

Connections

Virginia Mennonite
Conference &
Board of Missions

May 2004
Vol. 14, No. 7

Roth speaks to youth about peace

“Love is stronger than fear, and life is more powerful than death,” proclaimed John Roth, renowned Goshen College professor and featured speaker for the day. It was Saturday, March 13, and more than 100 youth and their sponsors from across Virginia Mennonite Conference had gathered on the campus of EMU at an assembly called “Peaceful Rebellion.”

This was an opportunity for youth groups and their sponsors to spend time learning about how God may be calling us to something besides the usual option of taking vengeance into our own hands. The goal of the day was to give everyone a chance to learn more about peace theology. In addition to worshipping together and hearing John Roth’s address, everyone had the chance to participate in various workshops throughout the afternoon. Then we gathered together one last time to hear about what everyone had learned and to ask John Roth our questions that had surfaced during the day.

The gathering, however, was not only about listening to speakers all day. The schedule also included a chance for youth to learn more about EMU. The Admissions Office sponsored a scavenger hunt that allowed the youth to get to know one another and the campus a bit better and to have some fun competition at the same time. To say the least, those youth now know that the school is built on a hill.

In the evening everyone had a chance to spend some time in the gym and game room, and the climbing wall was open for those who wanted an extra challenge. This was a great time to get rid of all the energy that had been cooped up all day. The evening did not end here, however; everyone headed out for two hours of “Cosmic Bowling” to round out the full day of activities.

This conference was like none other. Teens were able to learn about being rebellious in a good way, and they were given the chance to socialize and participate in many fun activities as well. It was truly a great honor to be part of a day where groups of youth from different churches could come together and learn more about such a significant issue. More than anything, I was encouraged to see the great interest of



In February, youth gathered to hear John Roth teach about peace, participate in workshops, and enjoy getting to know other Mennonite youth.

the youth who participated in all the activities. Many who attended were thankful to be given an opportunity to ask questions about some of the things they were struggling to understand. At the same time, others had their eyes opened as they were presented with a new alternative on how to deal with conflict.

If nothing else, this so-called “rebellion” was a great chance for conference youth to start dialoguing about what their role is in the violent world that we live in. This gathering was a chance for everyone to come together as members of a community that is seeking to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Roth was able to bring the point home by making his message personal to each of the youth. He encouraged everyone to seek to fight for peace as they go back to their homes and communities and to seek to live out the radical lifestyle that God calls us to. Learning how to love our enemies cannot be done in a day, but I do believe that many of our youth and adults now truly understand that “love is stronger than fear, and life is more powerful than death.”

• Stephen Gibbs, Jr.
Warwick River Mennonite Church

Maybe I'd have gone to Rome...

What would you have done on the first day of your resurrection if you had been Jesus?

We've been invited deeply into the passion—now let's imagine the resurrection.

Eyes opening, no pain, momentary darkness, warm light, complete peace, cradled by the affirming love of God's palpable presence, relieved crying. Walking out into the garden, observing the Roman soldiers paralyzed, chuckling. Remembering the jeering crowds, the agony of the cross, sighing, imagining a righted world. Victorious over death, the final power—why not pay a visit to the other powers? What would happen if I were to go visit Pilate? Herod? Caiaphas? Why not Caesar himself? Remembering the disciples, *the disciples*—oh my, they're likely in a huge stew...

With the options of the universe before him, on that first day Jesus chose to relate to several women (sending them to prepare the other disciples), Peter, two on the road to Emmaus, and the gathered disciples. And his first word to them was "Peace." No more fear.

In a fundamental way, Jesus is simply doing what he began following his baptism. What does it mean that there is continuity between the pre-passion Jesus and the post-resurrection Jesus?

