

*A Covenant People:  
Responding to God's Love*



17<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
of  
CENTRAL PLAINS  
MENNONITE CONFERENCE

Hosted by  
Sermon on the Mount Mennonite Church  
at  
Spirit of Peace UCC, Sioux Falls, SD

June 15-18, 2017

Workbook

# Table of Contents 2017

Table of Contents	2-3
Schedule for the weekend	4
Agenda for Delegate Sessions	5
Seminars/Workshops	6-7
<b>I. Our Conference at Work</b>	<b>9</b>
Moderator's Report	11
Ministry Staff Report	12-15
Pastoral Leadership Committee	16-17
Congregational & Pastoral Transitions & Credentialing	18-19
Outreach & Service Committee	20-25
Ecuador Partnership	20-22
Hispanic Ministries Coordinator	22-24
Church Planting	24-25
Peace & Justice Task Group	25
Report from Partnership Meetings	26-29
Christian Formation Committee	30-31
Shalom Readers - new book list for 2017	32-33
Shalom Readers	34
Discernment Committee	
Ballot of Election/Affirmation	35
Biographies	36
<b>II. Administering the Work of Our Conference</b>	<b>37</b>
Minutes of the Delegate Sessions - June 17-18, 2016	38-45
Summary of Conference Council Actions 2015-2016	46-47
<b>III. A Covenant of Spiritual Practices for Central Plains Mennonite Conf.</b>	<b>49</b>
Introduction	50-52
Covenant Document	53-54
A Process of discernment for Differing Beliefs and Practices	54
Some Implications of Adopting This Covenant	55
Appendix 1 - Contrast of Contractual & Covenantal Relationships	56
Appendix 2 - Twelve Characteristics of Missional Congregations	57
Appendix 3 - A modified Wesleyan Quadrilateral	58-59
Appendix 4 - Qualified Teachers	60

IV. <b>Our Conference Body</b>	61
Officers & Committees	62-64
Congregational Membership Statistics	65
V. <b>Financing the Work of Our Conference</b>	67
Stewardship Task Group report	69
Balance Sheet (FY 2016-2017)	70
Proposed Spending and Income Blueprint (May 1, 2017 to April 30, 2018)	71-73
Narrative Spending Blueprint (FY 2017-2018)	74-80
New Ministries Fund	81
Transfers to Other Church Agencies	82
Donations by Congregation 2016-2017	83

**Central Plains Mennonite Conference**  
**Tentative Schedule 2017 Annual Meeting**

All activities take place at Spirit of Peace United Church of Christ unless otherwise noted.  
6509 S. Cliff Ave., Sioux Falls, SD

Thursday, June 15 –

- 2:30 pm - Pastors meeting with Terry Shue - choir room
- 5:00 pm – Registration begins – foyer
- Evening meal – on your own
- 7:00 pm – Opening Worship – Sanctuary
- 8:00 pm – Social – Community Room
- 8:15 pm – Youth gathering & Orientation - Youth room

Friday, June 16 –

- 8:00 am – Registration continues - foyer
- 8:00 am – Children’s Activities begin – Nursery & Pre-school Rooms
- 8:30 am – Worship - Sanctuary
- 9:30 am – Break – Community Room
- 10:00 am – Delegate Session #1 – Community Room
- noon – Lunch - Community Room
- 1:30 pm – Delegate Session #2 – Community Room
- 3:30 pm – Break – Community room
- 4:00 pm – Workshops – locations TBA
- 5:00 pm – Children’s Activities end
- 6:00 pm – Evening meal – Community Room
- 7:30 pm – Evening activities arranged by the Local Host Committee

Saturday, June 17 –

- 8:00 am – Children’s Activities begin
- 8:30 am – Worship -Sanctuary
- 9:30 am – Break – Community Room
- 10:00 am – Delegate Session #3 – Community Room
- noon – Lunch – Community Room
- 1:30 pm – Delegate Session #4 – Community Room
- 3:30 pm – Break – Community Room
- 4:00 pm – Workshops - locations TBA
- 5:00 pm – Children’s Activities end
- 6:00 pm – Evening meal – Community Room
- 7:00 pm – Evening Vespers & Testimony Sharing – location TBA

Sunday, June 18 –

- 9:30 am – Closing Worship – Augustana Chapel of Reconciliation –  
2001 S. Summit Ave., Sioux Falls, SD

**\*\*Offerings will be received at each Worship Service\*\***

# Agenda for Central Plains Mennonite Conference Delegate Sessions

June 16-17, 2017  
Spirit of Peace United Church of Christ  
Sioux Falls, SD

## Friday June 16

- 10am-Noon Delegate Session I  
Welcome & Introduction of Guests  
Review of Minutes & Highlight Decisions  
God's Work through CPMC  
Staff Report  
Committee Chair Reports  
Overview of Spending Blueprint
- 1:30-3:30 pm Delegate Session II  
Reflection and Discernment on our life as "A Covenant People Responding to God's Love," Part I

## Saturday – June 17

- 10:00-Noon Delegate Session III  
Report from MCUSA  
Vote on Slate  
Vote on Spending Blueprint  
Our Holistic Witness to God's Reconciling Mission in the World
- 1:30-3:30 pm Delegate Session IV  
Presentation of Peace Mug  
Reflection and Discernment on our life as "A Covenant People Responding to God's Love," Part II  
Delegate Discussion and Plenary around our theme, "A Covenant People Responding to God's Love," Part III  
Recognition and Installation of CPMC Officers  
Listening Committee  
Closing Delegate Sessions

## Seminars/Workshops for Annual Meeting 2017

Friday, 4 to 5 p.m.

1. “Millennials” — Meghan Good

People born 1981-2000 are the least “churched” generation in American history. This seminar will explore the exciting opportunities and distinct challenges facing Anabaptist churches who seek to connect with millennials in their broader communities.

2. “Resilient Leadership” — Terry Shue

Looking at leadership in general, we will consider practices which help leaders remain resilient in the midst of turbulent times.

3. “Stewardship: The Spiritual Practice of Money Management” — Lyle Miller

As stewards, we are called to manage the financial and other resources with which we have been entrusted. In this seminar, we will explore Three Simple Rules that address 90 percent of the challenge when managing money wisely. Lyle Miller is a Stewardship Consultant with Everence, serving congregations in the upper Midwest.

4. “Immigration and the Church: Perspectives and Responses from the MCC Central States Region” — Ana Alicia Hinojosa, with panelists from the MCC Central States Region

This MCC-facilitated seminar will bring together key perspectives and responses to the current immigration crisis from within the Central States region. Presenters will provide an overview of the ways that MCC is responding to new changes to immigration policy, and others will describe the ways that local churches have responded as well. The seminar will end in a workshop format, by allowing time for Central Plains constituents to dialogue with presenters about their own particular communities.

5. “The Revolutionary Table” — Mark Van Steenwyk

Drawing from his experience offering hospitality in his community, the Mennonite Worker, Mark asks, “How can we see our communities not only as a place of welcome, but places of liberation?”

6. “The Ecuador/Venezuela Partnership” — Don Kempf and friends

Learn about the work of our brothers and sisters in Ecuador and Venezuela.

7. “Leading Adult Sunday School for Transformation” — Christian Formation Committee members

Adult Sunday school can be a vital and effective part of every participant’s spiritual growth. Understand the different types of Sunday school classes and how each type has a purpose in the formation of the participants. Explore how people learn and remember so you can improve the chances that long-term learning actually happens. Get exposure to several teaching techniques that will help you engage with your class. Come prepared to share what teaching techniques have been successful in your environment.

Saturday, 4 to 5 p.m.

1. "Worship for the Senses" — Meghan Good

Media and technology have altered attention spans and significantly changed the paradigm for effective communication. This seminar will offer fresh ways to thinking about preaching (and teaching) that stimulates the senses and engages contemporary audiences in a transformative "experience" of faith.

2. "MC USA Conversations" — Terry Shue

Following a brief overview of current reality of the denomination, the time is open to questions and answers from the floor.

3. "Stewardship: The Spiritual Practice of Generosity" — Lyle Miller

At its core, stewardship is a spiritual practice that draws us closer to God, and when we live life with open hands financially, our faith can be transformed. In this seminar, we will explore different modes of generosity through the three pockets of giving. Lyle Miller is a Stewardship Consultant with Everence, serving congregations in the upper Midwest.

4. "Racial Disparities in Mass Incarceration and the School-to-Prison Pipeline" — Karin Kaufmann Wall and Andrew Wright, with panelists from the MCC Central States Region

This MCC-facilitated seminar will provide an introduction to the issue of mass incarceration and the racial disparities intertwined with the U.S. criminal justice system. The seminar will clarify a number of key concepts surrounding mass incarceration, including the "school-to-prison" pipeline, the prison industrial complex, and the relationship between mass incarceration and the history of slavery in America. The panel will also consider ways that local faith communities have responded to mass incarceration (e.g., visitation and prison ministry, support and care for life those experiencing life after incarceration, restorative justice, as well as other efforts at criminal justice reform).

5. "The Revolutionary Table" — Mark Van Steenwyk

Drawing from his experience offering hospitality in his community, the Mennonite Worker, Mark asks, "How can we see our communities not only as a place of welcome, but places of liberation?"

6. "The Ecuador/Venezuela Partnership" — Don Kempf and friends

Learn about the work of our brothers and sisters in Ecuador and Venezuela.

7. "Leading Adult Sunday School for Transformation" — Christian Formation Committee members

Adult Sunday school can be a vital and effective part of every participant's spiritual growth. Understand the different types of Sunday school classes and how each type has a purpose in the formation of the participants. Explore how people learn and remember so you can improve the chances that long-term learning actually happens. Get exposure to several teaching techniques that will help you engage with your class. Come prepared to share what teaching techniques have been successful in your environment.

8. "Meet Your Conference Leaders" — Nathan & Erin Ramer (for youth delegates)

Youth and young adults...now that you've experienced most of annual meeting--worship, delegate sessions and fellowship--you surely have questions! Join your conference ministers and moderators for a conversation about the conference and the church. Church leaders are eager to hear your thoughts and questions.



*Our  
Conference  
At Work*



## Moderators Report

As I look forward to our annual meeting in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, I want to express how grateful I am to have been given the opportunity to lead this conference.

I continue to be in awe of all the people in our conference who continue to use their talents and gifts by serving on various committees. David, Shana and Tim continue to follow through with their job responsibilities amidst financial constraints.

During the past year Shana continued to seek out training opportunities and knowledge regarding culture competency. This work has assisted our conference to move forward with understanding and appreciating our cultural differences.

*Tuesday's with Dave.* a series of video conferences was well received by congregations across our conference. This year's theme was "Witness to a Better Place". Congregations who participated were able to better understand how the life and witness of our churches can be infused with grace, peace and joy to reach those in the world seeking hope.

The Ecuador -Venezuela partnership continues to move forward, impacting the lives of vulnerable people in these countries. This important work continues due to the financial support as well as prayers from many in our conference.

I want to thank you all for the opportunity that I was given to serve Central Plains in the role of moderator. The friendships formed and knowledge gained will remain with me always. It has been an honor to serve you.

Dios le bendiga-God bless you.

Margie Mejia -Caraballo  
Moderator

# *Central Plains Mennonite Conference*



**Ministry Staff Office**  
301 5<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 2  
PO Box 352  
Kalona, IA 52247

## **Ministry Staff Report to Annual Meeting, 2017**

*In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.*

*1 John 4:10-11*

### **Staff activity by the numbers:**

- Ministry staff were present in 29 congregations for 46 Sunday worship services this year.
- Ministry staff were present with leaders from 30 congregations for additional consultations on a variety of congregational issues such as search process, vision discernment, formation resourcing.
- Ministry staff conducted 60 annual accountability visits with credentialed leaders.
- Ministry staff were present for 12 installation and credentialing services.
- We are currently working with a record low of 6 pastor searches.

**Leadership for Holistic Witness:** *Central Plains Mennonite Conference calls and equips pastors and congregational leaders with missional vision and leadership skills for the church.*

### Pastor Transitions

Seven congregations said goodbye to their pastors between May 2016 and April 2017 and five congregations welcomed new pastors. (See report on p. 18.) Calling and equipping pastors and congregational leaders for the work of ministry and the building up of the body of Christ continues to be essential work for both congregation and conference as we seek to participate in God's mission for the world.

### Credentialing

Ministerial credentials entrust an office of ministry to persons in leadership (most commonly to pastors and chaplains). Through ministerial credentials we empower leaders to act in a representative way on the church's behalf with both the privileges and the responsibilities of the office. Between May 2016 and April 2017 three persons were ordained; one person's former ordination in another denomination was recognized and received ; and three persons were licensed toward ordination. See report on p. 18.

### Ministerial Leadership Support Teams

Four ministerial leadership support teams assist Tim in his work. The Pastor Search Support Team assisted with two pastor searches. The Pastor/Congregation Evaluation Support Team assisted with two evaluations. The Conflict Management Support Team led one Conflict Transformation Skills Workshop. Two members of the Clergy Misconduct Investigative Team attended the 101-102 Healthy Boundaries Training event in Kansas City led by the Faith Trust Group sponsored by Mennonite Church USA. Greater emphasis will be given to prevention and

boundary training for our credentialed leaders over the next two years. Terry Shue led a pre-conference workshop for credentialed leaders on the updated Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy for Mennonite Church USA. All credentialed leaders will be asked to attend a Boundary Training event over the next two years.

To access any of the support teams for assistance in your congregation, contact Tim Detweiler.

### *Annual Leaders Retreat*

The Annual Leader's Retreat is planned each year by the Pastoral Leadership Committee for all pastors, chaplains and their spouses. This year's ALR was held on March 19- 21, 2017 at the St. Benedict Retreat Center in Schuyler, NE. Our theme, "Living God's Story through Prayer, Fasting and Generous Giving" focused on the second spiritual practice in : *A Covenant of Spiritual Practices for Central Plains Mennonite Conference: We will practice prayer, fasting and generous giving to separate ourselves from the influence of the principalities and powers of this age and to make us available to fully participate in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.*

Christopher Montgomery, pastor at Sermon on the Mount Mennonite Church in Sioux Falls, SD led our three retreat sessions. Through worship, dialogue and practice we explored how the spiritual practices of *worship, prayer, fasting and generous giving* help us practice and live God's story in our day. Participants were blessed by Spirit-led worship, lively conversations in large and small groups, space for relaxing and renewal, informal conversations, developing friendships with peers, and good food.

### *Other Activities*

Some 60 annual visits for support and accountability with credentialed pastors and chaplains were made this past year. Attending pastor's week at both Eastern Mennonite Seminary and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, preaching in various congregations, attending the annual Mennonite Church USA conference minister's gathering, meeting with the Pastoral Leadership Committee, and attending Constituency Leaders Council meetings were some of Tim's other involvements.

### *A Word of Thanks*

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support for Tim's health. Tim is grateful to report that as of his last scans and doctor checkup, no active cancer was detected. Tim continues to go in for three month scans and doctor visits.

**Fellowship as Holistic Witness:** *Central Plains Mennonite congregations develop loving relationships with one another, as well as with Christians across the church and around the world, to discern a common way of life as a contrast society.*

### *Mission Partnerships around the world*

Our partnership with the Mennonite Mission Network and the Colombian Mennonite Church for mission work in Ecuador continues to bear fruit. At the invitation of the Colombian Mennonite Church, we are also continuing to accompany the growing Anabaptist network in Venezuela. The Mennonite Churches in Quito continue to develop even as leadership continues to transition. We are also newly sensitized to the economic crisis and food shortages that our Venezuelan brothers and sisters are facing. For more details, see Partnership Coordinator Don

Kempf's report on p. 20-22 and 26-29.

We have also followed closely the violence that continues in Congo, particularly following the killing of Mennonite UN worker, Michael J. Sharp. In the same area where M.J. was killed, more than 5,000 Mennonite brothers and sisters took refuge in the forest for their own safety. Our staff sent a letter to Mennonite leaders in Congo expressing our prayer support and solidarity with their struggle.

### *Partnerships for Church Planting*

Several persons from Central Plains Mennonite Conference attended the Sent 2017, a church planting symposium sponsored by Mennonite Church USA. This is one of the most multicultural and forward looking gatherings in the Mennonite Church. We note that in recent years the number of new churches being planted in our conference has declined. We wonder if the Spirit is leading us to slow down in this ministry or if we are not discerning God's call to plant Anabaptist churches where such a witness is not currently present. (For more information see Matt Troyer-Miller's report on p. 24-25.)

### *Pastor Max Villatoro*

In March of 2016, we acknowledged the second anniversary of Pastor Max Villatoro's deportation. We continue to explore the one avenue left to reunite Max with his family and his congregation in Iowa City. Many in our conference are taking our covenant of spiritual practices seriously and committing the first Tuesday of each month to prayer and fasting for the Villatoro family.

### *Relationships Ending*

While *Fellowship as Witness* is one of our conference priorities, we also recognize with deep sadness when we are unable to maintain the unity Jesus has offered us through the cross. We grieve that Neu Hutterthal and Pulaski Mennonite Church have chosen to end their long relationship with our conference this year. In addition, we received word from Friedensberg Bible Church clarifying that the church had taken action many years ago to disaffiliate from the conference but had not offered official notice. In Jesus' prayer recorded in John 17, Jesus prayed that those who choose to follow him will be one. Jesus prayed that our unity would be the way the world would come to know who Jesus is. Let us to continue to pray in hope with Jesus for the day when all who follow Jesus will be one as Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one.

### *Communications*

With many churches spread over a large geography and few face-to-face meetings, our publications and web site are especially important for keeping us all connected. The *Scattered Seeds* is a print newsletter published five times a year and distributed (ideally) to every household. *The Sower* is an electronic newsletter sent once a month to conference leaders, pastors, churches, delegates and other interested people. Subscribe to either of these on our web site. Our web site, [www.centralplainsmc.org](http://www.centralplainsmc.org), is continually updated with information about events, resources we are creating, and resources from other Mennonite sources.

