

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
Conference &
Board of Missions

November 2006
Vol. 17, No. 1

Ministry of Bishop Leslie II and Naomi Francisco celebrated

The legacy of Bishop Leslie W. II and his widow, Naomi (Rowe Taylor) Francisco was remembered and honored on September 9, as 92 guests joined in a "Celebration of Ministry" banquet at the Point Plaza Hotel in Newport News, Va. L.W. Francisco II was the first black pastor of Calvary Mennonite Church, which later merged with and became known as Calvary Community Church. This congregation, which is now one of the largest Mennonite churches in the denomination, began as an outreach of the Warwick River Mennonite Church among African American children in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Nelson & Dorothy Burkholder and John D. & Esther Mabel Yoder generously sponsored the banquet. Nelson, who is more than 90 years old, initially served as the lead pastor of Calvary Mennonite Church. He then became co-pastor with Leslie Francisco II. In 1971 Leslie II took over as lead pastor while Nelson continued on as his assistant.

The evening included a delicious prime rib buffet with baked chicken, sweet and mashed potatoes, along with salads, mixed vegetables and assorted desserts. Granddaughter Nichole R. Francisco emceed while other members of the Francisco family sang, prayed and gave testimonies. Nelson D. Burkholder, Ernest Godshall (overseer for the Eastern District of Virginia), Sylvia Gorman (an active member at Calvary for several decades) and Lloyd Weaver (former overseer for the Calvary Mennonite Church and Warwick District) reflected on the life and ministry of the Franciscos. Several others gave testimonies to God's anointing on the Franciscos, including Naomi's brother Sam Taylor.

All three of the Francisco children; sons Leslie W. III, Steven (who received his eternal rest on July 6, 2004) and Myron, along with their spouses, caught their parent's vision and are actively involved in Christian ministry. L. W. Francisco III serves as Bishop of the Calvary District while his



Naomi (Rowe Taylor) Francisco and her granddaughter Nichole R. Francisco, who emceed the event, at the Bishop Leslie II and Naomi Francisco Celebration of Ministry, held September 9 in Newport News.

wife, Pastor Natalie A. Francisco, serves as Administrator of Programs and Personnel, as well as the Minister of Music at Calvary Community Church.

The Francisco legacy is still having an impact on the community. Calvary Community Church continues to grow. They, in turn, have planted 5 churches including one in Texas and one in South Africa. Closer to home, the Harvest of Judah Fellowship, Calvary Community Chesapeake and Fellowship of Christ congregations grew out of Calvary's ministry.

Those gathered, along with several who sent gifts in L. W. II and Naomi Francisco's honor, contributed nearly \$4,100 for Virginia Mennonite Conference's ministries. These gifts were matched with a \$4,100 contribution by VMC to the newly formed Calvary District Ministerial Training and Trust Fund which will help train established and emerging church leaders in the Calvary District.

• Steve Carpenter
Conference Coordinator

At sea, or in the harbor?

Recently a friend gave me a copy of *A Continual Feast: Words of comfort and celebration, collected by Father Tim* written by Jan Karon, author of The Mitford series. Those who have read the homespun stories set in Mitford, North Carolina, are well-acquainted with Father Tim, the affable Episcopal priest. His warm care for the young, old, unique and strange residents of this fictitious yet real town sheds light on how relationships are nurtured.



Gloria Lehman
Director of Public Relations, VMBM

This small book contains “lively ideas, common sense, profound wisdom, and plain good humor that he has gathered” from various sources. Reading it in bits and pieces is like getting a cool drink on a warm day, or a hot drink on a cold day.

One of the treasures I found is this line from John A. Shedd: “A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not

what ships are made for.” Ah, a line with a punch of truth!

Our world is seeking to be safe while all around there is fear from the violence occurring in other countries and our own. The war in the Middle East, the famine and slaughter in Congo, the shooting of the Amish girls in Pennsylvania—all strike fear deep into our minds and hearts. We hold our loved ones close, and pray, and shrink into our safe places.

But can we push out of the harbor, away from the tethers of comfort and home? Americans are accustomed to climate-controlled living spaces, to a constant supply of hot and cold water and electricity, and to paved roads. Living in another country and adjusting to less-than-ideal conditions stretches our coping skills.

