

Leaders attend 'Healing Ministries' event with Willard Swartley

By STEVE LANDIS

Willard Swartley was a beloved Bible professor of mine who modeled serious biblical scholarship coupled with a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In 1975, I was blessed to be part of EMU's first "Jerusalem Term" cross-cultural experience, led by Willard and his wife Mary. As we trudged around the Middle East, the Bible and Christian faith came alive to me in fresh ways. I anticipated learning again from Willard, who greatly influenced my life as a young adult.

So it was meaningful for me to participate in a Credentialed Leaders Consultation on "Healing Ministries," a very relevant topic. I looked forward to time apart from day-to-day ministry to learn, share and reflect together with sisters and brothers from across the Virginia Conference.

Interweaving Scriptures and personal experiences, Swartley shared his journey of understanding the place of healing ministries in the church. He emphasized the prominence of healing in Jesus' earthly ministry. Through Jesus, many experienced both physical and spiritual healing. In the

book of Acts and beyond, healing ministries greatly contributed to the growth of the church. Swartley embraces a "Healing Discipleship" ministry model, not a "health and prosperity gospel".

Swartley shared some experiences in ministering to persons who were in demonic bondage. He learned to trust the Holy Spirit's nudging as he prayed for guidance and spiritual discernment. The Lord often gave him a simple word or phrase from the Scriptures. He observed there is power and authority in speaking God's word to address spiritual darkness. Other significant components of healing ministry are prayer support, accountability, and praising God for salvation, transformation and deliverance.

I was also touched by the experiences of Juan Carlos and Wendy Malvaez, Roy Hange, and Chuck and Joyce Hostetter. They shared various approaches of healing ministries that have impacted their lives and congregations. It's clear that God is at work



Willard Swartley shares experiences and insights from his work in the area of healing and transformation. Photo: Matthew Bucher

in bringing healing and deliverance to the hearts of hurting people! The church is called to offer Christ's ministry of hope and healing to this broken world.

As a pastor who now primarily serves with persons in the senior population, I asked myself how this connects to my current ministry.

I was reminded to be attentive to persons who have been impacted by wounds or spiritual bondage which need healing. I was especially challenged to minister with humility and compassion, remembering that we are the "hands and feet of Christ."

With authority, Jesus prayerfully proclaimed God's word as he ministered to those around him, offering spiritual transformation, healing and new life. What a privilege that we can be instruments of Christ's healing work in the world!



Steve Landis is Residential Living Chaplain of Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, Harrisonburg, Va.

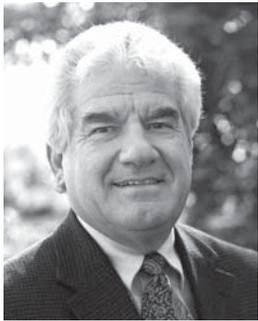


Credentialed leaders participate at the November 4 event.

Photo: Matthew Bucher

Healing mind, heart, soul, relationships and sometimes body

By ELROY MILLER, CONFERENCE MODERATOR



After forty years as a social worker engaging in healing ministries, I find the healing process a mystery. I see it happening, then not happening.

I see Christians experiencing the healing of heart, soul and relationship and sometimes even of body or not. I have seen individual and relational healing happen to genuinely good people and, frankly, to not so good people.

When I was in high school, my dad introduced me to Paul Tournier, M.D., a French Christian psychiatrist. Tournier writes in *The Person Reborn* (1966) about the challenges of healing. He says that most of us want solutions for our problems; with emphasis on solution. In truth, healing happens when "...we bring [problems] out into the daylight in order to be honest about them, for to repress (bury) them is basically to be dishonest towards oneself."¹

Most current day professionals and laity involved in the healing ministries agree. As my mother used to say, "Confession is good for the soul."

Tournier also adds that "[T]echnology (therapy/counseling) and faith work together. Psychoanalysis (a type of therapy) brings problems out into the daylight. Grace dissolves them without our ever knowing how."²

I agree. Helping people to put words to thoughts and feelings often transforms the pain they experience, gives it meaning and shows them a way forward. In recent times,

scientists are also learning that psychotropic medication, exercise, heartfelt conversation, meditation and prayer also facilitate the process of healing.

A few years ago on a Saturday afternoon, I was walking toward the James Madison University Convocation Hall for a garden show when across the way a man yelled out my name. I looked up and saw Tom (not his real name), a very angry previous client of mine, laughing and walking toward me with his wife, who was also grinning. After introductions, his wife said, "You have no idea what you did for Tom. He has changed his attitude and saved our marriage. Thank you, thank you!" Tom's healing of heart and mind meant confessing and letting go of his deep disappointment with midlife; for her, it was having her husband back.

Sometimes healing comes in unexpected ways. A friend of mine had very sore and inflamed knees for about 15 years. X-rays showed that his cartilage was gone. One summer, he traveled to see friends on the West Coast. Flying caused his knees to swell and inflame greatly and he could barely stand or walk. On the last night of his stay, his friends asked him if they could pray a prayer of healing for his knees. He agreed. They anointed his knees with oil and prayed. Within a week all the pain, inflammation and redness left his knees. My friend worked and played golf for years before knee replacements became necessary. He said to me, "Healing for me was very unexpected and mysterious but spoke volumes for the faith and love of my friends."

Therefore, in keeping with James 5:16, let's confess our sins or issues to each other and pray for each other so that we may be healed.