**Discipleship for Holistic Witness:** *The members of Central Plains Mennonite Conference seek to grow continually in Christ-likeness in order to embody a holistic witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.*

Following the adoption of *Being God's Faithful Community: A Covenant of Spiritual Practices for Central Plains Mennonite Conference* at last year's Annual Meeting, we are excited to see how our congregations are giving renewed attention to spiritual formation. We see renewed attention being given to spiritual practices like Bible study, developing competent Bible teachers, and prayer, fasting and generous giving. At our Annual Meeting this summer, we will be sharing the stories of how our members are exploring these practices in new ways as well as equipping our congregations to go deeper in the practices that are less familiar.

#### *Formation resources*

Bible Study Webinars. Last fall, more than 170 people participated in the Bible Study webinars with Meghan Good. We met three times, with Meghan teaching on the topics, *Introduction to the Art of Biblical Interpretation*, *Reading the Bible Like an Anabaptist*, and *Where the Bible Comes from and Why it Matters*. Comments from participants included:

“Meghan was an excellent teacher; very engaging and easy to understand”

“We liked the key questions to ask when reading a text, ways of understanding difficult texts, and the deep and wide overview of where the Bible comes from and why it matters.”

You may watch the webinars on our [Bible Study Webinars web page](#). It would be easy to watch a 10- to 15-minute segment and discuss it in Sunday School or small group.

Formation Resource Library. Shana keeps a library of recently-released studies and curriculum from MennoMedia and other publishers. These items are for you to check out and use in your congregation. Find a list of everything in the formation resource library on the [Resource Library page](#) of our web site. Shana will mail items to you; mail them back to return them.

Web Resources. Have you checked [www.centralplainsmc.org](http://www.centralplainsmc.org) to see what resources or advice might be there for your leadership roles? There are many resources there for congregational leaders such as Sunday School teachers, youth sponsors, church council chairs, and deacons and elders. We also have recordings from the [Bible study webinars](#) and [Tuesdays with Dave](#). Look also for the [covenant study and videos](#) and [discernment study and videos](#). Most anything we produce is available there. In addition, we received a \$15,000 grant from the Schowalter Foundation for the web site, [www.AnabaptistFaithFormation.org](http://www.AnabaptistFaithFormation.org), which Shana curates and promotes across Mennonite Church USA. Use this site to find formation resources for all ages.

Last year, our delegates unanimously passed a budget that projected a \$20,000 deficit. Due to carefully managing our expenses and extraordinary support from our congregations and individuals, we were able to not only meet our projections, but end the year without a deficit. Further through the generosity of many people, we will soon be able to purchase a newer conference car. We are so grateful for the confidence and support you have shown to the ministry of Central Plains Mennonite Conference

David Boshart  
Executive Conference Minister

Tim Detweiler  
Conference Minister for  
Ministerial Leadership

Shana Peachey Boshart  
Conference Minister for  
Christian Formation

## Pastoral Leadership Committee Report

The Pastoral Leadership Committee is charged with developing and maintaining high quality pastoral leadership for Central Plains Mennonite congregations. We work closely with the Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership, assisting him and a network of volunteers in offering counsel to congregations who are calling pastoral leadership, providing encouragement and support for pastoral Leaders and offering them opportunities for personal and professional development, serving as a resource for congregations needing assistance in preventing and resolving conflict, and supporting the training of elders, deacons, and other lay leaders. Among our tasks are helping to plan the Annual Leaders Retreat for pastors, chaplains, and spouses; granting scholarships to people exploring ministry; and overseeing the credentialing of leaders in our conference.

The PLC is made up of six elected members – Dennis Schrock, Grant Nebal (secretary), Martha Yoder, Marsha Yoder Schrock and myself as chair. Our sixth member, David Breckbill, passed away last fall and we miss his wisdom and experience. We six, along with Tim Detweiler, have gotten to know each other quite well as we meet and make decisions together. We value the wealth of experience and wisdom that each person brings to our work. We do not always agree, but we remain committed to honest, open dialogue in a spirit of unity and fellowship. We are bonded together by our unwavering faith in a loving God, and by the conviction that we all seek integrity between the Word of God as revealed in scripture, throughout history and by his Spirit.

We are grateful for Tim Detweiler's many years of faithful service as Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership. Tim's responsibilities includes leadership development and training, credentialing of new pastors, the Annual Leaders Retreat, responding to sexual misconduct charges, variance policy questions, pastor clusters, annual accountability visits with pastors, Volunteer Support Network and pastoral searches.

Our PLC committee gets involved as needed in all aspects of Tim's work, though our primary focus is on the first three areas of work. Interviewing new pastors and conferring credentials for licensing and ordination takes up a lot of our meeting time, but this is also a very rewarding part of our responsibilities. Conversations at these interviews are always inspiring as we are privileged to hear amazing stories of how the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives and vocations of those called as our pastors and chaplains. Each person's journey is different, and people hear the call to follow Jesus and proclaim God's kingdom in different ways. However, the desire to be faithful is consistent and we offer gratitude to God for those who have answered the call.

The names of those we interviewed and credentialed this year follow this report, as does a list of other pastoral transitions. We invite you to keep these leaders and their congregations in your prayers. We also ask that you talk with people you know who embody the kinds of values, gifts and insights you would like your pastor to have and invite them to consider whether God might be calling them to prepare for ministry. "Shoulder tapping" is still important and many of the candidates we interview give testimony to the importance of that in their lives and call.

The Volunteer Support Network is an initiative stemming from the reality that Tim cannot be everywhere all the time and so needs others to assist him. For several years now, we have invited and trained volunteers from across our conference to walk with congregations through pastoral evaluations, pastoral search processes, conflict prevention and management, and situations of clergy misconduct. These volunteers are provided with appropriate training and guidance and their expertise is available to any congregation in Central Plains. The only formal compensation they receive is mileage. We are grateful for people who have agreed to serve as part of these networks, and invite suggestions of additional people whom we might consider to serve this way in the future. Please contact Tim Detweiler to find out how to invite an individual or team to your congregation.

Thirty Nine (39) pastors, chaplains and spouses, along with Central Plains Conference ministry staff and PLC members gathered at St Benedict's Center near Schuyler, NE on March 19-21 for our Annual Leader's Retreat. This year's theme was *"Living God's Story through Prayer, Fasting and Generous Giving."* Our resource person came from within our own ranks. Christopher Montgomery, pastor of the Sermon On The Mount Mennonite Church in Sioux Falls, SD led us in 3 sessions, *"Practicing and Living God's Story"*, *"Prayer & Fasting"* and *"Generous Giving."* Participants at the gathering also worshipped together led by various people from within the group and had the opportunity for fellowship and relaxation.

PLC thanks you for making it possible for many of our credentialed leaders and their spouses to participate in this retreat. Next year's dates are April ? 2018 at St Benedict's. The retreat will begin after supper on Friday and end after lunch on Tuesday. Please do not ask your pastor to take a vacation day to be away on April 19! Getting away for a few days offers rest and renewal, and allows our leaders to build relationships with one another. Because we do not want finances to be an obstacle to anyone who wishes to attend, PLC has set aside some funds for scholarships, which are granted on a case-by-case basis.

In addition to covering costs for your pastor to attend the ALR, we encourage the same for attendance at Central Plains Annual Meeting and MC USA Assembly. These are important opportunities for pastors to get to know one another, our conference and denominational leaders, as well as becoming acquainted with and involved in the missions and ministries of our church.

As a committee, we continue to dialogue with people who are licensed or ordained and serve in specialized ministries, such as chaplaincy or intentional interims, to discern how we can best serve their needs. We also continue to work with leaders of emerging churches and those planting new churches to determine how PLC's resources can best be utilized in these ministries. We have limited scholarships and funds available for continuing education or to help finance sabbaticals, so please be in contact with us.

To support those exploring a call to ministry, PLC helps fund summer interns through the Ministry Inquiry Program of the Mennonite Colleges, and also offers scholarships to people from Central Plains congregations who are enrolled at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Eastern Mennonite Seminary and Instituto Biblico Anabautista of Mennonite Church USA. Nearly every year the amount of scholarship money we have to offer is greater than the requests we receive. As you "tap shoulders" of potential leaders, please let them know that the conference can be part of financial support package.

As congregations work with and update their pastor salary and benefits packages, Tim gets inquiries about expectations and common practices within our conference. The pastor salary guidelines put together by NC-USA offer congregations a worksheet, along with interpretive comments, for figuring salaries and benefits. Using these guidelines as a basis, Tim devised a survey for Central Plains congregations. Please be in touch with Tim if you would like more info about this survey and how it might help you in review and planning for your pastor's financial needs.

Feel free to engage Pastoral Leadership Committee members in conversation about the needs of your pastors and of other credentialed leaders with whom you are in relationship. We invite your prayers as we seek to call out and support pastoral leadership with Central Plains Mennonite Conference.

Willis Busenitz, Chairperson

Pastoral Leadership Committee

Pastor and Congregation Transitions and Credentialing  
May 2016 – April 2017

**Credentials Granted**

**Ordinations**

**David Schooley**, Pastor at Eicher Emmanuel Mennonite, Wayland, IA on 9/18/16.

**Jack Norris**, Pastor at Julesburg Mennonite, Julesburg, CO on 9/25/16.

**Rachelle Luitjens**, Pastor of Mission & Faith Formation, Sugar Creek Mennonite, Wayland, IA on 3/26/17.

**Christopher Montgomery**, Pastor at Sermon on the Mount Mennonite, Sioux Falls, SD. Former ordination with Church of the Brethren was recognized and received on 4/2/17.

**License Toward Ordination**

**Michael Miller Swartzendruber**, Co-Pastor at Wayland Mennonite, Wayland, IA on 5/8/16

**Josias Hanson**, Community Pastor at Third Way Church, St. Paul, MN on 9/11/16.

**Michael Jinteh**, Chaplain and member of Emmanuel Mennonite, Minneapolis, MN on 3/12/17.

**Pastor Transitions**

**Endings**

**Alberto Parchmont** (Resigned) Pastor at Templo Alabanza in Moline, IL effective 6/16/16.

**Corey Miller** (Resigned) Pastor at West Union Mennonite, Parnell, IA effective 12/31/16.

**Grant Nebel** (Retired) Co-Pastor at Washington Mennonite, Washington, IA effective 10/30/16.

**Elaine Kauffman** (Retired) Pastor at First Mennonite, Mountain Lake, MN effective 2/28/17.

**Karen Dalke** (Retired) Pastor at Des Moines Mennonite, Des Moines, IA effective 4/30/17.

**Ben Waddington** (Resigned) Pastor at Ashland Christian Fellowship, Ashland, MT effective 4/30/17.

**Aaron Carlson** (Resigned) Pastor at Manson Mennonite, Manson, IA effective 5/7/17.

**Beginnings**

**Michael Miller Swartzendruber** was installed as Co-Pastor at Wayland Mennonite, Wayland, IA on 5/8/16.

**Beth Peachey Miller** was installed as Pastor at Pleasant View Mennonite, Mount Pleasant, IA on 9/18/16.

**Corey Miller** was installed as Pastor at Salem-Zion Mennonite, Freeman, SD on 2/12/17.

**Jose & Paula Martinez** commissioned as Associate Pastors at Iglesia Cristiana El Balsamo in Muscatine, IA 12/18/16.

**Aureliano Vazquez** was installed as Pastor at Templo Alabanza, Moline, IL on 4/9/17.

### Interim Pastor Assignments

**Firman Gingerich** – Transitional Pastor at West Union Mennonite, Parnell, IA 1/1/17 – 6/30/17.  
**Gordon Scoville** – Transitional Pastor at First Mennonite, Iowa City, IA, 8/15 – 7/16  
**Jim Grossnickle-Batterton** – Interim at First Mennonite, Iowa City, IA, 7/16 - Present  
**Pam Gerig Unruh** – Interim at Zion Mennonite, Donnellson, IA, 11/16 - Present  
**S. Roy Kauffman & Lois Janzen Preheim** – Interim Team at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, MN, 3/17 – Present.

### Deaths

**Simon Rada** – Retired Pastor, 8/27/16  
**Peter William Tschetter** – Retired Pastor, 12/15/2016

### Congregations in Pastoral Leadership Searches

**Ashland Christian Fellowship** – Ashland, MT - Pastor  
**Des Moines Mennonite**, Des Moines, IA – Pastor  
**Manson Mennonite**, Manson, IA – Pastor  
**North Side Fellowship**, Omaha, NE – Bi-vocational Pastor  
**West Union Mennonite**, Parnell, IA – Pastor  
**Zion Mennonite**, Donnellson, IA – Pastor

**Central Plains Mennonite Conference  
Outreach and Service Committee  
2017 Annual Report**

Prepared by Roger Farmer, Chair

2 Corinthians 4:4,6 Since we have this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart...for it is God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness"

Like Paul, the Outreach and Service Committee tries to assist Member Congregations to shine the light of God's love and mercy into the world that surrounds us by assisting and encouraging Member Congregations in all areas of Christian outreach, including, but not limited to evangelism, church planting, peace making, justice advocacy, and service activities.

During this past year, the Outreach and Service Committee sponsored another series of on line video conversations on Tuesdays in February with David Boshart, Central Plains Conference Minister for Outreach and Service. The theme of this year's sessions was "Witness to a Better Place." The video input and discussion guides for these sessions are still available for study and use in Sunday School, small groups, or other settings at:

<http://www.centralplainsmc.org/tuesdays-with-dave-2017.html#/news/>

The Outreach and Service Committee also updated the Conference Map, which had been originally created in 2012. This map displays contact and location information for all Central Plains Mennonite Conference congregations and associated organizations. Each congregation and organization will receive a copy of this map in their conference information packet, and additional copies are available from the conference office.

Following this introduction are brief reports focused on other major areas of witness by the Outreach and Service Committee. Included in each of these reports are sources of further information. Please contact the persons mentioned for more information about projects of special interest to you.

Members of the Outreach and Service Committee for the 2016-2017 conference year were: Jane Goering (Bethel MC, Mt. Lake, MN), Martha Hernandez (Centro Christiano, Washington, IA), Chris Eisenbeis (Salem MC, Freeman, SD), Phil Friesen (Emmanuel MC, Minneapolis, MN), Kate Friesen (Hutterthal MC, Freeman, SD), Elisabeth Harder Schrock (First MC, Mt Lake, MN ), Nicholas Detweiler-Stoddard (Salem (south) MC, Freeman, SD), Roger Farmer, Chair, (Washington IA MC), and David Boshart, Staff, (Wellman IA MC).

For general information about the Outreach and Service Committee, or to participate in any of our projects and programs, please contact Roger Farmer, Chair, at 319-653-2547, or any other member of the Outreach and Service Committee, or visit our web pages at

<http://www.centralplainsmc.org/mission-leaders.html>

**2017 Outreach and Service Committee Annual Report: Ecuador Partnership**

Written by Don Kempf, Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley, Nebraska

"I continue to be amazed by the outsized ministry footprint which the small Quito Mennonite Church leaves on people's lives." This quote from a person who visited the church in Ecuador on the January Fellowship and Learning Tour expresses the feelings of all of us in Central Plains Mennonite Conference. As another year passes, we thank God again for the friendship of our brothers and sisters in Ecuador, Venezuela, and Colombia.

The tour mentioned above was arranged by Joetta Schlabach. They learned of the ministries in Quito and related to indigenous people in the rainforest. Other participants were Anita and Hannah Breckbill, Suzette Shreffler, Lewis Miller, Lynne Walksalong, Dwight Mueller, and Galen Kauffman.

In Quito, the refugee program continues with financial support through MCC Colombia. They interview an average of 20 families per week and 45 families receive basic food weekly. There has recently been an increase in the number of refugees who are not from Colombia. A number of families have arrived from Venezuela due to the severe economic crisis. There are also increasing numbers of asylum seekers from the Middle East, some of whom are of the Muslim faith. The church welcomes them all and sees this as an opportunity to provide hope as they represent the face of Jesus to them.

Other programs of the churches in Quito and Jardines Del Inca have seen changes over time. The Education for Peace program has been downsized so that they only have one group instead of two. At this time it serves mainly children of church members and refugees. ProPaz, the classes for Bible study and Anabaptist theology, have struggled with the lack of time and interest in recent months. The Vida Juvenil (Juvenile Life) program has focused more on after school help for children. In the future they would like to engage more with the parents in the community.

We are thankful for the generous response to our appeal for funds to help buy a property for ICAME (Christian Anabaptist Mennonite Churches of Ecuador) in Quito. We reached our goal of \$46,500 after we received a very generous donation from Christ Community Church in Des Moines, Iowa. Representatives attending Partnership Meetings were able to tour a property that appears to be ideal for purchase as a center for ICAME and the church in Quito. It is not far from their present location, but closer to the old airport. It is near the northern end of the new subway that is being built. This makes its location in a prime area for future development, so it is likely a good investment in financial terms. The owner is still asking \$225,000 for purchase. However, properties continue to remain on the market with little sales activity at this point in time. The hope is that it can be bought for \$200,000. Some research needs to be done regarding the soundness of the structure and possibility of future liens against the property. It is a large house with three stories. It has been divided into three apartments, one on each floor, so would have possibilities of rental income from a family living on one floor while the church and ICAME use the rest of the building.

Jane and Jerrell Ross Richer continue to be enthusiastic about the groups that visit them to learn about Creation Care from the indigenous people. They have felt a call to minister along with a small remnant of the church in the Cofan community which is located near the Ecuador, Peru and Colombia border. The community is building a house for them and is excited to have them spend more time with them.

