends the Iglesia de Evangelico Completo Alfa y Omega congregation in Gaithersburg, Md., to receive her personal copy.

Thanks to a \$2,000 grant from of the Mission Endowment Fund of Virginia, I purchased 200 copies of *Resplandece* for distribution to the Spanish-speaking Mennonite churches of Virginia Mennonite Conference (VMC). I went through VMC's District Ministers to distribute these books

to congregations within their area of responsibility. Alfa y Omega received 24 copies of *Resplandece*, enough for one for each family with elementary-aged children.

Luke Schrock-Hurst, District Minister for Potomac District, delivered the children's story Bibles and was present on a Sunday morning when they were given to the children. Luke speaks Spanish fluently, and had served with Mennonite Central Committee in Central America and the Philippines. The Potomac District is the most diverse cluster of churches in VMC with messages preached in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean every week.

The other VMC churches which received copies of *Resplandece* purchased with money granted by the Mission Endowment Fund grant are all located in Harrisonburg. They are: Harrisonburg Mennonite Church who will deliver the 30 books they received to a sister church in Nicaragua, Iglesia Discipular Anabaptista, Iglesia Enciende una Luz, Manantial de Vida, and Immanuel Mennonite Church.

Another individual MennoMedia donor and a family foundation have made it possible for MennoMedia to give away some more copies of *Resplandece* to native Spanish

speakers who attend Mennonite World Conference, July 21-26, in Harrisburg, Pa., this summer.

This is but one example of how MennoMedia is using financial gifts entrusted to our care.

The world needs the fresh, alternative perspective offered by Mennonites. Primarily through books, but also through DVDs



A young dance troupe at Iglesia Alfa y Omega performs a liturgical dance. Photos courtesy of Steve Carpenter

and on the web, MennoMedia's products not only shape the Mennonite Church in the US and Canada, they influence those seeking a deeper, more holistic faith. MennoMedia is projecting Anabaptist thought into the marketplace of ideas.

However, that market place is crowded, highly competitive and rapidly changing. MennoMedia needs your support to accomplish its mission. Many of the products we produce, although needed and important, are not profitable.

We strive to generate 90% of our operating income through sales of our products. We rely on individuals, churches and foundations to make up the difference by supporting this ministry financially.

A gift to MennoMedia helps insure the church receives the resources it needs from a distinctly

Anabaptist perspective at an affordable price. It also helps extend Anabaptist thought into the broader culture, thus drawing disciples to Jesus and his way of peace.

Your gift helps sustain our ministry of publishing and proclaiming words which are sorely needed, not only by the church but, by the world. Thank you for your support.



Pastor Justiano Cruz brings the message at Alfa y Omega.



Steve Carpenter is Director of Development and Church Relations for MennoMedia, based in Harrisonburg, Va.

Clayton Godshall: lay evangelist and church planter

By ELWOOD YODER

Clayton Godshall moved to Hickory, North Carolina, in the fall of 1952, to establish another Mennonite church, this time in the south. There were no Mennonite churches in Catawba County when Edna Godshall moved to join her husband the following spring, though by the sum-

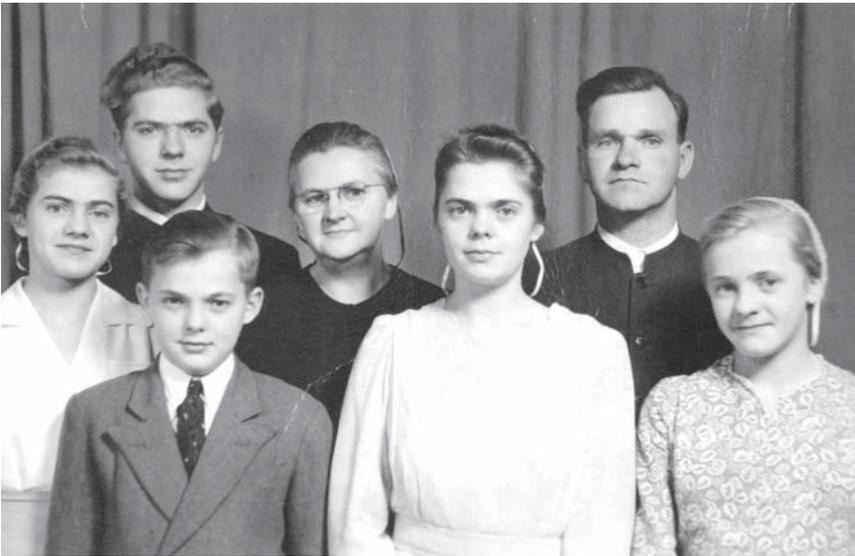
mer of 1953 they ran their first Summer Bible School for area children under southern pine trees. To get a church started, Clayton drove down dirt roads to gather folks for Sunday school and invited himself into homes for prayer meetings.

from Pennsylvania and Virginia to help. The newcomers drove their cars to local homes, sang songs, returned on Saturday evenings for cottage prayer meetings, and picked them up for church on Sunday.

When the Mt. View Mennonite Church finally got enough money to erect a block meetinghouse in 1958, they built it on the

up roots in Pennsylvania and moved south, in response to Godshall's appeal for help. The Moyers became the stable, long term church builders, along with Pastor Edward Godshall, who drove the sandy roads and carried on in the ministries of prayer, visitation, church meals, and endless basketball games. When Clayton and Edna Godshall moved on to Hickory, and established another church, Wellington and Evangeline Moyer poured their entire lives into building up the church at Mt. View Mennonite Church.