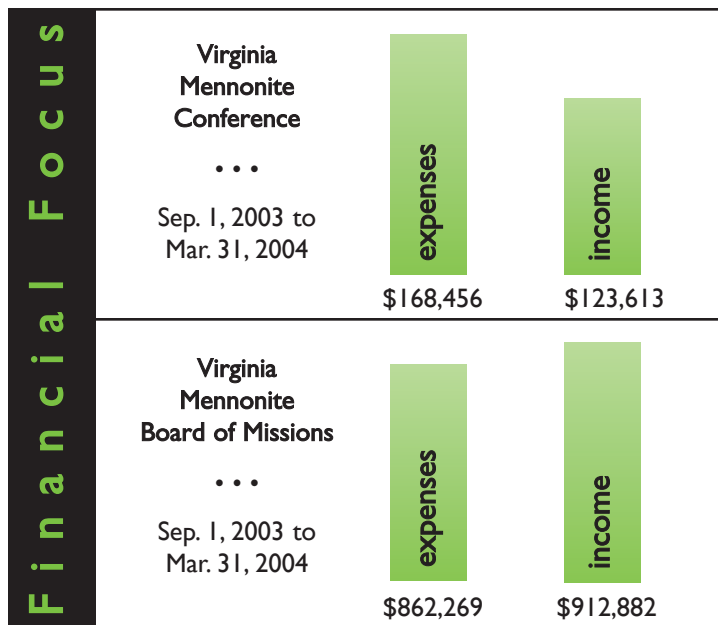


Owen Burkholder
Conference Minister

It means that the life of Jesus demonstrates the way of the kingdom of God as clearly as the resurrection of Jesus. It is what God wanted from Jesus. It is what God has wanted from the beginning. It is what God wants from us.

Jesus' first priority was and is those who need him and those who have come to trust him. The work of God will be done through them in the world.

Here, my friends, is the way to life as it was meant to be. Our congregations are gatherings of the most important people in the world. We have the most significant assignment in the world. May we be pleased to demonstrate the presence of Jesus in all of our routine interactions. May we be challenged to direct those routines toward inviting others around us to the life that is offered by Jesus.



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Get into the flow in Isle of Wight County

Calvary Community Church West (CCCW) is a family-oriented, servant-led, evangelical church birthed from its mother church, Calvary Community Church, in Hampton, Va. On December 31, 2003, Pastors Steven and Karla Francisco and a core group of five families embarked on a mission to build the Kingdom of God in Isle of Wight County. They quickly began working to transform an antique shop into a beautiful sanctuary in only three and half days. Everyone, from adults to children, worked diligently to complete the renovation of the new building in time for their first service on January 4.

CCCW is a place of refuge for broken people to come in contact with a real God, who provides genuine answers to an imperfect society from His Word. It is a place where love, compassion, and the presence of God is felt the moment you step through the door. People who come to Calvary will find wholeness, acceptance, and forgiveness in God's family.

Although the church is new, it operates as though it has been established for years. As experienced leaders, Pastors Steven and Karla have established core values, which are decoratively displayed on the walls of the sanctuary. The church's vision statement, a statement of faith, and a faith article for the ministry have also been established and are available on the church's website. The leaders believe that it is very essential for people to know what CCCW stands for. The core team has been trained and mentored to assist in planting the church and to facilitate community groups.

Pastors Steven and Karla are not interested in growing members for the sake of size. Their calling is to reap the harvest of lost souls in the Western Hampton Roads area. The vision for the church is to "enlarge our coast" (community) by Redeeming the Lost, Discipling the Redeemed, Empowering the Discipled, and Reproducing the Empowered. God has called us to be Kingdom builders, and this is the way we will build His Kingdom."

"Generations will be impacted by the work that God will do through us and those who will help to carry this vision," added Pastor Karla. "People are hungry for the Bread of Life, literally thirsting for the presence of God. When people hear that there is bread in the house, meaning God's presence, they will come in like waves on the seashore."

CCCW is by no means orthodox or ritualistic in the way it celebrates Jesus. Those who attend



might say that "traditional" does not describe this ministry. CCCW is using its latest technological advancements, knowledge, and expertise to launch a unique teaching ministry, which delivers simplistic, yet revelation-filled messages. Drama, reader's theater, praise step and dancing, blended music, special videos, PowerPoint presentations, monologues, poetry, symbolic props, and drum renditions are used to reach people of all ages and to draw them closer to God—all without compromising the Gospel.