This is again a time of transition for the church in Quito. Luis Tapia has completed his three years as pastor. He has resigned and he and his wife, Jennifer Rey, will be moving to Elkhart, Indiana, as he attends AMBS the next couple of years. The church in Quito has called Fernando Perez and Rebecca Gonzalez, a pastoral couple from Mexico City, Mexico, to be interim pastors for the next three months. Their mandate will be to help the church move toward a pastoral team approach to church structure instead of a pastor centered approach.

The churches in Venezuela continue to be an amazing story of a people who are seeking to take the teachings of Jesus seriously in the midst of a society whose structures are disintegrating. These churches developing in disparate regions of the country have found one another through courses offered by Mennonite leader Erwin Miribal and the Colombian

Mennonite seminary. A recurring theme of respondents is the joy they feel as they encounter a wider family of Christians who are sharing the same journey as communities who are serious about following Jesus. This network of congregations continues to evangelize by sharing theological education courses. They are practicing their faith by sharing food and clothing with the homeless, teaching cooperative games for peace in public schools, providing after school tutoring and strengthening and expanding their seminary courses.

We continue to pray for these sisters and brothers as they share the love of Christ in a context where there is much suffering from the evils of this world.

For more information about the Ecuador Partnership, the new work in Venezuela, and future trips to both countries, please contact Don Kempf at: [donaldkempf \(at\) windstream.net](mailto:donaldkempf@windstream.net), or visit the Ecuador/Venezuela Partnership webpages at:

<http://www.centralplainsmc.org/ecuadorvenezuela-partnership.html>

### **2017 Outreach and Service Committee Annual Report: Hispanic Ministries Coordinator**

Written by Ramiro Hernandez, Washington, Iowa

*For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God? <sup>32</sup> It is God who arms me with strength, And makes my way perfect. <sup>33</sup> He makes my feet like the feet of deer, And sets me on my high places. Psalm 18:31-33*

Saludos/Greetings!

#### **Pastoral visits**

I cherish the times when I visit with pastors. I enjoy hearing their stories. I especially enjoy praying for them as they also pray for me. We face the same struggles and we are on the same journey together as we serve our Lord Jesus Christ, Our King! Last year we lost a church. The Hispanic community where the church plant was taking place was very small and Hispanics move a lot.

#### **We still have 6 churches:**

Templo Alabanza	Moline, Illinois	Pastor Aureliano Vásquez
Casa de Oración	Davenport, Iowa	Pastor Fernando Ramos
Torre Fuerte	Iowa City, Iowa	Pastor Gloria Villatoro
Iglesia el Bálsamo	Muscatine, Iowa	Pastor Alejandro Huesca

#### **Church Plants**

Centro Cristiano	Washington, Iowa	Pastor Martha Hernandez
Jesús el Buen Pastor	Muscatine, Iowa	Pastor Ramiro Hernandez

Mt Pleasant: we are praying about a new Hispanic church.

#### **Prayers Requests for Hispanic Churches**

- Pray for Max and Gloria and family. Pray that the Lord will allow Max to reunite with his family, as well as his safe return. He is missed by our community.
- Pray for our Hispanic churches as they face possible emptying of churches due to immigration deportation.

## **Church Planting**

Starting a church is a time when we begin to see what God wants to do in a community. We however don't see beyond the vision that is placed in our hearts as to how easy or difficult it will be. Actually it's almost never easy.

God has called Martha and I to work in towns where the population of Hispanics is not large, so having a church of 80 or even 40 is difficult. Hispanics who live in small towns move a lot, so even when growth happens we pray that those people will stay in our church and not move to other parts of the country seeking better employment or having other families call them to come close to where they live. So even when we have given our time to these people we know the possibility of them moving away. The upside of this is that because of our ministry to them they continue to be faithful and participating in local churches where they move. We often hear from them and find that they are faithful to the call God has placed in their hearts. Some have suggested we go and help them start a Hispanic Mennonite church in their area, and as much as we rejoice in hearing their excitement of a new Mennonite church plant in their area, our hearts grieve because we are not able to fulfill their request. So we encourage them to grow in their faith as they follow Jesus where they congregate.

Martha and I we continue to pray that God will send other people to our community because of better employment opportunities or because families have asked them to move close to them. Reaching these new families means starting all over again with visitation, discipleship, praying with them, getting to know them, praying that God will touch their heart and give their lives to God. It will take another 1 to 2 years before they fully participate in our church community. We ask for your prayers as we continue in obedience to do His work, since we are just partakers of a bigger plan.

## **Hispanic cluster meetings**

Our cluster usually meets once a month. As we meet, we read scripture together and share what it says to us. We pray for our needs. We then move to plan our calendar for events and we also look at the conference calendar to see how we might be able to participate. At the end of our meetings we have time for fellowship and go out for a meal at a local restaurant.

## **Centers of IBA**

We are happy to announce that Enriqueta Paredes from Centro Cristiano, and Maria and Enrique Mendoza and Gloria Villatoro from Torre Fuerte graduated from IBA in August 7, 2016. They received their Certificate upon completion of the required courses.

Maria and Enrique Mendoza and Gloria Villatoro of Torre Fuerte are also on their way to complete their Diploma requirements thus receiving their Diploma.

Currently we have three centers:

- Davenport, Casa de Oración – Margie Mejia Caraballo
- Muscatine, Jesús el Buen Pastor – Ramiro Hernandez
- Iowa City, Torre Fuerte – Martha Hernandez

IBA has changed. Instead of having two levels (Certificate and Diploma), students can now graduate with a diploma. There will be 14 courses to be complete in order to graduate. The yearly retreats in Alabama will no longer be necessary. The translation to English is almost complete.

While celebrating the graduation of students in Iowa City, IBA Director Marco Guete, also gave a workshop on “Ministerial Ethics” to which all the Hispanic churches were invited to participate. The event took place at Jesus el Buen Pastor, Muscatine.

## **Other meetings**

- Central Plains Conference Annual Meeting
- Mennonite Education Association Board meeting in Jacksonville, Florida
- Sent Conference, Ft Myers Florida
- Meetings with David Boshart (Conference Minister)
- Hispanic Mennonite Church Consultation, Dallas, Texas

These are highlights taken from many things taking place in 2016-17. I praise God for the opportunity given to me as I work with pastors and congregations. Thank you for the opportunity you have gracefully given me to work and be part of Central Plains.

For more information about Hispanic Ministries in Central Plains Mennonite Conference, please contact Ramiro Hernandez at (319) 621-3725 or by email to [ramherns \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:ramherns@yahoo.com) .

Para mas información puede comunicarse conmigo al (319) 621-3725 o por correo electrónico [rmherns \(a\) yahoo.com](mailto:rmherns@yahoo.com)

## **2017 Outreach and Service Committee Annual Report: Church Planting Strategy Team**

Written by Matt Troyer-Miller, Wood River (Nebraska) Mennonite Church

The Church Planting Strategy Team (CPST) of Central Plains Mennonite Conference works at encouraging, supporting, and resourcing developing congregations and church planters. We work to bring resources and people of existing conference congregations into partnership with developing congregations and church planters to encourage a culture of church planting within the conference.

The CPST reports to the Outreach and Service Committee of Central Plains Mennonite Conference. Matt Troyer-Miller is the chairperson of the committee, and on-going members of the committee are Ramiro Hernandez, Susan Janzen and David Boshart. Several new members joined this year: Nathan Luitjens, Nick Stoddard Detweiler, and Joel Beachy. The committee met once in Des Moines this past year. We continue to encourage church planters to attend a national church planters conference called “Exponential,” and we have funds available to assist those who are interested. Three people from Central Plains went to SENT 2017, the annual Mennonite Church USA church-wide church planting summit. Other questions we have been considering: how proactive should we be in starting church plants? When does a “Bible study” become a church plant? When does a “church plant” become a “church?”

Currently, new and emerging churches include Torre Fuerte, Iowa City, IA, Iglesia Menonita Centro Cristiano, in Washington, IA, Shalom Mennonite Church, in Eau Claire, WI and Iglesia El Buen Pastor in Muscatine, IA. We have marked two years since Pastor Max Villatoro was deported, and we continue to support efforts to reunite him with his family and his congregation. We also note the closing of Iglesia Evangélica Ágape in Mountain Lake, MN.

You can find out more about our newest congregations at

<http://www.centralplainsmc.org/developing-congregations.html>

As we seek to develop a church planting culture in our conference, we want to encourage every existing congregation to consider becoming involved in developing new churches as an urgent and essential part of what it means to be a healthy church. When the vision develops for a new congregation, we want to surround that new work with supportive partnerships that become learning communities that explore what it means to be the church in every context. Please keep

our developing congregations in your prayers as they pioneer new communities that seek to bear witness to the inbreaking of God's reign in the world.

For more information about the Church Planting Strategy Team, please contact Matt Troyer-Miller, Chairperson, at [chase1056 \(at\) hotmail.com](mailto:chase1056@hotmail.com) or 308-380-3852, or visit the CPST webpages at: <http://www.centralplainsmc.org/church-planting.html>

**2017 Outreach and Service Committee Annual Report: Peace and Justice Task Group.**

Written by Dennis Lehmann, Sermon on the Mount MC, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

After the CPMC Annual Meeting in 2016, the Peace and Justice Task Group received a petition circulated and signed by 80 conference attendees. This petition, focusing on gun violence, was forwarded to the Peace and Justice Task Group by the CPMC Executive Committee.

This past year, we have been working on how best to respond. At the 2017 Annual Meeting, we will provide each CPMC congregation with a packet. The packet will include a sign for meeting house doors, a petition for members to sign, plus information on gun violence and sensible suggestions for action.

We hope each congregation will discuss this issue, spend time in prayer, and take action in their state by contacting their political leaders on the state and national level.

In 2016, we presented a peace mug to representatives of E'mapeva'e Netaa'o Hovae' (Everything Beautiful Gift Store) in Lame Deer, Montana. Suzette Shreffler and Willis Busenitz shared stories of how this ministry has changed people's lives.

The members of the Peace and Justice Task Group for 2016-2017 were Keisha Littlebear, Mai Yang, Jane Yoder Short, Max Villatoro, Tom Kessler, Fernando Ramos, Jane Goering, and Dennis Lehmann.

If you have questions or suggestions for the Peace and Justice Task Group, please contact Jane Yoder Short at [wilmajane17@gmail.com](mailto:wilmajane17@gmail.com) or 319-683-2547 or 1705 Angle Road SW, Kalona Iowa 52247.

# Report from Partnership Meetings 2017



The Communion Service on Sunday morning was a highlight for those of us who participated in the 2017 Partnership Meetings in Quito, Ecuador. The church was full with around 70 people, some sitting on the stairway. There were people there from at least 7 different countries. About one fourth of them were

refugees. Peter Stuckey, from Colombia, preached on the theme of suffering and how Christ knows what it is like to suffer and that we can leave our suffering on the cross for Him to bear. Participants wrote about their burdens and pinned the notes on the cross after the sermon.

The refugee program continues with financial support through MCC Colombia. Jennifer Rey has been the coordinator along with Daniela Sanchez. Jennifer has resigned as she will be moving to the U.S. with her husband Luis Tapia. Alexandra Meneses will be taking Jennifer's place. She is also a psychologist and will be able to offer sessions for the refugees. They interview an average of 20 families per week and 45 families receive basic food weekly. There has recently been an increase in the number of refugees who are not from Colombia. A number of families have arrived from Venezuela due to the severe economic crisis. There are also increasing numbers of asylum seekers from the Middle East, some of whom are of the Muslim faith. The church welcomes them all and sees this as an opportunity to provide hope as they represent the face of Jesus to them.

Other programs of the churches in Quito and Jardines Del Inca have seen changes over time. The Education for Peace program has been downsized so that they only have one group instead of two. At this time it serves mainly children of church members and refugees. ProPaz,



the classes for Bible study and Anabaptist theology, have struggled with the lack of time and interest in recent months. The Vida Juvenil (Juvenile Life) program has focused more on after school help for children. In the future they would like to engage more with the parents in the community.



We were able to tour a property that appears to be ideal for purchase as a center for ICAME (Christian Anabaptist Mennonite Churches of Ecuador) and the church in Quito. It is not far from their present location, but closer to the old airport. It is near the northern end of the new subway that is being built. This makes its location in a prime area for future development, so it is likely a good investment in financial terms. The owner is still asking \$225,000 for

purchase. However, properties continue to remain on the market with little sales activity at this point in time. The hope is that it can be bought for \$200,000. Some research needs to be done regarding the soundness of the structure and possibility of future liens against the property. It is a large house with three stories. It has been divided into three apartments, one on each floor, so would have possibilities of rental income from a family living on one floor while the church and ICAME use the rest of the building.

Jane and Jerrell Ross Richer related their enthusiasm for the groups that have come to visit them to learn about Creation Care from the indigenous people. They have felt a call to minister along with a small remnant of the church in the Cofan community which is located near the Ecuador, Peru and Colombia border. The community is building a house for them and is excited to have them spend more time with them.

Julian Guaman, an indigenous scholar, has been attending Quito Mennonite church. He is associated with four indigenous congregations who consider themselves to be Anabaptist in their theology. He has proposed that his congregations be covered by ICAME, both spiritually and legally. These congregations are located in Riobamba, Guayaquil and Quito. This is an interesting development and there will be discussions about this in the future.

Another interesting development has been more openness among the other Mennonite churches connected to Rosedale missions to relate with ICAME. This is the result of changes in leadership for those congregations and could also be

related to the cooperation with them to provide disaster relief for earthquake victims on the coast.



This is again a time of transition for the church in Quito. Luis Tapia has completed his three years as pastor. He has resigned and he and his wife,

Jennifer Rey, will be moving to Elkhart, Indiana, as he attends AMBS the next couple of years. The church in Quito has called Fernando Perez and Rebecca Gonzalez, a pastoral couple from Mexico City, Mexico, to be interim pastors for the next three months. Their mandate will be to help the church move toward a pastoral team approach to church structure instead of a pastor centered approach.

Always on our minds is the effect of providing outside resources and personnel on the sustainability of the local congregation. The tremendous and immediate needs of the refugees are always paramount and are impossible to meet with local resources. It is encouraging to see that people in the local church are aware of this and they voice desires to continue to reevaluate programs and their ability to carry them out.

We need to continue to pray for them as they share the love of Christ in a context where there is much suffering from the evils of this world.

Don Kempf

## Christian Formation Committee

### Annual Report 2017

The purpose of the Christian Formation Committee (CFC) is to assist the members of Central Plains Mennonite Conference to grow continually in Christ-likeness in order to embody a holistic witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The goal of this committee is to promote life-long formation in members of Central Plains by promoting Christian resources and equipping formation leaders.

The CFC members are: Lewis Miller, Beemer, NE, serving as chair; Barb Tieszen, Yankton, SD; Jane Yoder-Short, Kalona, IA; Gordon Krause, Mountain Lake, MN; Rachelle Luitjens, Olds, IA, and Stan Harder, Omaha, NE. Shana Peachey Boshart, Conference Minister for Christian Formation, works with the committee.

Highlights of activities in the past year include:

- A continued effort to align our work with the Covenant of Spiritual Practices adopted at Annual Meeting 2016. Our main focus has been on Bible study and prayer, offering resources through *Word and Spirit* on the conference website, along with workshops and webinars. Discussion in this area includes collaborating with other committees and possibly incorporating additional resources from their work on the *Word and Spirit* page. We are excited to offer these resources throughout the year and encourage all to explore and access them. We also welcome any feedback on what is helpful as well as areas for growth or improvement.
- Last fall we offered three webinars featuring Meghan Good, teaching pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church, Glendale, AZ. Meghan shared a wealth of knowledge on reading and interpreting the Bible. The webinars were well-attended and feedback was positive. All the sessions are recorded and available on the conference website. Use them for further discussion and education in groups, or for personal growth.
- A workshop offered Friday and Saturday at Annual Meeting 2016 focused on the resources available on the *Word and Spirit* page of the conference website. [www.centralplainsmc.org/word-and-spirit](http://www.centralplainsmc.org/word-and-spirit) features resources for Bible study, prayer and more. This year we will be offering another workshop on meaningful Adult Sunday School and Christian formation. How can we create and offer life-giving safe space for learning together in ways that nourish the soul? What is working, or not, in our local contexts and which resources are most helpful?
- The workshop described above has developed from our work with a survey offered to a number of adult Sunday school teachers and superintendents/Christian formation leaders. Special thanks to all who took the time to respond. The responses were very informative and helpful in discerning further steps to provide useful resources for equipping formation leaders.

- The Christian Formation Committee met for a weekend retreat October 22-23 at Twin Lakes Bible Camp near Manson, IA for spiritual growth, reflection and discussion of our work for the coming year. The beautiful setting stimulated our minds and hearts as we felt the Holy Spirit prompting and guiding our time together.
  - Youth Escape 2016 was held at Hidden Acres Christian Center, Dayton, IA on July 15-17. The theme was “Inside Out,” with featured speaker Michelle Hershberger and music by Lynn Stoneking. About 60 youth and 30 adults attended, and feedback was positive. As CFC assessed the event and changing demographics, we looked at ways to improve not only the event but also distributing the workload. A number of ideas were shared in brainstorming and we will continue to address this further in the coming months.
  - Rachelle Luitjens accepted appointment as Chairperson of Shalom Readers Task Group. We are grateful for her gifts and willingness to serve in this area. (See the report from Shalom Readers for further information.)
  - Shana was able to enjoy a sabbatical from January-March. Her time was spent in reading, attending Intercultural Competency training events, spiritual formation through contemplative prayer retreats, and travel, rest and relaxation with family and friends. We are grateful for this time of refreshing and renewing in her life, and for the many ways she shares her gifts not only with our committee, but throughout our conference and beyond in the broader church.
- ❖ In the coming year, we look forward to further development of *Word and Spirit*; continued work on Youth Escape; fresh resources through workshops and webinars; and openness to where the Holy Spirit will continue to guide us.

