Inspired by the example of his college professor, Richard Keeler (EMC class of 1960) chose to march to the beat of a different drummer. As a young doctor, he chose to practice medicine on distant shores. Thirty years later, the curse of “leper” is no longer spoken on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago.

For his legacy of uncommon service, Dr. Keeler was named the 2004 recipient of EMU’s distinguished service award at Homecoming weekend, Oct. 8-10.

As a pre-med student at EMU in the late 1950s, Richard admired the commitment of professor Daniel Suter; his willingness to stay at a church school rather than accepting a job at a large medical school with a much higher salary and his commitment to serving the church through pastorating a congregation as well as through teaching.

Richard continued his medical training at the University of Virginia, earning his M.D. in 1964. He then accepted a service assignment with the Mennonite Central Committee and moved to Kentucky with his young family. He worked to upgrade the health standards in the schools and Appalachian communities and embarked on an extensive measles immunization program in Harlan and Letcher counties. In 1968, the governor of Kentucky bestowed on Dr. Keeler the honorary title of Kentucky Colonel for his effective public health work.

That same year, the Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions called him to serve on the Caribbean island of Trinidad. The government wanted to end the long-standing practice of shipping leprosy patients off to a small island, separated from their families and doomed to eek out a hopeless existence for the remainder of their days.

In 1971, after completing the measles campaign in Kentucky and advanced training in both public health and leprosy, Dr. Keeler arrived in Trinidad with his family. He brought new methods of combating the scourge of leprosy. Rather than accepting the limiting role of primary care physician to his leprosy patients, Dr. Keeler developed a broad public health strategy to enlighten medical, nursing and citizen communities about the disease they feared and considered an incurable curse. Education was his weapon. He wrote articles and booklets, spoke on radio and television, and conducted training sessions.

Over time, Dr. Keeler’s efforts took root and bore fruit. Patients began to be released from Chacachacare, “the leper’s island.” After long years of separation, they were reunited with their families, husbands and wives. Patients who no longer had families were extended government aid to build homes in the communities of their choice. Eventually, the leper’s island was closed.

His successful efforts were noticed by neighboring countries. Dr. Keeler was invited to Guyana, St. Lucia, Jamaica and other islands of the Caribbean to advise and encourage similar programs. The World Health Organization used Richard’s expertise in the region, especially in St. Vincent.

Dr. Keeler’s work in his adopted Caribbean homeland is now focused on developing church leaders. He gives oversight to four congregations of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago, all led by national pastors. He comments on the ways his medical training has shaped his pastoral assignment.

“I am goal oriented, possibly more organized and alert for what could cause problems (the preventative approach), dealing with them before they develop into serious issues. Still another way is that I look at what will strengthen a pastor or a congregation behind the scenes. What is visible is not always what is most important.”

Paul Souder
Director of EMU Marketing Communications
(taken from a longer version published in EMU’s Crossroads magazine, Fall 2004)
An old man and a baby

A crowd had gathered at Park Cabin on the north edge of Harrisonburg. These young adults, mostly former James Madison University students, had gathered for a time of reunion. What called them together? Several years earlier an elderly couple from Harrisonburg started a Bible study. It began with seven JMU students. That mentoring ministry would eventually touch more than 200 people. Those young people, many of them now married with small children, were the ones meeting that afternoon.

The elderly couple? Lloy and Elizabeth Kniss, former missionaries to India, former pastoral couple, parents of missionaries and church leaders, and now retired. Lloy lay in a hospital bed dying of cancer. Sometime during the afternoon, Lloy and Elizabeth’s son, Mark, arranged for an ambulance to transport Lloy to this gathering at Park Cabin to be with these dear friends one last time. Richard Early, one of the original seven, recalls it as an emotional time of reunion and reminiscing. As the afternoon wound down, Lloy took the babies, held them, and blessed them. One person remembers that he affirmed that afternoon as the “crowning moment” of his life. Within weeks Lloy was gone—now with Jesus whom he dearly loved.

An entire life condensed to a few moments! Of course, we know many things of significance happened in Lloy and Elizabeth’s lives. But, oh, to be able to see life’s meaning and purpose condensed to a few moments. The old man Simeon also had his “crowning moment” when he held the baby Jesus in the temple. “You may now dismiss your servant in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation.” Simeon too had likely lived long and well. But at that moment, he saw his place, he recognized its meaning, and he embraced it in peace.

