

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
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He came and preached peace

Second in a series of five articles on Doorways in Mission

People are debating about peace more today than any time since the Vietnam war. It stands to reason, peace-talk increases at precisely those times when peace seems most lacking. At this same time too, world-wide mission initiatives are increasing, especially those begun by the global church. The outward-reaching impulse of the church confronts a world in turmoil and conflict. The missional church encounters a broken world.

Paul said of Jesus, "He came and preached peace." Jesus' world (and Paul's too) was a broken world. Both lived in the midst of intense conflict and both were killed as a result of conflict. The combination of "preaching" and "peace" provides interesting and essential clues to the Christian's place in these troubled times.

1) We experience peace most fundamentally in our changed relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Alienation and conflict are spiritual in nature. Further, persons of peace "preach" peace by eagerly desiring and working that others receive peace as well. Peace begets peace. Peace is instinctively missionary.

2) Peace with God has immediate human implications, making it hard at times to separate the New Testament's concern for peace with God from peace with one another. The two go together. At a particular point in time, Christians may work with one emphasis or the other, but dare not ignore this holistic connection between the two. Separating mission and peace has not served the church well.

3) The New Testament devotes most attention to peace in the context of the family of faith. We also have peaceful obligations to the non-Christian world and to all of God's creation. New Testament priority is devoted, however, to the family of faith. This applies immediately to those with whom we share fellowship on a regular basis. Ongoing alienation violates God's family. Peace also extends globally. "Fellow-citizen"

applies more to those who share common faith in Jesus Christ than to those who share national citizenship. If all who call themselves "Christian" would begin by preaching and practicing peace to all local and global fellow-Christians, the world would radically change.



4) Missionaries must disavow the sword. Since "go and make disciples" applies to all Christians, the message of God's peace must be preached peacefully. Materialism, power, and partisan political agendas always threaten to compromise the gospel. Persons must be able to encounter God, free of human duress and compulsion. Western Christians, linked to the only current world superpower, run the risk of confusion of the gospel with a very dominant culture. American Christians, committed to the practice of the violence of their nation, unwittingly contradict the preaching of Christ's peace.

5) The preaching of peace assures us no guarantees. The Prince of Peace died on a cross. Christians who practice peace receive no promises that the peace they preach will be returned again to them. Peace describes the message and the practice of obedient disciples, but may not always be the way they are treated. Jesus' way of the cross is the way of His followers. Taking up that cross is the content and consequence of conversion. The late Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Christians live fully in this life and expectantly of the next.

• Loren Horst
President, VMBM

A simple heritage in a complex world

When my daughter inquired about tracing her ancestral roots in Europe the response was quite simple. “Check out the cemetery across from the Langnau Mennonite Church in the Emmental Valley of Switzerland.” There she discovered current gravestones that bore the names of Augsburgur, King (Koenig), Burkholder (Burghalter), and Stalter. Family names of all four of her grandparents are located in one place!



Owen Burkholder
Conference Minister

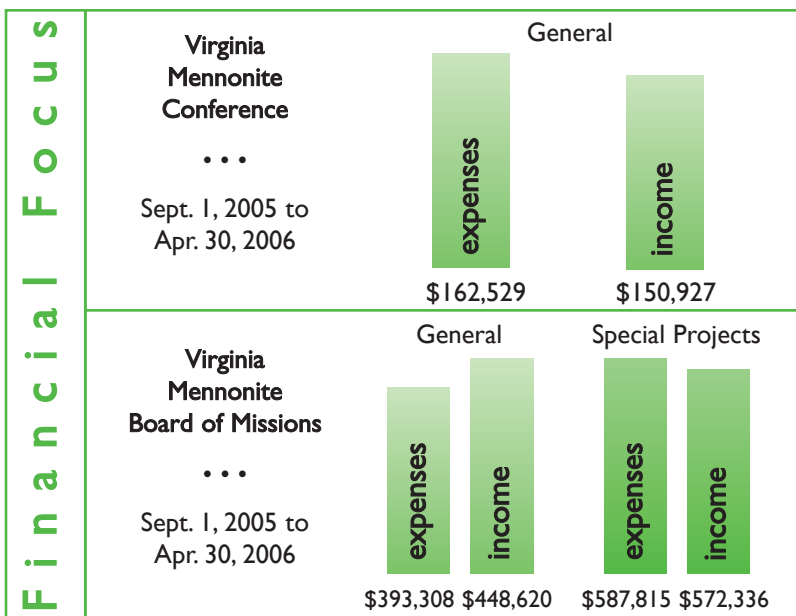
When that fact was reported to her young adult Philadelphia friends, they were shocked. That led to some reflections on how very uncomplicated the lives of her parents (that’s us!) seem to have been. Well now, we thought we had faced a good bit of the complexity that modern life has to offer. Just what are these wrinkles and aches and pains all about anyway?