Submitted by Lewis Miller, CFC Chair

## ***Shalom Readers***

### ***New Book List for 2017***

#### ***Kindergarten-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade***

***Invisible Boy*** by Trudy Ludwig - Meet Brian, the invisible boy. Nobody ever seems to notice him or think to include him in their group, game, or birthday party . . . until, that is, a new kid comes to class. When Justin, the new boy, arrives, Brian is the first to make him feel welcome. And when Brian and Justin team up to work on a class project together, Brian finds a way to shine.

***Cats in Krasinski Square*** by Karen Hesse – The cats in Krasinski Square once belonged to someone...And so did a young girl, whose family has been destroyed by war. Even as she and her sister struggle to survive amid the war's chaos, they risk their lives on a plan to help those still trapped behind Warsaw's infamous Ghetto wall.

***What Does It Mean To Be Global*** by Rana DiOrio - Can you say "hello" in nine languages? You can! Join children from around the world as they play, sing, and travel, trying all types of food and experiencing other traditions. Living respectfully and peacefully with one another, they celebrate diversity, see how their actions affect another person's experience, and come to understand that being global means being a citizen of the world.

#### ***3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade***

***Tale of Three Trees*** Retold by Angela Elwell Hunt - Featuring the wonderful illustrations of Tim Jonke, this best-selling children's book tells the Easter story from a new and unusual point of view. Children will be deeply touched as they understand, perhaps for the first time, the significance of Christ's life and his atoning sacrifice on the cross.

***Every Last Drop*** by Michelle Mulder - In the developed world, if you want a drink of water you just turn on a tap or open a bottle. But for millions of families worldwide, finding clean water is a daily challenge, and kids are often the ones responsible for carrying water to their homes. Every Last Drop looks at why the world's water resources are at risk and how communities around the world are finding innovative ways to quench their thirst and water their crops. Maybe you're not ready to drink fog, as they do in Chile, or use water made from treated sewage, but you can get a low-flush toilet, plant a tree, protect a wetland or just take shorter showers. Every last drop counts!

***Reign, Rain*** by Ann M Martin - Rose Howard is obsessed with homonyms. She's thrilled that her own name is a homonym, and she purposely gave her dog Rain a name with two homonyms (Reign, Rein), which, according to Rose's rules of homonyms, is very special. Not everyone understands Rose's obsessions, her rules, and the other things that make her different – not her teachers, not other kids, and not her single father.

When a storm hits their rural town, rivers overflow, the roads are flooded, and Rain goes missing. Rose's father shouldn't have let Rain out. Now Rose has to find her dog, even if it means leaving her routines and safe places to search.

## 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

***Threads*** by Ami Polonsky - *To Whom It May Concern: Please, we need help!*

The day twelve-year-old Clara finds a desperate note in a purse in Bellman's department store, she is still reeling from the death of her adopted sister, Lola.

By that day, thirteen-year-old Yuming has lost hope that the note she stashed in the purse will ever be found. She may be stuck sewing in the pale pink factory outside of Beijing forever.

Clara grows more and more convinced that she was meant to find Yuming's note. Lola would have wanted her to do something about it. But how can Clara talk her parents, who are also in mourning, into going on a trip to China?

Finally the time comes when Yuming weighs the options, measures the risk, and attempts a daring escape.

***Six Million Paper Clips: The Making Of A Children's Holocaust Memorial*** by Peter W.

Schroeder - Describes the efforts of middle school students from the rural Tennessee town of Whitwell to create a Holocaust memorial based on a collection of millions of paper clips intended to represent all of the victims exterminated by the Nazis.

***Fish in a Tree*** by Lynda Mullaly Hunt - Ally has been smart enough to fool a lot of smart people.

Every time she lands in a new school, she is able to hide her inability to read by creating clever yet disruptive distractions. She is afraid to ask for help; after all, how can you cure dumb? However, her newest teacher Mr. Daniels sees the bright, creative kid underneath the trouble maker. With his help, Ally learns not to be so hard on herself and that dyslexia is nothing to be ashamed of. As her confidence grows, Ally feels free to be herself and the world starts opening up with possibilities. She discovers that there's a lot more to her—and to everyone—than a label, and that great minds don't always think alike.

## **Shalom Readers**

### *Teaching Peace, Love and Justice Through Reading*

Shalom Readers Club continues to be a valuable resource to children in Central Plains as they read and explore books that teach about peace and justice. Each year new books are added to the list which encourage children to think about the Jesus way of peace. Shalom Readers provides occasions for parents/caregivers and other adults in church to read stories aloud, leading to important discussions about Christian faith. All of the information about Shalom Readers is located on the Central Plains website and a packet is sent home from Annual Meeting with delegates. Congregations use this ministry in a number of different ways from reading the books at a children's time or Wednesday evening gathering to sharing the books together at a preschool. Children ages 4 through Grade 8 have a chance to earn a free book by reading 7 books and doing 2 sharing options. We encourage congregations to purchase the new books for your Library. A local representative is key to the ministry in your congregation. Contact the regional coordinators for more information.

Joan Friesen for congregations in NE, SD MT or CO  
Box 682 Henderson, NE 68371  
[jfriesen@mainstaycomm.net](mailto:jfriesen@mainstaycomm.net)

Ellen Miller for congregations in IA, IL or MN  
2131 Grand Blvd., Waterloo, IA 50701  
[ellenkmiller@gmail.com](mailto:ellenkmiller@gmail.com)

Congregations with children earning free books in 2015-2016:

#### East Region

First Mennonite, Iowa City, IA  
Cedar Falls Mennonite, Cedar Falls, IA  
Sugar Creek Mennonite, Wayland, IA  
Kalona Mennonite, Kalona, IA

#### West Region

Bethesda Mennonite, Henderson, NE  
Hutterthal Mennonite, Freeman, SD  
Salem-Zion Mennonite, Freeman, SD

Number of children earning free books – 43

# Ballot of Election/Affirmation

## Central Plains Mennonite Conference

### Annual Meeting 2017

The following slate has been developed through the work of the discernment Committee and is recommended by Conference Board. Additional nominations may be made when this ballot is presented at the Annual Meeting provided such nominees meet the requirements of the bylaws for serving in the position for which they are nominated. Please contact potential nominees prior to the election to assure that they will serve if elected. As a matter of courtesy, the moderator should be given prior notice of the intent to make a nomination from the floor.

**Assistant Moderator** (2 year term, becomes Moderator AM 2019) vote for 1  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2019) Shawn Nolt Salem Mennonite Church Shickley, NE  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2019) *write in* \_\_\_\_\_

**Treasurer** (3 year term) vote for 1  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Kenteth Blossom West Union Mennonite Church Wellman, IA  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) *write in* \_\_\_\_\_

**CPMC Board Member-at-Large** (2 year term) vote for 2  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2019) S. Roy Kaufman Salem Zion Mennonite Church Freeman, SD  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2019) Ry Sigglekow Faith Mennonite Church Minneapolis, MN  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2019) *write in* \_\_\_\_\_

**Discernment Committee** (2 year term) vote for 2  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2019) Duane Ries Salem Mennonite Church Freeman, SD  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2019) Pam Gerig Unruh  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2019) *write in* \_\_\_\_\_

**Christian Formation Committee** (3 year term) vote for 2  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Jane Yoder Short West Union Mennonite Church Kalona, IA  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Barb Tieszen Salem Mennonite Church Yankton, SD  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) *write in* \_\_\_\_\_

**Outreach & Service Committee** (chair) (3 year term) vote for 1  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Chris Eisenbeis Salem Mennonite Church Hurley, SD  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) *write in* \_\_\_\_\_

**Outreach & Service Committee** (member) (3 year term) vote for 2  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Martha Hernandez Iglesia Menonita Centro Cristiano Washington, IA  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Suzette Shreffler White River Cheyenne Menn. Church Busby, MT  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) *write in* \_\_\_\_\_

**Pastoral Leadership Committee** (3year term) vote for 3  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Jerry Kroeker Bethany Mennonite Church Viborg, SD  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Seth Miller Bethesda Mennonite Church Henderson, NE  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Grant Nebel Washington Mennonite Church Washington, IA  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (2020) *write in* \_\_\_\_\_

## Bios for the Ballot of Election/Affirmation

(Assistant Moderator) **Shawn Nolt** is married to Suzanne and they have 4 girls Kindergarten through High School. Shawn is in his 8th year serving as Pastor at Salem Mennonite Church in Shickley, NE. Shawn enjoys cooking and eating at Campfires in their backyard, playing games and other outside activities with family and friends.

(Treasurer) **Kenteth Blossom** and his wife Theresa (Litwiller) Blossom reside in rural Wellman, Iowa and are members at West Union Mennonite Church. They have two children, Meredith (14) and Jesse (10), and a new Bernedoodle puppy named Nala. A graduate of Goshen College, Kent is a Financial Advisor with Everence in their Kalona office and has served in this role since 2004 and earned his CFP® credentials in 2016 as a Certified Financial Planner. He enjoys spending time with his family while playing games like Catan and being active playing soccer, basketball, and baseball.

(Member -at-Large) **S. Roy Kaufman** is a retired pastor and writer living in Freeman, South Dakota, his home community. (His book, *Healing God's Earth*, was published in 2013 by Wipf and Stock.) He served four congregations in the Great Plains including Pulaski Mennonite and Salem Mennonite in Central Plains Mennonite Conference. Roy works a few hours a week as curator at Heritage Hall Museum and Archives in Freeman, which complements his current writing project—a history of the larger Freeman community as a case study for the life cycle of agrarian cultures and the role of rural churches in them. Roy is the father of three grown daughters and has two granddaughters. His wife Loretta died in 2012, but Roy continues the gardening and food preservation he and Loretta enjoyed doing together. Roy is a member of Salem-Zion Mennonite Church of Freeman, and currently is part-time interim pastor for First Mennonite Church in Mt. Lake, Minnesota, Loretta's home congregation.

(Discernment Committee) **Pam Gerig Unruh** (Wayland, IA) has worked as both a teacher and a pastor. Retired from teaching (Math and Bible) she continues to live on their farm with her husband Lowell. She has three adult children (Seth, Marcus and Carly.) She is a member of Sugar Creek Mennonite Church and is currently serving Zion Mennonite (Donnellson) as a part time interim minister.

(Member-at-Large) **Ry O. Siggelkow** (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary) is Pastor of Proclamation, Witness, and Formation at Faith Mennonite Church in Minneapolis and teaches theology and ethics at the University of St. Thomas and Bethel University. He is an avid baseball fan and a self-described pizza connoisseur. Ry lives in northeast Minneapolis with his wife, Marcia, and their three children, Owen, Aleida, and Wendy.

(Outreach & Service Comm.) **Suzette Shreffler** is the Outreach Pastor of the White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church in Busby, MT, which is on the Northern Cheyenne reservation. She is married to Pastor Scott Shreffler. Suzette is the Manger of the Everything Beautiful Thrift Store in Lame Deer, MT and enjoys serving the people, building relationships and facing them towards Jesus. Suzette along with her husband, Scott, minister to juveniles that are incarcerated on the reservation on a weekly basis. She enjoys serving the youth as a Sunday school teacher and leading the Soaring Eagles youth group every week. Suzette has also taken initiative to start missional discipleship groups within the congregation she serves. In her spare time she enjoys creating Native American bead work which her mother taught her as a young girl. HaHo!

(Pastoral Leadership Committee) I, **Jerry Kroeker**, have served as the executive director at Swan Lake Christian Camp for the past twenty years. I live at the camp near Viborg, SD with my wife Judi and three daughters Kayle, Laura and Melissa. I have served in various congregational leadership roles at Bethany Mennonite Church in Freeman, where I am currently serving as lead elder. I hold a Masters of Divinity degree from Sioux Falls Seminary. I have enjoyed hiking the Grand Canyon from rim to rim and I have canoed more than 1000 miles in the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota.

(Pastoral Leadership Committee) **Seth Miller** currently serves as the Pastor of Preaching and Community Life at Bethesda Mennonite Church. He is married to Kristie and has two daughters, Abigail(2) and Susannah (4 mo). They live in Henderson, Nebraska.

*Administering  
the Work of  
Our  
Conference*

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Annual Meeting  
June 17-18, 2016  
Grandview University, Des Moines, IA

### **DELEGATE SESSION 1, Friday morning**

Moderator Margie Caraballo welcomed delegates and introduced Listening Committee members (Mary Lou Farmer, Kim Vu Friesen, Shawn Nolt). Delegates were challenged to channel their feedback toward specific questions:

1. Why did it matter that we had this meeting?
2. What did this meeting produce or what was accomplished at this meeting that will help our conference be more faithful?
3. To what point has our discernment in this meeting brought us?
4. What counsel or guidance are delegates offering the Conference Board, committees and staff so they can lead our conference more ably?
5. What are the seedlings of hope for the church that emerged at this meeting?

Russell Lackey, senior campus pastor of Grand View University and University President Kent Henning welcomed the group and shared a bit about the school.

Several special guests were introduced: Linda Shelly, Marvin Lorenzana & Joe Sawatzky (Mennonite Mission Network), Alex Awad (Bethlehem Bible College), Kent Blossom & Lyle Miller (Everence), Leonard Dow (Oxford Circle Mennonite Church), Rod Hollinger-Janzen (African Inter-Mennonite Mission), Nancy Kauffman (MC USA), Karin Kaufman Wall and Erica Littlewolf (MCC Central States), Joy Lapp (MennoPIN), Jeff Koller & Barb Schrag (Mennonite Disaster Service), Rose Shetler (Goshen College) and Dallas Stutzman (Hesston College)

Table groups were given time to introduce themselves.

Secretary Sherilyn Ortman reviewed minutes of the last annual meeting and highlighted major board decisions of the past year. *Correction: Willis and Nadine Busenitz served five years at Lame Deer Mennonite Church before heading to White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church. **Motion by Nathan Luitjens, seconded by Galen Penner to accept the minutes as amended. Motion passed.***

**Staff report.** David Boshart reviewed the geographic make-up of Central Plains. Two congregations (Bethel Mennonite of Wayland, IA and Lower Deer Creek of Kalona, IA) have withdrawn membership this year. Dave shared the MC USA vision statement and the Central Plains mission statement; reviewed our conference priorities; introduced board and staff members; and shared a graphic outlining departmental spending for the past fiscal year.

Tim Detweiler acknowledged the pastoral transitions that have taken place due to retirement and death. He welcomed the following new pastors to Central Plains: Craig Hofer, Seth Miller, Joshua Lundberg, David Nickel, Joel Beachy, Ry Siggelkow, Chris and Kim Becker, and Michael Swartzendruber.

*Note: Due to the deadline for printing of the Annual Meeting workbook, Michael Swartzendruber was omitted from the "License Toward Ordination" section of the Credentialing Report found on Workbook p. 18. It should read: **Michael Swartzendruber** licensed toward ordination on May 8, 2016 as co-pastor of Wayland Mennonite (Wayland, IA).\**

Tim is deeply grateful for younger pastors entering ministry among us, but reminded delegates of our accompanying commitment to nurture and help these pastors succeed in their ministry. He urges us to tap into the programs and resources available through MC USA and our seminaries to equip new leaders, and also wants us to encourage people to train for pastoral ministry as a possible second career.

Shana Peachey Boshart updated delegates on the work of the Christian Formation Committee (CFC). She defines *Christian formation as the lifelong journey of transformation into the likeness of Christ*. Her vision for CFC is to be a place where members not only contribute to the life of Central Plains conference, but also gain tools for their own life and spiritual journey as a formation leader. Very few of our congregations have dedicated staff to formation (i.e. youth ministry, children's and family pastors), which makes the work of CFC especially important.

CFC has worked at finding ways to foster scripture reading. *Seeking God's Will Together, Becoming God's Faithful Community*, and a series of Word and Spirit downloadable study guides are all examples. CFC plans to offer three webinars for adult Bible study leaders this fall.

Youth Escape is scheduled for July 15-17, 2016 for grades 6-12. Speaker Michele Hershberger will speak to youth about finding their identity in Jesus.

**Committee reports.** Willis Busenitz, Roger Farmer and Lewis Miller, respective chairpersons of the Pastoral Leadership Committee (PLC), Outreach & Service (O & S) and Christian Formation Committee, introduced their committee members and responded to several questions about their work.

Highlights of the past year include:

- Annual Leaders Retreat
- interviewing and credentialing new pastors
- the opportunity to work with all age different age groups
- a two-day committee retreat that planted the seeds of the eventual Word and Spirit resources
- a half-day Lenten retreat in Freeman
- churches participating in the Missional Discipleship Initiative (a collaboration with Mission Network)
- sending a representative to Congo to build relationships and explore opportunities for partnership
- creating a new web page devoted to hospitality in action among our congregations
- Ecuador partnership meetings
- having several persons attend a Sent church planting conference in New Orleans
- sending a letter to President Obama regarding Max Villatoro

Challenges that our committees encounter include:

- scheduling meetings, especially face-to-face
- trying to gather helpful feedback on resources the committee provides
- finding committee members to serve
- staying in touch over vast distances
- overcoming negative stories from our world that compete with hopeful ones
- connecting and coordinating with other committees on strategic planning is challenging, but encouraging

In order to carry out their work more effectively, chairpersons shared these needs:

- more shoulder tapping of potential pastors
- people who will joyfully serve on committees
- increased feedback and shared ideas from individuals/congregations
- increased use of the website and available resources
- a deeper sense of the questions the church and society are asking so committees can focus their energies and respond appropriately

Finally, each committee chair shared hopes and plans for the coming year:

- to keep developing resources and teaching tools
- to develop further participation with the Missional Discipleship Initiative
- webinars for adult Bible study leaders
- hearing more from, and finding ways to connect with congregations
- continuing to support Shana in her many roles, not just within our conference, but within the broader church.
- to proclaim the gospel in lots of places and ways
- to update the conference map
- to host another round of *Tuesdays with Dave*
- to continue to uphold the Villatoro family

**Proposed blueprint.** Central Plains ended its fiscal year \$3,400 in the black and passed through donations of over \$424,000 to other organizations.

