

**Agenda for Central Plains Mennonite Conference Delegate Sessions**  
**Capitol City Christian Church – Lincoln, NE**  
**June 21-24, 2018**

**Friday June 22**

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: Transformed into the Likeness of Jesus through the Power of the Holy Spirit, Part I

**Saturday – June 23**

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: Transformed into the Likeness of Jesus through the Power of the Holy Spirit, Part II  
Recognition and Installation of CPMC Officers  
Listening Committee  
Closing Delegate Sessions

**Moderator's Report**  
**Central Plains Mennonite Conference**  
**Annual Meeting 2018**

“We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” - I Thessalonians 1:2-3

Welcome! It is with deep joy and overflowing gratitude that we gather again in the precious name of our Lord in Lincoln, NE! As we anticipate rich times together in worship, fellowship, prayerful work, and learning, may we enter with shouts of thanksgiving for all God has done for us in Central Plains! At our Annual Conference last summer, delegates described the impacts of our Central Plains Covenant of Spiritual Practices upon the lives of their congregations—a stronger witness within and beyond their faith families, a renewed vigor and spiritual growth, and a strengthened sense of community, confidence and competence in our yearning for spiritual transformation. Loving God, may all these mustard seeds continue to sprout and flourish as we trust in you!

How might the Holy Spirit nourish our growth this year? Our theme builds upon becoming a *“Covenant People - Walking with Jesus”*. We tread the path of Jesus through renewed and empowered commitments of talent, resources, and energy—through generous investments in outreach and service, Christian formation and pastoral leadership and nurture.

Now we acknowledge that we also embark on a journey of some uncertainty, while joyfully trusting God to provide vision and hope as we consider God’s emerging will for the role of Conference Minister for Christian Formation. Shana Peachey Boshart has been hired by MC USA to serve as a denominational minister to use her many gifts in a new way, and we rejoice in her opportunity. We are so grateful that she has lifted our eyes to Jesus during her 20 years of conference service and we have been deeply blessed by her servant ministry. Once again we look to Jesus, our generous Provider, for the leadership You have chosen—You already know. May we always seek Your wisdom, Father, empowered by Your Holy Spirit for each step in this journey with Jesus.

May this be our common resolve and uncommon mission—to invest all of our collaborative soul-efforts into our neighbors near and far—from Montana to Iowa. Within and beyond the heartland, to Venezuela and Ecuador—we pray that our lives will magnify the transforming image of our risen Christ in our times!

Day by day, may we become more like You, Jesus!

In His Love,

Sid Burkey--Moderator, Central Plains Mennonite Conference

# *Central Plains Mennonite Conference*



Ministry Staff Office

301 5<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 2

## **Ministry Staff Report to Annual Meeting, 2018**

*Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me...*

—*Jeremiah 29:12-13*

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

- Ministry staff were present in 26 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 were present for 13 installation and credentialing services.
- We are currently working with five 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*

Four congregations said goodbye to their pastors between May 2017 and April 2018 and two congregations welcomed new pastors. (See report on [page 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 2017 and April 2018 three persons were ordained; one person's former ordination was recognized and received; and two persons were licensed toward ordination. See report on [page 18](#).

### *Ministerial Leadership Support Teams*

Four Ministerial Leadership support teams assist Tim in his work. The Pastor Search Support Team assisted with 2 pastor searches. The Pastor/Congregation Evaluation Support Team assisted with 1 evaluation. The Conflict Management Support Team is available to lead Conflict Transformation Skills Workshops and to assist congregations with conflict mediations. The Clergy Misconduct Investigative Team is available to assist in the investigative process for

clergy misconduct cases. Two persons attended the “Responding to Clergy Misconduct Leadership Training” presented by the Faith Trust Institute in March 2017. The Pastoral Leadership Committee plans to put greater emphasis on prevention and boundaries training for credentialed leaders. Credentialed leaders also must sign the Ministerial Code of Ethics for Pastors, Chaplains and Credentialed Leaders. To request services from any of the support teams, 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 April 27-29, 2018, at the St Benedict Retreat Center in Schuyler, Nebraska. Our theme, *Reading the Bible with Neighbors and Strangers* focused on the fifth spiritual practice in the Covenant of Spiritual Practices for Central Plains Mennonite Conference, “We will study the Bible with neighbors and strangers, inviting them to become followers of Jesus.”