A dynamic world is waiting for the priceless cargo on the ship—hope for the future found in Jesus Christ accompanied by food, medicine, and community development. We can encourage each other in opening the sails of our lives, welcoming the winds of the Spirit to billow the sails, and arriving at the harbors that have been watching and waiting for Hope to arrive. That’s what our ships are made for.

Gloria L. Lehman

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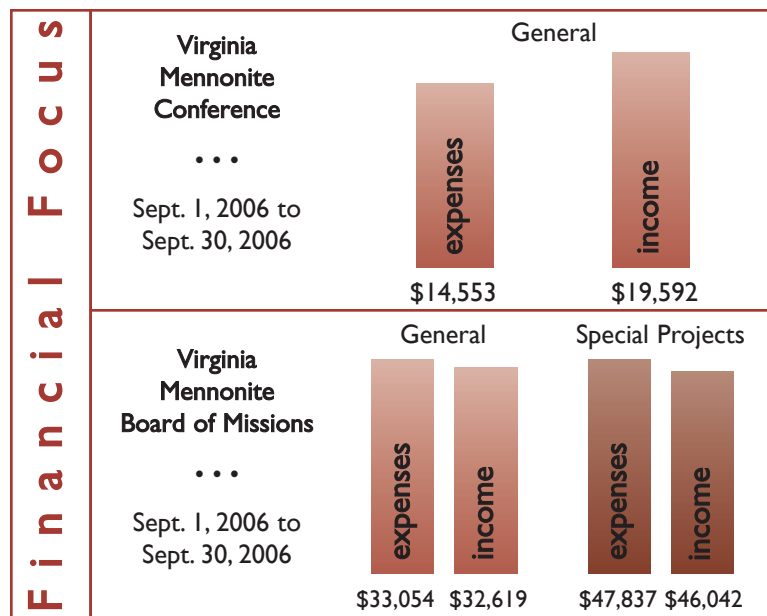
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Correction: Casey Sawyer was incorrectly identified as Casey Russell in the October issue. We apologize for this error.



Stories of Peace

sponsored by the Peace Coordinators
of the Virginia Mennonite Conference

Giving up on guns

Rafael*, a visitor from Haiti last year, couldn't imagine that nearly everyone here has a gun. He didn't really understand about hunting; he only saw guns as being used to kill others. In Haiti, he had been offered a good job for the French Embassy where he would have to carry a gun. When he got there and realized that he would have to carry a gun, he said no. He said, "I don't do guns." He desperately needed the money such a job could have given him. We were proud of his decision.

Near our mission in Haiti, there was a missionary from another church who carried a pistol. At one point, some Haitians claimed that they had held the land before the missionary came in and took it. So they hired police to come in and take it back. In the process, one of the missionary's helpers was shot and killed.

Later, Bill* (one of our missionaries) talked with this other missionary and tried to tell him that he didn't believe in using weapons. This didn't seem to mean anything to him. In fact, this other missionary hired a bunch of police and a judge and took the land back again with force. Now, he is building a gigantic church there.

Upon seeing this example, a Haitian pastor living close to Rafael and our mission told Rafael that he wanted his house and clinic. He hired the police to come in and run him out, because of the influence of this other missionary. In the process, one of the boys that cooked there was killed. They found him later floating in the river. Rafael could have gone to the law and done something, like trying to take it back again by force. But Rafael said that he "decided to let the Lord deal with him [the pastor]." He realized that it was time to break the cycle rather than to continue it.

Guns can really get you into trouble. Some people plan to kill if someone breaks into their house. I believe that the best thing we can do as Christians is to make up our mind ahead of time that we are going to be as peaceful as we can, and it will make a difference when it really happens.

• story told by Joe Arbaugh, Sr.
Mountain View Mennonite Church, Lyndhurst, Va.

* Names have been changed

Roth holds the key to Nazareth Village

Former Virginia resident and VMBM and Mennonite Mission Network worker, Shirley Roth, Executive Director of first-century Nazareth Village, is never sure who will pass through the doors of the exhibit center, and then move out onto the eight acres of land, walking the Parable Walk, and visiting the village homes. From over 50 countries of the world, evangelicals, Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Muslims come to see this historically accurate reproduction of what life was like in a first-century Jewish village under Roman occupation—the way Jesus lived it.