Treasurer Colin Hofer expounded on our current financial position. This past year, the board enacted several cost-saving measures, which accounted for \$23,750. Fortunately, the board had been planning for this scenario for a couple years already and acted early in the budget year to trim what it could. The withdrawal of two congregations will result in an estimated \$30,000 less income next year. Colin directed delegates to the list of changes the board is proposing for the 2016-17 fiscal year (Workbook p. 65). The board is also recommending a wage freeze for staff. The resulting blueprint produces a \$20,000 shortfall if giving stays as projected.

***Motion by Dennis Schrock, seconded by Brent Shantz to approve the financial report for 2015-2016 as presented. Motion passed.***

Table groups were given time to respond to four questions:

1. Is running an intentional deficit acceptable to delegates?

2. What do we need to change to meet the budget?
3. What questions or concerns does this raise?
4. Are there any opportunities within this situation?

Delegates expressed significant concern about freezing staff salaries and seemed serious about rather finding ways to generate more income. Are there clear recommended giving guidelines for churches and are they being communicated in clear ways? Some affirmed the efforts of the Stewardship Task Group in recent years, in demonstrating the value of Central Plains. It is crucial that delegates advocate in their congregations, since the average member does not have the same link to the conference as those who attend annual meeting. The board also expressed the need for feedback on how to communicate most effectively: Brochures? Website? Scattered Seeds? Emails? What audience(s)? What frequency?

## **DELEGATE SESSION 2, Friday afternoon**

David Breckbill led delegates in a hymn and Pastor Martha Ramirez led in prayer.

**Covenant of Spiritual Practices overview.** David Boshart reviewed the evolution of the covenant document. One year ago, delegates were asked 1) Would they approve congregations within Central Plains continuing to move toward a covenant relationship model, and 2) If congregations had chance to study the document through the coming year, would we be ready to take action at this meeting? At that time, delegates had indicated, “Yes” to both questions.

The proposed covenant attempts to address some gaps in our conference by-laws, as well as to remind us that our ethical positions arise out of our spiritual practices rather than just moral sensibilities. After a lengthy introduction to the current draft of the Covenant of Spiritual Practices, table groups were asked to respond to two questions:

1. Based on your study of the Covenant of Spiritual Practices and what you’ve heard here today, does the Covenant of Spiritual Practices help our congregations to be more faithful in discernment and mission?
2. Will your congregations and our conference as a whole be better off with the Covenant of Spiritual Practices than without it?

Based on their positive response, the group was asked a third question: *Shall we adopt the Covenant of Spiritual Practices for our common life?* Votes were cast by holding up a green card (yes) or a red card (no). Cards were collected and Tellers Wilbur Yoder and Linda Boshart counted votes, which were 111 (89.5%) green and 13 (10.5%) red.

Persons voting against adoption were given time to voice their questions and concerns, which ranged from questions of authority (Who decides if an issue is “significant,” and who are these “qualified teachers” the document mentions?) to specific spiritual practices (What does it mean to “study the Bible with neighbors and strangers?” Am I committing to evangelize?) to general preparedness (there is a lot of variety in how congregations have engaged the document/study up to this point) to personal well-

being (Does the conference understand how damaging this can be for individuals personally if there is such a “process” needed for certain situations—i.e. sexuality?)

### **DELEGATE SESSION 3—Saturday morning**

Darvin Yoder led an opening hymn.

Don Kempf, coordinator for the Ecuador and Venezuela partnership, updated delegates. Political and economic upheaval in Venezuela is very concerning. Food lines, lack of medicines in hospitals, and serious hunger issues lead to increasing violence. Help from social relief programs is being refused. Seth Miller, Pastor of Outreach and Preaching at Bethesda Mennonite (Henderson, NE) offered a prayer for the situation.

Denominational Minister Nancy Kauffman brought greetings from MC USA. At her invitation, Lyle Miller of Everence informed delegates that the Lilly Endowment has awarded \$1 million to MC USA for the benefit of pastors in MC USA and the Conservative Mennonite Conference in areas of debt relief and financial planning.

Nancy reported on the state of the denomination. Despite current struggles, the number of persons wishing to file Ministerial Leadership Information (MLI) forms is still high; MLIs are used extensively to match searching congregations with pastoral candidates. She urged us not to take Central Plains for granted, and cited as signs of hope and encouragement our excellent staff; the number of youth and children in attendance; the presence of youth delegates and the ways that several resources created within Central Plains are serving the broader church. She exhorted us to continue pursuing the covenant model as a means of maintaining the relationships we have with one another, and to expect God's continued presence with us.

David followed up briefly on the covenant decision from the previous session. He regrets that, for some, the process felt rushed, though there was a strong sense that the group was ready for the decision. One unfortunate aspect of the process was a discrepancy in the published end time of the session; leaders were operating under the assumption that the session ended 30 minutes earlier than it actually did and more time could have been devoted to discussion. Dave also offered a pastoral word that, though we have a high ethical compulsion to do everything right away, we are entering this covenant as disciples and learners. The call of the spiritual practices is a call to make ourselves available to learn new things and to be available to the work of the Spirit. Conference leaders are committed to providing additional resources to lead us in the development of these capacities.

Assistant Moderator Sid Burkey presented the slate, along with the following additions for positions not yet filled at the time of printing the Workbook:

1. Esther Buller, Bethel Mennonite (Mt. Lake, MN), Discernment
2. Rachelle Luitjens, Sugar Creek Mennonite (Wayland, IA), CFC
3. Stan Harder, First Mennonite (Lincoln, NE), CFC

***Motion by Donna Minter, seconded by Todd Jones to receive slate as presented. Motion by Lewis Miller, seconded by Donna Minter to approve the slate. Motion passed.***

Colin Hofer was available to answer final questions about the 2016-17 spending blueprint. Hearing none, ***motion by Colin Hofer, seconded by Nathan Luitjens to approve the blueprint as proposed. Motion passed.***

**Missional Discipleship Initiative.** Marvin Lorenzana of Mennonite Mission Network updated delegates on the Missional Discipleship Initiative (MDI), which aims to cultivate a disciple-making culture within local congregations through the use of “Missional Discipleship groups”—groups of two or three people who meet regularly for accountability, scripture reading and prayer. Suzette Shreffler and Joetta Schlabach spoke about their experience with MDI. Nick Detweiler Stoddard connected MDI groups to the fifth spiritual practice in the covenant—studying the Bible with neighbors and strangers. Making disciples relationally and intentionally is essential for the continued prosperity of the denomination.

**Clergy misconduct policy.** Tim Detweiler introduced a revised clergy policy. A Ministerial Misconduct Team is now in place within Central Plains and includes Sharon Waltner, chair (Freeman, SD); Shawn Nolt (Shickley, NE); Karen Harvey (Kalona, IA) and Paul Conditt (Cedar Falls, IA). These individuals have received training from Nancy Kauffman on the Ministerial Misconduct Policy from MC USA.

Pastors, Tim told the group, have a high commitment to live within the high ethical standards congregations expect. But pastors also face incredible pressure, which can make them vulnerable to bad behavior. Clergy self-care is very important. The MC USA policy has been revised and is currently being reviewed by a legal team. Once in hand, Tim plans to offer training event for all conference credentialed clergy.

Tim and Shawn Nolt used a PowerPoint presentation to brief delegates on the various steps of dealing with a case of misconduct.

Table groups were given time to discuss whether their congregational leaders, congregants and ministers know what constitutes misconduct and, if not, what they need to be better equipped to do so? What areas of ministerial misconduct would they like to see addressed through training seminars, and for whom?

#### **DELEGATE SESSION 4—Saturday afternoon**

Pastor Chong Xeng Thao of St. Paul (MN) Hmong Mennonite Church opened the session with prayer.

**Peace mug.** Nick Detweiler-Stoddard, representing the Peace & Justice Task Group of O & S, presented two peace mugs to Suzette Shreffler and Willis Busenitz, as manager and board chair of the Everything Beautiful Thrift Store in Lame Deer, MT. The peace mug is awarded annually to recognize people or groups who exemplify Christ's way of peacemaking. Everything Beautiful (Emahpeva Netao'o Hova'ha in Cheyenne) was nominated not just as a business, but a ministry to the community. The organization

“seeks wholeness and total well-being among neighbors and the neighborhood.” A special part of the award was an announcement that just earlier in the weekend, Everything Beautiful had been awarded a \$300,000 grant toward construction of its new building.

**Church planting resource.** Matt Troyer-Miller, chair of the Church Planting Strategy Team of O & S, presented a new resource for congregations, developed from input the Central Plains delegation received at the Sent church planting conference. Traditionally, church growth has been described in terms of “bodies, budget, and building.” The Strategy Team suggests rather measuring congregational *vitality* using five priorities: prayer, people, time, finances and facilities. Matt shared a Congregational Vitality Scorecard and suggested several ways to use it personally and within the congregation. The Scorecard will be made available on the Developing Congregations page of the Central Plains website ([centralplainsmc.org](http://centralplainsmc.org)).

**Shalom Readers Club.** Ellen Miller, Shalom Readers Club coordinator for the East Region, shared an update about the Shalom Readers Club. Joan Friesen is coordinator for the West Region. Ellen suggested three ways delegates can support Shalom Readers: 1. Deliver the information packet they received at Annual Meeting to someone with Christian education in their congregation. 2. Encourage someone to buy the new books for the church library. 3. Check out one of the books themselves and share it with someone.

**Christian formation resources.** Shana Peachey Boshart and Lewis Miller presented several formation websites:

- The Gathering Place, an online gathering place for youth workers ([thegatheringplace.us](http://thegatheringplace.us))
- [AnabaptistFaithFormation.org](http://AnabaptistFaithFormation.org)
- Word & Spirit, a collection of resources developed by CFC to help congregations to do the covenant practices. These are mostly downloadable one page guides and are available through the conference website.

The pair led delegates in an abbreviated prayer service from *Take Our Moments and Our Days*, an Anabaptist prayer book. Via video, Pastor Adam Harder Nussbaum spoke of how Shalom Mennonite Church (Eau Claire, WI) is using *Take Our Moments and Our Days* in its worship.

Delegates were given time to fill out discernment forms that were provided to each table. These are helpful as the Discernment Committee attempts to find officers and committee members in the future.

Margie Caraballo offered a prayer for new and continuing officers and committee members.

**“Joyfully Following Jesus.”** An open mic time afforded delegates the chance to share stories of individuals and congregations “Joyfully Following Jesus.” Many people shared stories from their churches.

**Listening Committee.** The Listening Committee summarized its report. The full report will be passed on to next year's Annual Meeting Task Group, as well as to staff and the Conference Board.

**Closing.** In response to the covenant decision, Heather Herschberger led the group in singing, “Renew Your Church.”

Members of the South Dakota pastor cluster invited delegates to attend the 2017 Annual Meeting in South Dakota on June 15-18, location TBD.

Dave referenced a petition that had circulated during the weekend protesting ownership of assault type weapons. The Council of Committees will process the topic at its August meeting, August 26-27, 2016 in southeast IA.

On behalf of the Conference Board, Secretary Sherilyn Ortman expressed gratitude to all who contributed to annual meeting:

- the Annual Meeting Task Group and local hosts, Christ Community and Des Moines Mennonite Churches
- Worship planners and leaders
- Speaker Leonard Dow
- Workshop presenters
- Grand View University facilities and staff
- Behind-the-scenes workers that helped the event run smoothly and documented it: Monica Clem (office manager), Stan Harder (photography), technology coordinators
- Childcare facilitators
- Central Plains staff and all others who prepared presentations and remarks for delegate sessions
- delegates and guests for engagement around discernment topics
- others who may have been overlooked

Margie Mejia-Caraballo adjourned meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sherilyn Ortman, secretary

*\*Also omitted from the Annual Meeting Workbook: Membership at Zion Mennonite (Donnellson, IA) is 147 persons.*

## Summary of Central Plains Board activity 2016-17

Meeting dates:

August 27, 2016 at East Union Mennonite Church in Kalona.

November 15, 2016 via Zoom

January 10, 2017 via Zoom

March 6, 2017 via zoom

August 27:

**Discussion:**

Review of current strategies for communicating with churches in conference; sabbatical proposal for Shana Boshart; listening committee review; executive conference minister's report; and partner in mission applications and new ministries in partnerships applications.

**Actions:**

Elizabeth Troyer-Miller made motion to accept the new ministries application for partner in mission. Seconded by Gene Troyer. Passed unanimously.

New ministries grant applications:

Ted Lewis \$2500.00 Motion made for new ministries grant application for Ted Lewis for holistic witness where there is no Anabaptist presence. Paula Martin made motion seconded by Sid Burkey.

John Glassbrenner \$500.00 John is a member of Shalom in Eau Claire, WI and has become an Anabaptist. Wishes to begin M.Div. program at AMBS long distance. Motion for John Glassbrenner to receive \$500.00 made by Elizabeth Troyer-Miller seconded by Gene Troyer.

Jill Hofer requesting grant for \$1000.00. She is at AMBS working toward chaplaincy. Motion made by Colin Hofer to fund this, seconded by Paula Martin

Suzette Shreffler requesting scholarship for the STARR training in Minneapolis. Asking for \$1250.00. Motion to provide funds for Suzette made by Gene Troyer seconded by Paula Martin.

All motions passed and carried.

**November 15, 2016****Discussion:**

Financial report and holiday fund appeal; pastoral openings and pastoral transitions; response to webinars; outreach/missions reports; employee health insurance for Tim Detweiler; and Shana Peachy Boshart's proposed sabbatical.

**Action:**

Motion made, seconded, and passed to accept proposal regarding Tim's health insurance. Motion was made by Sid Burkey to accept Shana's sabbatical and was seconded by Gene Troyer. Unanimously accepted.

**January 10, 2017****Discussion:**

Reviewed financial status of conference; reviewed conference minister report; upcoming staff evaluation; convention in Orlando and who will be attending.

**Action:**

No actions were taken at this meeting.

**March 6, 2017****Discussion:**

Conference minister report; gift discernment process and positions to be filled; conference ministry staff evaluation; credentials for Joetta Schlabach and responses of East Iowa Pastor Cluster; proposed budget; high-mileage conference car; New Ministries Grant proposal from Mark Van Steenwyk.

**Action:**

Sid Burkey made a motion to accept the conference minister report as presented. Motion was seconded by Colin Hofer. Passed.

Motion made by Colin Hofer to accept budget. Seconded by Gene Troyer. Passed and accepted. Tabled New Ministries Grant Proposal from Mark Van Steenwyk until next meeting.



*A  
Covenant  
of  
Spiritual Practices*

*for  
Central Plains  
Mennonite Conference*

**Adopted, June 17, 2016  
by the delegates at Annual Meeting  
in Des Moines, IA by 89%**

## **Introduction to a Covenant of Spiritual Practices for Central Plains Mennonite Conference**

### **Maintaining our unity through belief and practice**

The Kanagy survey of credentialed leaders tells us that a majority of Central Plains pastors value unity where we disagree.<sup>1</sup> This is something we should recognize and celebrate. However, our value of unity doesn't mean we always know how to 'maintain this unity in the bond of peace.' (Ephesians 4:3)

Currently, our conference and denominational by-laws refer to beliefs we hold in common. Commonly held beliefs are essential for maintaining communal identity. Our *Confession of Faith in Mennonite Perspective* (1995), or any succeeding confession, will continue to guide the faith and life of our conference.

The Central Plains Mennonite Conference bylaws say that any congregation may become a member of the conference if the congregation:

- Is located in the Geographical Area;
- Subscribes to the Biblical faith as expressed in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective 1995* or any succeeding *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*;
- Agrees to follow the principles and guidelines set forth in these Bylaws;
- Properly completes an application in the form prescribed by the Conference Board; and
- Is approved for membership in the Conference by a two-thirds majority vote of the Delegate Body

Two of these requirements are cast in terms of commitments, but we do not explain to what extent these commitments are mandatory. We don't define what we mean by "subscribing" to a confession, nor do we specify how a congregation "follows the principles and guidelines." In other words, our bylaws do not address *how* and *to what extent* the beliefs we "hold" *are binding or how we handle situations when we disagree* on these things.

Presumably, a congregation that wants to be Mennonite and that meets the criteria for membership in a Mennonite conference is doing so because it assents to commonly held Mennonite beliefs. It is reasonable for the conference to expect that member congregations actually manifest these beliefs in their common life. Even so, our bylaws anticipate times when congregations "may not always be in agreement on all significant levels of faith and practice."

Yet, experience has shown that it is difficult on a practical level to hold one another accountable for a difference in beliefs. On a relational level, divisions occur when we expect everyone to agree on everything we say we believe.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kanagy, *2014 Survey of Credentialed Leaders in Mennonite Church USA*, table 24.

There is a close relationship between belief and spiritual practice. That is, our beliefs tell us what we value and they orient us toward how we practice our faith. As we live out our faith by following Jesus' commandments, those experiences shape our beliefs. In all of this, the Holy Spirit is the counselor who reminds us of everything Jesus taught us and who enables us to obey (John 14:15-26). We can trust that as our sisters and brothers live out the spiritual practices outlined in this covenant, the Holy Spirit will shape their beliefs.

Since belief and spiritual practice are so closely related, this document proposes that we agree to be accountable to one another not only for holding common beliefs, but also for implementing a set of common spiritual practices. Commonly held beliefs are essential for maintaining communal identity. Our *Confession of Faith in Mennonite Perspective* (1995), or any succeeding confession, will continue to guide the faith and life of our conference.