Thirty-nine registrants attended this year’s Annual Leaders Retreat led by Bryan Moyer Suderman from Kitchner, Ontario, Canada. Through engaging presentations using scripture, song and video clips, Bryan addressed questions of “*Who is my Neighbor? Who is the Stranger? How do we read and study the scriptures with strangers, with the ‘other’? How might we open up the scriptures for and with the stranger, and how might the stranger open up the scriptures for and with us?*” 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*

Most of Tim’s focus gets centered around the work of the Pastoral Leadership Committee; conducting annual support and accountability visits with credentialed pastors and chaplains; being involved with credentialing services; planning the Annual Leaders Retreat and preaching in various congregations. Tim also led a Bible study series on the Holy Spirit; attended pastor’s week at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary; and attended the annual MC USA conference minister’s gathering.

#### *A Word of Thanks*

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support for my (Tim’s) health. I am grateful to report that as of my last scans and doctor checkup in April, no active cancer was detected. I continue to go in for four-month scans and a doctor visit.

**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. We are also continuing to accompany the fledgling Anabaptist network in Venezuela. For more details, see Partnership Coordinator Don Kempf’s report on **p. 22-23.**

### *Partnerships for Church Planting*

We continue to accompany developing congregations in our conference and work at vision discernment where the Spirit may be calling new churches into being. It is challenging to determine how to work at identifying leaders and finding the financial means to support this ministry. We continue to walk by faith, trusting that God will give us wisdom and willing partners for starting new Anabaptist faith communities. See Matt Troyer-Miller's report from the Church Planting Strategy Team on [p. 21](#).

### *Pastor Max Villatoro*

As of this spring, it has been three years since Pastor Max Villatoro was deported. "Friends of Pastor Max" initiated a fundraiser for the family this past year, which has enabled the conference to continue to disburse a monthly check to the family. In November, Pastor Alejandro Huesca of Iglesia El Balsamo in Muscatine, Iowa, was also deported. Alejandro is Max's brother-in-law, and the two have been living together in Mexico. Please continue to pray for the reunification of the Villatoro and Huesca families. We have been encouraging our members to fast and pray for the families on the first Tuesday of each month.

### *Relationships Beginning*

This year at Annual Meeting we will be welcoming two congregations into membership in our conference. White Chapel Mennonite Church in Glendive, MT, was a member of the North Central Mennonite Conference prior to that conference's decision to leave Mennonite Church USA and subsequently disbanding. The members of White Chapel have discerned that their membership in Mennonite Church USA is important to them and they would like to renew their affiliation by joining Central Plains Mennonite Conference.

For many years, the Lao Christian Fellowship in Mountain Lake, Minnesota has been affiliated with our conference. The Lao Christian Fellowship was started by an ecumenical council in Mountain Lake in the early 2000s. The church has been participating in Central Plains Annual Meetings the past number of years. We are delighted that the congregation has made the decision to become a full member of our conference this year.

### *Communications*

We are many congregations spread over a large geographic area, so it is important for staff to communicate well and for our members to give attention to what we communicate. The *Scattered Seeds* is a print newsletter produced five times a year. It is the only publication we produce for distribution to every household, so we really appreciate your efforts to distribute it well. If you have advice for us on how to make it more readable or appealing, we are open to your ideas. The purpose of the *Scattered Seeds* is to tell the stories of how our congregations are living out our common mission, give information about conference events, and share news of pastor transitions. Shana established a blog (*Seedlings*) for additional stories from congregations and staff but finds it difficult to keep it updated regularly.

