

MASK COVID PRECAUTIONS

Local COVID-19 infection rates and hospitalizations are very high. Seventeen people have died of COVID in the last two weeks in Rockingham and Augusta Counties, Harrisonburg, and Staunton. We considered cancelling the relief sale again this year, but decided to go ahead, with appropriate precautions.

To minimize COVID-19 spread, the Relief Sale Board decided **ALL MUST WEAR MASKS WHEN INDOORS, REGARDLESS OF VACCINATION STATUS.**

Anyone who does not feel comfortable being around others at the sale or wearing a mask indoors is invited to participate in the auction by watching the live video stream of the auction and bidding online.

We realize that masks have become a very divisive issue, but we want to act in the spirit of Christ to protect our brothers and sisters who are elderly, immune compromised, or young children. Let us remember we are gathered “in the name of Christ” and let our unity rise above our divisions.

VIRGINIA MENNONITE RELIEF SALE

October 1&2 at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds

We currently have over 200 items listed for the auction and will be adding more. The auction is famous for its beautiful handmade quilts; but we also have comforters, wall hangings, handmade wood furniture and other wood articles, collectibles, artwork, restaurant gift cards, and other items. Auction items are available for viewing at <https://vareliefsale.com>. Online bidding will begin on September 17. The live auction will begin on Friday October 1 at 7 pm at the fairgrounds and continue Saturday, October 2, at 9:30 am, with bids beginning at the highest level reached by the online bidding. During the live auction, people will be able to watch online from anywhere and place bids while others are bidding in person.

As usual, there will be plenty of delicious food on offer. A pork BBQ box dinner will be available on Friday night, as well as breakfast on Saturday morning. On Saturday, BBQ chicken, Brunswick stew, Smiley’s ice cream, hotdogs and hamburgers, Indian food, kettle corn, homemade potato chips, hot and cold sandwiches, apple butter, and meats and cheeses will be available. We will once again have a bake sale with homemade pies, breads and rolls, cookies, cakes, and preserves.

There will also be a 5k walk—run race at 8:30 on Saturday. You can register at <https://vareliefsale.com> under the activities tab.

Money raised by the sale will go to the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), <https://mcc.org> for its work with relief, development, and peacemaking throughout the world. There will also be special offerings at the sale for WARM in Augusta County and People Helping People in Rockingham County. Coins are being collected in churches for My Coins Count for the Family Discipleship Ministries of the Virginia Mennonite Missions and classroom supplies for Zambia.

You don’t have to buy anything at the sale, or even attend, to help out. You can donate at <https://vareliefsale.com/donate>. You can also donate at the same web address to the Sharing our Surplus, SOS, campaign, whose funds are specifically allocated to the MCC’s refugee assistance. At a time when there are over 82 million refugees in the world, we must reflect on the blessings we enjoy from God and share with those less fortunate. For further information, contact Dave Rush at dmrush1@hotmail.com or Timothy Jost at 540 421 1529

SHARING OUR SURPLUS

Four years ago, a Sharing Our Surplus (SOS) Committee was formed to help the fall Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale raise additional funds for world relief through having a donation table for cash, checks or credit card contributions. The proceeds were to augment funds the Relief Sale raises each year for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) through auction and food sales, with all SOS proceeds going directly to MCC, specifically for refugee relief needs.

In the years since, a total of over \$100,000 has been raised through this effort. This year, due to enthusiastic early support from a number of generous donors, the Sharing Our Surplus (SOS) Committee of the Relief Sale has already raised or received pledges of nearly \$20,000. You can join this groundswell by adding your generous contribution online at <https://vareliefsale.com/donate> or writing a check made out to Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale (with SOS on the memo line to designate it for refugee relief) and mailing it to Relief Sale, 601 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

The Committee also urges congregations to take up one or more special SOS offerings prior to the Sale for the benefit of those unable to contribute in-person on October 1 or 2.

MCC HELPS BRING RECONCILIATION IN ETHIOPIA

Revenge is one of the most powerful human motivators, responsible for blood feuds around the globe. The Amhara region in Ethiopia is no exception. If a person is killed, the victim's family is obligated to kill someone in the offender's family, according to a tradition called Black Blood. A murderer can look forward to being murdered upon their release from prison.



For over 20 years, MCC has worked with the Meserete Kristos Church, the Mennonite church in Ethiopia, to reduce this cycle of violence. They started with one prison in Amhara and were so successful in reducing revenge murders that they were invited to expand into another.

In February 2021, MCC Country Representative Rose Shenk was privileged to witness Sera, the traditional ceremony that reconciled the family of Tegene Chernet to the families of the men who murdered him. Rose will be sharing from that experience on Saturday at the relief sale.