Commonly held practices may be even more important for maintaining communal identity. First, it is difficult to see someone's beliefs, but it is not difficult to observe their practices. Second, spiritual practices shape our beliefs. As we obey Jesus, we come to know Jesus, and this knowing becomes belief. Third, spiritual practices shared by the community powerfully shape the identity of the community.

This document also proposes that when congregations come to differ on a commonly held belief, they will implement a specific set of discernment practices that are described below.

### **Biblical discernment and the guidance Holy Spirit**

As Mennonites, we aspire to be a biblical people.<sup>2</sup> When we face challenging matters of faith and life, our churches turn to the Bible for help and guidance. However, the most recent Mennonite Church USA Member Profile showed that fewer than 17% of Mennonite Church USA participates in weekly small groups for discussion, Bible study or prayer outside of Sunday School.<sup>3</sup> This would suggest that while we turn to the Bible in the face of challenging matters of faith and life, the biblical story may not be shaping our daily lives.

Our Confession affirms that the Holy Spirit "dwells in each child of God," "enables our life in Christian community," "calls people to repentance, convicts them of sin, and leads into righteousness all those who open themselves to the working of the Spirit...The Spirit teaches us, reminds us of Jesus' word, guides us into all truth, and empowers us to speak the word of God with boldness."<sup>4</sup> In practice, however, many Mennonites are less oriented toward what the Spirit can do through them and more oriented toward living obediently on their own strength. Diligent, prayerful, biblical discernment is the primary means by which we open ourselves to

---

<sup>2</sup> What it means to be a biblical people may vary but as Anabaptists, we hold to a Jesus-centered way of understanding the Bible.

<sup>3</sup> Kanagy, *MC Frequencies Report*, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> *Confession of Faith in Mennonite Perspective*, Article 3.

the Spirit leading us toward God's will for us. As we live in faithfulness, we trust the Spirit to work and therefore we do not need to control the outcome of discernment.

### **A covenant of common spiritual practices**

Covenants help us maintain relationships with God and each other. Baptism, marriage, and ordination are common covenantal relationships that church members enter. This covenant proposes a way for members of Central Plains Mennonite Conference to give ourselves to God's transforming work in our lives so we can know fullness of life in God's reign even when we differ.

A biblical view of covenant understands covenant as a relational vision that originates with God and God's hope for blessing and redeeming the world. Human actors in covenant making do not negotiate the terms of this ideal vision. The covenant is "received."<sup>5</sup> Human actors receive the covenant out of a heartfelt desire to honor the gift promised in the covenant. By lining up behaviors with God's vision, recipients of the covenant make themselves available to participate in and bear witness to God's hope for all people and all creation.

*Our Purposeful Plan* helps us maintain our common life as a church and helps us live out our calling to be God's people. The *Purposeful Plan* envisions "a culture of high expectations for people who call themselves members of the church."<sup>6</sup> It also describes twelve traits of the missional church.<sup>7</sup> These traits are described as "signposts" that indicate we are moving in the right direction. These twelve traits are all expressed in terms of behaviors or spiritual *practices*. If these traits are indeed the signposts that tell us we are moving in the right direction, related spiritual *practices* offer a common path for those who want to participate in and bear witness to God's transforming work in the world. A covenant that calls us to these practices may enable us to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

---

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 9:8-17; 15:1-21; Exodus 6:2-13; Exodus 19:1-25; Exodus 24:1-8, esp. v. 7; Deuteronomy 4:9-14; Joshua 24; Jeremiah 31:31-37; Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 21:14-24; Acts 3:17-26; Hebrews 7:11-28

<sup>6</sup> *Our Purposeful Plan* (2014), p. 6. See appendix 2 for the list of missional traits.

<sup>7</sup> The original source edited by Lois Barrett, *Treasure in Clay Jars*, lists these as "indicators" of a missional church.

## **Being God's Faithful Community: A Covenant of Spiritual Practices for Central Plains Mennonite Conference**

### **The Covenant**

*In response to God's unqualified love for us, we covenant to common practices through which we submit ourselves completely to the purposes of God who longs to transform us into the likeness of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup>*

### **The Spiritual Practices**

These are the common covenantal practices through which we seek transformation toward Christlikeness and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

1. We will worship God<sup>9</sup> as the central act of our common life whenever the church is gathered. (PP Trait 10)
2. We will practice prayer, fasting and generous giving to separate ourselves from the influence of the principalities and powers of this age and to make us available to fully participate in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. (PP Trait 2, 4, 5, 6)
3. We will prayerfully study the Bible together weekly in our congregations and whenever the conference gathers, guided by qualified teachers<sup>10</sup> for the purpose of increasing our competence in reading, interpreting, and applying the scriptures in an Anabaptist perspective to our everyday lives and to the critical issues of faith we face in the world.<sup>11</sup> (PP Trait 1, 2, 3)
4. We will accept and offer hospitality,<sup>12</sup> believing it creates the context for God's kingdom to appear in our midst, particularly as we minister to the poor, the hungry, the prisoner and the stranger. (PP Trait 7, 9, 12)
5. We will study the Bible with neighbors and strangers, inviting them to become disciples of Jesus. (PP Trait 7, 9)<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> This offers several key components. 1) there is a clear statement of God's ultimate longing for creation. 2) it reflects the Trinity; 3) it is embedded in the greatest commandments and therefore honors our most basic biblical commitment; 4) the vision is embodied in an incarnate person, Jesus, rather than conceptual commitments or virtues; and 5) the work of transformation is located in the power of the Holy Spirit. This offers a covenant that is precisely aligned with Vision: Healing and Hope and allows us to surrender our pretension to perfection.

<sup>9</sup> Worship of God includes adoration, thanksgiving, confession of our sins to God and one another, assurance of forgiveness, intercession and communion.

<sup>10</sup> One might ask how this practice is different than attending Sunday School. By naming this a basic practice of our covenantal life, our conference would need to re-appropriate *significant* structural and program resources to calling and equipping qualified Bible teachers and assessing teaching. Developing common understandings around what it means to be a qualified teacher will be an important next step in this process. There would be good biblical basis for doing so. See James 3:1, I Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11, II Timothy 4:3, Hebrews 5:12. See Appendix 4.

<sup>11</sup> Applying the scriptures in an Anabaptist perspective is often referred to as the "hermeneutic of obedience." (See Stuart Murray's *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 18:1-8; I Kings 17:8-24; Luke 10:1-20; Luke 24:13-35; Romans 12:9-13; Hebrews 13:2

6. We will practice peacemaking by extending loving-kindness and forgiveness to our brothers and sisters as well as to our neighbors and enemies. (PP Trait 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).

These spiritual practices will help to form our Annual Meeting agenda. Our Annual Meeting will become a time of equipping congregations to do these practices, and a space where we share testimonies of how we are being “transformed into the likeness of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit” through these spiritual practices.

### **A Process of Discernment for Differing Beliefs and Practices**

At our 2012 regional meetings, it was very clear that most of our congregations express love for one another and trust that other congregations are sincere in their desire to follow Jesus. Because we love and trust each other, we covenant to submit to clear and reliable pathways for communal biblical discernment when considering beliefs and practices that differ from the broader church. Speaking clearly and listening well, we agree to the following pathways for discernment. (PP Trait 12)

When a congregation is considering beliefs or practices that differ from the beliefs and practices outlined in our conference by-laws, *Confession of Faith in Mennonite Perspective* (1995), *Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love*, and *A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership* (the polity manual), the congregation will:

- 1) Begin by articulating how the beliefs and practices we hold in common (named above) bear witness to God’s intended purposes for the church and the world. (PP Trait 5, 7)
- 2) Accept guidance from the Conference Board in designing a trustworthy process of discernment. *Seeking God’s Will Together* will be used to prepare and equip the congregation to enter this process. This process will assume the interpretative commitments outlined in the modified Wesleyan Quadrilateral in Appendix 4. (PP Trait 5, 8)
- 3) Articulate the new belief or practice to brothers and sisters in the conference in terms of how it bears witness to God’s intended purposes for the church and the world. (PP Trait 5, 11) (In other words, we do not choose positions based on our preferences and then develop the theology that supports them. Our faith claims are expressed and tested in terms of how they are aligned with God’s purposes for the church and the world.)
- 4) Enter into a thorough and substantive process of biblical discernment with a peer congregation that embraces the conference’s articulated beliefs and practices. This process will be determined by the conference board in consultation with the two congregations and teacher. It would not be expected, or likely helpful, that such pairings would be with congregations that represent polar positions.
- 5) Be led in their study by a qualified teacher offered by the conference board in consultation with participating congregations. *Teachers will be chosen based on their ability to lead an honest inquiry, not for their ability to lead toward a predetermined outcome.* (PP Trait 7, 8,)

---

<sup>13</sup> The teaching of the Word was the highest priority to which the apostles gave themselves (Acts 6:1-7). It was the basic means of sharing the Gospel. In the places in the world where the church is growing, biblical and theological education are the primary methods of calling people to Christ

## Some Implications Of Adopting This Covenant

These practices provide the basis for a new covenant for Central Plains Mennonite Conference that all members would embrace to fulfill our missional calling. The covenant articulates the basic understandings for how all in the church will *practice* our common life in support of our common vision as described in our formational documents. Deepening our experiences of these practices then frames our agenda when we gather as a conference.

This covenant does require a new “self-emptying” (*kenosis*). This self-emptying reflects the self-emptying of Jesus in obedience (Philippians 2:5-11). Congregations will have to surrender the claim to control the decisions of other congregations. Instead, the measure of faithfulness to the covenant will be seen in the integrity with which the church enacts these spiritual *practices*.

This covenant is aligned with our conference bylaws, our Central Plains strategic plan and *Our Purposeful Plan* of Mennonite Church USA. It fills in the gap that currently exists in our stated understanding of membership by describing *how* congregations and the conference will work together in response to differences of belief. It lays out practical steps for holding congregations together in healthy accountability. Pastors are accountable to the Pastoral Leadership Committee for the commitments they make to the church at their credentialing, including the promise to “respect and be guided by the beliefs and practices of the Mennonite church.”<sup>14</sup>

The basis for membership remains the same, as stated in the by-laws. What changes is that we expect our spiritual *practices*, not only our *beliefs*, to be the basis for maintaining our unity. In addition to holding one another accountable for adhering to shared beliefs, we will also hold one another accountable for adhering to shared spiritual practices. By increasing our openness to the Holy Spirit through these practices, we hope to vitalize individual congregations and enhance our fellowship as a community of congregations. By doing so, we can allow for *some* difference in beliefs, trusting that the Holy Spirit will be at work in those with whom we differ because we are all being transformed into the likeness of Christ through our spiritual practices. We agree that when a congregation’s beliefs begin to differ from our commonly held positions, the congregation will turn to the practice of communal biblical discernment. In doing so, we submit ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit through an accountable discernment process.

By embracing this covenant, we agree that when a congregation has completed the discernment process with integrity and has reached a position of variance in belief, we will apply the reasoning of Gamaliel: “If their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But it is of God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God” (Acts 5:38-39). *Such a result should not be understood as a change in the position of the conference or denomination.* Regardless of the result of the study on the beliefs of the congregation, the congregation would remain accountable for the practices in the covenant.

---

<sup>14</sup> Minister’s Manual, p. 153

## Appendix 1

### Contrast of Contractual and Covenantal Relationships

Contractual Relationships	Covenantal Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals choose and create community as they deem necessary</li> <li>• Fosters a union of <i>interests</i> (is this church helping me grow, meeting my needs?)</li> <li>• Locate religious authority and accountability in the individual's <i>personal relationship with God</i></li> <li>• Are conditional: If the community ceases to meet my needs, the relationship is legitimately nullified</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community is the choice and gift of God</li> <li>• Fosters a union of <i>persons</i> (we give of our very selves to each other)</li> <li>• Locate authority and accountability in the <i>church's mutual discernment</i>.</li> <li>• Are unconditional: Grounded in the self-giving, steadfast love of God.</li> </ul>

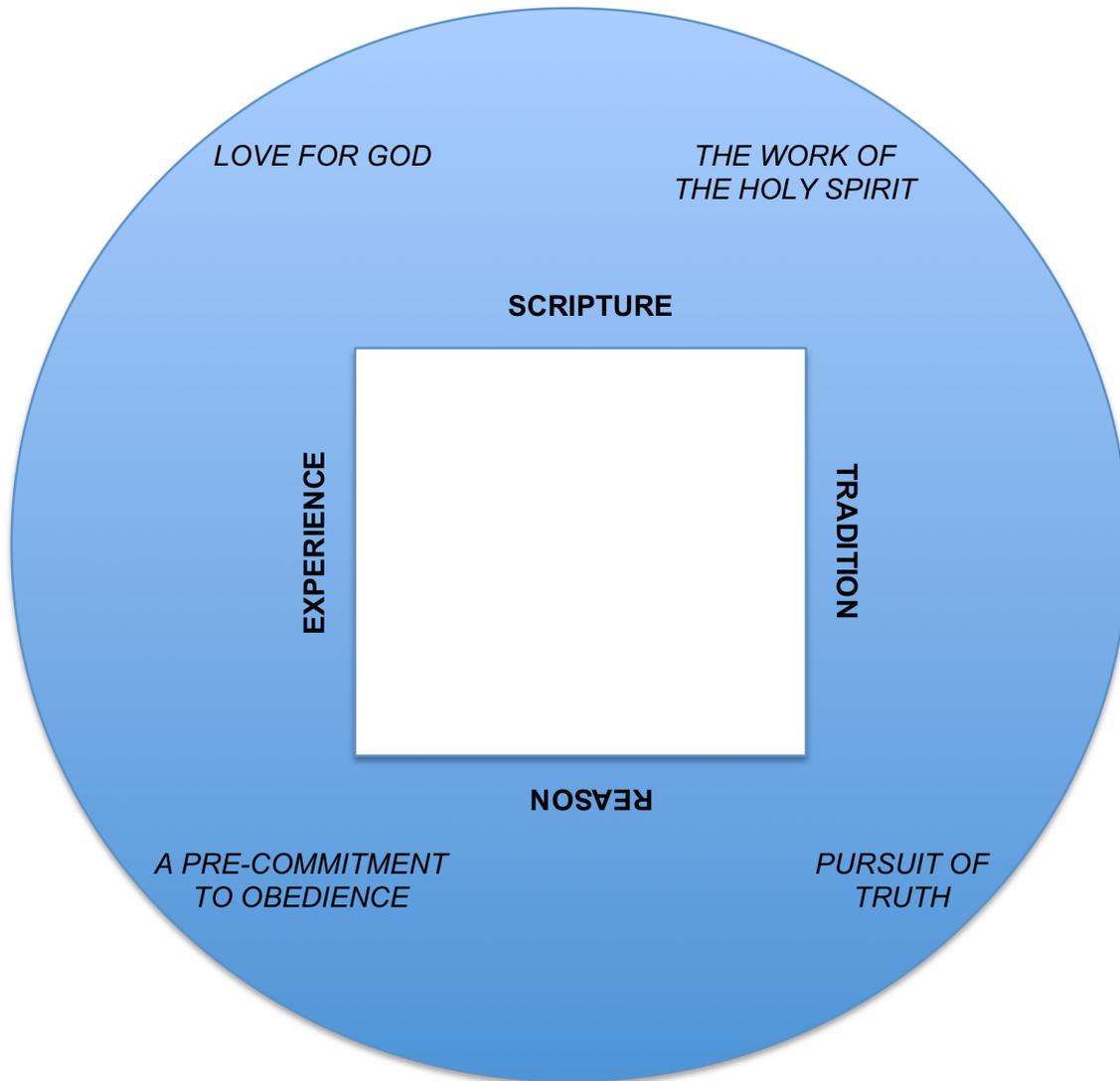
- Rodney Clapp, Families at the Crossroads, 1993

## Appendix 2 Twelve Characteristics of Missional Congregations

1. *Missional character trait:* The missional church proclaims the Gospel.  
*Signpost:* The story of God's salvation is faithfully repeated in a multitude of different ways.
2. *Missional character trait:* The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus.  
*Signpost:* The disciple identity is held by all; growth in discipleship is expected of all.
3. *Missional character trait:* The Bible is normative in this church's life. It sets the standard for our life as a people.  
*Signpost:* The church reads the Bible together in the light of Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to learn God's good and gracious intent for all creation, the way of salvation, and the identity and purpose of life together.
4. *Missional character trait:* The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord.  
*Signpost:* In its corporate life and public witness, the church is consciously seeking to conform to its Lord instead of the multitude of cultures in which it finds itself.
5. *Missional character trait:* The church seeks to discern God's specific missional vocation for the entire community and for all of its members.  
*Signpost:* The church has made its 'mission' its priority, and in overt and communal ways is seeking to be and do 'what God is calling us to know, be, and do.'
6. *Missional character trait:* A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another.  
*Signpost:* Acts of self-sacrifice on behalf of one another both in the church and in the locale characterize the generosity of the community.
7. *Missional character trait:* The members are engaged in a community that practices reconciliation and embraces the diversity that God has created here on earth. *Signpost:* The church community is moving beyond restricted cultural expressions toward becoming a community that is more diverse in its racial, ethnic, age, gender and socio-economic makeup.
8. *Missional character trait:* People within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love.  
*Signpost:* Substantial time is spent with one another, building trust and holding ourselves accountable to each other in love.
9. *Missional character trait:* The church practices hospitality.  
*Signpost:* Welcoming the stranger into the midst of the community plays a central role.
10. Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God's presence and God's promised future.  
*Signpost:* There is significant and meaningful engagement in communal worship of God, reflecting appropriately and addressing the culture of those who worship together.
11. *Missional character trait:* This community has a vital public witness.  
*Signpost:* The church makes an observable impact that contributes to the transformation of life, society, and human relationships.
12. *Missional character trait:* There is a recognition that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God.  
*Signpost:* There is a widely held perception that this church is going somewhere—and that somewhere is more faithfully lived life in the reign of God.