¹(p. 66), ²(p. 37)

Pastoral transitions (October to November 2016)

Luis Martinez, lead pastor of Iglesia Discipular Anabaptista, Harrisonburg District, licensed.

Caleb McClendon, Calvary Community Church, Calvary District, licensed.

Lesley Francisco-McClendon, director of student ministries at Calvary Community Church, Calvary District, licensed.

Merle Christner, lead pastor at Stephens City Mennonite Church, Northern District, transferred to VMC.

Richard Reed, pastor at Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Northern District, licensed.

Gregory Stenson, lead pastor of Mt. Vernon Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg District, licensed.

In this issue:

3 Consultation strives to cultivate a culture of healing
Gestalt Pastoral Care: a local healing ministry and practice

4 Healing ministries in the church: more prayer or better healthcare?

5 Remain in Me: Finding God in the Ordinary—Mennonite Women of Virginia annual retreat

Conference Related Ministries

6 Pleasant View, Inc.—Coming home to heal, helping others

Gift & Thrift a safe space for youth to fulfill community service obligations

7 Eastern Mennonite University & Seminary— Clinical Pastoral Education a practice of reflection

8 NewBridges walks with immigrants through uncertain times

Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale— 50 years a labor of love

9 Walking with USA Ministries

Features

10 Footprints from the past: Why write a new history book about Virginia Mennonite Conference?

11 Editorial: Anointing with oil— an essential ministry of the church that needs more prominence

END OF YEAR CAMPAIGN \$31,500* by December 31

(*45% of total individual gifts goal of \$70,000 for fiscal year 2016-2017, ending August 31.)

Donate online to VMC:
virginiaconference.org/donate

Pathways Winter 2016 – Volume 2, Number 3

© 2016 by Virginia Mennonite Conference. *Pathways* is published quarterly to connect congregations to the ministries of VMC. Application to mail at periodicals postage prices is pending at Harrisonburg, VA.

Editor & Designer: Jon Trotter
Assistant Editor: Anieta McCracken

Pathways is distributed free to each household of supporting congregations. To join mailing list, contact: *Pathways* (540) 434-9727 • (800) 707-5535
info@virginiaconference.org
Website: virginiaconference.org

POSTMASTER Send address changes to: *Pathways*
601 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

Consultation strives to cultivate a culture of healing

By MARIAN BUCKWALTER

“I am the LORD, who healeth thee.” We sing the words, and believe the healings of the Bible, but does healing happen now?

On November 4, at the Pastors’ Consultation, we heard modern day stories of healing ministries happening among us.

Wendy and Juan Carlos Malvaes nurture a culture of transformational healing within their congregation, Manantial de Vida. Several times a year, after an intense period of prayer and fasting, they invite small groups of people to a weekend of inner healing and deliverance at Highland Retreat. During this time, wounded hearts are set free to experience God’s love and forgiveness.

Having experienced healing through Gestalt Pastoral Care, Roy Hange ministers out of this perspective which prayerfully pays attention to body, spirit, and emotion. He expresses his role as showing up, and getting out of the way of the Spirit’s work.

Another couple walks the journey of healing with a victim of ritual abuse. Accompanying her out of utter torment and darkness into the light of Jesus Christ has been an experience of awe as well as pain.

Willard Swartley shared his surprising journey of God using him in deliverance ministry. Mentored by Dean Hostettler, Willard and a team of people have been used by God to confront and cast out demons in the name of Jesus Christ, setting the prisoner free.

He reminded us to be aware of healing power within the regular practices of our community life: baptism, communion and foot washing, anointing with oil,

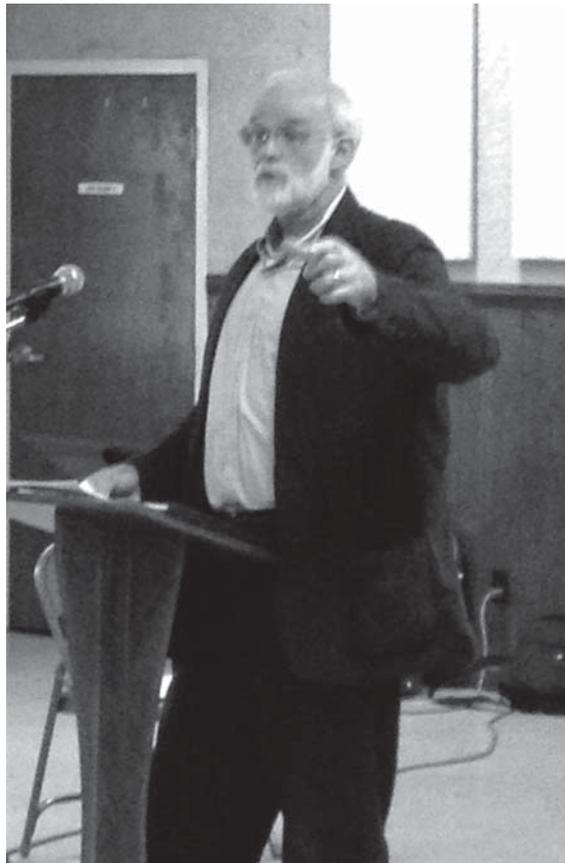
visiting the sick, and meditating on the Word. Within these practices, as we come before the Holy One, there is capacity for healing, both spiritual and physical.