So carefully recreated is the Village, that it has been drawing journalists and film crews from BBC and CBS news and interviewers from ABC's Nightline and NBC's Dateline as the setting for major stories and productions. Galilee school teachers have brought over 40,000 children—the majority of them Muslims—to walk the paths of Jesus' setting in the very town where he grew up and lived for 90% of his life. It is the only reproduction of a first-century synagogue in the world open for visitors.

Shirley Roth manages a staff of 20 persons including guides offering services in English, Arabic, German, Hebrew, Finnish, Spanish, Dutch, and Russian. She also oversees the training of volunteers from many countries. Shirley works alongside the manager of the Nazareth Village gift shop, an important conclusion for global visitors. (see sidebar)

Shirley's direction of the Village, now in its seventh year of operation, has additional management challenges not typical in other businesses: how to deal with the ebb and flow of Israeli/Palestinian tourism during another intifada/uprising, managing the financial responsibilities when political problems cut sharply into the numbers of visitors, and juggling the schedules of normal business deadlines and staffing schedules alongside the interruptions of government officials with tourism interests, pastors with tour groups, film producers with production crews, and all of the other activity that buzzes through this vibrant ministry project.

As Shirley strolls along Parable Way, she remembers Jesus who grew up in this little town, and how He impacted the world for the next 2,000 years and beyond. Even now during a time that the land is torn by ethnic and religious violence, Nazareth Village quietly and effectively presents the story of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

• Glenn Witmer, Mennonite Mission Network



Shirley Roth, Director of Nazareth Village, talks with workers dressed in first-century costume.

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– Casey Sawyer

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February 2007

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Serve with *Pura Vida* •
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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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Work team • January 2007

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GULFPORT, MS

Youth work • Summer 2007

HAITI

Work team • May 2007

ITALY

Youth work • July 2007

JAMAICA

Teach Bible school • July 2007

ISRAEL (NAZARETH)

Work team • May 2007
Teach English • July 2007

NASHVILLE, TN

Inner city ministry • Summer 2007

NEW YORK CITY, NY

Inner city ministry • Summer 2007

NICARAGUA

Work team • January 2007

PHILADELPHIA, PA

Inner city ministry • Summer 2007

PUERTO RICO

Work team • July 2007

SOUTH AFRICA

Work with Breakthrough
Ministries • July/August 2007

THAILAND

Work and evangelism • June 2007

TRINIDAD

Teach Bible school • July 2007
Construction team • Feb./Mar. 2007

UKRAINE

Teach English • June 2007

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SERVE IN SHORT-TERM MISSIONS.

VMRC completes strategic plan and analysis

The VMRC community recently completed a comprehensive strategic plan and operations analysis. The following outcomes, a recent representative sample, would only be possible through the Board's leadership and endorsement.

The first outcome is the creation of a newly composed Executive Team. This team composition improves communication access among front line care and service staff and the Board of Directors through the reduction of an administrative layer. Fewer dollars are spent on executive management staff and executive power and authority is more fully distributed among persons able to provide broader views and more in-depth information regarding our corporate environment.

I'm pleased to introduce to you the members of this competent and highly committed team. Please visit our website (www.vmmc.org) to review our corporate publication, the Journal, for more details on the responsibilities and professional background of each of these individuals.

- Ben Burks, Vice President, Division of Life Enrichment and Spiritual Care
- Kathy Coulter, Director of Human Resources
- Melissa Fortner, Vice President, Division of Supportive Living
- Les Helmuth, Executive Director, VMRC Foundation
- Carolyn Nesselrodt, Executive Assistant
- Marv Nisly, Vice President, Design and Construction
- Regina Schweitzer, Vice President, Division of Residential Living

- Curt Stutzman, Chief Financial Officer, Division of Resource Stewardship
- Diane Weaver, Chief Marketing Officer, Division of Marketing Services
- Ronald Yoder, President & CEO

The second outcome is indicative of the knowledge gained via the in-depth operational analysis and strategic plan deliberations. I am pleased to report a vision and mission that clearly define our intentions as a corporation and community.

Our Vision: "All people aging well in the place they call home." As countless studies and our own personal experiences confirm, the goals and desires of individuals entering a time where professional work no longer subjugates other choice activities have expanded. These individuals often increase their roles in both family and community and reconsider where leisure and family time occur.

