

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
Conference &
Board of Missions

July 2004
Vol. 14, No. 9

VMRC: 50 years of quality care and compassion

It all began in 1921 with one man's vision and his son's determination to carry it through. In May 1921, George Showalter, a farmer from Rockingham County, left \$1,000 in his will to be used for the care of older adults. It was not until thirty years later, in February 1951, that George's son, M.C., made his father's dream a reality. It was in this year that the Virginia Mennonite Home Corporation was formed. A building committee was appointed and a not-for-profit charter was issued by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1952. The carefully planned and inspired vision of George came together in July 1954 as the Virginia Mennonite Home opened its doors and was officially dedicated.

From the Showalters' small, but significant, amount of money, a legacy has grown. Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community is now recognized as a long-term community that provides a broad continuum of the highest quality senior services. Christian love and compassion are the key ingredients to VMRC's recipe for success. What began as a forty-five-bed nursing home constructed on a three-acre site is now a 43-acre neighborhood of 750 residents and 450 employees located north of Harrisonburg.

Over the years, many changes and additions have been made to this beautiful living environment we call VMRC. In 1968, seven cottages, now known as Woodland Cottages, were built next to the nursing home. There are now 91 spacious cottage homes nestled in a peaceful area. A few years later, in 1981, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offered rent assistance, and an attractive 150 bed apartment building named Heritage Haven was constructed. Oak Lea Nursing Home opened its doors in 1987 to provide quality nursing care to 120 residents. Park Place, an independent living setting with 88 apartments and seven available floor plans, received its first residents in 1989. Major VMRC expansion occurred in 1999 with the addition of Crestwood, a new assisted living facility; Park Gables, an exquisite independent living community; and the Wellness Center, an innovative gym complete with a warm water pool.

Although many physical changes have been made to the exterior of our facilities, the core values and mission of VMRC have remained constant. Christian



spirituality, excellent health care, and wellness have been and continue to be of highest priority. We realize that serving older adults and their families is the reason we exist. Through our employees, volunteers, board members, and residents working together as a team, we promote mutual respect and trust. Our motto is "making every moment count," and we do just that by treating everyone with Christian love and kindness.

Being a part of Virginia Mennonite Conference has been such a blessing to VMRC. Through our connection to the Mennonite Church, uniting through our denomination, we have been able to do great things. Also by having the same mission, to serve God and others, He is glorified. Matthew 20:18 reminds us, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Needless to say we are thrilled to be celebrating our fiftieth anniversary. Many exciting events have been planned to encourage everyone, young and old, to come out and help us celebrate. From a multimedia art exhibition to many talented musical acts to delicious, homemade food, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community is going all out to emphasize to Harrisonburg and all surrounding communities how significant this milestone is to us. We hope that you can join in the festivities. If you have any questions you can visit us on the web at www.vmrc.org or call 540-564-3400. God Bless!

VMRC residents Mary Brubaker and Anna Brubaker share a love of quilting.

Take and read

The last books to be disposed of were the Bibles. It was the Monday after the auction sale on Saturday and my father and I had worked all day long sorting through his library. There were multiple versions of the Bible. Some I had given to him as Christmas gifts. There, on the shelf with the solid volumes, was a coverless New Testament—that one I knew I would keep!

It took me back to the sixth grade when we were given New Testaments by the Gideons. I read that thing each evening before I went to sleep. It had a reading schedule that would get you through the New Testament in two years! Eventually, the cover of that NT came off and I sewed/glued a cloth cover on it and kept reading.

Now, I'm not completely sure that this coverless, incomplete (begins with Matthew 3, ends in the middle of Revelation), ragged book is the one I used to read, but it could be. Why did finding it have such an emotional impact on me?