Willard shared that early one morning before a medical procedure, he was meditating on Luke’s story of the centurion’s servant (7:1-10).

He marveled that the usual enmity between the Romans and Jewish leaders, as well as that between Jewish leaders and Jesus, was put aside for the sake of the healing of a servant.

In the midst of this pondering, he felt a warmth flowing through his own body, and knew immediately that he had been healed. God’s Word became a healing agent, even when he wasn’t asking for it!

These are stories of hope for me. God is using faithful women and men to bring healing and hope to wounded people. Our church, our nation, and our world, are broken. But our God is still “the Lord that healeth thee.”



Roy Hange shares about his work with Gestalt Pastoral Care at the Consultation, describing it as showing up and getting out of the way of the Spirit’s work.

Photo: Matthew Bucher

Marian Buckwalter is a pastor of Crossroads Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va.



Gestalt Pastoral Care: a local healing ministry and practice

By ROY HANGE

Gestalt Pastoral Care (GPC) is an inner-healing ministry of the church now practiced in many denominations across the United States, England and Australia.

It is Christian healing practice that creates a combination of spiritual, emotional and physical experiments, unique to each person’s need, to invite and evoke the transformative work of the Spirit.

Those who have experienced this ministry have offered the following descriptions: “powerful,” “life-changing,” “this is what the church should be,” “I finally have the freedom I have been looking for...”

GPC’s Methodist founder, Rev. Tilda Norberg, has taught it at Eastern Mennonite

Gestalt Pastoral Care continued on pg. 4

Seminary (EMS), Harrisonburg, Va., and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and was featured at EMS's School for Leadership Training in 2013, where she demonstrated this ministry for those gathered.

Her main handbook is entitled *Consenting to Grace: An Introduction to Gestalt Pastoral Care* (Penn House Press, 2006) which gives more content and narrative than this article will allow. Chapters include the following titles: "Spiritual Companionship and Faith Imagination," "Healing Prayer, Confession, Forgiveness and Forgiving," "Individualized Healing Liturgies," "Generational Healing," "Deliverance," and "Beyond Individuals: The Healing of Institutions."

Tilda has been ordained by the Methodist church for the ministry of healing for over 30 years. Though gestalt therapy in its original form was problematic for many, when combined with Christian spirituality it has become a powerful channel of the Spirit's freeing work. Because GPC is attentive to emotional, spiritual and physical processes not much brokenness gets past it.

Locally, there is a Community of Practice who plan two inner-healing retreats a year and meet once a month for resourcing and to "work" with one person. Sheryl Shenk, Lawrence Yoder, Pat Hostetter Martin and I make up the Shenandoah Community of Practice, and we each were a part of the GPC course offered at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in 2000.

I have connected off and on with GPC since 1986 when someone on the leadership committee of Franconia Mennonite Conference encouraged me to attend a retreat on my way to seminary.

I have since connected other persons to this healing ministry with many having had life-changing experiences as the Spirit has worked with their openings to grace. GPC has been so powerful in our ministry at Charlottesville Mennonite Church that four lay persons from the church have taken the GPC course at Eastern Mennonite Seminary and two of these persons are now Licensed Professional Counselors.



Roy Hange is pastor of Charlottesville Mennonite Church, Charlottesville, Va.



Wikimedia Commons

Healing ministries in the church: more prayer or better healthcare?

By HARVEY YODER

Some fifty Virginia Conference leaders attended a seminar on "Healing Ministries in the Church" held November 4 at Weavers Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va. All were blessed by Willard Swartley, of the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, sharing from his study and his personal experiences in healing and deliverance ministries.

As a pastor and as someone working in the mental health field, I was especially interested in hearing more about the intersection of faith-based and medical-science-based approaches to healing.

Swartley introduced us to a text in the Apocryphal Book of Sirach, chapter 38:9-14, that stresses the need for both:

"My child, when you get sick, don't ignore it. Pray to the Lord, and he will make you well. Confess all your sins and determine that in the future you will live a righteous life. Offer incense and a grain offering, as fine as you can afford. Then call the doctor—for the Lord created him—and keep him at your side... There are times when you have to depend on his skill."

For much of history, healing by spiritual means was the primary option available. In the passage above, written in the intertestamental period, the use of medicine and prayer receive equal attention. Today most of us see science-based medicine as the primary option, with prayer and anointing of oil as secondary.

At Family Life Resource Center we are committed to both, partnering with pastors and other members of congregations whenever appropriate and desired. Whether one's illness is primarily physical or emotional, whether it involves a disease affecting the brain or any other part of the body, we believe there is benefit in bringing together every possible means of healing to bear on the ill person.

Also, we want to help people utilize all the personal assets they bring with them, including the wisdom they have gained from their own life experiences, as well as the "first aid" they are offered by their family, friends and members of their congregational family. Professional caregivers should then be readily available when ordinary lay care isn't enough.

At the November 4 meeting, Pastor Roy Hange described the kind of gestalt therapy he and others are finding useful in congregational care, and Joyce and Chuck Hostetter shared from their experience of working with individuals dealing with trauma.

It indeed takes a whole congregation, with all of its healing gifts, to maintain good spiritual and emotional health.



Harvey Yoder is a Licensed Professional Counselor and Marriage and Family Therapist at Family Life Resource Center.