On February 29, CCCW held its first celebration of Holy Communion. The entire service was devoted to Communion, songs of worship, and prayer for each family in the church. Families came individually to the pastors with prayer requests as they participated in Communion. As the pastors prayed for them, the congregation prayed for the families as well. People lifted their hands, worshipped God, and prayed continuously throughout the service. Imagine the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, and the numerous prayers that were lifted up to Him throughout the church!

Another unique aspect of the ministry is its Wednesday night "Get Into The Flow" community group session. Each week members gather in a small group to discuss the previous Sunday message using a detailed outline. It is an opportunity to elaborate on the message, to share revelation, and to apply kingdom principles to daily living. The community group meeting has been extremely effective; it is wonderful for the members to connect intimately with each other in a more relaxed environment outside the Sunday gathering. The community group session is currently held at the church, but soon it will branch off into smaller groups in the homes of members.

God is doing incredible things, but the best is yet to come. For more information about CCCW, visit the church's website at www.cccwest.org. Come on, get into the flow, and celebrate Jesus!

• Rebecca Coursey
Calvary Community Church West

Calvary Community Church West, the newest church to be planted by its mother church in Hampton, began Sunday worship services in January.

Signing the new membership book at Chapel Hill

Twenty-two persons signed their names in the new membership book of the Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship (CHMF) to conclude the Membership Sunday worship service on February 8. The Fellowship has no pastor; the service was developed by those who joined. During the signing of the membership book the congregation sang "Praise God from whom" in the beloved old "606" setting.

New members were asked to respond to four questions: "Do you accept Jesus Christ as the true Son of God, who died for our sins?" "Are you baptized?" "Will you use 'The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective' as your guide for Biblical faith and Christian discipleship?" "Will you participate in the life of this community?"

Official greetings were brought by John Bender for Virginia Mennonite Conference, Paul Godshall for the Eastern Carolina District, and Raymond Martin, the congregation's overseer. Marilyn Bender offered a blessing for the congregation and Al Reberg offered a prayer. The Benders are co-pastors of Raleigh Mennonite Church, and Reberg is its minister for community development. CHMF developed out of a small group in the Raleigh



The members and regular attenders at Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship gather for worship on Sunday evenings.

Church. Godshall pastors the Durham Church and is also Urban Ministry Director of the Eastern Carolina District.

Nearly 70 people attended the service, with many coming from other congregations in the Eastern Carolina District: Durham Mennonite Church, Greensboro Mennonite Fellowship, and Raleigh Mennonite Church. Other friends and guests included the youth group of the host congregation, the Friends Meeting of Chapel Hill. CHMF meets on Sunday evenings in the Friends Meetinghouse next to the campus of the University of North Carolina.

• Tom Lehman
Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship

HIGHLAND RETREAT

CAMP SCHEDULE 2004

Resident Camps

Date	Camp Name	Ages
June 24-25	Camp Bear Paw	6-8
June 27-July 2	Camp Cottontail	8-10
July 4-9	Camp Woodchuck	9-11
July 11-16	Camp Crawfish	9-11
July 18-23	Camp Coyote	11-13
July 25-30	Teen Adventure Camp	14 & up

Wilderness Camps

Date	Camp Name	Ages
June 27-July 2	Wilderness Explorers	11-13
July 4-9	Wilderness Mountaineers	12-13
July 11-21	Wilderness Pioneers	13-15

Day Camps

Date	Camp Name	Ages
June 28-July 2	Camp Acorn	6-8
July 5-9	Camp Beechnut	8-10
July 12-16	Camp Chestnut	9-11

Soccer Camps

Date	Camp Name	Ages
August 1-6	Girls Soccer Camp	Grade 7-12
August 8-13	Guys Soccer Camp	Grade 7-12

Trip Camp

Date	Camp Name	Ages
August 1-6	WV Mountain Adventure	14-17

For more information, call 540-852-3226 or visit www.highlandretreat.org.

Prayers for Osama?

When it comes to explaining our peace position, we Mennonites usually refer at some point to that famous verse, "Love your enemies." This verse is easy for us to quote, but is there really any way that we Christians can show love to a national enemy that we don't personally encounter? Can we really show love to someone like Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaida, a group who hates us as a people and might wish us all dead?