Perhaps I was in need of the continuity that the Bible represents. We were, after all, disposing of my father's books—the resources that gave substance to his thinking, preaching, and teaching in that isolated spot in northern Alberta. I have more books on my shelves than my father had on his. In 20 or 25 years, my daughters will be helping to distribute those as well. Was that day more traumatic

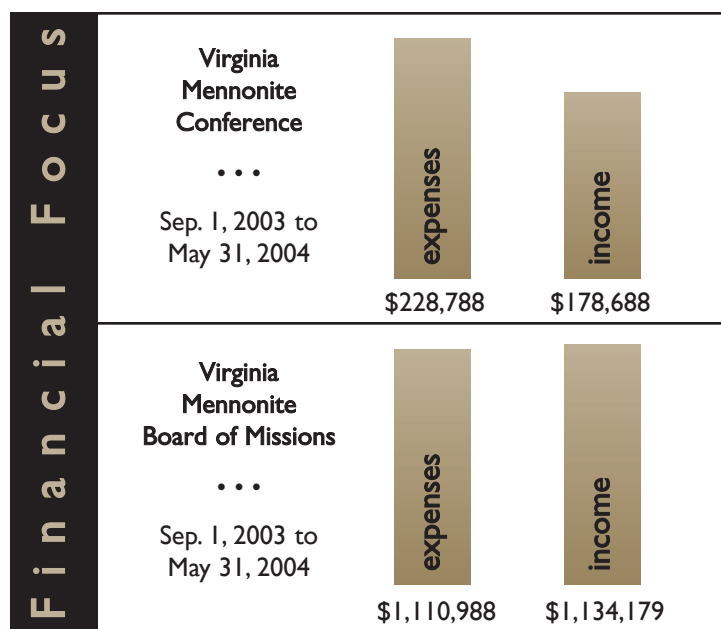


for me than for Dad? I am less ready to face the mortality that is the lot of us all.

But I believe that the Scriptures have meant more than just continuity to me. I learned to interact with the God of the Bible as I read and studied over the years. Through those words and the interaction of the community of faith with them, I have come to a satisfying faith. A faith that recognizes the necessity of constantly re-reading the Scriptures in the light of the transitions of my own life and the vast learnings that test this ancient document on every side.

What to do with the Bibles? Grandpa Joe's Bible went to my eldest brother. Grandma Adeline's went to my eldest sister. I took an additional three of them—versions that I had given Dad. I had him sign his name in each. I then signed my name in each and am giving them to my daughters. I am confident that they too will find a living relationship with the God of the Bible as they read and study in their communities of faith.

Doreen Burkholder



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Celebrating the ministry of Truman and Ruth Brunk

What a joy it was to gather together to honor the legacy of Truman and Ruth Brunk at Virginia Mennonite Conference's second Celebration of Ministry event. As a pastor of Warwick River Mennonite Church and later bishop in Warwick District, Truman gently exerted tremendous leadership in VMC. He was also very involved in missions, helping establish a Mennonite presence in Jamaica and encouraging the work in Italy. Truman and Ruth were instrumental in starting the Peggy Memorial Home, a girls' orphanage in Jamaica named after their daughter Margaret, who died suddenly at age 26.

Eighty-seven people gathered in Newport News on Friday, May 14, for an evening of music, testimony, and remembrance. They enjoyed a delicious buffet and music by the Warwick River Quartet and Lucas Creek Band. Susan Ackerman read her poem "The Ballad of T. H." with its touching refrain, "...and the children call him Brother." Later the band repeated the ballad set to music by David Weaver. An open mic time rounded out the evening as many recounted memories both humorous and poignant.

The celebration continued the next day as 129 gathered in Harrisonburg. Both evenings were moderated by Myron Augsburgberger who had been



Truman and Ruth Brunk's son Truman Brunk, Jr., grandson Steve Brydger, and daughter Evelyn Hertzler gathered with other family and friends for the Celebration of Ministry events in May.

called, ordained, and mentored by Truman. Esther Augsburgberger gave testimony of Ruth's love for painting and her behind the scenes sermon preparations. The crowd enjoyed the music of grandson Steve Brydger and his family as well as a moving rendition of "Via Dolorosa" by Beth Jarrett.

These events were generously sponsored by Bob and Marie Hertzler, Don and Jewell Shenk, and Lloyd and Sarah Weaver. Participants contributed nearly \$12,000 to the work of VMC and VMBM. What a joy it was to obey the admonition of 1 Timothy 5:17: "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor." Well done, thou good and faithful servants—Truman and Ruth Brunk.

