

## Funnel cakes at the fair: fundraiser or outreach?

by Jim Parks  
Charlottesville Mennonite Church

For 15 years, Charlottesville Mennonite Church has sold funnel cakes at the Albemarle County Fair in Virginia. The goal has always included both fundraising and community outreach.

A significant amount of preparation is involved in setting up our booth at the fair. After repairing and improving the booth, we purchase the ingredients for the funnel cakes. On the Sunday prior to the fair we assemble the mix and bag it. The next evening several members gather at the fairgrounds to set up our booth and the funnel cake cooker.

Over the years this process has become more and more involved. Both the Fire Marshal and the County Health Department seem to introduce new regulations annually. Finding enough volunteers to staff the booth is always a challenge, but it seems that the Lord always provides enough willing hands when the time is right.

During the fair we frequently have lines 40 or 50 people deep waiting to purchase funnel cakes, and we have raised up to \$6000 during the five-day fair. A large portion of our missions funding comes from this event, as does funding for our congregation's annual retreat.

People who are usually quiet and seemingly shy open up and interact excitedly with this crowd. I especially love watching and listening as visitors ask questions about our beliefs. It's fun to watch our member families as they work in the booth. New friendships are forged and greater understanding of one another develops.

Outreach is an important part of our booth. Originally, we had posters mounted on wooden walls and brochures spread over a table for people to look at and take with them. Unfortunately, few visitors took time to view our display. A few years ago several of our members developed the idea of placing pictures of



Jim Parks

our church activities under Plexiglas on tables and creating a sitting area where fair goers could enjoy their funnel cakes. This transformation from posters to a place to rest, which also tells a story, has been very popular with visitors.

Selling funnel cakes has offered numerous opportunities for our members to share God's love with the community of Albemarle County. One of our newer, very active families joined us through this outreach. The initial picture of who we are created sufficient interest for them to visit our church. We have been richly blessed by Curt and Keelie Massie's hard work.

This year we experienced a near catastrophe when a wind and rain storm on Thursday evening lifted the huge tent our booth was located in and collapsed it on many fair attendees. Pastor Roy Hange was working in the booth that evening with our youth and young adults. When he saw that the tent was coming down, he gathered our youth outside the tent as he shut down the propane valve. Roy sent the youth to the home of a young man who lived nearby, and then searched the fairgrounds for one youth who

Adam Gredler and Andrew Showalter volunteered at Charlottesville Mennonite Church's funnel cake booth at the Albemarle County Fair in August.

## Sawdust trails

Do you remember the “sawdust trail?” Many do. Some of us have even walked it. In the grand tent crusades and camp meetings of a previous era, people’s hearts were touched, failure was acknowledged, and people began a journey of transformation. They did so by getting out of their seats at the nudging of the Spirit and invitation of the preacher and walked down the sawdust aisle. At that particular point, the person’s internal conviction and corresponding behavior matched. “Here we are Lord, broken as we are. Use us.”

We Christians have this idea that conviction and behavior should match. The convictions we profess and the conduct of our lives should be in harmony with each other. The problem is that none do it perfectly. We don’t spend our whole lives on the “sawdust trail.” This dilemma gives rise to the most frequently cited criticism against Christianity—hypocrisy. “Christians don’t practice what they preach.”

Religious folks especially hear this charge. I suppose everyone at some time or another is guilty but religious folks in general, and Christians in particular, seem vulnerable to the charge of, “Hypocrite!” In our honest moments we realize the allegation is not far off. Our critics actually get it right uncomfortably often. Then we try to solve it in one of two ways. Some of us hide our failures in order to appear holier than we really are. Others hide our beliefs so people won’t expect much from us. Hidden failures and hidden faith-futile attempts to deal with the tough issues



**Loren Horst**  
President of VMBM

of living for Christ in a difficult world.

There is another way. We can follow the “sawdust trail.” We can frankly acknowledge our limitations and then humbly offer our lives as a continuing work of God’s grace. To the charge of hypocrisy we answer, “That could well be true. Help us to understand and live more faithfully.” On the “sawdust trail” conviction and behavior are congruent. We are convicted of our own inadequacy, yet God’s ability. We offer our lives as humble sacrifices to Him.