I don’t know if I will recognize my “crowning moment,” even if I have one. Do others? Was Richard Keeler’s recognition with EMU’s Distinguished Service Award his “crowning moment?” Was Eva Eberly’s translation of Exploring Worship into Italian her “crowning moment”? I’m not sure. I suspect though, if we even recognize our “crowning moment,” it will be found in these two things—in selfless service and in relationship to Jesus.

Two old men and two babies suggest the way. This Christmas may we join Lloy and Simeon in selfless service and in worship of Jesus.

Loren Horst
President of VMBM
Virginia Relief Sale nets over $241,000 for MCC

Mild temperatures and hazy sunshine, instead of forecasted rain, provided a pleasant backdrop for the 38th annual Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale held Oct. 1-2 at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds.

The sale raised over $241,000 in gross receipts for the worldwide relief program of Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, Pa. Last year’s sale, after expenses, netted $166,000 for MCC.

An auction of more than 300 handmade quilts, wall hangings, knotted comforters and afghans, artwork and wooden handcrafted items accounted for $109,000 of the total funds raised.

A 102” x 112” off-white grape design quilt made by Anna Mary Burkholder of Waynesboro took the top quilt bid of $3,000.

A grandfather’s clock handcrafted by Harry Kraus, Sr., of Harrisonburg, went for $4,000, the highest auction item.

“A Penny Power” project, initiated in 2001, raised $11,585 at the sale. Some 28 area congregations and other groups collected coins and currency in large water jugs for weeks or months and brought their containers to the sale for sorting and tabulating. The money given to MCC this year will support the Bolikamxay Forestry and Agriculture College in Laos, and Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions will use its portion to support a ministry with the Hmong people of Hickory, N.C.

“I was impressed again this year with the generosity exhibited by buyers at the sale and with the way that everyone pitches in to make things happen,” said Marvin Nisly of Harrisonburg, planning committee chair. “The relief sale is an intergenerational, community event that involves everyone from youngsters to teenagers to older adults, all working together to respond to the needs of others around the world,” he added.

Jim Rush of Harrisonburg transports some of the 16,000 homemade donuts that volunteers worked through the night to make to sell.

Exploring Worship translated

A new resource for evangelical churches is available in the Italian language, thanks to the translation work of Eva Eberly. *Scoprire L’adorazione* (Exploring Worship) is being published and will soon be available in Christian bookstores all over Italy.

This is Eva’s seventh translation project. The first booklet titled “Welcome to Your New Life,” helped new believers understand their conversion experience. The next major one was “Experiencing God;” it is presently among the top 10 books sold to evangelicals. Another project, “Seven Things Children Need” by John Drescher has gone into a second printing—more than 1500 have been sold, an exceptional record in the Italian context.

The primary objective of VMBM translation projects is to provide helpful teaching/training material for the discipleship school and for pastors to use in their congregations on subjects that are not currently available in Italian. Books are carefully selected with these criteria in mind, as well as their cultural suitability. Publishers advertise these books and they are displayed in bookstores. Also a widely viewed evangelical web site promotes some of Eva’s books.

More than a theological treatise, “Exploring Worship” is a practical guide to praise and worship. Albino Montisci (compares to Michael W. Smith in the US) wrote the introduction for the Italian version. Eva’s assistant, Rosa (a Christian musicologist), compiled a list of music resources for worship leaders. How to lead worship, how to write songs and evaluate them, how to plan a worship service, and how to organize a worship team are just some of the practical suggestions included.

The book sells for 12.50 euros.

Next possible projects are “Good Sense Budget Course” and “Coping with Cancer.” Eva’s translation work is intensive, but she adds, “because of the dearth of resources available to the Italian church, it brings me joy to serve in this way.” We thank God for this unique service that Eva provides to the international church.

Jon Michael Eberly, Eva and Willard Eberly’s son, designed the cover for this new book. Family members’ hands are used, adding a personal touch.

The mass chorus at the third annual Festival of Praise combined the members of different men’s a cappella groups for the closing numbers, directed by Jay Hartner. The event was held at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, on November 7, and raised $2,223 for Eva Eberly’s translation work.
Where will you serve this year?
Serve with Partners in Mission from one week to one month...