### Appendix 3

A modified Wesleyan Quadrilateral that is aligned with an Anabaptist hermeneutic (approach to biblical interpretation).



Quoting Debra Hirsch: “Incorporating *Scripture* (as one’s primary source), *reason* (recognizing God has created us as rational beings able to comprehend and discover God’s truth), *tradition* (drawing on wisdom of the people of God, both past and present) along with *experience* (how we *feel*) helps us minimize the potential for being led astray or seeing emotions alone as the final authority.

“The work and guidance of the Holy Spirit is also crucial. The Spirit first inspired the writing of the Scriptures and continues to inspire and guide us as we seek to interpret them, our history and personal experience. The Spirit bring us into the knowledge of God.”

Hirsch enhances the four components of the quadrilateral “with a commitment to the leading of the Holy Spirit, approaching scripture with a *pre-commitment to obey it* and guided by our primary commitment to the *love of God*, which is a necessary guard against idolatry and deception.

“The quadrilateral’s balanced approach validates our human *experience*- how we *feel* – but also protects it within the boundaries of *Scripture, tradition, and reason*. When these are governed by love for God, pursuit of truth, and a pre-commitment to obedience, no matter what the outcome, we have a powerful combination to guide us determining God’s truth and will for us.”

- Debra Hirsch, *Redeeming Sex: Naked Conversations about Sexuality and Spirituality*, Downers Grove, IL: Intersivity Press

## Appendix 4 Qualified Teachers

In a process of discernment at our Annual Meeting in 2015, conference delegates identified the biblical qualities and expectations consistent with qualified teachers. Based on that feedback, here are the qualities that people like to see in those leading Bible study in the congregation. These qualities are not to be seen as minimal requirements, but rather as qualities teachers would identify with and aspire to.

### Spiritual qualities

- Love for students and discovery
- Strong and sincere faith
- Full of wisdom and the Spirit
- Pure-hearted
- Patient and kind
- Respected and in good standing in the community of faith
- Evidences the fruits of the Spirit
- Not quarrelsome or perpetuating controversy

### Expectations

- Is diligent in his/her own study (a lifelong learner) and continually builds his/her knowledge of the scriptures
- Carefully prepares learning experiences using lesson plans with clear objectives
- Teaches with an awareness of the context of each scripture text in the long arc of the whole biblical story
- “Opens” the scriptures to the students as opposed to reducing the scriptures to pre-determined platitudes
- Teaches with an expectation that Bible study will produce change and growth toward obedience and spiritual maturity
- Speaks the truth in love, aspiring to create a learning space in which all can participate

### Types of teachers in the Covenant of Spiritual Practices

The Covenant of Spiritual Practices refers to two types of “qualified teachers.” The first type leads Bible study in congregational contexts, as in spiritual practices #3 and #5. Here, we are referring to those who lead Bible study for youth or adults in

congregational settings. We suggest the following qualifications for these teachers:

- attendance in a Mennonite congregation for a minimum of two years
- commitment to be guided by Mennonite theology and an Anabaptist hermeneutic (i.e., method of biblical interpretation) as described in Appendix 3
- willingness to attend teacher trainings to improve his or her skills in teaching and Bible study

The second type is the qualified teacher referred to in step 5 of “a process of discernment for differing beliefs and practices.” Here, we are referring to the person who will facilitate the study with the congregation considering differing beliefs or practices along with the congregation who agrees to study with them. The qualifications for these teachers include:

- training in biblical studies from a recognized program
- use of the Anabaptist approach to biblical interpretation (hermeneutic) described in Appendix 3
- commitment to the process and standards outlined in the covenant

Central Plains Mennonite Conference encourages each member congregation to identify and train a cohort of people with gifts for teaching and facilitating Bible study in congregational settings. The congregation would affirm these people for their gifts, encourage them to see themselves as Bible study leaders, and offer them training to improve their skills. The conference will offer no less than two trainings a year in which congregational teachers can participate.

-Discernment drawn from: Acts 6:1-7; Acts 5:33-39; I Corinthians 12:27-30; Ephesians 4:11-16; I Timothy 1:3-7; II Timothy 2:22-26; 4:3-5; Hebrews 5:12; James 3:1-2

*Our  
Conference  
Body*

Contact information for our board members and committees found on pages 62 - 64 is not available in the online version of the workbook. See the hard copy of the workbook provided to your church's office for this information.

## Congregational Statistics

CONGREGATION	<u>2017'</u>	CONGREGATION	<u>2017'</u>
Ashland Chr. Fellowship	*	Lao Chr. Fellowship	*
Beemer	133	Manson	124
Bellwood	178	Mercy	*
Bethany	185	Milford	147
Bethel	190	The Mennonite Worker	*
Bethesda	1,013	Northside Chr. Fam. Ctr.	*      3
Casa de Oracion Emanuel	*	Pleasant View	35
Cedar Falls	49	Rochester	24
Christ Community	63	Salem, Freeman	343
Des Moines	75	Salem, Shickley	178
East Union	167	Salem-Zion	310
Eicher Emmanuel	*	Sermon on the Mount	14
Emmanuel, MN	77	Shalom	*
Faith	131	Sugar Creek	300
Fargo-Moorhead FMF	*	Saint Paul Hmong Mennonite Church	*
First, Iowa City	329	Templo Alabanza	*
First, Lincoln	102	Third Way	38
First, Mt. Lake	83	Washington	117
Hutterthal	181	Wayland	*
Iglesia Cristiana El Balsamo	*	Wellman	*
Iglesia Menonita Centro Cristiano	*	West Union	*
Iglesia Torre Fuerte	35	White River Cheyenne	62
Julesburg	*	Wood River	62
Kalona	320	Zion	*
Lame Deer	43		
		<b>Total</b>	5,111

\*      did not submit a statistical form



*Financing  
the Work of  
Our  
Conference*



## Stewardship Task Group Report

In spite of our budgeting a \$20,000 deficit we were blessed with a small surplus for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. We had slightly lower than budgeted giving but our staff was once again very frugal on the expense side of things. We appreciate all the contributions! This year we also raised just over \$13,000 for the purchase of a different conference car. These funds are not reflected in the income line of the financial statement. The money was put in an account in the New Ministries fund to be held until the car is purchased. You will note the line has just over \$11,000 but one more check came in the new fiscal year to put us over \$13,000 currently. Our two conference cars were both high mileage with one being over 300,000 miles. We certainly don't want Dave, Tim or Shana stuck on the side of the road with car troubles on a Sunday they are scheduled to be at your church! In conjunction with our end of the year fundraiser for the car we had matching gifts from two anonymous donors in an amount totaling \$12,500. We were pleased to claim that entire amount for the regular budget and that helped push us over the finish line in the black for the fiscal year ending April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

We have this year put together a budget that is balanced and includes a modest increase in the amount of income we expect to receive and also gave raises back to salaried staff that we had skipped last year. We are still short on the conference minister salaries due to the fact that the geographic factor for Washington County in IA was raised a number of years ago and we have not made that adjustment yet. We thank you for your continued support for the ministry of Central Plains Mennonite Conference!

Feel free to ask either one of us or our Finance Officer, Ted Widmer, any questions or concerns you may have.

Kent Blossom

Colin Hofer

Stewardship Task Group Chairperson

Treasurer

# Central Plains Mennonite Conference

## Balance Sheet

As of April 30, 2017

	<u>April 30, 2016</u>	<u>April 30, 2017</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
<b>Checking/Savings</b>		
1001 · Home Federal Checking	2,600.10	1,285.97
1005 · Cash Shortfall Savings	67,027.35	67,100.42
1021 · Petty Cash - Freeman	75.00	75.00
Assist Witness	16,413.10	14,011.98
Facilitating Relationships	15,586.86	15,685.74
Developing Leadership	18,335.58	12,184.45
Nurturing Formation	28,013.07	27,126.94
Unrestricted	395.50	415.64
Restricted	96,229.12	71,924.42
<b>1031 · New Ministries MMA</b>	<u>174,973.23</u>	<u>141,349.17</u>
<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	<u>244,675.68</u>	<u>209,810.56</u>
<b>Other Current Assets</b>		
<b>Total 1100 · Investments</b>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
<b>Total Other Current Assets</b>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<u>244,675.68</u>	<u>209,810.56</u>
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<u>93,260.36</u>	<u>93,260.36</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u><b>337,936.04</b></u>	<u><b>303,070.92</b></u>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>		
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
<b>Other Current Liabilities</b>		
2001 · Transfers	398.45	291.13
2652 · Iglesia Centro Christ PT	-900.00	-2,400.00
2654 · Torre Fuerte PT	5,825.00	4,250.00
<b>Total Other Current Liabilities</b>	<u>5,323.45</u>	<u>2,141.13</u>
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<u>5,323.45</u>	<u>2,141.13</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	5,323.45	2,141.13
<b>Equity</b>		
30000 · Opening Balance Equity	87,189.21	90,612.01
3110 · Restricted for Cash Shortfall	67,027.35	67,100.42
3120 · Restricted for New Ministries	174,973.23	141,349.17
Net Income	3,422.80	1,868.19
<b>Total Equity</b>	<u>332,612.59</u>	<u>300,929.79</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<u><b>337,936.04</b></u>	<u><b>303,070.92</b></u>

## Central Plains Mennonite Conference Receipts Expenses vs Blue Print

Account	2016/2017 Blue Print	2016/2017 Actual	2017/2018 Blue Print
<b>INCOME</b>			
4001 · CPMC General Mission	383,170.51	378,259.66	389,691.61
4002 · Annual Meeting Reg/Offering	38,000.00	38,270.85	38,000.00
4500 · Interest Income	50.00	123.11	175.00
4700 · Income from New Ministries Fund		-	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>421,220.51</b>	<b>416,653.62</b>	<b>427,866.61</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>			
<b>5000 · CONFERENCE BOARD</b>			
5100 · Executive Conference Minister			
5110 · Minister Salary	34,868.10	34,868.16	35,260.37
5120 · Payroll Benefits	12,707.18	11,629.08	11,724.15
5130 · Staff Travel/Misc	3,500.00	3,061.69	3,500.00
<b>Total 5100 · Executive Conference Minister</b>	<b>51,075.28</b>	<b>49,558.93</b>	<b>50,484.52</b>
5300 · Office/ Administrative			
5310 · Office Manager Salary	12,249.72	12,249.72	12,433.47
5320 · Payroll Benefits	1,021.22	1,026.75	1,048.60
5330 · Office Rent	8,460.00	8,460.00	8,460.00
5340 · Office Supplies & Equipment	4,500.00	2,906.37	3,200.00
5350 · Utilities/Telephone	2,500.00	1,758.63	1,700.00
5360 · Computer/Software	-	307.21	1,200.00
5370 · Insurance	1,400.00	1,456.55	1,500.00
<b>Total 5300 · Office/ Administrative</b>	<b>30,130.94</b>	<b>28,165.23</b>	<b>29,542.07</b>
5400 · Conf. Board Activity			
5410 · Annual Meeting	20,000.00	26,261.35	23,000.00
5420 · Conference Board/Exec Travel & Misc	1,500.00	501.00	750.00
5430 · Discernment Committee	-	-	-
5440 · Interculture Transformation	-	-	-
5450 · Ecumenical Organizations	-	-	-
5464 · Long Term Disability Commitment	-	-	-
5464 · Regional/Covenant Meetings	-	-	-
<b>Total 5400 · Conf. Board Activity</b>	<b>21,500.00</b>	<b>26,762.35</b>	<b>23,750.00</b>
5500 · Mennonite Church USA Connection			
5510 · Assembly Delegates	2,000.00	-	2,000.00
5520 · MC USA Travel Pool/Consultation	-	710.97	750.00
<b>Total 5500 · Mennonite Church USA Connection</b>	<b>2,000.00</b>	<b>710.97</b>	<b>2,750.00</b>

## Central Plains Mennonite Conference Receipts Expenses vs Blue Print

Account	2016/2017	2016/2017	2017/2018
	Blue Print	Actual	Blue Print
5600 · Stewardship/Finances			
5610 · Finance Officer Salary/Contract	11,496.66	11,496.72	11,496.66
5620 · Payroll Benefits	-	-	-
5630 · Stewardship Office Supplies	500.00	163.69	200.00
5640 · Stewardship Devel. & Promo	1,500.00	1,058.51	1,500.00
5650 · Interest Expense	-	-	-
5660 · On-Line Donation Fees	50.00	404.73	150.00
Total 5600 · Stewardship/Finances	<u>13,546.66</u>	<u>13,123.65</u>	<u>13,346.66</u>
5700 · Conference Car	3,000.00	2,051.11	2,000.00
5800 · Communications			
5810 · Scattered Seeds	15,000.00	16,120.22	15,000.00
5820 · Web Site Maintenance	500.00	60.00	250.00
5830 · Materials Translation	2,200.00	2,179.53	2,200.00
Total 5800 · Communications	<u>17,700.00</u>	<u>18,359.75</u>	<u>17,450.00</u>
TOTAL 5000 · CONFERENCE BOARD	138,952.88	138,731.99	139,323.25
<b>6000 · OUTREACH &amp; SERVICE</b>			
6100 · O & S Conference Minister			
6110 · Minister Salary	34,868.10	34,868.04	35,260.36
6120 · Payroll Benefits	12,707.18	11,628.96	11,724.15
6130 · Staff Travel/Misc	3,500.00	3,128.16	3,500.00
Total 6100 · O & S Conference Minister	<u>51,075.28</u>	<u>49,625.16</u>	<u>50,484.51</u>
6200 · O & S Travel/Misc	1,500.00	297.17	1,000.00
6400 · Church Development			
6410 · Strategy Development	-	-	-
6430 · Hispanic Ministries	29,066.00	29,563.17	29,412.03
Total 6400 · Church Development	<u>29,066.00</u>	<u>29,563.17</u>	<u>29,412.03</u>
6500 · Beyond Our Borders			
6510 · Ecuador Partnership	19,130.00	19,130.02	22,700.00
6511 · Ecuador Partnership Task Group	3,000.00	35.49	3,000.00
6512 · Rio Bamba	-	-	-
6513 · Quito Support	3,573.00	3,573.00	-
6514 · Delicia Bravo Support	16,500.00	16,500.00	16,500.00
6520 · Venezuela Seminary Support	2,900.00	2,900.04	2,900.00
Total 6500 · Beyond Our Borders	<u>45,103.00</u>	<u>42,138.55</u>	<u>45,100.00</u>
TOTAL 6000 · OUTREACH & SERVICE	126,744.28	121,624.05	125,996.54

## Central Plains Mennonite Conference Receipts Expenses vs Blue Print

Account	2016/2017 Blue Print	2016/2017 Actual	2017/2018 Blue Print
<b>7000 · MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP</b>			
7100 · ML Conference Minister			
7110 · Minister Salary	70,138.32	73,338.32	75,781.38
7120 · Payroll Benefits	25,935.67	17,304.28	9,418.58
7130 · Staff Travel/Misc	6,000.00	7,839.81	6,000.00
Total 7100 · ML Conference Minister	<u>102,073.99</u>	<u>98,482.41</u>	<u>91,199.96</u>
7200 · PLC Travel/Misc	2,000.00	1,484.12	2,000.00
7400 · Leadership Resourcing & Develop			
7410 · Leadership Resourcing & Dev	3,000.00	823.53	2,000.00
7415 · Leadership Dev Scholarships	-	(5,000.00)	-
7420 · Retreats Pastor/Spouse/Elder	1,000.00	(1,863.93)	-
7425 · Minister's Manuals	500.00	440.96	500.00
7430 · Ministry Inquiry	-	-	-
7435 · Ministerial Leadership Database	350.00	348.00	350.00
Total 7400 · Leadership Resourcing & Develop	<u>4,850.00</u>	<u>(5,251.44)</u>	<u>2,850.00</u>
Total 7500 · M L Volunteer Network	<u>2,000.00</u>	<u>1,556.45</u>	<u>2,000.00</u>
<b>TOTAL 7000 · MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP</b>	<b>110,923.99</b>	<b>96,271.54</b>	<b>98,049.96</b>
<b>8000 · CHRISTIAN FORMATION</b>			
8100 · C F Conference Minister			
8110 · Minister Salary	44,888.40	44,138.40	46,134.96
8120 · Payroll Benefits	6,010.96	5,972.98	6,161.90
8130 · Staff Travel/Misc	5,000.00	4,451.13	5,000.00
Total 8100 · C F Conference Minister	<u>55,899.36</u>	<u>54,562.51</u>	<u>57,296.86</u>
8200 · C F Travel/Misc	1,200.00	636.68	1,200.00
8400 · Youth Escape	1,500.00	(335.07)	1,500.00
8500 · Shalom Readers Club	1,500.00	1,073.17	1,000.00
8600 · Formations Resources	4,500.00	2,220.56	3,500.00
8700 · Western Dist. Resource Library	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL 8000 · CHRISTIAN FORMATION</b>	<b>64,599.36</b>	<b>58,157.85</b>	<b>64,496.86</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>441,220.51</b>	<b>414,785.43</b>	<b>427,866.61</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>(20,000.00)</b>	<b>1,868.19</b>	<b>-</b>

## **2017-2018 Spending Blue Print for Conference Board**

Conference Board - \$139,323.25 – The Conference Board supervise the overall implementation of the mission and vision, and priorities of Conference. The Conference Board is supported in their work by the Executive Conference Minister, ministry staff, contract staff, and the annual delegate session.