Reflecting more deeply, our lives have been remarkably stable. To borrow a phrase from the Yoder Barn production, “we had it good!” My parents lived their missional lives in the same small town for more than 50 years. Ruth Ann’s parents planted two churches in Youngstown, Ohio, over the space of 30 years. We have lived in Harrisonburg for 33+ years. There are no divorces in our direct ancestry that we know of. None of our siblings are divorced. Sadly, an uncle, and now some nieces and nephews know such trauma.

That kind of stability in this kind of world is amazing. And that is the platform from which this next generation has been launched. They are launched into a very different milieu. These young adults are making choices about the values of their heritage—which will be held, which will be discarded.

But, so it has been! Somewhere in the Emmental Valley some Augsburgur, King, Burkholder and Stalter family member chose this Anabaptist way of following Jesus. And they provided the launching for those of us who followed, but we also had to choose.

Dear young adults, we commend to you the Scriptures which speak of Jesus. Jesus is living and represented by the Holy Spirit. That presence is for you—whatever you face. We pray for you as we pray for your world.



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Stories of Peace

sponsored by the Peace Coordinators
of the Virginia Mennonite Conference

God of freedom & peace

My husband Chris and I were invited to VBS at Waynesboro Mennonite Church and were excited to find a place where our children made new friends. Now I can look back and see God taking us to WMC. Since that VBS, Chris and our children have committed their lives to Christ, and I renewed my commitment.

My journey includes the far-reaching effects of WWII. My father was a radio operator in the Air Force during this war. My mother told us that when the crews came in from flying a mission, alcoholic drinks were brought to the men as they got off the planes. My father would take not only his drink, but also those of the men who didn't want them. He learned that drinking helped him forget the things of war. His 40-year addiction to alcohol began.

Although my father was honored for serving his country and being part of the longest mission flown in WWII, I believe he despised what he had been a part of. He never talked about his time in the service. He never flew again. Four nights a week plus holidays, he would drink himself into someone I didn't want to be around.

As a young adult, I came home one night to find my father sitting on the kitchen floor in a drunken stupor. I had also been drinking. I wanted things to change. In my disgust and despair, I went to my room and cried out to God.

The God of freedom heard my cry for help. My father was diagnosed with diabetes and stopped drinking. He began reading the Bible every night. He lived for about 12 more wonderful alcohol-free years. He finally committed his life to Jesus. Because my father accepted the gift of grace that reconciled him to His Father, he now knows true freedom as he lives with Him in heaven.

I guess this is how I see things because of where I've been: wars perpetuate hate, poverty and bondage like what my father lived through. God may use the wars of a sinful world for His purposes, but it doesn't mean that Christians should participate in these wars. His desire is "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). We should be loving and praying for those He also wants to receive His gift. Instead of getting caught up in patriotism, my prayer is that I can love all people so they can understand the grace that is available to them.

• Kelly Eldredge
Minister of Youth at Waynesboro Mennonite Church

Doorways in Mission:

Refugee friendship educates young adults

The Democratic Republic of Congo was a country most young adults at Raleigh Mennonite Church knew very little about until Tresor Medju came to the church as a political refugee. Tresor, a 30-year-old medical student and church youth leader, had to flee his country under death threats, after encouraging Congolese Christian youth and children to stay in school rather than dropping out to become fighters in the civil war that continues to take the lives of civilians in the large central African country.

After leaving Congo, Tresor spent time in a refugee camp in Uganda, before being sent to live in the U.S. His entire life was uprooted. When he arrived in Raleigh, members of the Raleigh Mennonite congregation were glad for the opportunity to help Tresor find housing, employment, English classes, and a college in which to continue his medical education. We valued the chance to get to know and assist someone who had literally put his life on the line for peace.