Clayton and Edna Godshall's five children carried on their passion for mission, with all five becoming pastors, spouses of pastors, and church planters themselves. Clayton witnessed with songs, gospel tracts, and southern style front-porch conversation. Godshall received a Macedonian call to move to Hickory, and like the evangelist Paul in the first century, he responded, and God moved mightily in his life, enabling him and others to plant two Virginia Mennonite Conference churches and make new disciples for Christ.



The Clayton and Edna Godshall family in 1945. (From left) Evelyn, Ernest, Edward (front), Edna, Esther, Clayton, and Elizabeth Godshall.

Photo courtesy of Evelyn Nice

mer of 1953 they ran their first Summer Bible School for area children under southern pine trees. To get a church started, Clayton drove down dirt roads to gather folks for Sunday school and invited himself into homes for prayer meetings.

Clayton Godshall (1905-1997), lay evangelist with an uncanny gift to reach the lost for Christ, picked up families for church from homes along unpaved roads that turned muddy when it rained. The North Carolina environment was very different than eastern Pennsylvania, where Clayton Godshall had established six Mennonite congregations that joined the Franconia Mennonite Conference. Godshall quickly gave up his plain coat and easily incorporated instruments into his song leading.

It had been a dramatic series of God-inspired events that led the Godshalls, in their late forties, with young adult children, to uproot and move to Hickory. After beginning his evangelistic work in the Carolinas, Clayton issued a call for others to come and join him and Edna. Over the next several years at least six Mennonite couples moved

same plum grove where the church planters and local believers had met many times for fervent prayer. Clayton Godshall's Macedonian call to move to Hickory succeeded. Godshall, however, was a church and Sunday school starter, with a gift for sharing the gospel and personal evangelism, and he soon moved about ten miles away to plant another church. Though never ordained, Godshall raised up at least ten Mennonite churches during his ministry.

Another couple, Wellington and Evangeline Moyer, in their early thirties, also pulled



Elwood Yoder teaches Bible and Social Studies at Eastern Mennonite School, Harrisonburg, Va.



The Wellington and Evangeline Moyer family, about 1970. (From left) Jeannie, Wellington, Galen, Evangeline, and Joanne. Photo: VMC Archives

A path forward for Virginia Mennonite Conference

By CLYDE G. KRATZ

Jesus saw two brothers and said to them “follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.” (Matt 4:19). The pathway that was forged by Jesus’ invitation to Peter and Andrew changed their life forever! As Virginia Mennonite Conference launches this inaugural issue of *Pathways*, I want to frame the way this publication will serve as a communication instrument for the people of God.

What are the stories that capture the significant moments of people on a faith pilgrimage within congregations and agency ministries? It is first-person stories of how an act of kindness, service, or compassion impacted the life of an individual or family that placed their life on a new or renewed pathway with God.

These are types of stories that Jon Trotter, our Communications Manager, will be seeking from your congregation connected to Virginia Mennonite Conference.

A second set of stories will be solicited from Conference Related Ministries. Each of these has a significant ministry that was started and sustained by an individual or a group of people from our faith communities.

As these ministries, which carry a significant role within the faith community, embark on new initiatives, achieve milestones or experience a deepening or widening of perspective with the people that they serve, we want to capture their witness and share it with you.

Finally, *Pathways*, a quarterly publication, will provide updates about the unfolding drama of Conference life from the perspective of key leaders engaged in mission and ministry on behalf of the people of God. We hope to have recurring articles from the

Conference Moderator, periodic updates from the Treasurer, and my own reflections on specific activities sponsored by the Conference.

As I give my attention to three key priorities that give shape to my work: making disciples, discerning sexuality issues and revitalizing the Conference organization, I hope to make this a space of transparency and a helpful source of information.

The theme of this issue is “making disciples.” Our focus is not only to Christian formation of believers, but a renewed effort to engage in the calling and training of individuals, family groups, and cultural distinctive groups to be disciples of Jesus in the Anabaptist-Mennonite distinctive. During this past year, this renewed effort occurred through Skip Tobin’s work of coaching church planters as well as pastors interested in revitalizing their outreach to the community.

As we work through a dramatic time in the faith community over issues of sexuality, we continue to invest energy in resourcing events and ongoing conversations. We have had several Pastoral Consultations so far and are planning another in November, which will focus upon “Same Gender Attraction, Relationship, Lifestyle.” This event will again focus on ways to assist ministers in their own thinking, discernment, and leadership around this challenging theme.

At the Conference, we face the challenge of developing new ways to meet the contemporary situation of networking of congregations for mission, pastoral leadership development, and resourcing lay leaders in a time when there is a reduction in



Clyde G. Kratz
Executive Conference Minister
Virginia Mennonite Conference

financial resources. In this next year, a Task Force on Vision and Mission will be meeting with districts to continue developing a vision and mission statement in order to give clarity to the unfolding work of a conference.

Another phase of the revitalization process will be to review the structural questions and governance models. We will look at how the constituency of Virginia Mennonite Conference wants to be connected with each other and what forms it may take.

It is my personal hope that we will show these and other aspects of our work at the Conference in this new publication, I hope that this instrument can serve you well in keeping at the fore what God is doing through the people of God associated with Virginia Mennonite Conference.

We welcome your stories and experiences that can be shared with the people of God. If we have too many to print, we will place them on our website for broader distribution.

May this publication be our witness of the people of God on pilgrimage forging new pathways in the name of Christ!