

# Connections

Virginia Mennonite  
Conference &  
Board of Missions

October 2006  
Vol. 16, No. 12

## *Extending an offer too good to refuse*

*Final in a series of five articles on Doorways in Mission*

Peter reminded his listeners at Pentecost that the offer of promised salvation was for them, for their children, and for all who were far off—for all whom the Lord would call. The name of Jesus was then preached through Holy Spirit power wherever those early believers went. People died and people learned to live because of an encounter with the resurrected Lord. The face of the world would be forever changed. What has come to be known as the “great commission” has served as the center of the church’s purpose in the world and the heart of the Christian’s motivation for involvement in the world.

The early Anabaptists recovered this missionary sense of the gospel after a long period of stagnation in the European church and abuse of the gospel in the Crusades. John Calvin thought the great commission was mostly finished, at least in Europe. Martin Luther charged those early Anabaptists as “hedge preachers” for what he thought was harassment of other Christians. Meanwhile, Anabaptist lives were changed and the gospel was shared throughout Europe, resulting in Anabaptists outnumbering both Catholics and Protestants combined in some communities. Already in the 1500’s, Anabaptists contemplated a mission to “the red man across the sea.”

This passion to go into all the world and to send out workers into the harvest is being experienced in many places in the world, both here and elsewhere. It is born from a life-changing encounter with the living Lord Jesus. It derives from an urgency to share this gift freely with others, not simply selfishly enjoying the pleasure of the Kingdom by oneself and with one’s own. This missionary passion is complemented by a compassion for those who are hungry, naked, strangers, sick and in prison. It is not surprising that such settings often provide the fertile soil in which the gospel takes root. The living Jesus is made visible once again.

The continuing mandate of the gospel cannot present the alternatives to North American

Christians more starkly. If we are preoccupied with our own defense and our own well-being, we will, ironically, contribute to our detriment—maybe even our own demise. Christ taught us to give away our lives in order to find them. If we withdraw into cocoons of comfort due to displaced priorities, failure of conviction, or loss of nerve, we embark on a journey towards irrelevance. The generation that loses its passion to save the world is only a generation or two away from losing its ability to save its own children. If we turn away from concern about the temporal and eternal welfare of our neighbor, we ultimately demonstrate disregard for the condition of our own souls.

Our own recovery of vision will come from two sources. We will find it by drinking deeply ourselves at the well of our own spiritual renewal, learning anew each day to walk in close communion with Jesus. We will also experience recovery of vision as we join others in the world who have come to Jesus on a similar but different journey. Our journey will be inward and it will be outward. We will be fed and we will be challenged.

When Jesus said, “Follow me,” He meant it. God’s love for the world extended to the uttermost parts, resulting in our own inclusion. Included people become compelled people, people compelled by God’s grace to invite others to be included in God’s love. We have experienced it. We have confessed its Source. We share it, an offer too good to refuse!

• Loren Horst  
President, VMBM



### **In this issue:**

**Mission  
Connections:  
Celebrating a  
year of Partners  
in Mission**

# Home congregation: destination or launching pad?

I spoke at the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the Bluesky Mennonite Church building in August, in Bluesky, Alberta, Canada—my hometown. One of the amazing things about that small congregation is how many persons have been sent out in service literally throughout the world in these past 50 years.



**Owen Burkholder**  
Conference Minister

My parents, Paul & Doris Stalter Burkholder, responded to the call to 'establish a mission station' in Bluesky following a successful Bible school in the area in 1948. Some 58 years later, my father is buried there and my mother lives in a retirement setting nearby.

For them, Bluesky was a destination. It was the place where they were to raise their family, develop a business, and grow a congregation.

Check out this gift: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." John 3:16 (NRS)

We may now consider two concepts embedded in the establishing of a "mission station." For my parents, it was the location in which they were engaged in mission. For many of us who grew up there, it became the station from which we were sent "to the world."

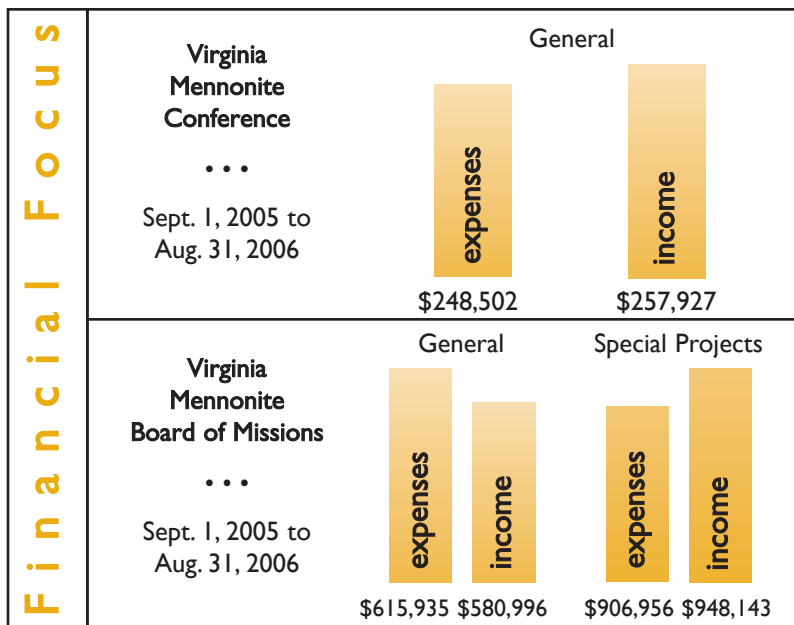
So, the destination/launching pad question can and should be answered, "YES!" It has everything to do with the call and gift of God. It gives perspective on the nurture/mission orientation of a congregation.

Some will be called to provide the essential nurturing/local mission task of the home congregation. And the intent of that nurture is to give many others to bless the world.

It was not always easy for my parents to send people from the congregation. They saw many unmet needs around the area. It was a poignant moment for me when Dad spoke at my installation as pastor at Park View Mennonite Church. When he saw the tremendous resources of that congregation and realized how challenging the work was in northern Alberta, it took grace for him to say, "When Owen was born we gave him to God. Now, God has given him to you."