Christ must have foreseen that quandary, as he follows up that verse with a statement even more astounding: "...and pray for those who would persecute you." It is interesting that this is the first place in the New Testament where Jesus mentions prayer. He could have just as easily said, "Pray for the troops" or "Pray for the families of the victims." Surely he would feel that everyone deserves our prayers, but Christ knew that to pray for our worst enemies is not at all human nature. In fact, it is the opposite of what our society around us teaches.

Persecutors are the most difficult enemies to love. We can demonstrate the love of God by praying for them. Some psychologists say that persecutors are often just insecure people in need of God's love to melt their tough exteriors. We do believe that people can change when we pray for them. According to Acts, Saul was part of the crowd giving approval to Stephen's death, when Stephen prayed, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." This early terrorist of the Christians later became a vibrant model evangelist for Christ.

For our own well-being, the surest way of killing the bitterness within us is to pray for the persons we are tempted to hate. This prayer changes us as well.

Hymn Sing for Peace

6th Annual • May 22, 2004 • 2:00-3:30 p.m.



U.S. Capitol Building
Reflecting Pool steps,
Washington, D.C.

Acapella concerts at 1:00
• *Sons of the Day* • *Shekinah*

*Called to be peacemakers,
sometimes we are overcome by
futility as violence continues
in the world. Join your voice as
we sing of our love to God and
neighbor in a simple witness
to Jesus' transforming power.*

How can we keep from singing?

Sponsored by First Menn. Church of Richmond, Va., Springdale Menn. Church, Waynesboro, Va., and the Virginia Mennonite Conference Peace Committee. For more information call (804) 359-1308, e-mail leshorning@aol.com or go to <http://peace.mennolink.org/hymnsing>.

Jesus set the example for us by praying for those who were crucifying Him. "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:24). What if all of the Mennonite churches began praying for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida? Would our hearts be changed? Could the terrorists be changed? What if we asked other denominations to join us in this prayer? What if we asked President Bush to join us in this prayer for Osama bin Laden? Could these prayers lead to more peace in our world? When that is what our savior, the Prince of Peace, calls us to do, I have to believe, yes! This is one way we all can show love to our enemies and spread Christ's peace.

• David Powell
VMC Peace Coordinator

Loren Swartzendruber inaugurated at EMU



Owen Burkholder, conference minister of Virginia Mennonite Conference, offers a dedicatory prayer for Loren and Pat Swartzendruber and their family at the close of the inaugural ceremony on March 27. Loren took office as the eighth president of Eastern Mennonite University on January 1, 2004.

A good revival in Highland Cluster

“There’s nothing like a good revival, good music, good preaching, good fellowship, and good food!”

These were the opening words that rang true during the revival meetings of the Highland Cluster of Northern District. It had almost been more years than can be remembered since the last area-wide revival of the Mennonite churches in western Rockingham County, Va., and eastern Hardy County, W.V. Held each evening from February 27-29, the meetings included congregational singing, a devotional, special music, a children’s story, an inspirational sermon by one of the cluster’s pastors, and good fellowship and food provided by the host church.

The first meeting was held at Mathias (W.V.) Mennonite on Friday evening. “Crossroads Plus One” led the congregational singing and provided special music. Bill Greene, pastor of Crossroads in Timberville, Va., used Leviticus 6:12-13 to challenge all to take inventory and rekindle each one’s personal altar fire.

Saturday evening’s service was held in Criders, Va., at Valley View Mennonite Church. The Foltz Family Singers from “across the mountain,” near Woodland Mennonite Church, provided fine a cappella singing of favorite hymns and gospel songs. Don Bare, pastor of Hebron Mennonite in Fulks Run, Va., preached from Matthew 8 and 17 about two times that Jesus was amazed—first at belief, then at unbelief. All in attendance were challenged to consider what amazes us today. Are we amazed with what God has done in our lives and communities, or are we amazed at more secular accomplishments?

The final meeting was held in Fulks Run, Va., at a full Hebron Mennonite Church. The Walnut Ridge Boys, a popular bluegrass gospel group, inspired everyone with their music ranging from old-time favorites to original compositions. Dean Williams, pastor of Mathias Mennonite, preached from Mark 5, challenging all to a personal revival from which lasting community revivals begin.