The Sower is an electronic newsletter sent monthly to all pastors, congregations, conference leaders and any interested person. Subscribe at [www.centralplainsmc.org](http://www.centralplainsmc.org). Our website is a rich source of resources for congregational leaders and information about conference events.

**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.*

#### *Formation resources*

Bible study webinars. Three webinars were offered in the fall to help those who lead Bible study in the congregation. Keith Slater of the West Union congregation in Parnell, Iowa, pulled off an impressive feat: creating a webinar experience in which participants constructed learning through vigorous interaction. Keith also graciously agreed to create three short videos of the webinar learnings which will be available on our website for ongoing teacher training.

Formation Resource Library. Remember to check with the formation minister when you need curriculum for any age group. The resource library has recently-released studies and curriculum from MennoMedia and others. Find a list of everything in the library on the Resource Library page of the website. Check them out by letting the formation minister know what you need. It will be mailed to you and you will mail it back to the Kalona office.

Web Resources. Did you know that you can find advice and resources for all kinds of congregational roles on our website? Deacons and elders, church council members, treasurers, Sunday School teachers for all ages, youth sponsors will find things to make their tasks easier. Also find recordings of past webinars, Tuesdays with Dave, the covenant study and videos, and the discernment study and videos. Teachers and sponsors of children, youth and adults will also find curriculum and other helpful stuff at [www.AnabaptistFaithFormation.org](http://www.AnabaptistFaithFormation.org).

#### *Time to say good-bye*

This summer, I (Shana) will complete 20 years of service with our conference congregations. I am grateful beyond words for the opportunity to serve you in this way for this long. It has been an ideal place for me to grow in ministry and to serve the church. As I transition on August 1 to formation minister for MC USA, I do so with love and gratitude for all the congregations and individuals of Central Plains. I will remain a member of Central Plains; my heart and my prayers will always be with you. May the Spirit of Christ lead us; may God be glorified through us.

We, together, are so grateful for the support that our members provide for our ministry. It is a privilege to serve Central Plains Mennonite Conference and to journey together toward our common call as a covenant people. This coming year will be a time of transition for our ministry team. We ask for your prayers as we discern the leadership that is most needed for this season in our 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 – Grant Nebal, Martha Yoder, Marsha Yoder Schrock, Seth Miller, Jerry Kroeker and myself as chair. 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 April 27-29 for our Annual Leader's Retreat. This year's theme was ***"Reading the Bible with Neighbors & Strangers."*** This theme focused on the fifth spiritual practice in the Covenant of Spiritual Practices adopted by our conference. Our resource person was Bryan Moyer Suderman from Kitchener, ON Bryan, an itinerant singer/songwriter and Bible teacher, led us in 3 sessions, ***"Scripture in Public"***, ***"Scripture in Conversation"*** and ***"Scripture in Community"***, these 3 sessions plus 4 worship times were based on the "Emmaus road" story in Luke 24. Worship times were led by various people from within the group. We also had the opportunity for fellowship and relaxation. Marsha Yoder Schrock, Suzanne Nolt and Tim Detweiler served as the planning committee.

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 have not been finalized. We are also considering moving the venue to Swain Lake Christian Camp (since they have a new retreat center). 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.

As I complete my term as chair of PLC, I give thanks to our Creator, Ma'heo'o, and to all of you (our conference) for giving me the opportunity to serve. Each interview and each responsibility has been an opportunity to learn and grow.