It is fundamentally gratifying for me, now, to see the number of persons from Park View being sent "to the world." Such is the calling of every congregation: destination and launching pad.

These figures are preliminary, pending final auditing.



**Connections** (USPS 007-205) is published monthly by Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions and Virginia Mennonite Conference to connect congregations with each other and conference agencies.

**Editor**

Gloria Lehman

**Assistant Editor**

Jon Trotter

**Circulation manager**

Beth Brunk

*Connections* Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation: Virginia Mennonite Conference, Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions. 2,431 paid or requested circulation, 1,780 free distribution.

**Phone** 540-434-9727

1-800-707-5535

**E-mail** info@vmbm.org

info@vmconf.org

**Web** www.vmbm.org

www.vmconf.org

**POSTMASTER** Send address changes to 901 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg, VA 22802. Periodical postage paid at Harrisonburg, VA 22801.

## Taking the words of Jesus seriously

Some years ago, I believed that government's use of violence could result in some positive change in the world. Violence was just another foreign policy tool, an extreme form of diplomacy. The leaders of our government had the ability to use violence reservedly, which could result in eventual good for everyone. My wife gently pointed out that my view did not seem to correspond to the life and teaching of Jesus, and I had to agree that she was right. If we know anything about Jesus, we know that He would condemn war and violence. If I claimed to be a Christian, Jesus was the model for all my behavior and personal philosophy. Thus, many years ago I was forced to a pacifist's position.

We had been attending a Southern Baptist church for many years. Just before the outbreak of war in Iraq, I became very disturbed about our country beginning a unilateral war in Iraq. I approached the elders of our church about speaking out against this rush to war, but they were reluctant, fearing it would upset some church members who were in the military. For me the church was the visible presence of the Kingdom of God on earth, and failing to speak out against this war seemed to weaken our Christian witness.

I had known of Mennonites for many years and had a friendship with a local Mennonite pastor. My wife and I decided that it was time to make a break with the church where we had raised our children, a difficult and wrenching choice. Thus, we began attending Huntington Mennonite Church in Newport News, Va. During one of the Sunday services, I was allowed to make an announcement. Several others and I were going to the office of our Representative to plead with her not to allow our country to enter this war. On the day of our local visit, it was standing room only. Her office was filled with people all expressing their view that it was morally wrong for us to enter this war. I looked around and to my pleasant surprise, about 25% of the people there were Mennonites. I determined then that this is where I wanted to belong, with those who took the words of Jesus about loving enemies seriously. We were not successful that day; our Representative voted for the war resolution. The struggle goes on, but the commitment of Mennonites to peace has remained strong and continues to this day; I am glad to be a part of a community of faith who take Jesus' words about loving enemies seriously.

• Russell De Young,  
Huntington Mennonite Church

## Mission workers attend orientation for *tranSend*

Seven *tranSend* participants prepared to be "Sent! Around the World" July 9-14 in Harrisonburg following the 2006 Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly. Tim & Tama Shoemaker (Donegal, Ireland), Dan Hoopert (Kiev, Ukraine), Chris & Melody Riddle (Bari, Italy), Sara Ulrich (Hertford, England), Luke Hoover (Nazareth, Israel), along with VMBM staff Ken Horst, Laura Moyers and Jon Trotter heard from former and current missionaries throughout the week. Sharon Kniss (London, England) was unable to attend the orientation due to another commitment.

The 2006-07 *tranSend* participants were inundated with a variety of cultural experiences. Throughout the week, we were provided with insight into many of the joys and challenges we will likely encounter during the next year, as well as encouraged to maintain an ever-deepening relationship with Christ. Speakers included Loren Horst, Willard and Eva Eberly, Linford Stutzman, Francesco and Martha Picone, Klotilda Stojani, Don Clymer, Lawrence Yoder, and Luke, Carmen and Grace Schrock-Hurst, and others.

Adjunct Instructor in Spiritual Direction at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Kevin Clark, and recent graduate of EMS, Theda Good, led the *tranSend* participants in a time of daily guidance and reflection each morning to start the day's training.

Tama Shoemaker said, "I really appreciated the half-hour times of silence in nature, talking with God. When we go through a change like the one we're preparing to make, it's so important to keep our feet under us, and our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus. And during such a hectic time, that's the easiest thing to forget."

Chris Riddle, who will be serving in Italy alongside his wife Melody and their three sons, commented, "The thing that we are taking with us is the closeness that we feel to the others in the group. We look forward to staying in touch and seeing how God works through them where they are, as well as letting them know what God is doing in our own lives in Italy."



The group that attended orientation for the *tranSend* program (from left): Dan Hoopert, Tim Shoemaker, Laura Moyers, Luke Hoover, Tama Shoemaker, Melody Riddle, Chris Riddle, Ken Horst, Jon Trotter, Sara Ulrich.

• Sara Ulrich

Serving with *tranSend* in Hertford, England

## A family mission experience in Trinidad

This summer our family spent four weeks in Trinidad. We went primarily to fulfill Dale's seminary cross-cultural requirement and combined it with a Partners in Mission trip. Dale preached twice at Charleville Mennonite and we both taught VBS for 3 consecutive weeks at Chaguanas, Hope and Charleville Mennonite Churches.



Barb Hartzler works with children at the VBS in Chaguanas along with Trinidadian colleagues.

Going to Trinidad was especially nostalgic for me, since I lived there as a missionary kid from ages 15-17 in the late 1970s. I went to an all-girls' school and formed friendships there and with the youth group at church. This trip enabled me to see some old friends again and those times were a delightful part of our month there.

Interesting experiences included: driving on the left side of the road and learning to be desensitized to the narrow secondary roads and the crazy driving around us, listening and trying to understand the Trinidad dialect (I was surprised and pleased how much of that "came back" for me), eating hot roti, curried mango, fresh mangoes (a family favorite) and pineapple.

Even though doing 3 weeks of VBS was challenging, Dale & I enjoyed forming new relationships with church people and wished we'd had more time to develop those. We enjoyed reconnecting with the friends from my teen years and having meaningful conversations with them. We brought back lots of pictures and some very wonderful memories!