Singing together was a highlight, as the harmony and the acoustics were amazing. All photos courtesy of Gloria Lehman



Marlene Bogard, MW USA Exec. Dir., shares enthusiastically on the theme of "Remain in Me – Finding God in the Ordinary."

Remain in Me: Finding God in the Ordinary

Mennonite Women of Virginia hold annual retreat in Natural Bridge

By GLORIA LEHMAN

Mennonite Women of Virginia (MWV) held its annual retreat October 28-30 at the Natural Bridge Historic Hotel and Convention Center. The beautiful setting and weather enabled 130 women to truly 'retreat'—to be still, to listen, to worship, and to fellowship with faith sisters.

In each of the four sessions, Jean Oswald and Janine Kanagy opened the call to worship with the reading of John 15, each time in a different version, and on Sunday morning in a reader's theater style. The repeated words of Jesus brought them deep into our minds: "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine." Krista Powell and a group of women from Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va., led worship music.

Marlene Bogard, the Mennonite Women USA president from Albany, Ore., spoke in four sessions centered on *Remain in Me...* Following each session, a woman from MWV shared from her own experience.

Remain in Me...in the daily rhythm of life—Marlene led us through some spiritual practices including the "five-finger prayer"

which is easy to follow in our personal prayer time. Margaret Bruckhart (First Mennonite, Richmond) shared personally.

...In caring relationships with others—Marlene shared about women nurturing other women, and presented the concept of Sage and Parsley Challenge. This grows out of Sister Care, a program of MW USA, which has gone around the world. Marian Mininger (Springdale Mennonite) shared personally.

...In personal pain/crisis—Marlene led us through a process of writing a lament where we are honest before God, and fully trusting him. Sharon Arbaugh (Waynesboro Mennonite) shared personally.

...In commitment to the body of believers—We gathered in small groups to share our joys and concerns, blessed each other by drawing a cross on the back of each other's hands and prayer. Jodi Schiedel-Anderson (Huntington Mennonite) shared personally.

Marlene wove humor throughout each session, provided practical applications for spiritual practices, and was available for further questions and dialogue.

Retreat participants enjoyed a variety of afternoon activities—hiking on the trails around the Natural Bridge grounds, shopping in Lexington, knotting a comforter for Mennonite Central Committee, or having quiet time in the prayer room. Two workshops were offered: The "Spice Girls," (Laurie Ahlgrim, Barbara Bowman, and Patricia Rohrer talked about "complementary healing spices," and Chris



Opportunities to share with each other in table groups or one-on-one enhanced the focus of strong women relationships.

Eberly shared how clean eating affects our health, weight and well-being.

An added feature was the opportunity to go to the Natural Bridge at dusk and witness the "Drama of Creation" with music, lights and scripture read aloud. It was impressive to see God's masterpiece as the sky darkened and the stars shone out.

The silent auction raised \$990 for MWV scholarships to assist women to attend retreat in 2017. Saturday morning's offering brought in \$2,200 for Mennonite Women USA International Women's Fund, which supports women around the world attend seminary and other training schools.

Following communion on Sunday morning, participants gathered in a circle around the meeting room, joined hands and sang "Hearts with Loving Hearts United," blessing each other to remain in Jesus until we gather again.



MWV Retreat Planning Committee (L-R): Janine Kanagy, Jean Oswald, Lois Maust, Gloria Lehman, Tammy Driver, Deb Pardini.

Gloria Lehman is a member of the Executive Committee of Mennonite Women of Virginia.

Coming home to heal, helping others in the process

By PAM MILLER

What does it mean to be a healing ministry? Pleasant View, Inc., supports adults with intellectual disabilities who, when emotional, physical and psychological changes occur, may not fully understand what is happening.

When William Shifflett, Jr., (known as Junior) had a stroke in April 2016, his life changed dramatically.

He had lived an active, ambulatory life spent working, playing sports, and being as helpful as humanly possible. He now uses a wheel chair and has little control of his left hand.

These limitations have been an adjustment for Junior, but he was able return home to live with his friends at Pleasant View's Turner House.

True healing would not be possible for Junior if he was not able to be active and helpful to others.

He started attending the Broadway Day Program with some of his longtime friends and enjoys the weekly visits from our agency pastor, Dave Gullman. As a member of the Pleasant View Worship Team, he has participated in at least two programs a month since August. He experienced success last month by learning to



William Shifflett, Jr. Photo courtesy of Pam Miller

play a bell in the bell choir. He also enjoys attending monthly Faith & Light services.

Each year brings many challenges for the individuals we support. Pleasant View is blessed to have dedicated people and many Virginia Mennonite Conference churches who continue to support us annually. These donation dollars enable us to go beyond meeting the needs of the body to

provide a loving home and offer healing opportunities through the Spirit of God.



Pam Miller is Director of Development for Pleasant View, Inc., Broadway, Va.

Gift & Thrift a safe space for youth to fulfill community service obligations with positive role models

By SHANNON SECRIST

Harrisonburg Gift & Thrift is committed to Christian faith in action, offering a friendly, caring presence in the community while addressing the stewardship of our environment and supporting the primary goals of Mennonite Central Committee. In 2015, we began a (L)earn-a-Bike program at Gift & Thrift, which arose from a longstanding partnership between our local thrift shop and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Over the last decade, hundreds of Harrisonburg's court-involved youth have met their community service requirements by



working at Gift & Thrift. Our organization is proud of the multidimensional impact of our work. In addition to offering affordable repurposed goods to our community as we fund the international programs of Mennonite Central Committee, we also provide a safe space for youth to complete their community service obligations under the supervision of positive role models.