• Steve Carpenter
Conference Coordinator

Raleigh Mennonite commissions beloved co-pastors

On Sunday, June 6, Raleigh Mennonite Church held a service of commissioning for co-pastors John and Marilyn Bender and family (*center*), who are leaving Raleigh after 18 years of ministry. The Benders are moving to Pittsburgh, where John will serve as pastor of Pittsburgh Mennonite Church. Joe Bontrager will serve as interim pastor at Raleigh Mennonite while he continues working for VMBM on a half-time basis.



Two Virginian Mennonites run for public office

It isn't often that a Mennonite gets elected to public office, but Bill Greene, pastor of Crossroads Mennonite Church for the past six years, did just that. He was elected to the Timberville, Va., Town Council in May 2004. Linda Alger, chair of the Church Leadership Team, couldn't vote for Bill because she lives outside the city limits, but she and the congregation are proud of him nonetheless. "We haven't processed it all yet, but we're excited for him and glad a minister will represent the people of Timberville," she said.

Crossroads, a Virginia Mennonite Conference Church, sits in an apple orchard at the intersection of two country roads near the town of Timberville (population 1,800), several miles north of Harrisonburg. Pastor Bill Greene's presence has made an impact on this rural community. Several years ago, when a group of teenagers faced charges for vandalizing a building in town, Bill worked with the Chief of Police and others to work toward reconciliation using principles of restorative justice. The process was a success. Charges against the boys were reduced from felonies to misdemeanors. They worked hard to repair, paint, and clean up the damaged building.

More recently Pastor Greene made an appeal to the Town Council as a citizen and property owner. The construction of an apartment building on the hill behind his house dramatically altered the way rain water drained, causing problems for him and his neighbors. Along with his neighbor, he made a presentation to the Town Council, appealing for their assistance. Drawing on 25 years of engineering experience, Bill's presentation was well prepared and received.

Not long after his appearance before the Town Council, Timberville's mayor called and asked Pastor Greene to consider serving on Town Council. Before making a decision, Bill sought the council of his wife, Cindy, his overseer, Michael Shenk, Sr., and his congregation. They were all supportive of his desire to serve on Town Council.

A week before the election Cindy joked, "He only needs to come in third to get a place on the Town Council. There are four people running for three seats." Despite the favorable odds, Bill campaigned hard by placing green lawn signs and canvassing the entire town door-to-door. His diligence paid off when he received more votes than any of the other candidates.

Eighteen-year-old Billy Hoffman, a member of Stephens City Mennonite Church, wasn't as successful in his bid to become mayor of Middletown, Va. a town of 600 located 5 miles south of Stephens City. A high school senior, Billy took a government class which sparked his interest in politics. He was the first to enter the town's mayoral race, but two former mayors quickly followed suit. Although he received only 8 of the 200 votes cast, he gathered a lot of media attention from the two local newspapers and a TV station. He was even interviewed by WTOP, a news radio station in Washington, D.C.

Aldine Musser, co-pastor of Stephens City Mennonite Church, said, "We're excited about Billy stepping out, taking a risk and trying to serve his community in this way. We thought he was too young to deal with the complicated issues the town is facing, but what better way to learn about the governmental process?" Billy learned a lot and even received a thank you note from State Senator J. Russell Potts, Jr., who represents District 27.

Although many older Mennonites are not registered to vote, others see public office as a way to live out their faith and serve. Congratulations, Bill, and keep trying, Billy!

• Steve Carpenter
Conference Coordinator



Billy Hoffman

Seven baptized at Hickory Mennonite

Seven adults from Hickory (N.C.) Mennonite Church were baptized on May 23. Five of these are Hmong believers who have been mentored by Hmong church planter Chaiya Hadtasunsern. These baptisms took place at the indoor pool on the campus of Lenoir-Rhyne College, where Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly was held four years ago.



Pastor Chaiya Hadtasunsern, la Vang, Pastor Jim Roth

Aikens serve as delegates from Jamaica

This year at Virginia Mennonite Conference Assembly, we welcome Liston, Juline, and Avia Aiken as delegates from Jamaica Mennonite Conference. The ongoing fraternal relationship between JMC and VMC is a blessing to both church bodies.

Liston Aiken has been the pastor of Good Tidings Mennonite Church since 1999. Prior to becoming the pastor there, Liston served as JMC Youth Director, as speaker on the Way to Life radio program, and as pastor at Temple Hall, Waterloo, and Alpine Mennonite churches. He graduated from Jamaica Theological Seminary as a Bible and Guidance Counselor, and currently serves as vice principal in a high school.