Soon Tresor was sharing more with us than we had shared with him. He became an active part of the church's young adult group, and broadened our understanding of his homeland by introducing us to other African Christians living in Raleigh, and to the culture, food, music and languages of Congo. Through him we met Monique, a Congolese pastor's daughter, who taught RMC's young adults how to cook delicious fish with skin and eyes included, and to eat vegetables that even the food-savvy ones among us had barely heard of.

We have danced, and discussed politics, peace and faith. More importantly, we have developed a desire to educate others in our community and our churches about the need for peace in Congo.

With this in mind, the Raleigh Mennonite young adult group has begun planning a summer evening of education of peace and faith for interested people. It will focus on the need to pray and directly advocate for peace in Congo, and will



Members of the youth group of Raleigh Mennonite Church sharing a Congolese meal with Tresor (r) and Monique (c).

Refugee Friendship continued on page 4

Children's Bible Camp a success in Albania



Norma Teles (l) with children from her Bible Camp and assistant at the beach in Albania.

This past year was the sixth camp I've had here in Albania. Each one is different---new ideas, new theme, new helpers, new location and more kids! Finding suitable helpers is always an obstacle to overcome in organizing camps. But once again, God provided just the right number of helpers I needed. Seven Albanian believers, including three cooks volunteered to serve as staff for the 23 children who participated. The camp was held this year at the "Light Force Center," an excellent facility that gave ample space for games and Bible classes. The theme was "Living in God's Power—the Fruit of the Spirit" based on John 14:26 and Galatians 5:22.

We had Bible stories, memory verses, missionary stories about William Carey, dramas, small group discussions; there were volleyball and ping-pong tournaments, swimming at the beach and lots of games. Small groups gave opportunity each day to discuss the Bible lesson, ask questions and do craft projects. Not accustomed to working in small groups, the children found it difficult the first day. They kept calling me to come explain what they were supposed to do. Later, however, they began enjoying this time very much when they could talk freely about what they were learning.

Some of the children share their thoughts and impressions of camp. Melissa says, "This has been a wonderful and extraordinary week! I was touched in a very special way. The missionary stories were truly amazing and inspired us to praise the Lord. Love and kindness are the fruit of the Spirit that I need to work on the most."

Igli says, "We learned that instead of carrying our burdens on our own shoulders, we should give them to Jesus. We learned that Jesus is very great! My favorite sport was soccer; my team won the tournament. I would certainly stay if there would be another week of camp!"



The quilt fashioned by women from Weavers Mennonite, from Tanzanian fabrics, which was sold at the Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale for over \$4,000. Some of the proceeds went to help the women in Arusha, Tanzania, who had donated fabric. The quilt was then presented to Jan Emswiler (r) and her husband, Kajungu, at their wedding. (Story on next page)

Refugee Friendship continued from page 3

provide education about the country, its culture and politics, and the refugee crisis there. Anyone interested in learning more about the event may e-mail the church office at pastor@raleighmennonite.org

For Raleigh Mennonite's young adults, becoming friends with Tresor and Monique has broadened our world, tweaked our taste-buds, and invited us into an opportunity to join with those who are promoting peace in Congo.

La paix à nos amis. Peace to our friends.

• Janelle Bitikofer
Raleigh Mennonite Church, Raleigh, N.C.

"We learned that we should always trust God and be faithful to Him, just as He is with us," says Eridiola. "The missionary stories taught us that God is great and will never let us down. I was very impressed by this whole week of camp, especially by the love among us. Everything has been good—the teaching, the games and the wonderful dramas."

Praise God for the wonderful time with the children! And thank you for helping with this camping ministry through prayer and financial support.

• Norma Teles
VMBM worker in Albania

called and sent!

Will you serve in one of these places?

Couples, families, and/or two individuals for teacher assistants at the Maranatha School for the Deaf, Jamaica. Serve for 1 year and begin in Sept. 2006.

Junta Menonita de Missoes Internacionais (JMMI), in partnership with Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions, supports Norma Teles, who returned to Albania in March after a seven-month leave for deputation and relaxation. Summer camp will be held again in 2006.

This summer camp is an excellent project for VBS offerings! Contact VMBM for more information.

Mennonite Women create a “Sister-Link” with Tanzania group

Sister-Link is a program envisioned by Mennonite Women USA to join groups of women together for fellowship and prayer across international boundaries. In 2002, a group of women in Arusha, Tanzania, expressed interest in such a venture and women from Weavers Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, took up the challenge, committing to praying for their partners across the miles. Edith Shenk became the liaison between the two groups, due to being in Tanzania at this time for an MCC assignment and having served as a pastor in the Weavers congregation.