The (L)earn-a-Bike program is an extension of this concept. The objective of this eight-week program is to provide local, court-involved youth practical hands-on

learning mediated by positive, enthusiastic role models. The course provides opportunities for skill-building, collaborative problem-solving, and practical and sustainable transportation: a bicycle.

We hope our alternative diversion program serves our community by empowering our at-risk youth through hands-on learning and providing them with earth-friendly transportation.



Shannon Secrist is General Manager of Gift & Thrift, Inc., Harrisonburg, Va.

Clinical Pastoral Education a practice of reflection

By LAURA LEHMAN

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Eastern Mennonite Seminary involves ministry practice and reflection in places where people often experience crisis and trauma. CPE trains persons to enter spiritual care roles in a variety of ministry settings including chaplaincy and pastoral ministry.

CPE provides a disciplined practice of reflection for students as they experience ministry to those in deep need. This practice offers opportunities for students to reflect theologically as well as to draw from the behavioral sciences.

“CPE has been a transformative experience of learning and growth impacting every aspect of my life,” said Penny Driediger, who divides her time between supervising the CPE program and working as a staff chaplain at Sentara RMH. “Intentional reflective practice on life and ministry has increased my self-awareness and ministry capacity. I am able to look at myself more honestly and accept responsibility for self as I seek to companion others toward healing and wholeness.”

The CPE program at EMS is unique in its flexible internship opportunities. Through valued relationships with the local hospital, Sentara RMH, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community and Bridgewater Retirement Community, for the last several



Penny Driediger, staff chaplain at Sentara RMH, has supervised the Clinical Pastoral Education program at Eastern Mennonite Seminary since 2010. She is certified as an associate supervisor by the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education. Photo: EMU

years the CPE program has expanded the range of placement opportunities. Some of these include The Village at Orchard Ridge, a Lutheran retirement community in Winchester, Va., MennoHaven in Chambersburg, Pa., as well as some local prisons. Pastors are also welcome to utilize up to half of their congregational ministry as part of their internship.

EMS offers CPE in multiple formats. Students can take a full-time summer

unit from late May to early August, or an extended unit, which is a part-time assignment across the two semesters of the school year. Since 1999, 290 people have been trained through the program.



Laura Lehman is Web Project Manager & Strategist of Eastern Mennonite University's Marketing & Communications Department.

Relief Sale: A labor of love for 50 years

By JIM BISHOP

The Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale celebrated its 50th birthday this fall at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds with near record-setting fundraising of about \$338,300 for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Last year's effort raised \$264,021; the highest amount ever raised was \$372,901 in 2014.

“Once all expense reports are finalized, we expect to come close to breaking the record sales total,” said Dave Rush of Harrisonburg, relief sale chair.

Funds included \$22,185 for My Coins Count (formerly known as Penny Power),

which will help support Rafael and Solange Tartari, Virginia Mennonite Missions workers in Lezhë, Albania; and an MCC project that assists uprooted people in Ethiopia, Honduras and other places.

The sale, held Sept. 30-Oct. 1, marked its 50th year with a commissioned auction piece and commemorative book.

Relief Sale continued on pg. 8

Karen Gonzol holds the commemorative 50th anniversary book she compiled, entitled *For the Least of These: 50 Years of the Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale: A Photographic History, 1967-2016*. Photo: Jim Bishop





NewBridges hosted a quilting gathering this fall called “Hilos en Comun” (Common Threads).

NewBridges walks with immigrants through uncertain times

By ALICIA HORST

Greetings from NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center! We are currently responding to the anxieties that some persons in our local immigrant communities are feeling as a result of the presidential election.

So much of the future is unknown, and I have gathered with groups to listen to stories of experiences in recent weeks. Our immigrant friends have expressed concern about their safety based on their appearance. Parents, professionals, friends, and church members are processing what it means to support healing and kindness in our current context.

In October, our board completed a strategic plan which incorporated church and community feedback. Our new mission statement is *Engaging Immigrants. Connecting Cultures. Building Community.*

NewBridges began over 16 years ago because Mennonite churches wanted to support immigrants to the Shenandoah Valley. The kind of support we offered changed over the years.

For example, we used to offer English classes but are now able to instead connect people to wonderful agencies and schools that offer language classes at all levels of skill.

A few years ago we heard about the need for basic immigration legal counsel. This led us to pursue the necessary training and accreditation steps so that I can practice immigration law. Thank you for praying and supporting this journey of kindness, healing, and bearing witness to God’s love among us. May the peace of Christ be with you!



Alicia Horst is Executive Director of NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center, Harrisonburg, Va.

Relief Sale continued from pg. 7

The commissioned piece, a handcrafted wall hanging, was auctioned for \$5,100. Carolyn S. Bontrager of Harrisonburg pieced the wall hanging, and Charlotte O. Swope of Linville did the quilting.

Bontrager and Swope collaborated nearly two years on the project, which used 50 cotton fabrics reminiscent of the Civil War period and 325 yards of thread to construct the 40 six-inch blocks that comprise the piece.

For about 20 years, Kathy N. Zendt of Staunton has worked with other volunteers in handling the quilts, comforters and wall hangings. Her husband, Glenn, works with the donated woodworking items.