**albania**
- evangelism     july 2005

**argentina**
- peacemaking team    february 2005

**belarus**
- july 2005

**belize**
- work & evangelism   august 2005

**costa rica**
- serve with pura vida    july/august 2005

**dominican republic**
- work team     july 2005

**ghana**
- work team     july 2005

**gulf states churches**
- youth work    summer 2005

**haiti**
- work teams     january 2005

**italy**
- youth work     july 2005

**jamaica**
- monthly work teams    starting nov. 2004
- teach Bible school     july 2005

**liberia**
- work team     september 2005

**nazareth & bethlehem**
- work group    may 2006

**new york city**
- inner city ministry    summer 2005

**nicaragua**
- work team     june 2005

**philadelphia, pa.**
- inner city ministry    summer 2005

**puerto rico**
- work team     july 2005

**south africa**
- support new zion ministries int.    july 18-august 6, 2005

**tanzania**
- work team     september 2005

**trinidad**
- teach Bible school     july 2005

**ukraine**
- teach English     june 2005

**want more info?**

contact
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pim@vmbm.org  www.vmbm.org/pim

a program of
Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions
On September 25, the women of the Mennonite Church of Trinidad and Tobago (MCTT) held a Community Health Day at the Charlieville Mennonite Church. The gates opened at eight in the morning, and 180 men, women and children came for information regarding various aspects of health. Tests for diabetes, cholesterol levels and blood pressure were given. Risha Kalloo taught about diabetes prevention, Lisa Kalloo on mental health, and Linda Gunpath on HIV and other STDs. Margaret Keeler witnessed to people while they waited to see a doctor, and the children watched “Veggie Tales.” Women from every congregation of MCTT participated in some way and were instruments of Christ’s love as they cared for the persons who came. Linda said, “People were grateful for this service and wondered when we will go this again.” All the activities of the day demonstrated God’s love and message to those who do not know Christ.

• Babes Jaimani, Risha Kalloo, Linda Gunpath
MCTT “In Your Hands” Ministry

When I was farming in the Newport News area, I had a cornfield on the back of the farm where the corn would get mashed down every year by young guys in their cars or 4-wheel drives. This was when the corn was real tall and just about ready to harvest. They would run their vehicles right through the cornfield at night, when I could never catch them. I would lose a couple of loads of silage every year because of this. However, I knew that it was a neighbor boy who was involved because I saw corn stalks under his car. I could also tell by the tire treads in the field that they were his.

One day we were at the nearby service station at the same time, talking in a group of people about hunting, etc. When we were all about ready to go, I suddenly turned to him, grabbed him on his collar, looked him in the eye and said, “Leroy, what would you do if you were me and I was you and I kept racing cars through your corn field?” He immediately looked down, embarrassed, and said, “I’m sorry, I won’t do it again.” It never happened again and we remained good friends.

• story told by Myron Ross
Newport News, Va., who died October 2004, leaving a legacy of peaceful living
Financial help is urgently needed to continue reaching thousands of Muslim and Jewish children with the story of Jesus at Nazareth Village. For details on how individuals, Sunday school classes and/or churches can be involved, go to www.nazarethvillage.com and click on “Loaves and Fishes Program.” You may also contact Dave Eshleman at DMEshleman@aol.com or at (540) 432-6585.

A Used Book Sale will be held at the Congregational Resource Center January 18-19, 2005, at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, during the School for Leadership Training. You are invited to participate by purchasing books or by donating books for the sale. Donations can be taken to the Congregational Resource Center, M-F (7:30-4:30). Books should be in good condition: please no journals, periodicals, or novels. Children’s books are welcomed.

Pastoral Transitions

Ben Risser was ordained as lead pastor of Ridgeway Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, on September 12. He and Kathy have three young adult daughters.

Martin Rhodes was licensed towards ordination as an interim pastor at Christiansburg Mennonite Fellowship, Christiansburg, Va. He is married to Sylvia (Witmer) Rhodes.

donate your car to Virginia Mennonite Conference!
The IRS rules are changing. Take a tax deduction for the full Blue Book value if you act before Dec. 31st. Contact Conference Coordinator Steve Carpenter at Steve.Carpenter@vmconf.org, (540) 434-9727 or (800) 707-5535 for details or with questions.