It was a blessing to work alongside and fellowship with the members of the churches in Trinidad. We could see both the passion people have for Jesus and the commitment to bringing the Good News about Jesus to their communities. We pray that the seeds that were planted in Bible School will yield fruit for God's Kingdom—particularly as the church seeks to develop the next generation of leaders.

• Barb Hartzler



The Kiser family performs on a piazza in Italy. They went in May to minister to the churches in Palermo and Bari.

## A heritage of ministry

The children of the late Roy Kiser, VMBM secretary of overseas missions 1963-1974 went to Italy in May 2006 to minister to the churches in Palermo, Sicily and Bari, Italy. Randy, from Mt. View (Va.) Mennonite Church, Danny, and Jeff Kiser, along with their sister, Linda, and her husband Dwight Burkholder, all from Waynesboro Mennonite Church, shared their message in word and song.

In 1949 our grandfather, Jason Weaver, baptized the first Mennonite believer, Franca Ceraulo, in Palermo, Sicily. Through her witness, others came to know the Lord and the Centro Agape church began. Our dad, Roy Kiser, visited the church in Italy many times during his term. He took me along in 1969, Linda in 1973, and Danny in 1974. Jeff was too young and never got to accompany Dad.

Ken Horst, Director of Partners in Mission, encouraged the Kiser family to go to Italy to renew old friendships that Dad and we had made years ago and give musical programs at the churches in Palermo and Bari. After much discussion and prayer, we made plans to go.

We enjoyed a great fellowship in Francesco and Martha Picone's home in Palermo. In the Sunday worship service, we sang several good ol' gospel bluegrass songs (which most of them had never heard before!). Dwight gave the morning meditation. The evening service was more of the same; spirited singing led by the worship team, then more singing by our group. The sanctuary was full for the evening service!

In Bari, we were hosted by Willard & Eva Eberly and Phil & Marcia Lehman. We enjoyed two services with the Centro Koinonia congregation. The afternoon service in the piazza featured a puppet show given twice for the children. Many adults listened and browsed the literature table where they received free New Testaments plus other items. Two church members gave testimonies.

The Italian people we met were so friendly, loving (we liked the greeting with a kiss on each cheek!), and excited about their faith. Even though we had trouble communicating, they made us feel right at home. One of my favorite parts of the trip, sharing stories of our families and life's experiences, made it difficult to leave when it was time to go.

"We came to Italy be a blessing, but we have been blessed far more than we could have imagined possible," says Dwight.

• Randy Kiser  
Mt. View (Va.) Mennonite Church

# Mission *Connections*

October 2006 • Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions • Vol. 4 No. 10

*costa rica • israel • italy • jamaica • nicaragua • trinidad*



## CELEBRATING A YEAR OF PARTNERS IN MISSION



nicaragua



costa rica



jamaica



(left) The Nicaragua PIM team from Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church that traveled to Nicaragua in July.  
(below) James Bergey pushes a wheelbarrow of sand to help create a concrete pathway to connect the town to the nearby rice mill.



## Coffee plants and rice mills in Nicaragua

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA—

Our team of 11 set off from Norfolk International Airport on July 13th full of excitement to see what the next fourteen days would hold. We were a young team with 6 youth and 5 leaders from Mt. Pleasant Mennonite in Chesapeake. We would be working with Peace and Hope Trust, a missions organization in Nicaragua, in conjunction with Partners in Mission. Needless to say, we were excited to see what the next two weeks would hold.

Our first stop was in Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua. Peace and Hope's headquarters are in Managua and we stayed there for the first night. The next day we flew across the country to the east coast town of Bluefields. Peace and Hope Trust has a vocational center and helps to run a school in Bluefields.

The next day we were off on another adventure. In a downpour of rain, we took a four and a half hour boat ride up a river to the village of LaBarra. LaBarra is quite remote, but the team did a great job adjusting to all we had to deal with. Peace and Hope Trust has recently helped the village acquire a rice mill that will help them become more self-sufficient. Our team's job during our six days in the village was to make a concrete pathway from the main walkway through town to the rice mill. We shoveled the sand on the beach, putting it in buckets and transported it via a "bucket brigade" to the work site. The villagers came out and helped us haul the sand. Four of the six days there, we worked in the rain—a challenge but it ended up being a great time. God did some major things in our hearts by allowing us to go to LaBarra.

After our boat trip back to Bluefields, we were able to see some of the projects Peace and Hope

Trust runs there. The vocational center is located near the city dump. Peace and Hope Trust runs a clinic as well as a feeding program for the children who live on the dump. This was probably the most sobering thing that we saw during the trip. Our team was able to walk to the dump and see people who live by salvaging things. A few of us helped in the feeding program that gives over 100 children one good, balanced meal a day. This was a very special, life-changing time for the team.

The next place we went was Matagalpa. This is a city in the highlands of Nicaragua back on the east coast. Peace and Hope Trust runs a fair trade coffee plantation in this area. We went to help work on the plantation for two days. It was a tough hike up to the plantation, but well worth it. We were to sort through coffee plants and chose the ones that were ready to be planted. Then we transported them and planted them. In two days, our team planted 785 plants. This was also a great feeling to know that we had done something that will have a lasting effect on the farm.

The trip was a first time out of the country (US) for many of those on our team. It was an experience that none of us will ever forget. We were able to see and work in quite a few different environments at each place. Nicaragua is truly a wonderful place. Our team was able to see and experience what the Lord is doing around the world. A truly amazing summer adventure!

• Inga Mast  
Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church  
Chesapeake, Va.



## Costa Rica provides challenge and blessing

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA—

Seven youth and three adults from our church congregation went on a mission trip to Costa Rica. It was the first time out of the country for about half of us and for all of us, it was a physically and emotionally challenging experience. We learned a lot from our training and were pushed out of our comfort zones daily. We all were asked to write our testimonies to share at sometime during our outreach. This was a difficult task for most of us but it helped us to be able to fulfill our sole purpose in life, to be able to glorify God in all that we do. Before we left the training center we were given a challenge, to experience a complete death of self and through this allow ourselves to become recklessly abandoned for our Savior Jesus Christ.

The trip to our outreach was long and full of many winding roads and hairpin turns; needless to say, a lot of Dramamine was used during this trip!