“It’s simply beautiful to see people from so many different Valley area churches taking hold of their responsibilities to make the relief sale happen,” Kathy Zendt said.

The celebration also saw the release of *For the Least of These: 50 Years of the Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale: A Photographic History, 1967-2016*. The 81-page softcover book features some 350 pictures chronicling the sale’s beginnings and rapid growth, along with stories, sale milestones, major volunteers, statistics and other historical data.

Karen Gonzol, of Martinsburg, W.Va., compiled the book by combing the archives at Eastern Mennonite University and connecting with people who knew others with information, stories and photos. (The book is available for \$15 at Gift & Thrift, Harrisonburg, Va., or by emailing info@vareliefsale.com).

There’s something distinctive about the Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale. Or maybe it’s actually a lot like the dozens of other Mennonite relief sales across North America — but made unique by the people who love it as their own.

“I don’t know of any other organization that involves such a diverse group of people in a cause beyond themselves. [The fact] that the Virginia relief sale has this kind of momentum after fifty years speaks volumes,” said Phil Helmuth, auction co-chair.



Jim Bishop is a freelance writer and columnist. He resides in Harrisonburg, Va.

Stories of healing, with practitioners in our midst

By SKIP TOBIN

When Willard Swartley stepped up to the podium and began telling his own fresh, personal healing journey and speaking his praise to God through a hymn that was obviously dear to him, I, too, wanted to open myself to God and hear what God might be saying to me through him.

As the resource person who grounded November's Credentialed Leaders Consultation on Healing Ministries so well, Swartley's motivation shone brightly, helping to orient us towards our collective "true north."

His prayer, flowing through Psalm 30:12—" [S]o that my soul may praise you, and not be silent"—became our prayer too. Along with the many people who expressed affirmation, I certainly was not disappointed. I want to echo my gratitude for this excellent event.

It was not only the grounding nature of Willard's presentation that gave me hope and direction; I was also deeply encouraged to witness a room full of interested and engaged ministers.

The varied approaches bravely shared by multiple VMC practitioners helped me



Willard Swartley gives a presentation based on his book *Health, Healing and the Church's Mission*. Photo: Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship



The gospel of Luke has Jesus "rejoicing in the Spirit" upon the return of the seventy disciples. He had sent them out to every place he intended to go. He was joyful because God's revelation was hidden from the wise and yet given to mere infants.

I believe that Jesus continues to rejoice in our going out, even if we are only infants in our experience and understanding.

You, like me, may ask, "What's next? How can we learn more? Where can we learn to practice the healing ministries of the church? Will the Lord help us in our interest and desires?"

If you were not a part of the consultation, the good news is that Willard's book *Health, Healing and Church's Mission*, which served as the backbone of his input, is readily available. We also have a number of practitioners in our midst who can serve as models.

As we get out in mission and engage with others, we are increasingly faced with the brokenness of our world. Our hearts cry out to God for more of Jesus' healing power to be released.

We too want to see ourselves and others healed from sicknesses and delivered from evil powers. And we want more of God's kingdom to come, more of his will done, right here on earth as it is in heaven.

As Willard said, "The church's mission includes embodying the divine healing presence and embrace that prays, helps and encourages in such situations."



Wendy and Juan Carlos Malvaez, pastors of the Manatial de Vida (Fountain of Life) congregation in Harrisonburg, Va., presented stories from congregational life of how people are being healed and restored. Photo: Matthew Bucher



Skip Tobin is Director of USA Ministries for Virginia Mennonite Missions, a partner of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

Why write a new history book about Virginia Mennonite Conference?

By ELWOOD YODER

When I saw the first pair of shoes that my wife bought for our six-month-old grandson, Daniel Billings, it clicked for me that children like him are an important reason we're writing a new history book about Virginia Mennonite Conference.

The History Book Committee has chosen Psalm 102:18 for our theme verse: *"Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord."* The committee is committed to a ten-year project to write a new book because we believe that writing about God's actions is important for future generations to learn about history and faith in our past.

I want my grandson, whose parents take him to Lindale Mennonite Church, to be able to read the history book someday.

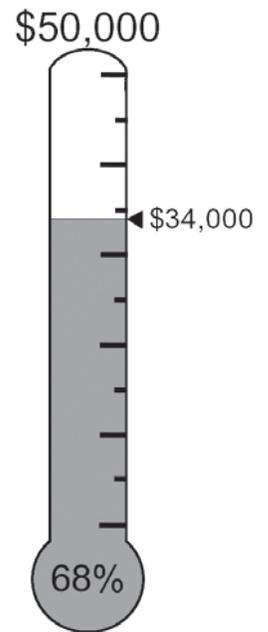


First pair of shoes for Daniel Billings, grandson of Elwood and Joy Yoder. Courtesy of Elwood Yoder

ence, but others have adopted this network of congregations more recently as their spiritual home. All of this to say that many do not know the story of Virginia Conference very well and it is important to write such a history book.

Third, the unique and distinctive history of Virginia Mennonite Conference is

Never before has the Virginia Mennonite Conference story been told to a national audience. We want the book to be readable and valuable for folks in our pews, and we also want to get it into churches, libraries, and archives across the USA and beyond.



Funds for the history book project as of November 2016.

Finally, Harry Brunk's history books end in 1960. His second volume is out of print, and used copies are difficult to find and very expensive. The Virginia Conference has had many developments since 1960, and we believe that now is the time to share a history of our newer stories.