Willis Busenitz, Chairperson  
Pastoral Leadership Committee

Pastor and Congregation Transitions and Credentialing  
May 2017 – April 2018

**Credentials Granted**

**Ordinations**

**Amanda Bleichy**, Pastor at Washington Mennonite, Washington, IA on April 8, 2018.

**Taric Leichty**, Associate Pastor at Bellwood Mennonite, Milford, NE on April 15, 2018.

**Seth Miller**, Pastor at Bethesda Mennonite, Henderson, NE on March 18, 2018.

**Aureliano Vazques**, former Ordination with the Mennonite Church was recognized and received on October 15, 2017.

**License Toward Ordination**

**Fernando Ramos**, Pastor at Casa de Oracion Emanuel, Davenport, IA on November 5, 2017

**Larry Nail**, Pastor at Julesburg Mennonite, Julesburg, CO on January 28, 2018.

**Pastor Transitions**

**Endings**

**Todd Jones** resigned as Pastor at Hutterthal Mennonite, Freeman, SD effective 8/31/17.

**Jack Norris** resigned as Pastor at Julesburg Mennonite, Julesburg, CO effective 8/31/17.

**David Miller** resigned as Pastor at Bellwood Mennonite, Milford, NE effective 3/25/18.

**Scott Shreffler** resigned as Assistant Pastor at White River Cheyenne Mennonite, Busby, MT effective 4/1/18.

**Suzette Shreffler** resigned as Outreach Pastor at White River Cheyenne Mennonite, Busby, MT effective 4/1/18.

**Joetta Schlabach** is retiring as Pastor at Faith Mennonite, Minneapolis, MN effective 5/31/18.

**Beginnings**

**Terry Zimmerly** began as Pastor at First Mennonite, Iowa City, IA on 9/1/17.

**Karen Martens Zimmerly** began as Pastor at First Mennonite, Iowa City, IA on 10/15/17.

**Larry Nail** began as Pastor at Julesburg Mennonite, Julesburg, CO on 1/28/18.

**Interim Pastor Assignments**

**Marcia Yoder-Schrock** – Interim Pastor at West Union Mennonite, Parnell, IA 7/2/17 – 2/28/18.

**Jack Scandrett** – Transitional Pastor at Hutterthal Mennonite, Freeman, SD, 12/2017 to present.

**Pam Gerig Unruh** – Interim Pastor at Zion Mennonite, Donnellson, IA, 11/2016 – 2/28/18.

**S. Roy Kauffman &**– Interim Pastor at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, MN, 3/2017 – Present.

**Lois Janzen Preheim** – Transitional Pastor at First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, MN 3/2017 – 9/30/17.

**Deaths**

**Arlin David Yoder** – Retired Pastor, 12/31/2017

**Congregations in Pastoral Leadership Searches**

**Christ Community Mennonite Church**, Des Moines, IA – Pastor (Kent McDougal has announced his resignation with no set end date).

**First Mennonite Church**, Mountain Lake, MN – Pastor

**Manson Mennonite**, Manson, IA – Pastor

**West Union Mennonite**, Parnell, IA – Pastor

**White River Cheyenne Mennonite**, Busby, MT – Assistant Pastor

**Zion Mennonite**, Donnellson, IA – Pastor

**Hutterthal Mennonite**, Freeman, SD – working with Jack Scandrett as Transitional Pastor.

**Bellwood Mennonite**, Milford, NE – Gordon Scoville coming as Transitional Pastor in May 2018.

## **Outreach and Service Committee**

### **2018 Annual Report**

Prepared by Chris Eisenbeis, Chair

During the past year, the Outreach and Service Committee met twice in person and three times via Zoom meetings. We had some interesting discussions about the mission statement of our committee, the various activities we are engaged in currently, and what we might envision for the future.

Our committee developed the “Traveling Like Dave” initiative to encourage our congregations and members to get to know each other better. This is another way of working at the spiritual practice of accepting and offering hospitality. This initiative was rolled out to the churches in March. We encourage you to give it a try; we think it will be a positive and growing experience for everyone – those offering as well as those receiving hospitality.

Members of the Outreach and Service Committee for the 2017-2018 conference year were: Jane Goering (Bethel MC, Mt Lake, MN), Martha Hernandez (Centro Christiano, Washington, IA), Phil Friesen (Emmanuel MC, Minneapolis, MN), Elisabeth Harder Schrock (First MC, Mt Lake, MN), Kate Friesen (Hutterthal MC, Freeman, SD), Nicholas Detweiler Stoddard (Salem (south) MC, Freeman, SD), Suzette Shreffler (White River Cheyenne MC, Busby, MT), Chris Eisenbeis, Chair (Salem (south) MC, Freeman, SD) and David Boshart, Staff (Wellman, IA MC).