Overseer Michael Shenk kept the children coming back each night with “Captain Jack” stories from his childhood. Would little Michael and Mabel be safe in the orchard as they heard footsteps and saw Captain Jack swaying down the road? How would Captain Jack be released from the shock of a newly discovered electric fence? How did Captain



Overseer Michael Shenk told “Captain Jack” stories to the children each evening at the Highland Cluster Revival Meetings.

Jack receive Jesus as Savior? After each evening’s story, every child received a special gift.

“Let’s do this again next year.” “We need more meetings like this.” “I’m pumped up.” “What a blessing!” These were but a few of the comments heard throughout the meetings as the pastors and Overseer Michael were encouraged to plan a series of revival “meetings in the mountains” next year.

Congregational Resource Center

Honor your mother and your father - and your children. All of us need help with our cross-generational relationships. The Congregational Resource Center offers the following, plus more:

- **The Shelter of Each Other: Rebuilding our Families** by Mary Pipher
- **Faithful parents, Faithful Kids: a strategy for passing the baton of faith** by Greg Johnson & Mike Yorkey
- **Different Children Different Needs: The Art of Adjustable Parenting** by Charles F. Boyd
- **Getting Home Before Dark: Stories of Wisdom for all Ages** by Peter J. Dyck
- **Whisper a Prayer for Moms**
- **Embracing Midlife: Congregations as Support Systems** by Lynne M. Baab

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 the Center online at www.emu.edu/mcrc to browse the catalog.

May 2004 Prayer Calendar

Sunday

2 Mennonite Mission Network staff John Powell led the second of four training events for mission church facilitators this past weekend. This training equips facilitators to introduce the missional change process to their districts.

9 Aldine Musser is being licensed today to serve as co-pastor with her husband Jim at Stephens City Mennonite Church. Pray that God would bless Aldine, Jim, and the Stephens City congregation.

16 Pray for vision and creativity for missionaries in Albania and Italy as they plan for important summer activities designed to reach new persons with the Gospel and provide for the needs of emerging churches.

23 In your prayer time today, listen for what God may want to do in your sphere of influence. Be obedient if something emerges for you.

30 On this Memorial Day weekend, thank God for the freedom to worship and serve Him. Pray for those who are oppressed and that we may be instruments for them to find freedom and hope by sharing Christ's love.

Monday

3 The Virginia Mennonite Conference Chaplains Cluster meets today. Thank God for the service of retiring overseer Wayne North and pray for leading for a new overseer.

10 Pray for the Partners in Mission work group in the Middle East. After spending last week in Nazareth, they are in Bethlehem this week. Pray for safety as they continue their work and as they return home next Monday.

17 Richard Keeler finishes the academic year at West Indies Theological College soon. Pray for him as he grades papers and prepares the final test. Also pray that his influence will continue to bless and guide students during the summer.

24 A peanut butter sandwich given "in the name of Christ" is a witness of Christ's love. Danny and Shirley Trobaugh share both of these with the children in the Ridge community in Jamaica.

31 Remember the many Christian Albanian youth who have left Albania for work and study and are now scattered in Europe or the US. Pray that they would find meaningful fellowship in churches where they are located.

Tuesday

4 Pray for Liston and Juline Aiken as they lead the 200-member Good Tidings Mennonite Church of Kingston, Jamaica. Both have full-time jobs in addition—Liston as assistant principal of a school and Juline at Air Jamaica.

11 Pray for Central District Overseers Richard Bowman and Paul Kratz along with Chair Floyd Blosser as the pastors of Central District gather for fellowship, business and encouragement on Thursday.

18 This week Willard Eberly is teaching a course on 2 Corinthians in the discipleship school in Sicily, Italy. Pray especially for those in leadership roles who will be attending these training sessions.

25 Thank God for three Trinidadian students—Ramesh Jaimani, Reena Mohammed, and Lalman Sookharry—who are doing well in their studies at West Indies Theological College. Pray that others will join them in the new school year.

Jo Martin and the family of Richard Martin sponsor this month's prayer calendar in memory of Richard, whose birthday was May 15. His interest and support of missions continues to "make light in the darkness."