As time went on, the African women wanted to share a gift with the Weavers women and decided to send them many pieces of fabric that were typical to their area. The creative women at Weavers decided to fashion a quilt that could be sold at the Virginia Relief Sale in October of 2005. Working with their treasurer and MCC, they arranged to have some of the money raised returned to the Arusha group. The goal would be to start up a business selling tie-dyed fabrics and locally-made clothing as a way of providing employment for the women who know how to dye fabrics and sew.

The finished quilt was a beautiful work of art and elicited many positive comments. When presented for auction at the Virginia Relief Sale, it received good bids and finally sold for just over \$4,000, much to the joy of the Weavers congregation. Later, it was learned that the new owners of the quilt were the parents of a woman who is working in Tanzania and about to be married. It was also revealed that this was going to be a wedding gift. It was hard to keep the secret on this side of the ocean!

This beautiful quilt was presented to Jan Emswiler and her husband, Kajungu, at their wedding. What joy was experienced as the leader of the Arusha women’s group was able to witness this special gift—a gift begun with prayer, created by loving hands, and shared across the ocean.

• Edith Shenk
Weavers Mennonite Church

First annual retreat for Trinidadian Women

The first annual “In Your Hands Ministry” women’s retreat for the Mennonite churches of Trinidad was scheduled to start the next day. It had been cancelled just that morning by the camp director at Ridgewalk Camp due to a water shortage. In spite of the water problem, the women wanted to have the retreat and worked together to make that happen, including meal preparation. Roy and I printed out schedules, pasted them in notebooks, prepared name tags and did final preparations for a craft project.

On Friday evening ladies from various churches arrived by maxi taxis and settled into their cabins at Ridgewalk Camp. When the second taxi from Sangre Grande drove up the kitchen filled with food supplies. The first evening the ladies had wisely planned to have sandwiches and served them on napkins. However, the rest of the meals showcased their talents as fine Trinidadian cooks.

The theme of the weekend was “Breaking Free” with Beth Moore video Bible studies about finding freedom in Christ from anything that is hindering us in our walk with God.

There was time for worship, small group discussion, crafts, swimming, relaxing, getting a little sleep and of course a Saturday night banquet followed by “Showtime.” Each small group put on a presentation on the theme of freedom in Christ. We had a wonderful mix of inspiration and fun.

Sunday morning we lifted our voices in praise. Linda Gunpath brought a powerful message about living in freedom from Galatians 5. This was followed by a time of ministry in pairs, praying for each other. True to the pace of the weekend, we were not quite finished when the maxi taxis arrived on schedule. The drivers simply sat and waited while lunch was served and the riders got ready to leave. One lady shared that it was the best weekend of her whole life. Most comments were very positive along with some good suggestions for the next time. In the final analysis God provided enough water to keep us dependent on Him and meet our basic needs. He had also provided the Living Water to refresh our spirits.



Trinidadian Mennonite women meet at a retreat which they hope to have every year. Above, they are making crafts. Below is a small group that met for discussion.



• Joanne Hunsberger
VMBM worker in Trinidad

Teach in an English School in Lezhe, Albania, and relate to the growing congregation in that town as part of the outreach team. Serve for 2 years, and begin as soon as possible.

Contact Beth Brunk, HR Associate at (800) 707-5535 or email: beth.brunk@vmbm.org

The ministry of EMHS Touring Choir

For Jay Hartzler, who has been directing the Eastern Mennonite High School Touring Choir for 25 years, it is about more than just making great music. It is a chance for the students and him to take something back to the church as Touring Choir visits congregations in the Shenandoah Valley and around the world.

“Touring Choir is for the kids. It gives them a perspective of listening, a chance for them to share their faith as they sing. When we travel, we meet people from other religions, and from other faith expressions—Catholics and Baptists. The kids learn as they interact with the people whose homes they stay in and the people we sing to.” The students then in turn minister to the congregations where they sing, as church members “see a younger generation expressing faith through song. It is enriching for them and they see hope in the next generation.”

This experience of Touring Choir ultimately provides students with numerous gifts they can take to the church. Beyond the obvious musical talents and skills that students develop in Touring Choir, Hartzler also believes that each member “has more of an open mind, both culturally as they experience other types of people, and in their ability to relate to others in group situations and work together.”