Not long ago I witnessed a “sawdust trail.” At the end of a service at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Pastor Harry Jarrett asked if there were people present who felt the tug of the Spirit to respond in some new way to God’s service. They were then invited to come forward for prayer. He apparently expected a few. The response was overwhelming. Probably 20 or more came and Pastor Jarrett quickly recruited additional prayer teams to meet the response. I saw imperfect people, responding to God’s grace, and offering themselves as objects and instruments of transformation. Their conviction and behavior matched. Oh, they’ll still be hypocrites at times. But God will use them. “Here we are, God. Send us.”

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Leslie Vernick (L) chats with participants at the Mennonite Women’s retreat held September 26-28 in Williamsburg, Va.



# Saying goodbye to the Bike Shenandoah child

On a very cold November day in 1997, about a dozen avid bike riders gathered in the “delivery room” at Community Mennonite Church and gave birth to a little infant called Bike Shenandoah Cycle for Service. This infant would grow up to be a very significant Mennonite world mission fundraiser in the Shenandoah Valley. The infant was born kicking, full of life, and excited about being alive. It was nurtured by eight very interested and caring people, and I was invited to be the director of the nurturing committee.

The child grew quickly and developed in strength. It began to walk in just a few months; in March 1998 nearly \$5,000 was donated by businesses, individuals, and special service people to put it on its “feet,” or more literally, on its wheels. Forming five riding routes—100, 62, 30, 10, and 5 miles (plus a 1-mile route for children 5 years old and under)—Bike Shenandoah began to make its presence known throughout many communities west of Harrisonburg.

When the last Saturday in September 1998 arrived, Bike Shenandoah stood 105 bikers strong. It had grown to adulthood and was ready to go to work. Covering more than 4,000 miles in the scenic Shenandoah Valley, the riders of the first Bike Shenandoah raised \$18,250 for Mennonite world missions. The money was equally divided between Mennonite Board of Missions (now Mennonite



Gloria Lehman

Mission Network), Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions, and Mennonite Central Committee.

Bike Shenandoah grew rapidly in physical, spiritual, and emotional strength each year. By six years of age, Bike Shenandoah had traveled more than 25,000 miles and raised more than \$105,000 for world and local missions. Bike Shenandoah is growing stronger and its health is very good. It wants to keep riding, and its riders are excited.

After serving for six years as chair of its nurturing committee—which has gone way beyond the call of duty—I’m ready to step down, turning over this part of the process to Gloria Lehman. She will take Bike Shenandoah to a new level of growth and development. It is with much joy that I say goodbye to this mission fundraising infant that has matured to adulthood. May God’s marvelous grace continue to be poured out upon Bike Shenandoah for years to come!

• John T. Kreider

Beth Brunk, John Kreider, Dale Hartzler, Don Hertzler, Paul Yoder, and Byron Peachey served on the planning committee for Bike Shenandoah 2003, which raised \$15,700 for world and local mission.

## *a gift of good cheer*

### Financial Focus

The Bible is full of passages urging God’s people to rejoice. I can envision God himself rejoicing as He looked down upon His creation and pronounced it “very good.” Perhaps the best loved passage along this theme is found in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, rejoice!”

During this holiday season we remember the angel’s admonition to the shepherds, “I bring you good news of great joy...” (Luke 2:10). As we reflect on God’s gift of his only begotten Son, and the mystery of the incarnation when “the word became flesh,” our joy overflows into worship. Worship gives birth to thanksgiving. Thanksgiving leads to giving with grateful hearts as we echo the Apostle Paul’s words in II Corinthians 9:15, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

During this holiday season please consider making a gift to support the ministries of Virginia Mennonite Conference as we seek to be an agent of God’s call, for individuals, congregations and organizations, to follow Jesus and reflect peace, faith, hope and love to the world. Your financial gifts sustain the ministry of our conference leaders, staff and commissions as they work diligently to encourage and challenge our congregations, institutions and members to follow Jesus.