Wednesday

5 Pray for the Regional Leaders meeting in Lancaster tomorrow as they prepare a proposal to invite Menn. World Conference to PA in 2009. Pray for wisdom in choosing the right place for this important gathering.

12 The Youth Ministry Council is meeting in Charlotte this weekend. Pray for patience, honesty and wisdom as they make some tough decisions regarding the future of youth ministry in both the US and Canada.

19 The women's Bible studies in Trinidad have their final meetings in May before the summer. Thank God for Margaret Keeler's guidance of these studies. Ask God to encourage the women who have benefited from these studies.

26 As the value of the dollar has steadily declined in relation to the euro during the last two years, so has the missionaries' support dwindled to one-third less. Pray for clear guidance for VMBM in dealing with this financial crisis.

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.

Thursday

6 The Faith and Life Commission meets today and tomorrow. Thank God for the service of our bishops and overseers and invite blessings on their gathered work.

13 Pray for the VMBM board as they gather in Harrisonburg this weekend for their quarterly board meeting. Pray for Chair Marvin Slabaugh and the other board members as they consider the proposed budget for the next fiscal year.

20 Pray for Harrisonburg District Overseer Truman Brunk and co-chairs Brian Boettger and Kathy Hochstedler as they lead the district pastors and delegates in prayer, fellowship and business (including health, insurance issues).

27 Paul and Esther Kniss find joy and blessing in meeting with Trinidad believers. Pray that their interaction will lead to deeper understanding of God's Word and reaching out to others with the Gospel.

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
John 8:12 (NIV)

Friday

7 Conference Council will gather this weekend to pray, report, fellowship and learn together. Phil Bergey, representing MC USA, will report on First Fruits Funding. Pray for wisdom and grace in the decisions made there.

14 Pray for those gathering in Newport News this evening and in Harrisonburg tomorrow evening to honor the ministry and legacy of bishop Truman and Ruth Brunk in a Celebration of Ministry banquet.

21 Philip Rhodes leads a Bible study each Friday evening with five deaf students who have accepted Christ. Pray for him and for JB, Tanya, Kevon, Terrence, and Tonya as they grow in understanding of the Scriptures.

28 The third session of the missional church training is being held today and tomorrow. Invite God's blessing on those preparing to assist our congregations along the missional journey.

Saturday

8 Moderator Joe Longacher led the Conference Council meetings yesterday and this morning. Thank God for Joe's service; he will be concluding his second term as moderator at the VMC Assembly in July.

15 Pray for high school seniors who have a summer of transition ahead of them. Pray for peace as they enter the workforce, prepare for college, or begin voluntary service assignments.

22 VMBM and Northern District formed a revitalization effort that brought Pastors Milford and Carolyn Lyndaker to Crest Hill Community Church. Pray for them in this ministry as well as Loren Horst as he preaches there tomorrow.

29 Pray for the 13 congregations of the Jamaica Mennonite Church as they envision planting even more. Pray especially for President Richie Tyson as he leads the church while balancing the demands of running a chicken wholesaling business.

1 The biannual meeting of the National Ministerial Council of the Italian Mennonite Church is being held today. Pray for discernment and unity of the Spirit as pastors and missionaries meet together.

Announcements

Vacation Bible School teachers are needed for VMBM Partners in Missions teams to Jamaica and Trinidad in July. If you are available to serve in this way, contact PIM Director Ken Horst at 540-434-9727 or pim@vmbm.org.

The sixth annual Hymn Sing for Peace will be held May 22, 2:00-3:30 p.m., at the reflecting pool steps on the west side of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. For more information, see the ad on page 5.

A list of VMBM giving projects for church groups, families, or individuals is available by contacting VMBM at 540-434-9727 or 1-800-707-5535. The projects are also online at www.vmbm.org/giving.

Spirit led!

Virginia Mennonite
Conference Assembly

July 8-11, 2004

on the campus of
Eastern Mennonite University

Watch for a registration form
in your church mailbox!

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.



speakers

July 8-11
2 0 0 4

worship

Battle of the Bands

friends

improv comedy team

www.vmconf.org/youthfest

on the campus of Eastern Mennonite University

>> to register,
talk with
your pastor
or youth
sponsor



This event brought to you by >>



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