Our committee endeavors to assist and encourage member congregations in all areas of Christian outreach, including, but not limited to evangelism, church planting, peace making, justice advocacy, and service activities. We encourage your comments and constructive criticism of our committee’s work and/or ideas for future projects. Feel free to contact Chris Eisenbeis, Chair, at 605-661-8335 or any other committee member with your comments or questions.

Following are several reports on the major areas of service/witness overseen by our committee.

## 2018 Church Planting Strategy Team Annual Report

Written by Matt Troyer-Miller

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, Grant Nebel and David Boshart, 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. Five people from Central Plains went to SENT 2018, 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 Washigton, IA, and Shalom Mennonite Church, in Eau Claire, WI. Iglesia El Buen Pastor in Muscatine, IA. We have marked three years since Pastor Max Villatoro was deported, and we continue to support efforts to reunite him with his family and his congregation. We also continue to work with church planters about the possibility of new church plants. 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.

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

God has been good to the Ecuador and Venezuela Partnership this year. We have seen positive developments in Ecuador including ownership of a new building in Quito and the integration of four indigenous churches under ICAME. In Venezuela, partners from Colombia and Central Plains shared their resources with the churches in Venezuela to help facilitate their ministries.

A highlight of the year was the building dedication in Quito. This building fulfills a long time dream of the Christian Anabaptist Mennonite Church of Ecuador (ICAME) to own their own place for worship, the Refugee Program and other ministries of the church. The church began using the building in October of 2017 after remodeling was done to make an area large enough for a place of worship. A group from Central Plains under the leadership of Doyle and Anne Roth spent a week in March painting the building and doing some additional remodeling. We praise God for the gift of this property and for all those who had a part in making this happen.

Four indigenous congregations which have a history of being formed under the leadership of Henry and Pat Klassen continued to dialogue with ICAME and appear to be processing integration together. Henry and Pat were with the Gospel Missionary Union and were also Mennonites. These congregations have maintained an Anabaptist vision. With ICAME, they have applied for membership in Mennonite World Conference. These congregations are located in Riobamba, Quito and Guayaquil.

Other than the above highlights, the Refugee Program continues as before. Jane and Jerrell Ross Richer continue their ministry in the Amazon region, centered in the Cofan community. Many people have visited with them through tours, learning about Creation Care and their ministries with indigenous people.

In Venezuela, the disintegration of the economic system continues to dominate life. Many financial donations were received from Central Plains members. Dave and Linda Shelly were able to take monetary gifts with them when they traveled

to Venezuela in February. The Colombian Mennonite church also donated and sent small hand corn grinders so that the Venezuelan church members could buy corn, grind it, and sell it at a discount to people in need. They were also able to support some of their other ministries with the small profits.

In spite of being in a dire situation themselves, members of the churches remain enthusiastic in sharing their vision of Jesus as understood by Anabaptists. The congregations continue to grow and when the delegation visited in February, they attended and assisted in several baptisms.

In October of 2017, 3932 persons participated in “Cooperative Games for Peace”. These games were held in public schools with the cooperation of the school administration for five days. Topics addressed were love, respect, empathy, esteem of others, self-esteem, solidarity, cooperation, communication, recognizing bullying, resolution of conflicts, active non-violence, passive resistance, and the love of God.

We continue to be grateful to God for these relationships. We ask for your continued prayers for these ministries, especially for our sisters and brothers in Venezuela as they share with others when they have tremendous needs of their own.

Don Kempf

Hispanic Coordinator for Central Plains Conference  
Ramiro Hernandez

May 12, 2018

Saludos/Greetings!

Following is a brief report of events.

1. **Pastoral visit.** I've met with each of the pastors as we have visited throughout the year - Usually over a meal. It's a time of catching up with their dreams and plans for their congregations as well as conversing on personal stuff whether it be family, struggles in church or .... other stuff?