Hartzler believes the biggest role Touring Choir members, and any EMHS students, can play



in the church is simply being a resource for the churches. “These kids are doing the kinds of things that don’t go on other places, whether it is Touring Choir or the Southwest trip. They aren’t being used as much as they could be in the churches; the kids need to be asked to be involved. I hear Mennonites saying ‘we didn’t know what you’re doing [at Eastern Mennonite School].’”

So, ask an Eastern Mennonite School student in your congregation to participate in worship, to sing a prelude song, to lead music during the children’s Sunday school or to share their experiences from school. And if you have a child in kindergarten through 12th grade, consider visiting the school to see what could be in store for your student.

• Les Helmuth
Eastern Mennonite School

Congregational Resource Center

SEEKING VOLUNTEER(S) FOR RESOURCE LIBRARY

The Congregational Resource Center, a resource library for pastors and lay leaders, is seeking volunteers to help carry out general weekly tasks. Located at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, the Congregational Resource Center (CRC) provides practical ministry resources to congregations of Virginia Mennonite Conference, students at the seminary, and others. Presently, there are approximately 5 hours of work available for volunteers.

General weekly tasks include: processing, shelving and mailing resources, watering plants and dusting.

Additional duties, based on interest and skill, could include: checking shelves (for chronological order), filing resources, creating signs, creating displays, assisting in the CRC when the director is unavailable and other special projects.

Helpful skills: basic computer skills (will train), reading medium to small print, simple housekeeping tasks.

Helpful but not necessary: Interest in ministry resources and/or libraries or resource centers, creativity, willingness to assist others.

Perks: Access to resources on ministry, adult education, youth ministry, children’s ministry, worship, and spirituality.

CRC hours: Monday - Friday, 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Volunteer hours are during these times.

The CRC is willing to train several people to serve as volunteers. All ages and backgrounds welcome to inquire.

To learn more, express interest or visit, contact: Jill Landis, Director of Congregational Resource Center, Eastern Mennonite Seminary 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802

The Resource Center is open 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Contact Jill Landis at 540-432-4219 or crc@emu.edu to make arrangements for evening use.



Connections Prayer Calendar

June 2006

Sunday

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.” Luke 6:35 (NIV)

4 Pray for young adults in AMIGOS, the Mennonite World Conference group that builds relations of shalom with their peers around the world. May they discern the meaning of our faith for today in their own settings.

11 Is the Penny Power jug in your congregation getting filled up? Nancy Marshall, *travSend* participant, and the Jesus' Deaf Church will benefit from the money raised. Youth and adults attend this church each Sunday.

18 Pray for the growing number of Christian youth from various churches in Bari who meet together informally for fellowship, prayer, and sharing their faith, that the Holy Spirit will use their commitment in a powerful way.

25 The Tobins spent time in the village of B-narick, Thailand, the place where John Hertzler was killed. They pray that strong relationships and meaningful experiences will develop as they continue to witness there.

Monday

5 Praise God for answering many prayers for Eraldi, the Albanian boy who was desperately ill with leukemia! God miraculously opened doors for his treatment in Italy and after chemotherapy, all tests are negative!

12 Ask God to guide Laura Kauffman, *travSend* participant and MMN worker as she helps form a health team at La Mesa Mennonite Church, Colombia to do outreach in the rural communities around the city.

19 Praise God for the release of Ms. Le Thi Hong Lien from a Vietnamese prison. Continue to pray for full recovery both physically and mentally.

26 Thank God for Sherah-Leigh Gerber, VMC administrative assistant, who visited last month with Melissa Wenger, *travSend* participant in Armore, Ala., to assist with planning logistics for the 2006 Native Assembly.

Tuesday

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by

Galen and Gloria Lehman, in honor of the church leaders in Trinidad and Jamaica. May their ministry be fruitful.

If you would like to sponsor the prayer calendar, contact gloria.lehman@vmbm.org or (800) 707-5535.

6 Roy and Joanne Hunsberger use their gifts of teaching and praying in various settings with the Mennonite churches in Trinidad. Thank God for their willingness to be servants for Him in that place.

13 Paul and Esther Kniss are relating to the Gospel Lighthouse Mennonite Church in Trinidad on the weekends during June. Pray that they will have the insight that they need for ministering with this lively church.