The work of Virginia Mennonite Conference needs God’s blessing and your encouragement in the form of a year-end gift. For your convenience, an envelope is included in this issue of *Connections*. Thank you for your generosity. May God continue to richly bless you.

• Steve Carpenter, Conference Coordinator

Service opportunities with  
Partners in Mission range  
from one week to one  
month.

albania  
evangelism ♦ july 2004

argentina  
peacemaking team ♦  
february 1-16, 2004

belize  
work & evangelism ♦ august 2004

costa rica  
serve the Costa Rican Mennonite  
Church ♦ july 2004

ghana  
work team ♦ june 2004

haiti  
work team ♦ january 2004

italy  
evangelism ♦ july 2004


jamaica  
work team ♦ february 2004  
teach Bible school ♦ july 2004

liberia  
work team ♦ september 2004



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work team ♦ june 2004

philadelphia, pa.  
inner city ministry ♦ any time

puerto rico  
work team ♦ july 2004

south africa  
support to the local church ♦  
august 2004

tanzania  
work team ♦ september 2004

trinidad  
teach Bible school ♦ july 2004  
congregational outreach ♦ august  
2004

ukraine  
teach English ♦ june 2004

washington, d.c.  
inner city ministry ♦ any time

want more info?

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Board of Missions*

# North Carolina church celebrates 50 years

On September 19-21, Mountain View Mennonite Church in Hickory, North Carolina, celebrated 50 years of ministry. The church was begun in July 1953 under the initiative of Clayton and Edna Godshall, formerly of Franconia Mennonite Conference.

Edward Godshall



Old photos displayed in the foyer welcomed the congregation with a peek into history as anniversary activities began Friday evening with a gospel sing. Wellington Moyer, one of the founding members, presented an overview of the church's fifty-year story. Participants reflected on warm memories of early church life and unorthodox activities, such as using guitars when instruments were forbidden in Mennonite churches and crowding unbelievable numbers into cars and buses. Kay Mosteller and Robin Shelton described the anticipation they felt as children waiting to be picked up for church.

The celebration continued on Saturday as the congregation met at a campground for swimming, sports, and food. Many enjoyed viewing old movies taken by Edward Godshall, who served as pastor for 45 years until his retirement last year. Friends reunited and old pals sat around tables catching up and laughing over remembered experiences.

The weekend culminated on Sunday morning with special music by new and traditional groups, a commemorative poem by Pearl Davis, a children's story by Pat Davis who shared her childhood church experiences, and a message by Sam Weaver, an overseer in Virginia Conference. Sam challenged us to be "tent people" as in our early days. He described tent people as those on the move, going into the world with good news.

Interim Pastor Chuck Hostetter closed the service with a mortgage burning ceremony for the church's two-year old building. A fellowship meal provided further opportunities for old friends and new visitors to connect. Following the meal, a service of remembrance at the church's cemetery commemorated the contributions of many who helped found the church and others who followed.

• Joyce Moyer Hostetter  
Mountain View Mennonite Church

## Congregational Resource Center

Be alert and on the move! Don't miss all of the materials at the Congregational Resource Center to help you with worship services and events for this special time of year.

Take a careful look at the following periodicals:

- **Children's Ministry**
- **Church Worship**
- **Reformed Worship**

Get ideas from:

- **The Complete Library of Christian Worship** — Volume V: The Services of the Christian Year
- **Destination Christmas!** Advent Programs and Practices for Youth
- **La Navidad Hispana at Home and at Church**
- **It's Jesus' Birthday!** A Christmas Eve Service

Enjoy the music on CDs of:

- John Bell — **God Comes Tomorrow...**
- Iona Community — **Innkeepers & Light Sleepers**

Don't overlook Epiphany and congregational covenant renewals or communion as you begin a new year together.

The Resource Center is open 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, with a key available at the EMU Information Office for use after hours.

Visit our website at [www.emu.edu/mcrc](http://www.emu.edu/mcrc) to browse our catalog. Contact us at 540-432-4219 or [wengerkw@emu.edu](mailto:wengerkw@emu.edu).