The Board and Executive Team fully appreciate these changes in society and further confirm this through our Mission statement: "To be a leading resource in providing quality homes and services that people want and need to age well." Life is forever a journey with changes and opportunities reflected in a myriad of possibilities. We, as a community, embrace the certainty of change and individual desires that call into play our own ability to design fluidity around our services and residential environments, yet hold constant to the quality and care current and future residents and customers expect and deserve.

• Ronald E. Yoder
President of VMRC

Congregational Resource Center

The New Face of the CRC

Come see the new face of the Congregational Resource Center (CRC) located in the Eastern Mennonite Seminary Building, main floor! Materials have been sorted to retain the best and most recent and moved into one inviting space. Linda Alley, new Director of the CRC, is available for consultation and research 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Mon through Fri. Arrangements for evening use may be made by calling 540-432-4219 or emailing crc@emu.edu.

Browse the holdings for Advent/Christmas/Epiphany resources, including dramas, videos on the Christmas story, sermon helps, and much more. New materials are arriving weekly.

Go to www.emu.edu/seminary/crc and click on "Search the Catalog" to find materials by title, author or subject. Call if you have a particularly useful book, video or study kit to sug-

gest for purchase. You may also call to have materials mailed to you.

"Seasons of the Spirit: Congregational Life" is a set of Advent/Christmas/Epiphany ideas for worship, special programs and education. An intergenerational learning event includes a service project. Resources include a pageant written by a 10-year-old girl and adapted by her pastor. There is also a page of Harvest/Thanksgiving worship resources for the beginning of Advent.

Hundreds of other resources are available free of charge to enhance your ministry. Explore the Congregational Resource Center online (www.emu.edu/seminary/crc) or in person!

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



Connections Prayer Calendar November 2006

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by

An anonymous donor. We are grateful for this contribution.

If you would like to sponsor the prayer calendar,

email Gloria Lehman at gloria.lehman@vmbm.org or call (800) 707-5535.

5 In early September John M. Dey was installed as pastor of Warwick River Mennonite Church. Pray for John, Susan and their 3 sons as they adjust to their new surroundings from Ohio.

6 Some thieves have entered Nancy Marshall's property in Orange Walk Town, Belize, in the past weeks. Ask God for extra protection for her each day and night.

7 Today is Election Day. Pray for elected officials, that they will make positive differences in the country and the world by being responsible, wise and gracious with their appointed power.

8 Dan Hoopert, ^{TranSewel} participant, who teaches Christian Ethics and General Epistles at Kiev Theological Seminary, has found an apartment in Kiev. Dan invites prayer for class preparation and good relations with the students.

9 The Warwick River and Norfolk Districts recently merged to form the Eastern District of Virginia Mennonite Conference. Pray that this organizational restructuring may bear much fruit in God's kingdom.

10 The women's fellowship is the most effective outreach of Centro Koinonia, in Bari, Italy. Pray for the women whose lives are being touched that they will come to faith in Jesus.

11 Praise God for those who believe in mission and who support in finances and prayer the work of VMC and VMBM. Pray that God will provide for our ongoing financial needs as we head toward year's end.

12 Richard Keeler asks us to pray for the healing of relationships in the Gospel Lighthouse Menn. Church in Sangre Grande, Trinidad. Thank God for progress that has been made so far in this regard.

13 Tomorrow the leaders of seven local area conferences from Pa., N.Y., and Va., will meet in Souderton, Pa., for mutual support and encouragement. Pray for safety in their travel and God's anointing on their work.

14 Pray for Andy Ramsumair who has started attending the West Indies Theological College in Trinidad. Ask God to guide him as he makes vocational choices in the months and years ahead.

15 Each Wednesday evening, Willard & Eva Eberly have an English conversation class in their home. Pray that the friendships formed will open doors for sharing Jesus with their students.

16 Praise God for Norma Teles' preschool for gypsy children. Her students are able to fit into first grade in the Albanian school system. This was impossible before Norma began her ministry.

17 Tim and Tama Shoemaker, ^{TranSewel} participants, desire to make friends in Donegal, Ireland. May God grant them grace and patience during these weeks of adjustment to their new roles and surroundings.