We were all a little apprehensive because we didn't know what to expect to find at our outreach but our nervousness quickly changed to excitement as we got closer and closer to our destination.

We were welcomed by a large crowd at the church. It seemed like everybody there was so excited that we were there and their eagerness to communicate with us, despite the language barrier,

was contagious. They gave us their best while we were with them; everyday they had something new and exciting to show us.

They loved watching our drama and our singing while we were on the prayer walk and at church. At church they taught us songs in Spanish and how to be *loco* for God. Their way of worship was obviously devoted to serving God, and was amazing and inspiring to be around. They were so appreciative of the work we did in building a cafeteria for their church and we were never without people to provide us a break and a snack when we needed it.

Both our team and their group grew so close in just the short time we were with them that it was really hard to leave at the end of the week. We had a special service where we prayed for each other and by the end of it, we were all crying. The Lord was definitely present there. Always. We made amazing memories and friendships that will never be forgotten.

Throughout our trip we were all challenged and tested, pushed, changed, and blessed.

• Casey Russell  
Warwick River Mennonite Church

(far left) Members of the Warwick River PIM team with Costa Rican children and youth.

(above left) The team performs drama at the church where they worked to build a cafeteria.

**SERVE CHRIST AND THE WORLD. BECOME A PARTNER IN MISSION.**

**SERVE ON A PARTNERS IN MISSION TEAM IN 2007!**

**CHECK OUT NEXT YEAR'S SHORT-TERM OPPORTUNITIES ON PAGES 4-5 OF THE NOVEMBER 2006 ISSUE OF CONNECTIONS. IF INTERESTED, EMAIL OR CALL KEN HORST AT [ken.horst@vmbm.org](mailto:ken.horst@vmbm.org) OR (800) 707-5535.**

# Beyond what is comfortable

ST. ELIZABETH, JAMAICA—

No orientation for a mission team headed for Jamaica would be complete without the word “flexibility,” because no team in Jamaica would succeed without it. And so it was with great pride that I watched my team members displaying it on the very first evening of their arrival. As we prepared to make our connection with a Jamaican pastor, my cell phone rang and a quick conversation alerted us to the fact that our waiting was not due to his running on “Jamaican time.” No, the next hour saw our team members standing by a busy road with luggage, as evening became night, and the pastor and I took his punctured tire to the nearest gas station to repair it. Four years earlier I had been introduced to Jamaica in the exact same way!



This first test for our team was followed by others during our two weeks of Vacation Bible School in Jamaica's southwest. We experienced lack of water, long walks uphill, unpleasant bugs, schedule shifts, language barriers, heat and sunburns, 11 people in one Corolla-sized car, to name a few. But all of these could not deter us from our mission which was to work alongside our Jamaican sisters and brothers, teaching the good news of God's love in ways their children could understand. We were also excited about getting to know our host families as they welcomed us kindly and gratefully into their homes and took care of us.

Karmen Heatwole and Melissa Sager teamed up with the Bethel and Joyland Mennonite congregations over the two weeks while Shirley Wilbers, Krista Swartzentruber, Monica Unzicker, and I teamed up with the Ridge and Abrams Mennonite congregations. When the weeks were over, it was the opportunities that God had given us to minister, as well as the blessings we had received from our new friends, that made a bigger impact on us than any of the discomforts we faced.



(above) Krista Swartzentruber leads a Vacation Bible School class at a church in southwestern Jamaica.

(left) Karmen Heatwole with some of her VBS students.

It was things like meal-time conversations. Karen Brunk nurturing and counseling us. Games of Bible Bingo. Krista and her immense patience with the little ones. Brendan Yoder and Philip acting out the Passion of Jesus. Honest sharing among ourselves about our successes and struggles. Two young guys wanting to follow Jesus. Monica interpreting a sermon for the deaf community she loves. Young “D” crying as she hugged Melissa and Karmen goodbye. Shirley signing thank you's and farewells to her deaf host family.

These are some of the memories that will stay with us, nurturing our spirits, and teaching us that God is forever seeking to use us beyond what is comfortable.

• Philip Rhodes  
Dayton Mennonite Church, Dayton, Va.

*called and sent!*  
Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions

## Serve in Jamaica!

**Teaching assistants are needed at Maranatha School for the Deaf in September 2007, teaching vocational classes and tutoring students in academic classes. Flexibility, creativity, enthusiasm and strong Christian faith are required.**

**Family Physician is needed immediately for both rural and urban clinics working with the Jamaica Mennonite Church, beginning anytime.**

**Contact Galen R. Lehman, Caribbean Regional Director with your interest at (800) 707-5535 or at [galen.lehman@vmbm.org](mailto:galen.lehman@vmbm.org)**



(left) The PIM team from Mountain View Mennonite Church that went to Trinidad.

(below) Tim Sullivan working with two Trinidadian men on the house project.  
(below) Simon's old hammer beside a new one he was given.



## The Word spread through action

DIEGO MARTIN, TRINIDAD—

On June 10, a mission team of ten left Mt. View Mennonite Church (Hickory, N.C.) headed for Trinidad. Half had never flown and, except for disaster work, few had been on a mission trip. We were excited and wondered how things would go.

We left home before daylight and it was after dark when we arrived. At the airport we were greeted by Joanne and Roy Hunsberger from the Asheville Mennonite Church who were doing a six-month mission stay—people the whole team knew and loved. Then we met with Rawl Gunpath, and wife, Linda. Rawl is the pastor of Diego Martin Mennonite Church, where the team attended while in Trinidad.

The team crawled out of bed early each morning to go to the job site—a home owned by Maureen and Nesto Bodington who were living in a one bedroom house with a tiny kitchen. We ladies shoveled dirt for the men to fill in for another room. We also handed blocks as needed and cooked meals for the team. We couldn't have done the meals without the generous help of Joanne Hunsberger and some local ladies. Beena, Babes, and Denise were there so much they became a part of our team.

The men worked long hard hours. They shoveled dirt, mixed cement on the ground, and then on the floor when they got to the blocks. Sometimes it was hard to get the materials to work with. That was discouraging! But when they arrived, we were back on the job!