# December 2003 Prayer Calendar

## Sunday

**1** Pray for the City on a Hill Committee meeting tomorrow evening at Durham Mennonite Church to review efforts to strengthen the presence and witness of the church in North Carolina's Triangle and Triad regions.

**7** Pray for Howard Miller, Chair of the Health & Mutual Care Commission, as they meet tomorrow. The commission is seeking a replacement for co-chair Floyd Blosser, who has assumed new responsibilities with Central District.

**14** Milford & Carolyn Lyndaker give leadership to Crest Hill Community Church. Thank God for numerical growth and for growing commitment, and pray for wisdom as Crest Hill strengthens its witness.

**21** Christians around the world celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in a variety of ways. Pray that the true meaning of Christmas will be evident through the witness of our brothers and sisters in Jamaica, Italy, Trinidad, and Albania.

**28** Pray for Steven & Karla Francisco as they lead a new church plant in Isle of Wight, Va. Pray for wisdom, strength, and unity for the church planting team and that they will build meaningful relationships in the community.

## Tuesday

**2** Thank God for Diego Martin Mennonite Church's care for those in need. This congregation in Trinidad held their annual Soup for Charity on November 29 as a fundraiser for assisting persons in their community.

**9** Danny and Shirley Trobaugh are teaching vocational classes and being a loving presence at Maranatha School for the Deaf. Pray that God will give them good insight and wisdom as they live in this rural community.

**16** Pray for Raymond Martin as he provides oversight for Norfolk and part of Warwick Districts. Pray particularly for his involvement in the pastoral transition at Providence Mennonite Church in Newport News, Va.

**23** The holidays are often lonely for single persons who are separated from extended families. Thank God for the wonderful contributions that Allen Umble, Steve Campbell, and Sonya Harmish are making to the missionary efforts in Albania.

**30** Pray for Marvin Zuercher, who began serving as pastor of Chestnut Ridge Mennonite Church in Orrville, Ohio, in September. Pray for Marvin, his family, and the Chestnut Ridge congregation during this time of transition.

## Wednesday

**3** Pray for Tony Campolo as he speaks tonight at JMU in Harrisonburg. This event has been arranged by and from Goshen, Ind. to meet with MMA's COMB management board. This team makes decisions about our pastors' and church employees' health insurance.

**10** Pray for Richard and Margaret Keeler as they continue to counsel two Trinidadian couples in strengthening their marriages. They meet weekly on Wednesday and Friday evenings.

**17** Pray for the Centro Koinonia congregation in Bari as they hold a special Christmas outreach event to present the Gospel to unchurched people. Pray for good attendance and clear communication of God's love for the world.

**24** Pray for Bishop Leslie Francisco as he gives pastoral leadership to Calvary Community Church in Hampton, Va., and provides vision for several church planting initiatives.

**31** Pray for Ed Bontrager as he begins working for VMBM tomorrow. Most recently Ed had served as pastor of Huntington Mennonite Church in Newport News.

## Thursday

**4** Pray for Conference Coordinator Steve Carpenter as he travels to and from Goshen, Ind. to meet with MMA's COMB management board. This team makes decisions about our pastors' and church employees' health insurance.

**11** VMC's Finance Committee meets tomorrow morning to review the first quarter's operations. Pray for wisdom for them and a spirit of generosity among God's people toward the ministry of Virginia Menn. Conference.

**18** Finn & Karen Ranchod give leadership to Calvary Community Church Chesapeake. Thank God for continuing growth in numbers and in maturity. Pray for strength and wisdom for the leadership team at Calvary Chesapeake.

**25** "Welcome to earth, O noble Guest, through whom this sinful world is blessed! You turned not from our needs away! How can our thanks such love repay?" *Hymnal: Worship Book #205*

This month's prayer calendar is sponsored by Marvin & Carolyn Slabaugh in loving memory of his parents, Moses & Mary Slabaugh, and her father, Lester Campbell, and in honor of her mother, Naomi Campbell.

## Friday

**5** Jill Landis completed her work as Virginia Mennonite Conference's Staff Assistant last week. Pray for safety as Jill travels this month, and pray for God's guidance as Jill discerns her next steps.