18 Pray for the teachers at the Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica, that they will be energized to be creative and purposeful in teaching daily.

19 Allen Umble returns to Albania this week for a 3-month assignment. Pray for the Lord's direction and blessing over Allen as he cares for the Lezhe church while the Kropis are on furlough.

20 Pray that God will call several Albanian believers to assist Norma Teles in her ministry to gypsy children. Her present helpers are leaving Lezhe for further study.

21 Thank God for an overflowing Sunday morning group at the Hope Menn. Church, Trinidad—some sat on the grass! This group plans on beginning the foundations of a church building in the next month.

22 As you prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving this year, ask yourself "What am I most thankful for?" then express your gratitude to God who is "the giver of every good and perfect gift."

23 Psalm 67:4-7 (NRSV) Let the nations be glad and sing for joy...let all the peoples praise you. The earth has yielded its increase...may God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him.

24 This American "shopping day of the year" can be used to benefit others by shopping at fair-trade stores where the gift gives twice—to the artisans, and to the receiver.

25 The political instability in Haiti has caused economic suffering among our sisters and brothers. Pray for Pastor Jacques and Judite Bernard in their work with political prisoners, teaching them job skills and the Gospel.

26 Luke Hoover, ^{TranSewel} participant, arrived at Nazareth Village, Israel, in September. Pray that the doors of relationships will swing open for him in this transition period.

27 Brian and Dawn Waltman and their 4 children are planning to serve for 3-4 months at the Maranatha School for the Deaf, Jamaica, beginning in January '07. Pray that the details may work out and that God will direct each step of the way.

28 Pray for the leaders of Mennonite World Conference as they prepare for the 2009 Assembly in Paraguay. The focus is to "promote, encourage and facilitate cooperation among member churches around the world."

29 A community survey, vision-casting meetings, and building up a core group are all activities of "Outlet 10/27" in Graham, NC to prepare for an official launch of a new church early next year. Pray for this exciting venture.

30 Aaron and Laura Kauffman, MMN and VMBM workers in La Mesa, Colombia, ask us to give thanks for the growing youth group and to pray for an outreach event planned for November that the youth are involved in.

"Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise. Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."

Proverbs 19:20-21 (NIV)

Announcements

Steve Carpenter, Virginia Conference Coordinator since 2003, was recently appointed as an Associate Regional Editor of *OurFaith* digest. Five regional associate editors from



across the United States were recently appointed to assist *OurFaith* digest. They will help choose articles for printing, plus giving the Mennonite digest a stronger regional presence, according to Eugene Souder, founding editor.

Gift & Thrift, Inc., of Harrisonburg, Va., announces a full-time job opportunity. **Booksavers** will be hiring a full time assistant manager. Persons who are comfortable with a computer, have a broad knowledge of books, good organizational skills and a willingness to supervise volunteers should contact Glendon Blosser at 540-434-0657 or email glendon@adelphia.net.

Will there be a draft? Whether or not it happens, the Conference Peace Committee is calling all of our youth, adults, and congregations to voluntarily pre-register with MCC by completing the Peace Registration Packets. Document your beliefs well in advance of a draft as proof of your allegiance to the Prince of Peace! Download the peace packets at <http://www.mcc.org/us/co/form/> or call (540) 941-3798 for information.

Overseer Transition



Clyde Kratz was installed as Overseer of Northern District at Highland Retreat on September 10 at a celebration of ministry for **Michael Shenk**, the retiring Northern District Overseer. Pictured are Owen & Ruth Ann Burkholder, Conference Minister; Clyde & Eunice Kratz, Peggy & Michael Shenk, and Sarah & Sam Weaver, continuing overseer in Northern District.

2006 Penny Power



We are pleased to report that the results of the 2006 Penny Power exceeded our goal of \$22,000, bringing in a total of **\$26, 873.32!**

In 2005, congregations and organizations contributed \$22,834.09.

Thank you to **everyone** who contributed to and coordinated this project! Your generosity will greatly benefit a deaf school in Nigeria and the deaf ministry of Nancy Marshall in Belize!

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- Be a contact with the Conference Peace Committee

Nominate someone in your church and contact Dave or Krista Powell at (540) 941-3798.

For more information, visit www.vmconf.org under "Peace Information."

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