Our History Book Committee recently met over a long session with Dr. Steven Nolt, the writer of the book. He will begin research in the fall of 2017, and we expect the book will be finished in 2020 or 2021. The cost will be approximately \$50,000, which is less than what the committee first anticipated. Nolt's new position at Elizabethtown College gives him great research assistance, and so his original projections have been reduced. We are grateful for over \$34,000 already raised from congregations and individuals. If you would like to help fund this book, please make a contribution to Virginia Mennonite Conference, designated for the History Book Project. Thank you for your support.



History Book Committee: From left, Harold Huber, Jim Hershberger, Eunice Showalter, Steven Nolt, Timothy Jost, and Elwood Yoder, November 5, 2016. Photo courtesy of Elwood Yoder

The second reason to write a new history book is because the complexity and makeup of Virginia Conference has changed in recent decades.

Some congregations use Spanish in services, we have traditional and contemporary styles of worship, and the younger generation is rethinking and reshaping the church in creative new ways. Some have deep generational roots in Virginia Confer-

a remarkable story to tell, not only for our own churches, but for a wider audience.

Virginia Conference emerged in a southern geographic and cultural context. Our people experienced the American Civil War firsthand. We had to deal with issues of slavery and race. Mission and educational institutions formed and grew in our midst. Now we are experiencing an in-migration of people from many different places.



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

Anointing with oil

Spiritual healing of the soul is an essential ministry of the church that needs more prominence

By CLYDE G. KRATZ



The healing ministry of the church may well be one of the church's dormant ministries. There may be a tendency to avoid this kind of ministry altogether.

We have become so accustomed to medical professionals providing us with medical information, diagnoses, and chemical remedies that are covered by our co-pay and insurance coverages. Our personal and medical challenges are kept strangely quiet.

At times, a pastor discovers one of their members is in the hospital almost by accident. The member apologizes to the pastor for needing the pastor's time, not for failing to inform the pastor of the pending hospitalization. Medical interventions and solutions are very important to our health, but so is the role of a pastor and the congregation to provide healing and hope.

There is also the fear that healing ministries may become sensationalized. It could become a sort of marketing strategy for the church, to be known as the place where public healings occur. The pastor produces the mystery of healing on cue, as if the grand performance is a drama reenacted weekly almost as a spectator sporting activity. People come from around the countryside and cities to be healed, only to experience a false hope and unfulfilled promises.

Recently, I attended a worship service in a Virginia Mennonite Conference congregation where the pastor invited worshippers to experience freedom from bondage. Worshippers came forward weeping as they

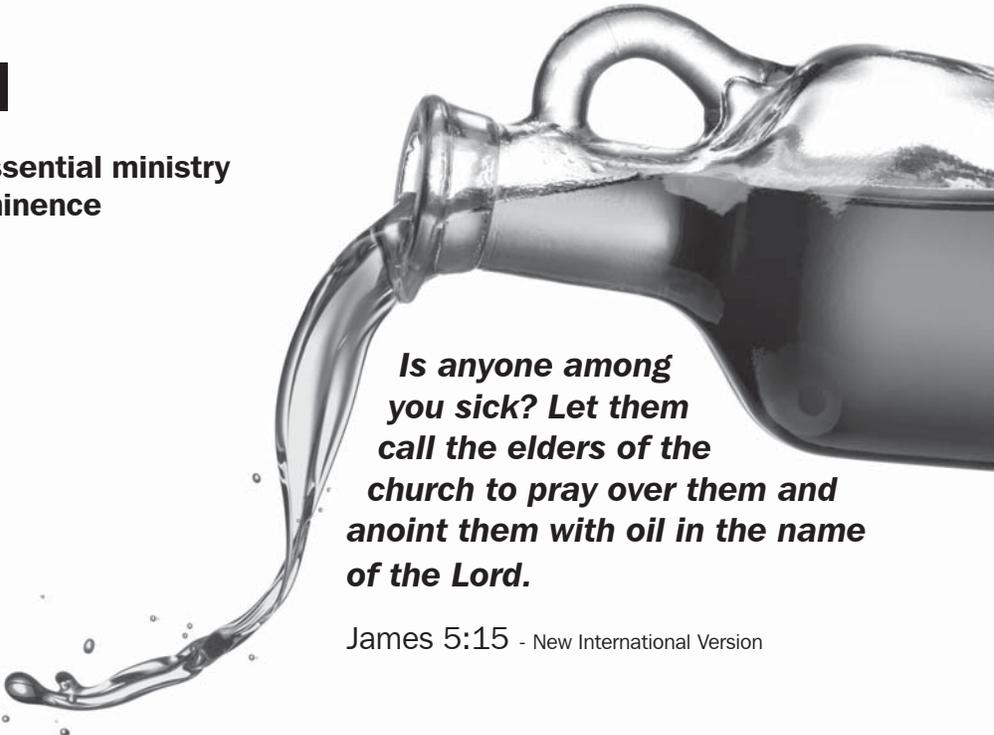
knelled to pray and experience the presence of God in worship—cared for by the elders of the congregation.

I have experienced services where a pastor invited worshippers to come forward for anointing with oil, for healing that may include identified sin, unnamed struggle, or a desire to surrender to God's will in a personal challenge.