20 Dan Hoopert, teaching seminary classes in Kiev, Ukraine, thanks God for the many answered prayers on his behalf. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide his teaching.

27 Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs. James 5:13

Wednesday

1 Pray for the annual convention of Creatio, June 1-3, in Perugia, Italy, an interdenominational association that offers multimedia resources for communicating the Gospel in a post-modern setting. A group from the Mennonite church will participate.

8 Robert Wenger guides the Maranatha students through woodworking projects a couple times a week. Accomplishments are valued and praised! Thank God for Robert's patience and skill as he relates to the students.

15 VMC Development Officers will hold their quarterly meeting tomorrow at the Pleasant View, Inc., facility in Harrisonburg. Pray for Director Nancy Hopkins-Garriss and Public Relations Coord. Rosa Bare.

22 School is closing tomorrow for the year at Maranatha School for the Deaf, St. Elizabeth, Jamaica. Thank God for a good year and pray that the students would be safe during the 2-month holiday.

29 The VMC Finance Committee is scheduled to meet this morning to finalize next year's budget. Pray for Treasurer Ron Piper and members John Bomberger and Amy Rush as they do this important work.

Thursday

2 Tomorrow Conference Coordinator Steve Carpenter will facilitate the Hickory Mennonite Church in a visioning process. Pray for wisdom as together they discern God's leading for their congregation.

9 Richard and Margaret Keeler are visiting family members in the UK this summer, taking a break from their many responsibilities in Trinidad. Ask God to refuel them for the ministry they will return to in August.

16 Norma Teles and the Phil Lehman family are participating in "Refresh," a retreat for missionaries in the French Alps (June 17-28). Pray for restoration and rest in body and soul.

23 On Saturday, Highland Retreat will hold its annual steak BBQ fundraiser. Blue Mt. Sunrise will provide music and classic cars will be on display. Pray that God might continue to use Highland to draw young people to Christ.

30 In the next 5 days, international guests arrive to participate in VA Mennonite Conference Assembly. As we work together to spread the Good News around the world, may God's direction be followed closely.

Friday

3 On Sunday afternoon Steve Carpenter will assist the leaders of Immanuel Mennonite Church, in Harrisonburg, as they envision and shape their congregation's future. Ask God for clarity of thinking and unity of purpose.

10 Pray for Mt. Clinton Mennonite Church's pastor Lee Martin, and his wife Peg, as they lead their congregation. Steve Carpenter, Conference Coordinator, will bring the morning message there tomorrow.

17 Tomorrow, the Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center will dedicate its new visitor's center in Harrisonburg. Pray for Executive Director Steve Shenk as he gives leadership to this exciting new witness to the community.

24 Remember Aaron Kauffman, *travSend* participant and MMN worker as he teaches "World Religions" at the Arise and Shine Mission Institute that meets on Saturdays at the La Mesa Mennonite Church, Colombia.

Saturday

Announcements

Register now! The Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly "**Sent! Around the World: New Perspectives on Mission**" will be **July 6-9, 2006** at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg. Ask your church office for a registration form, or register online at www.vmconf.org/assembly



Y-LEAD: A leadership conference for Mennonite youth and youthworkers. Is leadership WORTH THE RISK? That's what youth and youthworkers will be asking this summer, July 27-30, 2006 at Eastern Mennonite University.

Speakers include: Glen Guyton, Lana Miller and Joseph Dugan. Students will come from Mennonite

high schools and congregations across the U.S. Registration is \$175 by June 1, \$195 after June 1. For more info: www.emu.edu/seminary/ylead or contact Jill Landis, 540-432-4699, jill.landis@emu.edu.

Service Transition



Tim and Tama Shoemaker will be serving in Donegal, Ireland in partnership with the *tranSend* program of VMBM. They are members of Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Meet Your WORLD NEIGHBORS at the Mission Festival

**Thursday, July 6
4:00-6:00 p.m.
EMU Commons**

- Meet and greet international guests
- Visit displays from Albania, Ecuador, China, Czech Republic, Haiti, Italy, Jamaica, Nazareth Village, Peru, Trinidad, Swaziland, USA and other countries
- Taste food samples!
- Watch stage events with music, drama and dances

All are welcome with special invitations to Venture Clubs, Junior MYF groups, Sunday school classes, & families with school age children.

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