Juline and Liston were married in 1988. Both were baptized in the Good Tidings Church. Juline serves as praise and worship leader, Sunday school administrator, and Sunday school teacher in that



congregation. She is an accounts supervisor with Air Jamaica, the national airline.

Their daughter Avia is 8 years old, loves people, and is musically gifted.

You will enjoy learning to know this family at Conference assembly!



Martins serving in Trinidad this summer

Lee, Peg, Maria and Curtis Martin are living in Chaguanas, Trinidad, for 10 weeks this summer. Lee is on sabbatical leave from his pastorate at Mt. Clinton Mennonite Church; while in Trinidad, the family will relate to the Mennonite Church of Chaguanas. A primary focus will be for Lee to mentor a young man who has been identified as a potential pastor. Peg will teach some new songs to the believers in the community. Together they will be involved in the life of the congregation in any way that opens to them.

The opportunity to experience life in another country and the worldwide church is welcomed by Lee and Peg and will be mutually beneficial for all. Please pray for the Martins and for the Mennonite Church of Chaguanas, pastored by Ganesh Kalloo.

Hymn Sing for Peace

May 22, 2004 • Washington, D.C.



Mt. Vernon celebrates 50 years of ministry

Hubert and Mildred Pellman were presented a plaque with the words, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news...” (Isaiah 52:7), to recognize their 18 years as the founding leadership couple of Mt. Vernon Mennonite Church at Grottoes, Va., during Mt. Vernon’s 50th Anniversary, May 15-16.

Excitement filled the air with 200 guests joining 100 of Mt. Vernon’s current attenders for the two-day event. Guests came from 10 states, with Minnesota being the most distant.

After an hour or more of “family time,” a pork-barbeque meal was served on Saturday evening, followed by a two-hour program. The evening included singing of old favorites, a skit of the founding of the church, sharing of memories, and a video of 50 years of history. The skit detailed how Harold Eshleman, then pastor of Chicago Avenue Mennonite Church (now Harrisonburg Mennonite), discovered a vacated church building after visiting Carrie Morris during a healing service. Mrs. Morris lived next door to the vacated church building, which later became Mt. Vernon Mennonite.

Sunday service was packed with singing, a message by Tim Martin who served as associate pastor in the early ‘80s, and a time to share more memories. A carry-in meal, plus a repeat of the



Hubert and Mildred Pellman, first leadership couple at Mt. Vernon, receive a plaque of Isaiah 52:7 from current pastors Al and Rose Huyard, recognizing the Pellman’s “compassionate shepherding of the Mt. Vernon family for 18 years.”

skit and video, concluded the planned events. More “family time” lasted well into the afternoon.

Pastors and assistants serving through the years were Hubert Pellman, Frank Nice, John Miller, G. Irvin Lehman, Eugene Souder, Tim Martin, Jason Yoder, Milford Lyndaker, John Keim, Darrel and Sherill Hostetter, Millard Osborne, and now Al and Rose Huyard.

Copies of the history of Mt. Vernon Mennonite Church are available by contacting Eugene Souder at 540-249-4368 or eksouder@aol.com.

• Eugene Souder
Mt. Vernon Mennonite Church

Congregational Resource Center

The scenes and impact of war have been with us for generations and are still vivid today. How do we teach and respond in a Christian and Anabaptist way? Look into these resources from the Congregational Resource Center.

For Children:

- Make peace cranes and share stories of Hiroshima
- **Hiroshima: A Tragedy Never to Be Repeated** by Masamoto Nasu
- **One Thousand Paper Cranes: The Story of Sadako & the Children’s Peace Statue**
- **The Sun and the Rain:** An Aesop Fable retold by Comelia Lehn
- **How to Teach Peace to Children** by Anne Meyer Byler
- **A Manual on Nonviolence and Children** (includes cooperative games for children and adults)
- **Creating Circles of Peace: Alternatives to Violence** (Church kit from Families Against Violence Advocacy Network)

For Youth & Adults:

- **Generation Why? Does God Fight? Violence in the Bible** by David Radcliff
- **God’s Healing Strategy** by Ted Grimsrud
- **The Path is Made by Walking** (20 minute MCC video from El Salvador)

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

Visit our website at www.emu.edu/mrc to browse our catalog.