I know that after congregational conflicts involving long periods of duress for congregational life, there is often a call for a healing service to move beyond the pain of the conflict and discover inner healing.

Spiritual healing of the soul is an essential ministry of the church that needs more prominence in the vast range of activities sponsored by the local congregation.

Jesus healed people. I can't explain the how of what Jesus did that led to such miraculous changes of health and well-being. James wrote to encourage his readers to utilize this ministry of the church. As an active sign of God's presence in a person's life, James calls for church elders to be present and for anointing with oil when sickness occurs.



Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.

James 5:15 - New International Version

Because we value our privacy, many of us are reluctant to call the pastor and elders when we are sick. But by failing to call the pastor, we miss an opportunity to experience the deepening presence of God at vulnerable times in our life. We also miss out on effective pastoral care that many of our pastors willingly provide.

The healing ministry of the church is not about reproducing the miracle. It is about caring and experiencing the presence of God in a new way.

It is soul ministry that can occur through the pastor and the local congregation. It is not our responsibility to interpret how people experience this healing ministry. It is only our duty to offer the opportunity for people to experience it.

I am grateful for the transformation that occurs when persons experience healing through anointing with oil. May there be many joy-filled experiences of pastors giving witness to the mystery of God's presence.

Clyde G. Kratz is Executive Conference Minister of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

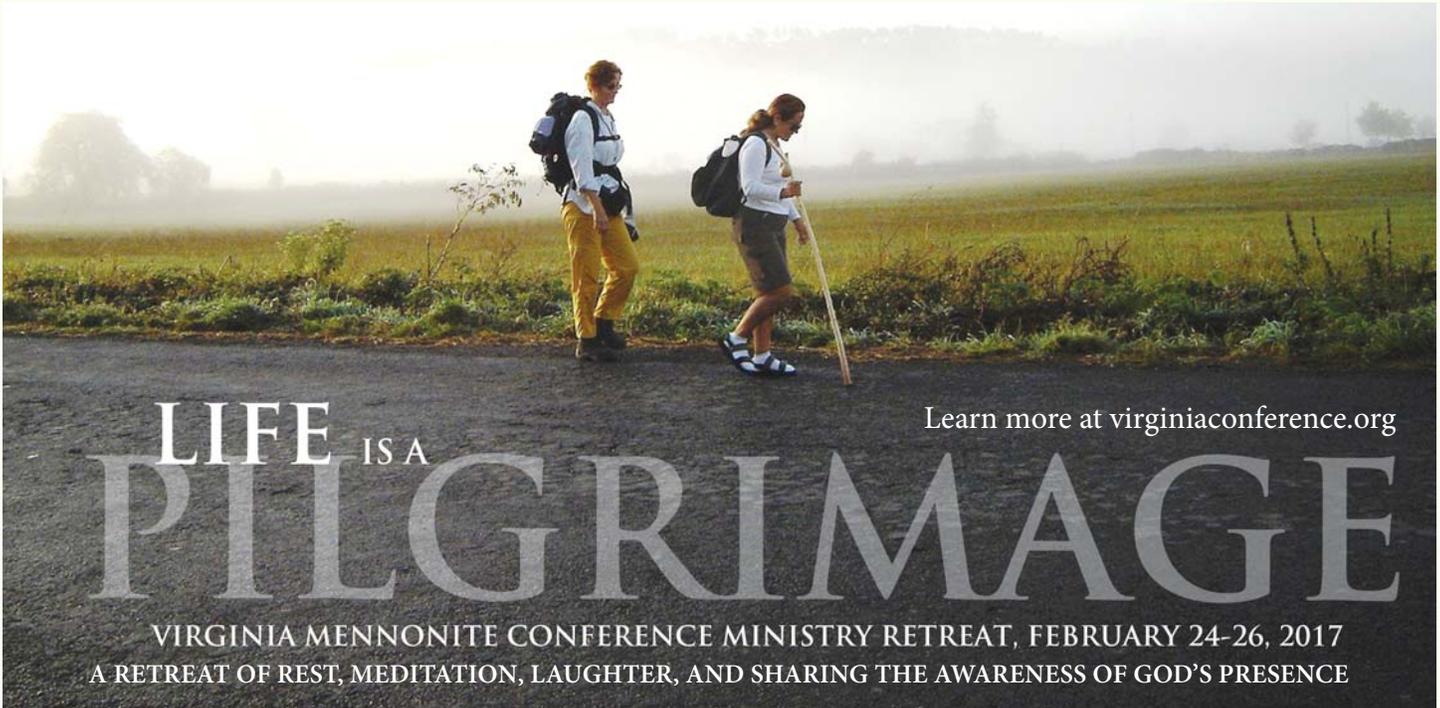
Winter
DELEGATE SESSION

February 4, 2017
8:00 am to 3:00 pm
Waynesboro Mennonite Church

A donation of \$15 p/p will cover the meal and expenses.



Pathways
Virginia Mennonite Conference
601 Parkwood Drive
Harrisonburg, VA 22802-2498



Virginia Mennonite Conference equips pastors, lay leaders, and congregants to support worship, mission, and service for Jesus Christ and to bring Good News to the world in which we live.

To continue this work of equipping leaders and sharing the Good News, please consider a contribution to Virginia Mennonite Conference.



virginiaconference.org/donate

Or send contribution to:
Virginia Mennonite Conference
601 Parkwood Drive
Harrisonburg, VA 22802