Simon was a Trinidadian man who helped everyday. His hammer was worn from working elsewhere. Our men were so fascinated that they tried to buy it from him. But it wasn't for sale. They gave him a new one but he said he'd still

shape up the old one and continue using it also.

Nesto, the homeowner hadn't been attending church, but had worked with us all week. The Sunday after we were there, he came to church. Pastor Rawl said, "This is the way the Word is spread in Trinidad."

The team came home with a great love for the people of Trinidad. They were friendly, loving, and helpful. Everyone is talking about a future trip. I think a church will be built there next year, so who knows!

• Pearl Davis

Mountain View (N.C.) Mennonite Church

*called and sent!*  
Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions

### Serve in Trinidad!

**Mentor church pastors as they lead small, yet dynamic congregations and plant churches, starting anytime.**

**Train church members in worship and music leading, starting anytime.**

**Contact Galen R. Lehman, Caribbean Regional Director with your interest at (800) 707-5535 or at [galen.lehman@vmbm.org](mailto:galen.lehman@vmbm.org)**



## Building new friendships in Nazareth

NAZARETH, ISRAEL—

God never fails to surprise me. When I was asked to lead a PIM team to Israel, I was not prepared. But I decided that of course I can go! Over the next few weeks a team came together with one member from Waynesboro, Dale Humphries, a couple from Chesapeake, Mike and Tina Harrell, my brother Dietrich and I from Dayton, and Kristen Batdorf, from Phoenix, Ariz., whom none of us met until we checked in at Dulles for our flight to Israel.

Our mission: 1) partner with the Nazareth municipality to teach a two-week summer English camp to 170 children ages 4-12;

2) support the work of Nazareth Village (a recreation of first-century life) by volunteering as we could;

3) experience the culture and build relationships by staying in host homes for the duration of the two weeks.

To me it sounded not only exciting, but also a bit frightening as I prepared to lead a group with varied life experiences into a situation of which none of us had any knowledge!

But God surprised us. From lost luggage, to wonderful/frazzled mornings at the English camp, to enjoying meals with our host families, to a sprained ankle, we saw God's hand of guidance and protection. A digital camera survived the frigid waters of Tel Dan; unique friendships between Americans and Arab-Israelis formed (and continue via e-mail); and God worked in His perfect timing to protect us from the escalating conflict that ensued not 20 miles from where we were located.

I'm not a person who typically spiritualizes events, but one of the greatest proofs of God's

guidance and care for us as a team were the prayer times we shared together. Our first morning in Israel, as we enjoyed made-to-order cups of coffee and prayed together on the patio of new missionary friends, I was impressed at how I could sense God's Spirit in the flow of our sharing. And that may have been the greatest surprise of all: how God can take a group of six strangers, throw them on a plane together, send them into a country always on the edge of conflict, give them an almost impossible task to do, and they become a team, unified to serve Him for His purposes. How thankful I am to have been part of such a unique experience in such a unique place like Israel!

• Anita Rhodes  
Immanuel Mennonite Church  
Harrisonburg, Va.



(top left) Dietrich Rhodes with Israeli youth. (above left) Anita Rhodes in first-century costume at Nazareth Village. (above right) Anita Rhodes, Kristen Batdorf, and Tina Harrell.

## A specific time and purpose in Costa Rica

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA—

Asheville Mennonite Church had never sent a team on a missions trip before, much less a group of 12 to Costa Rica, but through God's help and many faithful supporters, we did just that in July 2006.

We didn't have any idea of the challenges ahead. Only one of our adult leaders, a Spanish teacher, knew more than a few years' worth of high school Spanish. We didn't have the money or the resources to even begin to fund the \$15,000 trip. Many of us wondered what we, high-school students from North Carolina, had to offer the people of Costa Rica.

For a theme verse, we chose Esther 4:14, which says, “And who knows but that you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this and for this very occasion?”

We felt this verse expressed our feelings of being called by God for a specific time and purpose of advancing His kingdom. Slowly but miraculously, things began to fall into place. We all wrote letters requesting financial support, and the money began to come in—\$25 here, \$200 there, and soon we had raised more than enough.

Once there, we spent two days training at the Pura Vida Missions headquarters for our outreach assignments. Our group was assigned to five days of ministry in the small town of Rio Cuarto with the local Mennonite Church, Iglesia Cristiana Betel. This church and its people seemed handpicked by God for us. We were immediately convinced of His hand in our trip and on the people we would be working alongside.

God was present with us in many areas as we all left our comfort zones, never to return. We stayed with host families during outreach, most of which did not speak English. Though we were hesitant at first, we learned a valuable lesson—that friendship and community go beyond being able to speak the same language.

Our work project was to paint the church, originally lime green, to a fresh shade of light blue. We were able to finish this assignment because we had a day without rain, highly unusual during Costa



Rica’s summer wet season and the result of many prayers for dry weather. We also participated in door-to-door ministry, during which several people made commitments to Christ and others expressed interest in coming to church. Though we don’t know exactly what seeds were planted that day, we are satisfied that God used us to spread His Word.

We all made lasting friends in Rio Cuarto. Though we may never see them again, they changed our lives. We came back to the U.S. with permanent blue paint stains, wonderful new friends, and hearts that had been changed by God’s work in our lives. We give God the glory for His grace and His abundant miracles on this trip.

• Lauren Miller  
Asheville Mennonite Church

## God’s hand at work in Italy

PALERMO, ITALY—

“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”  
Mark 15:16

Therefore they all went...The PIM Italy team was made up of Davide and Yanice Picone, Jeremy Barb,



Steve Horst, Kristen McManus, Emily Huffman, and Kledia Shahini. As the van made its way through the busy Sicilian traffic, team members recollected last year’s trip. Spirits were high as old friends greeted each member with hugs and kisses. The PIM Italy team felt at home.

Last year, the team ministered to children and youth, and God’s work was apparent in each child’s life over the past year. The youth’s desire to share their love for Christ and his amazing work in their lives surpassed the language barrier. Their smiles and worship proclaimed clearly how deep their love for Christ and each other is. The week passed quickly as we spent our days with the youth at the beach, at the church playing games, eating gelato or excursions to historical sites in Sicily. We sadly counted down the days.