- Martha and I have visited with Gloria Villatoro (at worship service and home)
- Fernando Ramos
- Aureliano Vázquez
- Margie Caraballo
- Met with Martha Hernandez as Coordinator as well.

I have been and am available for the pastors and congregations if and when needed.

2. **Hispanic cluster mtgs.**

We meet the third Saturday of every month unless we have agreed to meet at another time.

3. Other conference responsibilities

- Central Plains Conference Annual Mtg - 2017
- CLC Mtgs (Elkhart, Pennsylvania)
- MEA (Elkhart)
- Church Planting Strategy Team
- Meetings with David Boshard (Conference Minister)
- Hispanic menonita Church
- MCUSA Conference

4. **IBA - Hispanic Bible Institute is a resource for our Hispanic churches.**

IBA will no longer have a four year course of study, but rather it will focus on 2 ½ years and at the end of its course work, students will receive a diploma.

5. Sept. 23. Invited Marcos Guete as a resource person to bring us a workshop on "Leaders from an Anabaptist Perspective".

I have been in conversation with the leaders Jose and Paola Martinez of El Balsamo about starting IBA with the. I am still waiting for a response from them.

- New IBA class to start in Washington - Centro Cristiano church.
- Casa de Oración. Margie Caraballo is the facilitator for this center. The classes are being held in English. It would be up to the facilitator to choose the preferred language (English or Spanish) or bilingual.
- Pastora Martha Hernandez is finishing up with her IBA group (Enrique and Maria Mendoza, Gloria Villatoro) graduation be held possibly in August of this year 2018).
- IBA is about to finish its last class on the first level. This is the last year for this IBA group in Muscatine.
- Our facilitors for IBA centers continue to be:
- Martha Hernandez for Torre Fuerte - Iowa City
- Ramiro Hernandez for Jesús e Buen Pastor – Muscatine
- Margie Caraballo English IBA Casa de Oración

4. **Max Villatoro.** Pastors and churches continue to pray for the Villatoro family as they go through this transition. Our answered prayer is that Max be reunited with his family. Gloria continues to work at the hospital while also taking care of her children.

Something new. We have begun planning our Hispanic Men's Group for our area. We are in the planning process and hope to have our first meeting yet this year.

In conclusion,

- I continue to visit with pastor as a group or individually.
- We are in the process of putting together a Men's Group for our area.
- We have already meet to begin our process electing leaders and possibly having Men's Worship Service sometime this year. We are excited about this as we will have a time to address whatever issues pertinent to our times.
- Pleas continue to pray for those whose husbands and father have been taken by ICE.
- Please pray for the Villatoro Family and also for the Huesca Family – pastors taken by ICE.
- *Pray for Mt Pleasant. We began meeting in Mt Pleasant Monday nights at 6pm. We have been invited by Pleasant View Mennonite church for a fellowship meal and as well, preaching at their church.*

*submitted by Ramiro Hernandez, Hispanic Coordinator*

## Christian Formation Committee

### Annual Report 2018

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.

Current 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. We meet several times throughout the year, generally with three physical meetings and two or three Zoom teleconference meetings.

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 <http://www.anabaptistfaithformation.org/> on the conference website, along with workshops and webinars. 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.
- In the fall of 2017 we offered three Bible Study Webinars led by Keith Slater, Sunday School teacher and member of West Union Mennonite Church in Parnell, Iowa. Considering our covenant practices of “studying the Bible together, as well as with neighbors and strangers,” *Open the Book: Practical Tips for leading Bible Study* was designed to equip people to facilitate Bible studies in settings like Sunday School and small groups. The webinars covered goals and challenges of leading Bible study, skills necessary for leading, and tips for preparation. Each session included time for exploring and practicing the various elements through group facilitators. The webinars were well-attended and feedback was very positive. Three short instructional videos are being developed from the webinars to offer as a resource on <http://www.anabaptistfaithformation.org/> and accessible through the CPMC website.
- Development and planning for Youth Escape, to be held July 20-22, 2018 at Hidden Acres Christian Center in Dayton, Iowa. The theme for this year is *Choose Joy*, and includes speaker Josh Lundberg and friends as resource persons, music by John Murray with other musicians and friends, and various activities for everyone. Planning has been led by Shana Peachey Boshart,