### **Executive Conference Minister** – \$50,484.52

The Executive Conference Minister is a half time position. This person reports to the Conference Board. Salary is \$35,260.37. Benefits (\$11,724.15) are health insurance, Life & Disability insurance, pension, HSA account, and continuing education. Travel (\$3,500.00) is for gas, meals and lodging while on conference business. These amounts are reviewed annually to align with the Salary Guidelines of MC USA. A performance review is conducted every three years by the Conference Board.

### **Office/Administration** - \$29,542.07

The Central Plains office is located in Freeman, SD. Monica Clem is the Office Manager and is employed approximately half time. She provides secretarial, banking, and other services. Salary is \$12,433.47 with Life & Disability insurance and FICA budgeted at \$1,048.60.

The conference rents **office space** in Freeman from Ten Thousand Villages and also office space in Kalona, IA from Everence. Projected cost is \$8,460.00. We will rent one fewer rooms in Freeman.

**Office supplies and equipment** are estimated at \$3,200. Utilities/Telephone is estimated at \$1,700.

**Computer upgrades** for office and ministry staff are done on a rotating schedule. \$1,200 is budgeted for this coming year.

**Insurance** to cover general liability, misconduct, and officers and directors has been arranged at \$1,500 per year.

### **The Conference Board Activity** - \$23,750.00

#### **Annual Meeting** - \$23,000.00

\$20,000.00 is budgeted for costs related to the Annual Delegate Meeting and to provide resources for the Local Hosting Committee. Most expenses are covered by registration fees and offerings, which are included in the Blueprint receipts (\$38,000.00). Expenses now include most delegate lodging and food. Facilities rental will be more this year but food costs should be less.

The **Conference Board/Executive Travel** line covers travel and incidental expenses with a budget of \$750. Our travel for Conference Board meetings has been lowered with the benefit of video conferencing.

The **Discernment Committee** seeks nominations for vacancies to be filled. Nothing was spent last year and nothing is anticipated this coming year. Meeting are often electronic.

**Inter-cultural Transformation** covers anti-racism trainin, and ethnic acceptance. Expenses for this area have been reallocated to the Formation Resources line item in the Christian Formation Committee budget.

Expenses related to membership in **ecumenical organizations** have been budgeted at \$750.00 in the past. Churches in their respective state took care of this last year and again this year.

Central Plains covered the **Long Term Disability** for two local ministers. This is a commitment prior to the merger. This commitment is completed as the ministers are retired or out of the conference.

**Mennonite Church USA Connection** - \$2,000

Central Plains is eligible to send 9 delegates to the Mennonite Church USA Biennial Assembly. \$2,000.00

Mennonite Church USA plans a variety of consultations with conference leaders, including the **Constituency Leaders Council**, with 3 representatives from each conference. Travel is shared through a Travel Pool. Meetings this year will be close and will not require much expense. \$750 is planned.

**Stewardship/Finances** - \$13,346.66

Ted Widmer, Financial Officer, provides accounting and disbursement services on a part-time basis as a self-employed contractor from his home in Mt Pleasant, IA. A contract of \$11,496.66 and supplies of \$200 is budgeted.

Funds for **Stewardship Development & Promotion** are used to create and disburse inserts, posters and such on giving. \$1,500 is budgeted.

**On-Line Donation Fees** - \$150. Donations given on-line through a credit card cost up to 3%.

**Conference Auto** - \$2,000

Two automobiles were purchased by the conference for use by the conference ministers as a pool. Insurance and repairs are covered here at \$2,000. Fuel is covered by the travel accounts of the individuals using the vehicle. It is desired to replace the one or both aging cars with a newer car this year.

**Communications** - \$17,450.00

Our conference newsletter *Scattered Seeds* is the written voice of the conference to member congregations. *Scattered Seeds* is published five times a year. An electronic newsletter, *The Sower*, is sent to monthly to conference leaders and interested people. \$15,000 is budgeted for editing, printing, and mailing.

The conference has a **web site** at [www.centralplainsmc.org](http://www.centralplainsmc.org). Maintenance of the site is \$250 per year. This includes e-mail addresses for conference personnel.

We want our publications to be accessible to all conference members. The *Scattered Seeds*, *The Sower*, and a new brochure are offered in Spanish. Hmong translation can also be provided where needed. Cost of this is estimated at \$2,200.

## **2017-2018 Spending Blue Print for Outreach and Service**

Outreach & Service - \$125,996.54 - The Outreach and Service Committee assists Member Congregations in promoting peace, justice, evangelism, and church planting efforts both within Central Plains Mennonite Conference and also the global community. The Outreach and Service Committee is supported in the Budget Blueprint by the Outreach and Service accounts (Accounts 6000-6500). Please consult the annual reports for each major category below for more information and description of ministry activities in the past year.

### **Account 6100-6130 - Outreach and Service Conference Minister - \$50,484.51**

Accounts 6100-6130 provide support for the Outreach and Service Conference Minister, Dave Boshart. The Outreach and Service Conference Minister provides staff time and resources for the programs and projects of the Outreach and Service Committee of the Central Plains Mennonite Conference. The total budgeted amount includes salary (\$35,260.36), benefits (\$11,724.15), and travel expenses (\$3,500) for this half-time position. These amounts are reviewed annually to align with the Salary Guidelines of MC USA. A performance review is conducted every three years by the Conference Board.

### **Account 6200 - Outreach and Service Committee Expenses - \$1,000**

Account 6200 supports the projects and activities of the Outreach and Service Committee, including travel expenses for committee meetings and miscellaneous small projects.

### **Account 6410 - Strategy Development - \$0**

Account 6410 supports the expenses of the Church Planting Strategy Team, including the annual Church Planters' Retreat which provides an important opportunity for church planters and supporting partners to gather for continuing education, renewal, and mutual support. This is being supported by gifts in the New Ministries Fund.

### **Account 6430 - Hispanic Ministries - \$29,412.03**

Account 6430 provides a part-time salary and expenses for the Coordinator of Hispanic Ministries, Ramiro Hernandez. Ramiro's work includes visitation and coordination with Hispanic congregations and pastors of Central Plains Mennonite Conference and strengthening relationships among Hispanic and Anglo congregations.

### **Account 6510-6512 Partnership for Mission in Ecuador and Colombia- \$45,100**

Account 6510 - The Ecuador Partnership (\$22,700) along with Mennonite Mission Network supports our workers who lead the theological education, leadership development, peace and refugee ministries of the Iglesia Cristiana Anabautista Menonita de Ecuador (ICAME). This work involves theological education among indigenous churches and offering the two level course called PROPAZ to teach leadership in the Anabaptist community. This partnership has also supported the development of new congregations in Calderon and Jardines del Inca near Quito. As local leaders begin assuming more responsibility for the work of ICAME, North American workers are returning to the states. We have also accepted the invitation of the Colombian Mennonite Church to expand this partnership to include support of a growing Anabaptist witness in Venezuela.

Account 6511-Partnership Task Group (\$3,000) covers expenses for the Partnership, mainly travel to Partnership Meetings. The Partnership is a cooperative effort of the Central Plains Mennonite Conference, Mennonite Mission Network, the Colombia Mennonite Church, and the Ecuador Mennonite Church.

Account 6514 - Support for Delicia Bravo (\$16,500) Peter Wigginton and Delicia Bravo will be serving as new partnership coordinators In Ecuador. Delicia and Peter will help to maintain the relationships among the partners and manage partnership roles within Ecuador. They will also use their gifts in music, education, and children's and youth ministries in the programs of the Mennonite churches in Ecuador.

Account 6513 - Quito Pastoral Support (\$0) Central Plains provides support for the new pastor of the Quito Mennonite Church on a short-term basis. In the past money for pastoral support was raised outside the conference budget. We have added this line to the budget to provide partial support to Pastor Luiz Tapia. This amount is on a three-year declining scale as the Quito Mennonite Church increases their pastoral support.

Account 6520 - Support for Seminary in Venezuela (\$2,900.00) Delegates at our Annual Meeting last summer encouraged the expansion of our partnership with the Colombian Mennonite Church for theological education and church development in Venezuela. A thriving Anabaptist seminary has been established in Venezuela. As a partner, Central Plains is providing a small amount of financial support for this fledgling ministry.

## **Ministerial Leadership - \$98,049.96**

The Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership and the **Pastoral Leadership Committee** are charged with developing, coordinating and maintaining high quality pastoral leadership and healthy congregational/pastoral relationships within the conference. Leadership development and resourcing; credentialing; offering support for pastor searches, pastor/congregation evaluations and conflict management; overseeing clergy misconduct charges; annual visits with pastors; planning the Annual Leader's Retreat; and keeping the Ministerial Leadership Database updated are the primary areas of focus that guide the work of Ministerial Leadership.

### **Account 7100 – Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership - \$91,199.96**

This account provides financial support for Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership, Tim Detweiler. The budgeted amounts include salary (\$75,781.38); Benefits (\$9,418.58) and \$6,000 to cover Tim's travel/misc. expenses. These amounts are reviewed annually by the Stewardship committee in consultation with the Salary Guidelines of MC USA. Tim went on Medicare this year, causing Benefits to drop drastically. However, the Conference still owes spousal insurance. His salary was increased to cover the added out of pocket cost to him.

### **Account 7200 – PLC Travel/Misc. - \$2,000**

PLC meets 3 - 4 times a year, asking members to travel to a designated meeting place. PLC has experimented using Zoom for some meetings as a way to minimize travel costs. While Zoom can be workable for some meetings it is not suitable for all of our work (like credentialing interviews). It is also less personable and not always reliable depending on internet service. This account allows committee members to submit reimbursement requests for travel costs such as airfare, mileage, meals and lodging, thus making it possible for PLC to have representation from all geographic regions of our conference.

### **Account 7400 – Leadership Resourcing and Development - \$2,850**

Leadership resourcing and development is central to the work of Ministerial Leadership. \$2,000 is allocated for Leadership Resourcing and Development Account #7410 (\$1,000 reduction from the 2016/17 blueprint). This account is used for purchasing Ordination Bibles for pastors when they are ordained; helping with expenses at our Annual Leader's Retreat; offering assistance to pastors when they seek help for attending continuing education events; assistance to persons enrolled in Instituto Biblico Anabautista; and other leadership development programs. \$500 is allocated for the *Minister's Manuals* Account #7425 used to purchase *Minister's Manuals* for all pastors when they are Licensed toward Ordination. \$350 is allocated for Ministerial Leadership

Database Account #7435 to cover the usage fee to MC USA for maintaining our Ministerial Leadership Database.

\$1,000 is cut from this year's blueprint for Pastor/Spouse/Elder Retreat Account #7420 illuminating this account. Costs for these events will primarily be covered by registration fees.

A shift has been made to fund Leadership Development Scholarships (for seminary training) and Ministry Inquiry (used for funding the conference's responsibility for college students enrolled in Ministry Inquiry Program through the Mennonite Colleges) through the **New Ministries Fund** instead of through the Ministerial Leadership blueprint funds. **This shift only recognizes a different funding source and does not minimize our commitment for Leadership resourcing and development.**

PLC also administers the **Hochstetler Pastoral Training Fund**, which awards scholarships to persons from Central Plains congregations specifically training for congregational ministry or overseas missionary work. The amount available each year is determined by the income earned from this endowment and is not part of the Central Plains blueprint.

**Account 7500 – Ministerial Leadership Volunteer Network - \$2,000**

This account supports training for the four Volunteer Support Networks currently in place. They are used to offer support with pastor searches; congregation/pastor evaluations; conflict management; and with clergy misconduct investigations. This account also covers travel and other expenses incurred by these volunteers.

## Christian Formation Committee

### 2017-2018 Spending Blueprint Narrative

Christian Formation Committee – Total of 64,496.86. The Christian Formation Committee (CFC) promotes Christian formation resources and equips formation leaders. Our purpose is to assist the members of the Central Plains Mennonite Conference to grow continually in Christ-likeness in order to embody a holistic witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Formation Minister – 57,296.86. This account provides financial support for Conference Minister for Christian Formation, Shana Peachey Boshart. The budgeted amounts include salary (\$46,134.96), Benefits (\$6,161.90), and \$5,000 to cover Shana's travel/misc. expenses. These amounts are reviewed annually to align with the Salary Guidelines of MC USA. A performance review is conducted every three years by the Conference Board.

CFC Travel/Misc. – 1200.00. This amount (\$500 less than last year) covers travel, training and miscellaneous expenses incurred by CFC members carrying out the work of CFC. The committee schedules telephone and video conference calls and one or two face-to-face meetings per year to conduct its business.

Youth Escape 2016 – 1,500.00. Youth Escape is the biennial weekend youth retreat for Central Plains youth in grades 6-12. We gather to connect youth to Jesus, the church and each other through worship, spiritual formation, fun and fellowship. This contribution (down from \$2000 in past years) from the spending plan is intended to keep the cost of Youth Escape affordable for our youth.

Shalom Readers – 1,000.00. This program is for the children of Central Plains. They learn Jesus' way of peace by reading selected books, reporting on them and then earning a free book of their choice. This allotment of money pays for new books for the Shalom Readers lending library as well as the free books earned by the children.

Formation Resources – 3,500.00. This money (\$1000 less than allocated previously) is used to purchase resources and equip member congregations. We keep a Formation Resource Library of books, DVD's and curriculum at the ministry staff office in Kalona, Iowa. Activities such as workshops, retreats, speakers, materials, equipping leaders, and intercultural transformation are funded through this line item. This year, a major focus of the committee was to provide three Bible Study Webinars for lay leaders.

Western District Conference Resource Library - \$0. For a number of years, we paid the Western District Conference a fee so that all our congregations and individual members could use their extensive resource library. Last year, we paid \$2000. Two years ago, we decided to save money by discontinuing this line item. Central Plains congregations and individual members still can check out resources from the Central Plains Formation Resource Library curated by the formation minister and lodged in the ministry staff offices in Kalona, Iowa. See a list of library items at [www.centralplainsmc.org/resource-library](http://www.centralplainsmc.org/resource-library)

**CENTRAL PLAINS MENNONITE CONFERENCE**  
**NEW MINISTRIES FUND**

April 30, 2017

	BALANCE April 30, 2016	Received	YTD Expensed	Balance April 30, 2017
<b>Restricted Funds</b>				
Native American Minister	16,945.74	-	6,450.00	10,495.74
SHINE scholarships	5,000.00	-	-	5,000.00
Max Villatoro Family Fund	25,755.61	6,188.00	26,427.57	5,516.04
William & Lus Marina	400.00	-	-	400.00
Marvin Hostetler Mem	4,257.27	-	1,345.98	2,911.29
Robert Yutzy Sabbatical fund	4,441.82	-	-	4,441.82
Villatoro Legal Fund	100.00	-	-	100.00
Anabaptist Faith Formation	-	15,000.00	659.16	14,340.84
Conference Special Project	225.46	-	-	225.46
Youth Escape	-	-	-	-
Car Fund	-	11,094.00	-	11,094.00
Annual Meeting Registration	-	3,585.80	-	3,585.80
Hmong Schowalter grant	11,927.12	-	-	11,927.12
Ecuador Building Fund	23,551.00	31,556.10	55,107.10	-
Equador	3,625.10	1,831.00	3,569.79	1,886.31
	<u>96,229.12</u>	<u>69,254.90</u>	<u>93,559.60</u>	<u>71,924.42</u>
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>				
Assist Witness	16,511.98	-	2,500.00	14,011.98
Facilitating Relationships	15,685.74	-	-	15,685.74
Developing Leadership	18,434.45	-	6,250.00	12,184.45
Nurturing Formation	28,111.94	-	985.00	27,126.94
Undesignated	-	415.64	-	415.64
	<u>78,744.11</u>	<u>415.64</u>	<u>9,735.00</u>	<u>69,424.75</u>
<b>TOTAL FUND</b>	<u><u>174,973.23</u></u>	<u><u>69,670.54</u></u>	<u><u>103,294.60</u></u>	<u><u>141,349.17</u></u>

Total Available for Disbursement this year 10,413.71

**CENTRAL PLAINS MENNONITE CONFERENCE**  
**TRANSFERS TO OTHER CHURCH AGENCIES**  
 May 1, 2016 - April 30, 2017

Entity	2015/2016	2016/2017
	-	-
Mennonite Education Agency		
General Contributions	6,730.74	3,116.72
Mennonite Seminaries	19,330.05	17,442.47
Mennonite Colleges	16,733.08	17,881.20
Mennonite Mission Network		
General Contributions	139,543.03	114,931.89
Partners Designated	26,428.13	20,528.80
Ecuador	3,009.10	1,831.00
Quito Building project	23,551.00	31,556.10
Mennonite Church USA		
Total Mission	78,554.14	66,106.77
Executive Board	-	225.00
Congregational Life	-	-
Cross Cultural Relations	3,163.02	3,286.17
Leadership	2,789.00	1,892.00
Mennonite World Conference	1,225.00	1,310.00
MennoMedia	1,684.20	1,490.00
Mennonite Central Committee	17,124.99	11,363.57
Mennonite Men/Join Hands	4,500.00	1,000.00
Mennonite Women	-	279.00
Christian Peacemaker Teams	-	1,304.00
Hmong Mennonite Church of St Paul	1,833.37	2,166.71
Lao Fellowship	916.74	1,083.42
Iglesio Centro Christiano	16,200.00	15,600.00
Torre Fuerte	20,500.00	18,825.00
MEDA	700.00	200.00
Mennonite Disaster Service	330.00	800.00
Galilean Fellows	8,278.50	8,285.22
Max Villatoro Fund	19,051.53	6,230.00
Shalom Mennonite Church	-	3,500.00
Everything Buautiful	-	500.00
Congo Travel	4,265.00	-
Miscellaneous	7,656.00	7,335.80
	<u>424,096.62</u>	<u>360,070.84</u>



# Central Plains Mennonite Conference

## Church Location Map