Our focus in the teaching was vision. We encouraged them to find vision from God for their lives, their church, community and the world. Prayer and every gesture-oriented conversation throughout the week was utilized to help them get a better understanding of the importance in vision. We realized the last day that God’s hand was at work. Some of the youth shared with us their newly found vision from God and many others promised to continue to pray for theirs.

Our last night in Sicily was spent with the youth at a pizza restaurant. As we savored our last Italian pizza, we asked the youth to share their most precious experiences of the week. Upon receiving their answers, we were encouraged, for we knew, although we would be leaving, Christ will always remain. The work that had begun a year ago, had been nurtured and grown as it will in the years to follow.

The Italy PIM team (from left): Emily Huffman, Jeremy Barb, Kledia Shahini, Steve Horst, Yanice Picone, Kristen McManus, Davide Picone.

• Kledia Shahini  
Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church

# Have you considered tranSend?



by Ken Horst

Director of Partners in Mission and tranSend

tranSend has recently concluded orientation for its second group of participants. (See article on page three.) Starting a new program is never easy but we began and are very grateful for the results. Those who are a part of tranSend for this year are Chris and Melody Riddle (Bari, Italy), Tim and Tama Shoemaker (Donegal, Republic of Ireland), Sharon Kniss (London Mennonite Centre, London), Sara Ulrich (Hertford, UK), Dan Hoopert, (Kiev, Ukraine), and Luke Hoover (Nazareth Village, Israel).

I invite you to hear the pulse from the heart of Nancy Marshall, a participant in the first tranSend group who teaches deaf children in Orange Walk Town, Belize. She says, "The Lord God is doing a great work here in Belize among deaf people and their families. Its God's leading because He is taking us in directions that I would not have chosen. Yet I know God's wisdom is omniscient. I invited 10 deaf children under the age of 12 to come to Jesus' Deaf Church for Summer Bible School. We had nine children, and to my surprise, four were hearing. I hadn't anticipated that two neighbor boys would want to come and [other siblings] would join us. It was great to have them all. Everyone signed. The theme was "Jesus is my Friend."

Samuel Hernandez worked at Nazareth Village this past year. In a newsletter he wrote: "I have completed my first eight months in Israel and my time here is approaching the end. The opportunity is something I will treasure for the rest of my life, and the fruits of my work are starting to show. God continues to speak to my life, and so far He has taught so much. My work at the Nazareth Village continues to bear fruit as I share the teachings of Jesus from a first-person perspective. I have had the privilege to share with all peoples, from far places such as Iceland, Singapore and Chile. Each group is different and has different needs, so the approach sometimes is different, but the same message is delivered each time."

What is the mission statement for tranSend? Through tranSend we desire to see people "experience the opportunity of a year of service for individuals and couples ages 22-35 exploring a future long-term ministry." There are invitations for longer-term workers that comes from the Republic of Ireland, Thailand, China, South Africa, Albania, Kosova, and Montenegro to mention a few. At VMBM, it is our desire to see workers sent to these areas where the invitations have originated.

Maybe you are interested in discussing opportunities to serve with tranSend. Please visit [www.vmbm.org](http://www.vmbm.org) or call (800) 707-5535. I would be glad to discuss it with you.



Experience the opportunity of a year of service for individuals and couples ages 22-35 exploring a future long-term ministry.



- Belize
- Colombia
- Israel
- Ireland



- Italy
- United Kingdom
- United States
- other locations

Contact Ken Horst, Director:  
[ken.horst@vmbm.org](mailto:ken.horst@vmbm.org), (800) 707-5535  
[www.vmbm.org/tranSend](http://www.vmbm.org/tranSend)

# A mystery year in Nazareth

NAZARETH VILLAGE, ISRAEL—

The word mystery is often associated with fear or a feeling of uncertainty. Fear is a natural human response to what is unknown or unclear, and is often our first response.

I would like to describe my year of service prior to its start as a mystery, not for the lack of planning, but for the uncertainty of what was to come. I also had fear at first, but as I was encouraged by the church, I gained confidence in accepting what God had in store for my life.

I started my service at the Nazareth Village in Israel as a tour guide and managing other tasks. Nazareth Village is a first-century archeological site that has been restored for teaching about the life of Nazareth's most notorious citizen, Jesus Christ. I presented and explained the parables of Jesus in a vivid way. The project offers a small window to what life was like in Jesus' time, and how such stories had practical applications to those who heard them for the first time. In a town where the majority of the population is Muslim, and in a country where the majority of the population is Jewish, Nazareth Village offers a light to those seeking for the truth.

Another part of my service was devoted to a "football ministry" (soccer), where we use sports as the means to deliver the message, which is the Gospel of salvation. The ministry is intended for all children; Muslims, Jews and Christians to come and play soccer three times per week, but one day and for ten minutes they listen to stories about Jesus.



Samuel Hernandez and other workers at Nazareth Village guide a donkey loaded with branches.

The last part of my service was to participate in the chapel of the Nazareth Hospital. I played music, led worship and provided the chaplains with support. I did not anticipate at the beginning of my service that I would be involved in such diverse ministries; God works in mysterious ways and will work in us as well. We must be faithful and listen for God's call; perhaps this is the most difficult step. I was encouraged to follow His call and not to fear uncertainty, but to wait on the Lord because his faithfulness endures forever.

• Samuel Hernandez

Served in Nazareth, Israel with *tranSend* 2005-2006

## Christmas cards and other items from Nazareth

Village will arrive in Harrisonburg soon and be available for sale during the holiday season. Nazareth Village seeks to increase revenue so that the important message of Jesus' life and His peacemaking example can continue to be promoted. Watch for more information in the Nov. issue of *Connections* or contact Marie Shenk at [marie.shenk@emu.edu](mailto:marie.shenk@emu.edu)



## Mennonite Mutual Aid Stewardship Solutions

### What is a charitable bequest plan?

There is a very simple way to leave a portion of your estate to several charities of your choice and to later easily revise the plan if you wish.