July 2004 Prayer Calendar

Sunday

"God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them."

Hebrews 6:10 (NIV)

Monday

July marks the wedding anniversary of Michael and Louise Blosser; Louise sponsors this month's prayer calendar in loving memory of him. Their commitment to sharing God's Word through missions and service is a continued blessing.

Tuesday

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

Wednesday

1 Pray for Howard Miller, newly appointed overseer in Southern District, as the district gathers together today for fellowship, prayer, and discussion of church business.

Thursday

2 Remember Norma Teles as she leads the second of two weeks of Bible camp for children in Lezhe, Albania. Pray also for her Albanian helpers as they work together in this important ministry.

Friday

9 Pray for the delegates who have gathered from 11 VMC districts and 67 churches for Conference Assembly. Pray that this might be a time of encouragement which strengthens our ministry together.

Saturday

3 Steve Dintaman is the Bible teacher at the annual youth and adult Bible conference organized by the churches in Lezhe, Albania. Pray for wisdom as he teaches God's Word for the strengthening of the Albanian believers.

4 Pray for Pastor Liston and Juline Aiken and daughter Avia, fraternal delegates to Virginia Conference Assembly from Jamaica. In addition to attending Assembly, they will be involved in ministry in our congregations.

5 Pray that the "Settimana Felice," a Bible and music day camp held at Centro Koinonia in Bari, Italy, this week, will be an unforgettable experience for the children and will have a spiritual impact on their lives.

6 A team of six persons from the churches in Sicily will be assisting in the "Settimana Felice" at Bari. Pray that they will serve joyfully and bring blessing through the testimony of their lives.

7 Pray for the youth who will gather in Harrisonburg tomorrow for Youth Fest in conjunction with VMC's Assembly. Pray that they may be challenged in their faith and experience the joy of growing in Christ.

8 Pray for the children who will be present at VMC Assembly, as well as the Children's Program Director Sarah Beachy and the other leaders. Pray that they may have wisdom and grace as they nurture the children.

9 Pray for the delegates who have gathered from 11 VMC districts and 67 churches for Conference Assembly. Pray that this might be a time of encouragement which strengthens our ministry together.

10 Pray for John Powell of Menn. Mission Network as he brings the morning message tomorrow at the closing worship session of VMC's Assembly. Pray that we might be sent forth with renewed energy for missions.

11 The PIM team assisting with Bible school in Jamaica includes Rich and Twila Lehman and family from Oregon. Pray for them as they teach many children and adults more about God's love for them and the world.

12 Jason and Donna Martin, VMBM missionaries in Bari, Italy, are on home leave in Canada this summer. They invite your prayers as they do a lot of traveling to meet old friends and make new acquaintances.

13 Robert and Lois Wenger are taking a sabbatical from Riverside Mennonite Church in June, July, and August. Pray that they are being refreshed as they work at Highland Retreat, and will be ready to return September 1.

14 Pray for Damion Hines, a student at Jamaica Theological Seminary, as he works with congregations during the summer. Thank God for his continued commitment and his desire to follow the call of God to serve the church.

15 Pray for Steve Campbell and the six youth on the Albania YES team as they say goodbye in mid-July. May their influence and example live on in the hearts of their host families and churches where they served during this past year.

16 Pray for Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community as they celebrate their 50th anniversary this month. Pray that CEO Ron Yoder might have wisdom as he leads this ministry to the elderly in our community.

17 Ben Risser began his role as pastor of Ridgeway Mennonite Church on July 1. Pray for Ben and his wife Kathy as they give leadership to this growing congregation in Harrisonburg.

18 Pray for Roy Good, interim pastor at Gospel Hill Menn. Church, and for elders Wilma Wilkins and Roger Hertzler, who assist in visitation and counseling. Pray also for elder Bassil Lam, who is experiencing health problems.

19 Pray for the success of the joint VMC and VMBM phonathon this week. Callers will be making many calls to solicit prayer, personnel, and financial support. Ask that the Holy Spirit will prompt persons to give generously.

20 Pray for Petr and Olga Mazur who give pastoral leadership to the Lindale Ukrainian congregation near Harrisonburg. They are also involved in supporting mission work in their homeland.