along with Barb Tieszen from CFC and several others throughout Central Plains Conference. Our committee discussed some of the dynamics of Youth Escape and considered challenges of funding, attendance and age groups, parent and family involvement, and the ongoing viability of the event. This has continued as a formative and worthwhile endeavor, and we are grateful for quality leadership and creativity, which are key factors in its success. Thanks to all the planners and participants!

- Exploring creative responses from Shalom Readers through the use of technology: some of the older participants have been enthused about using various technology tools for responses and we discussed how to invite and gather these for accessing on the website. We are grateful for the good work of Rachelle Luitjens, Ellen Miller, and Joan Friesen in promoting and facilitating Shalom Readers.
  
- Christian Formation Committee shared a retreat/planning weekend October 14-15 at Twin Lakes Camp in Manson, Iowa. Highlights from the weekend include:
  - Reviewing the Annual Meeting workshop from last year, presented by Stan and Jane on “Leading Adult Sunday School for Transformation.” Resources from the workshop are included on the Anabaptist Faith Formation website.
  - Other updates and additions on the above website: It is loaded with resources for every level of Christian formation, from personal to family, youth and adult learning, teaching and prayer practices, downloadables, and multiple helpful how-to’s. We encourage leaders and individuals to access this valuable website often and to offer suggestions for further resources or updates. Contact curator Shana Peachey Boshart or the CFC chairperson with any ideas, updates and feedback.
  - Re-imagining youth delegate participation at Annual Meeting: Area youth pastors will be meeting with Shana to work at re-shaping format and planning for this year’s meeting.
  - Planning CFC workshop for Annual Meeting 2018: We imagined a number of possibilities, based on providing resources for persons interested in ongoing Christian formation through weekend retreats, online cohorts of spiritual direction, and exploring experiments in engaging scripture/covenant practices for transformation through shared stories. From further discussion and meetings we decided on the latter idea, with Barb Tieszen and Lewis Miller assigned to formulate further details for this year’s workshop. We are excited about hearing from many of you as we share stories and ideas for imagining creative ways to engage with scripture and each other through the activity of the Holy Spirit.
  - Explored ideas for a theme or focus for the coming year: We have been focused on adult Bible study for the past year, and considered a focus on worship for the coming year. Further development and planning will be needed and we will continue to explore ideas in the near future.

- Upcoming changes: The Christian Formation Committee will experience significant change in the coming months. Shana Peachey Boshart will complete her work as Conference Minister for Christian Formation on July 31 to begin her role as denominational minister for faith formation for Mennonite Church USA. Shana's gifts of leadership, creativity and wisdom have been a vital part of the work of the Christian Formation Committee. We will miss her presence and leadership on this committee and with CPMC, and wish her God's blessing and guidance in her work. Two other committee members will also complete their terms of service: Gordon Krause and Lewis Miller. With the change in personnel, the committee will have new dynamics, and we look forward to the ongoing work as God continues to use the many gifts of current and new members. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide and surprise in the journey of transformation.

Submitted by Lewis Miller, CFC Chair

## Shalom Readers

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

Shalom Readers Club is giving children an opportunity to explore books which talk 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- 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 2016-17:

#### East Region

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

#### West Region

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

Number of children earning free books – 38

### Preschool through Second Grade

***Cheyenne Again*** by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Irving Toddy c. 1995, 2002 by HMH Books for Young Readers. A boy named Young Bull is taken from his parents and sent to boarding school, where he struggles to hold on to his Cheyenne heritage even as he must learn the white man's ways.