When making a will, or living trust, simply indicate that a portion of your assets should be left as a bequest to the Mennonite Foundation. Then fill out a charitable distribution form that allows you to recommend what charities you would like to support with your bequest. This form is filed with the Mennonite Foundation. Upon your death, the executor of your estate will transfer your bequest to the Mennonite Foundation. The Foundation will then distribute your assets to the charities you have recommended.

This plan has several key advantages.

- It's very simple to set up and administer.
- It's very easy to revise your recommendations without changing your will.
- Mennonite Foundation offers free advice

For more information regarding this plan or other options contact Joseph L. Lapp, Southeastern Representative of the Mennonite Foundation and MMA Trust Company.

(540) 434-3666 (800) 442-7930  
[joseph.lapp@mmapartners.org](mailto:joseph.lapp@mmapartners.org)

Pleasant View, Inc., staff member Amber talks with Steve and demonstrates the importance of eye-level communication with someone in a wheelchair.



## How to not make those with developmental disabilities feel left out

by Dan Jenkins

Lately, it has become more common for a person with mental retardation (MR) to become an active member of their community. With the help of families, friends, and community-based organizations, folks with MR have secured employment, bought property, and volunteered in the areas in which they live.

Unfortunately, sometimes a person that has been diagnosed with MR experiences the inadvertent alienation of being left out in a group setting. Everyone hates to feel left out, which is why most people would not intentionally make someone else feel that way. The sad truth is that while these folks shop, go to doctors, see movies, and meet new people just like everyone else, there's a common trend in society to be uncomfortable interacting with a person living with a developmental disability.

Often a person with MR will attend a doctor's appointment with a care giver and never be spoken to directly. It's easy for a doctor or a clerk to look past the person with the disability and communicate directly with the care giver, but for the person that got ignored, it can be dehumanizing.

Imagine buying a car with friends and instead of the salesman asking you what you like, he turns to your friends and asks them. Doesn't feel too great, right?

With that in mind, there are some ways we can all avoid creating this dehumanizing experience. Most importantly, remember that a person living with mental retardation is a person first. People live with disabilities; the disability does not define them.

First, if you are approached by someone with a disability in the community, make eye contact! It's the best way to let someone know you're interacting with them. If a person is in a wheelchair,

make the effort to lean down to talk. Don't be afraid to offer your hand in a friendly shake, a common friendly gesture.

Second, remember to focus on what people can do and not what they can't. Just because a person has MR doesn't mean they're deaf or need to be spoken to like a child.

Also, most adults will agree, if they can do something for themselves, they want to do it, so don't feel like you need to do everything for them.

Lastly, remember the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. That's not so hard to remember. So the next time you encounter a person in the community who is living with a developmental disability, make sure you're treating them the way you would want to be treated; you will help someone feel included and not left out.

• Submitted by Rosa C. Bare  
Public Relations & Fundraising Coordinator  
Pleasant View, Inc.

### fifth annual Festival of Praise

Sunday, November 5, 2006 4 p.m.  
Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg

**Featuring 13 singing groups and a  
mass choir directed by Jay Hartzler**

For more info • 540-434-9727 • [info@vmbm.org](mailto:info@vmbm.org)

# October 2006 Prayer Calendar

## Sunday

**1** The 2006 Junior High Retreat for Virginia Conference ends today at the Smith Mountain Lake 4-H Center. Pray that this time was a blessing for the youth who participated and for those who organized and led it.

**8** Conference Minister Owen Burkholder is on sabbatical for the month of October. Pray for he and Ruth Ann as they work on their "missional lives" project.

**15** Pray for Cindy Martin, sister of Jason Martin, who will spend 20 days in Italy on a PIM assignment to encourage missionaries, connect with Jason and Donna's friends in Bari, and experience cross-cultural missions.

**22** Richard and Margaret Keeler nurture the Gospel Lighthouse Mennonite Church in Trinidad, by participating in Bible study, prayer meetings and worship services. Ask God to sustain them with health and strength.

**29** Pray for VMBM/EMM worker Carol Tobin in Thailand who conducts English classes with teachers who teach in their own classrooms. Ask God to provide her with just the right words as she relates to this influential group of people.

## Monday

**2** Paolo Campos, Secretary of the Brazilian Mennonite Mission Committee (JMMD), visited Norma Teles in Albania during the last week of September. Pray this visit strengthens the partnership between VMBM and JMMD.

**9** Today representatives from the Mennonite mission agencies are on the EMU campus with displays welcoming everyone passing by to stop and talk to representatives. May students and others hear God's call for missions/service.

**16** Pray for Virginia Conference churches in a present state of flux – those with declining attendance, pastoral changes, financial challenges, and internal struggles. Ask for God's abundant grace at this time!

**23** Pray for the ongoing work of Virginia Mennonite Conference and VMBM. Pray that people who feel God's call for service in whatever capacity may find a good fit in their assignments, whether in ministry, mission or service.

**30** Chris and Melody Riddle are working in preparation for their assignment in Bari, Italy beginning in January 2007, if all funding is in place. Thank God for the many contacts they have made in the past months, and ask continued direction for this family.

## Tuesday

**3** Give thanks to God for the many individuals and families that supported the mission of VMBM and VMC especially during the month of August, when both agencies were striving to reach their annual financial goals.

**10** Pray for Sharon Kniss, a participant in *Transit*, who began working with Bridge Builders at London Mennonite Centre in July. Sharon is developing new relationships through participating in choirs and visiting area churches.

**17** Willard Eberly, Bari, Italy, has a full schedule of traveling this fall, to Albania, Greece, and Sicily for the annual Conference in December. Pray for his health and safety, and for the opening of these various places to the Gospel.

**24** Today is United Nations Day. Pray that the UN will be an effective seeker of peace on the world stage to solve disagreements and ending violence. Pray for the many countries with separate agendas to come together.

**31** Tomorrow is the traditional celebration of All Saints Day, honoring those over the centuries who have devoted their lives to living for Christ. Remember those in your life who have passed on after a life lived in Christ.

## Wednesday

**4** Mauricio Chenlo is the Urban Ministries Director in Raleigh, NC., who helps the area churches focus on church planting in the Triad and Triangle regions of Eastern NC. Praise God for his ministry there.