**12** Pray for Beryl Brubaker, Interim President of Eastern Mennonite University, as she fulfills her responsibilities and prepares for incoming President Loren Swartzendruber.

**19** Franco Arena was ordained as elder for the Centro Agape congregation during the annual Italian Mennonite Conference last month. Pray for God's blessing on the ministry of Franco and the other Italian leaders.

**26** Jesse Bergey requests prayer that the violence in Jamaica would cease and that those experiencing economic oppression would be relieved. Pray that the Jamaican Christians will shine as lights in darkness.

If you would like to sponsor one or more months of the prayer calendar, contact Gloria Lehman at 540-434-9727 or 1-800-707-5535.

## Saturday

**6** The Hmong Advisory Committee meets this afternoon in Asheville, North Carolina. Pray for the continuing development of the Hmong fellowship in Hickory. Thank God for the strong support by TCK District churches.

**13** The annual Christmas program will be held tomorrow at Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica. Pray that this will be a time of joy for the staff, students, and community.

**20** Dan and Mary Hess are very busy with the leadership responsibilities they carry in the Gorica and Kemishtaj congregations that they pastor in Albania. They welcome our prayer support.

**27** The fiscal year will soon end for individuals and many congregations. Pray for a spirit of generosity towards the ministries of Virginia Mennonite Conference and Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions.

## Announcements

A **Men's Retreat** will be held at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center on March 12-14. Myron Augsburg will be the guest speaker. Come for a time of meaningful worship, inspired teaching, great fellowship, recreation, and reflection. For more information, contact WCRC at 757-566-2256 or [programs@wrc.info](mailto:programs@wrc.info). The event is co-sponsored with Mennonite Men of Virginia.

**Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly** will be held July 8-11, 2004, on the campus of Eastern Mennonite University. Note that the event has been extended by one day; on Sunday morning there will be a mass worship service in the University Commons at 10:00 a.m. A major component of this year's Assembly will be Youthfest, which will include worship, workshops, Battle of the Bands, a concert by Daniel's Window, recreation, improv comedy, and more!

**Dr. Tony Campolo** will speak to Mennonites in the Harrisonburg area on Wednesday, December 3, 7:00 p.m., at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church. Campolo will speak on the role of comfortable suburban Christians in a time when radical Christian vision is needed for hurting people and communities in our

country and the world. Plan to attend this event to further develop our Mennonite mission identity.

**Xtreme Impact** will be held January 2-4 at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center. This weekend retreat for youth ages 15 and older introduces youth to concepts and definitions of Christian leadership, offers practical opportunities to work with others as a team, and helps them discover their spiritual gifts. For more information, contact Bob Briscoe at [programs@wrc.info](mailto:programs@wrc.info) or 757-566-2256.

**World Day of Prayer** is March 5. The theme of this year's material distributed by Church Women United is "In faith, women shape the world." To order the leader's guide, contact CWU at 1-800-298-5551 or [cwu@churchwomen.org](mailto:cwu@churchwomen.org). Ask for item #1401; cost is \$3.30 (includes S&H).

**Peter Dula**, of Durham, N.C., is beginning a two-year MCC assignment in Iraq. Dula attends Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, in Chapel Hill, N.C.



### "Funnel cakes" continued from front

was missing. He later learned that the youth had returned home during the frightening event.

Power and phone services were restored after nearly two hours, and only then did we realize that all were safe. Although our booth sustained heavy damage, the good Lord was clearly looking out for his flock, as no one was seriously injured and there were no deaths in this horrid mishap.

We returned to the fairgrounds the following day and removed all of our equipment and supplies. The fair remained closed on Friday as booths were repaired, replaced, and cleaned. The County Fair and our funnel cake operation re-opened on Saturday morning. Our booth was in a new location that seemed to be a special blessing.

A funnel cake booth may seem unusual. Yet it has served to bring many smiles and numerous opportunities to share our faith.



Karina Hange, Pastor Maren Tyedmers Hange, Kim Flash take a break in the relocated funnel cake booth.