21 VMBM is coordinating plans for planting a church in Charlotte, N.C., and is working to identify church planters and congregations that will support them. Pray that God will provide the persons and resources.

22 Thank God for Jesse Bergey's two years of service at Maranatha School for the Deaf in Jamaica. Jesse returned home to Chesapeake, Va., this month. Pray that God will bless and guide him as he makes plans for the future.

23 Pray for the Steve Landis family as they leave today for Academia Menomita Betania in Puerto Rico. They are serving in short-term missions with Partners in Mission.

24 The VMC Missional Church Team and Menn. Mission Network are developing a congregational resource on missional identity. Pray that leaders will receive new insights on being an instrument of God's kingdom in a broken world.

25 Pray for pastor Dean Williams and the Mathias Mennonite Church as they engage in spiritual warfare over the presence of a strip club, Paradise City, in their neighborhood.

26 This month a group of Hmong immigrants is expected to arrive in Hickory, N.C. Pray for Pastor Chaiya and Aranya Hadtasunserm as they lead the Hmong outreach and develop relationships with the new immigrants.

27 Pray for Paul and June Kropf as they spend several months on "home leave" from their missionary assignment in Albania and for those who fill in for them in their absence.

28 Pray for Dick and Wanda Good as they fill in at Riverside Mennonite Church and Harman Mtn. Farm Campground for Robert and Lois Wenger who are taking a sabbatical this summer.

29 NewBridges Immigrant Resource Center provides assistance to immigrants in the Harrisonburg area. Pray for director Susannah Gerber Lepley, who has received training to provide paralegal assistance.

30 Omar Beiler does many physical exams for students in the Santa Cruz Mountain region during July and August. Pray that the children and their parents will see Jesus the Great Physician demonstrated in Omar's life.

31 Pray for the new believers, including five Hmong, who were baptized at Hickory Mennonite Church in May. Pray for their growth as disciples of Jesus and for the leaders who are mentoring them.

Announcements

Maranatha School for the Deaf invites two individuals to assist with teaching computer skills, cooking, small-scale farming, woodworking, and sewing for the 2004-2005 school year. Qualifications include being a vibrant Christian, a willingness to learn sign language, a love for young people, and flexibility for cross-cultural living. If you could serve in this way, contact Beth Brunk at beth.brunk@vmbm.org or 540-434-9727.

Fierce Goodbye: Living in the Shadow of Suicide will air on the Hallmark Channel, Sunday, August 22, 12 noon ET with folksinger Judy Collins as host. Mennonite Media is producing the 44-minute program in cooperation with Faith & Values Media. The documentary shares stories of families and friends dealing

with the aftermath of suicide as they face difficult, unanswerable questions and also explore biblical/theological understandings about suicide. Kay Redfield Jamison, a professor of psychiatry and other experts will also give insights. Participants from the Virginia area (or formerly) include Sheri Smucker, Jonas and Barbara

Borntrager, Ann Yoder, Dr. Fred and Gail Fox, Father John Grace, and Roger Steffy. For more information, visit www.fiercgoodbye.com.



Estate Planning Seminar

(For Women Only)

**“Basic Estate Planning:
The Essential Elements”**

Presenters:

**Lynn Suter, Attorney, Keeler Obenshain
Geraldine Rush, CPA, PBGH**

Tuesday, September 21

10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

(repeat program)

7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community
Detweiler Auditorium

Sponsored by MMA Trust and Mennonite
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Information: Joseph L. Lapp, JD
joseph.lapp@mmapartners.org
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Spirit led!

Virginia Mennonite
Conference Assembly

July 8-11, 2004

*on the campus of
Eastern Mennonite University*

*Join us for Bible study and
worship services*

Thurs.
7 p.m.



Loren Swartzendruber
President of Eastern
Mennonite University

Fri.
7 p.m.



Natalie Francisco
Pastor at Calvary Community
Church, Hampton, Va.

Sat.
7 p.m.



Owen Burkholder
Conference Minister,
Virginia Mennonite Conf.

Sun.
10 a.m.



John Powell
Mennonite Mission Network

Fri. &
Sat.
11 a.m.



Duane Yoder
Pastor at Lindale Mennonite
Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

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