**11** Phil and Marcia Lehman, Bari, Italy, meet families everywhere they go, often in connection with their children and their activities. Ask God to direct their conversations and for opportunities to share the truth with people they meet.

**18** Pastor Morris Baker of Alpine Mennonite Church, Jamaica, is studying at the Jamaica Theological Seminary in Kingston. Thank God for this opportunity for him to get further training, and ask for God's grace for his busy schedule.

**25** Elias Chacour, the Melkite Archbishop of Galilee is at EMU, giving lectures open for the public. Pray for Elias as he continues a long career of peacemaking in the Middle East.

## Thursday

**5** Thank God for the elderly man in Carlsen Field, Trinidad, whose commitment to Christ nudges him to invite his neighbors to his home for Bible study. He built an addition to his house for the future congregation. What a testimony!

**12** The Constituency Leaders Council of MC USA meets tomorrow through Sunday. The VMC Moderator, Beryl Jantzi, and Anna S. Janzen will be representing Virginia Conference at these meetings.

**19** Pray for Clyde Kratz who is now serving as overseer in the Northern District of Virginia Mennonite Conference along with Sam Weaver. Thank God for Michael Shenk's many years of service to the District.

**26** Pray for the Music Weekend Retreat at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center Oct. 27-29, with Marvin Miller of Sarasota, Fla., as conductor. This is followed by a Sunday afternoon concert at Yoder Barn.

## Friday

**6** Ask God to give you a heart for unreached people groups and go to this web site which offers helpful research on the unreached and how to get connected with ministry for them <http://www.calebproject.org>

**13** Class reunions, worship celebrations, and Menfolk are all a part of Eastern Mennonite University's Homecoming this weekend. Praise the Lord for the role EMU and EMS have played in many people's lives.

**20** This evening the VMBM committees meet to hear reports and envision direction for taking the Gospel wherever God leads. Pray for committee members to have creativity and insight as they give feedback to staff members.

**27** Sarah Bixler is attending the "Church in My Dreams" conference at Hesston College this weekend. May the Spirit lead the dreaming of how youth and young adults can be active in the church.

## Saturday

**7** Thank God for Steve and Betsy Dintaman, MMN and VMBM workers at Lithuania Christian College, who recently went to Albania to visit the homes of their Albanian students who attend the Mennonite church there.

**14** May God bless Jamaica Mennonite Church's Youth Rally held this weekend at Good Tidings Mennonite Church. Quizzing, singing competitions, good fun and fellowship will abound with youth from 12 congregations.

**21** The full board of VMBM meets today. Phyllis Miller, chair, brings her gifts of organizational procedures to the meeting. Thank God for Board members who give their time and wisdom in shaping the future of VMBM.

**28** In Orange Walk Town, Belize, Nancy Marshall teaches deaf children in school each day, and on Sundays teaches deaf youth and children in her home where Jesus' Deaf Church meets. Thank God for her vision for outreach.

"I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the LORD, the  
Maker of heaven and earth."  
Psalm 121: 1-2 (NIV)

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by



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

## Announcements

A Young People's Christian Association (YPCA) Reunion Banquet and Program will be held October 14, 2006, in the EMU University Commons. The program will feature speakers Dr. David Augsburg, Carmen Schrock Hurst, and Karla Stoltzfus, as well as displays from Y-church congregations, historical photos from 85 years of YPCA history, and vocal groups from throughout YPCA history. The banquet begins at 5 p.m. and registration is required. Register at: [www.emu.edu/homecoming/registration](http://www.emu.edu/homecoming/registration)

## Staff Transition



**Sarah Bixler** joined the staff of Virginia Mennonite Conference in early September as the Interim Conference Youth Minister, a half-time position, following Kimberlee Greenawalt who served for eight years in this role. Sarah will continue as quarter time Youth Minister at Zion Mennonite Church, a position she has held for five years. She and her husband Ben have a newborn son, Calvin.

**Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions** is seeking a person to serve as a full-time Development Director. This individual will provide leadership for the fundraising efforts of the mission program and serve as an advocate for mission in Virginia Conference. Experience in areas of finance, broad familiarity with the Mennonite Church, and good relational skills are required. Position is available immediately. Contact Lois Maust at (540) 434-9727 for an application and position description. Please submit resumes and applications by October 13, 2006.

### Will you serve in Albania?

**Church Development/Leadership Trainer Couple – Lushnje, Albania**  
There is an urgent need for a couple with gifts, experience and vision for church development, especially in the area of discipleship and leadership training, to live in Lushnje and nurture the small clusters of existing believers in this area. Through agricultural development work there are many open doors in the communities but there is a need for workers to nurture these relationships and raise up local leaders. Contact Ken Horst, Mediterranean Regional Assistant, at [ken.horst@vmbm.org](mailto:ken.horst@vmbm.org) or (800) 707-5535.



You are invited to **MennoFolk**, October 13 -14, 2006. This year's music festival will feature 15 national and local Mennonite folk artists including: Trent Wagler, Chuck Neufeld, Rachel Ries and Tim Shue. Concerts will take place in downtown Harrisonburg on Friday night from 7 – 11 pm and on the campus of Eastern Mennonite University on Saturday beginning at 4 pm. Tickets are \$12/person or \$35 per family, children under 5 are free. *Over the Rhine* will close out the festival, under a separate \$12 ticket (\$8 if you have a MennoFolk festival ticket), in Lehman Auditorium at 8pm on Saturday. Seating is limited, get your tickets early at: [www.emu.edu/boxoffice](http://www.emu.edu/boxoffice), call (540) 432-4663 (M-F 10:30-2:30pm) or in person at the EMU Box Office in the University Commons or at Red Front Supermarket in Harrisonburg.

**2006 Penny Power**

We are hoping to raise **\$22,000** for this year's *Penny Power* projects. In 2005, congregations contributed **\$22,834.09!** We hope to continue the effort and momentum from last year.

- Highlight *Penny Power* during your Sunday morning worship service. Involve the children in your church.
- Bring jugs from your church/org. to the Relief Sale, October 6-7, at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds.
- Take your empty jugs back to your church and start collecting for next year's *Penny Power* projects!

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