***If You Plant a Seed*** by Kadir Nelson c. 2015 Balzer & Bray With spare text and breathtaking oil paintings, this story demonstrates not only the process of planting and growing for young children but also how a seed of kindness can bear sweet fruit.

***The Whispering Town*** by Jennifer Elvgren, illustrator Fabio Santomauro, c. 2014 by Kar-Ben Publishing. The dramatic story of Anett and her parents living in a small Danish fishing village who, during the Holocaust, shelter a Jewish family in their cellar until they can be ferried to safety in Sweden.

### Third through Fifth Grades

***Teammates*** by Peter Golenbock, illustrator Paul Bacon c. 1990 HMH Books for Young Readers. The moving story of how Jackie Robinson became the first black player on a Major League baseball team when he joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in the 1940s. On a fateful day in Cincinnati, Pee Wee Reese took a stand and declared Jackie his teammate. Illustrated with a blend of historic photographs and striking watercolors.

***Train to Somewhere*** by Eve Bunting, illustrator Ronald Himler c. 1996, 2000 HMH Books for Young Readers. Historical fiction. Marianne, heading west in the 1920s with fourteen other children on an Orphan Train, is sure her mother will show up at one of the stations along the way. Stop after stop goes by, and there's no sign of her mother in the crowds that come to look over the children. No one shows any interest in adopting shy, plain Marianne, either. Then the train pulls into its final stop, a town called Somewhere in Iowa, where her new life begins, and hope and faith sustain her.

***Wish Tree*** by Katherine Applegate, illustrator Charles Santoso c. 2017 Feiwel Friends. Red, an oak tree who is many rings old, is the neighborhood "wishtree"—people write their wishes on pieces of cloth and tie them to Red's branches. You might say Red has seen it all, until a new family moves in. Not everyone is welcoming, and Red's experiences as a wishtree are more important than ever.

## Sixth through Eighth Grades

***Out of the Dust*** by Karen Hess c. 1997, 2005 Scholastic Inc. When Billie Jo is just fourteen she must endure heart-wrenching ordeals, but the quiet strength she displays is as surprising as it is inspiring. Written in free verse, this award-winning story is set in the heart of the Great Depression and chronicles Oklahoma's staggering dust storms, and the environmental--and emotional--turmoil they leave in their path.

***Radical Jesus: A Graphic History of Faith*** edited by Paul Buhle et. al. c. 2013 Herald Press. This is arguably the first modern effort to convey through comic art the meaning of Jesus and his social message, not just in his own time, but also in the Radical Reformation, recent centuries, and in our own time.

***Views from Our Shoes: Growing Up with a Brother or Sister with Special Needs***; edited by Donald J. Meyer, illustrator Cary Pillo c. 1997 Woodbine House. Forty-five siblings, ages four to eighteen, share their experiences as the brother or sister of someone with a disability: autism, cerebral palsy, development delays, ADD, hydrocephalus, visual and hearing impairments, Down and Tourette syndromes. Their personal stories introduce young people to others like them, perhaps for the first time, and allow them to compare experiences. A glossary of disabilities provides easy--to--understand definitions of many of the conditions mentioned.

**Ballot of Election/Affirmation**  
**Central Plains Mennonite Conference**  
**Annual Meeting 2018**

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.

**Conference Board** (2-year term) vote for 2  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Shella Franz - 1st term - Bethel Mennonite, Mountain Lake, MN  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Renea Richenbach - 1st term - Wayland Mennonite, Wayland, IA  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2020) (write in) \_\_\_\_\_

**Discernment Committee** (2-year term) vote for 2  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Glenn Geissing - 1st term - Faith Mennonite, Minneapolis, MN  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2020) *open position*  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2020) (write in) \_\_\_\_\_

**Christian Formation Committee** (3-year term) vote for 3  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2021) Stan Harder - \*1st term as Chair for final 1 year of 1st term –  
First Mennonite, Lincoln, NE  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2021) Corey Miller - 1st term - Salem-Zion, Freeman, SD  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2021) *open position*  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2021) (write in) \_\_\_\_\_

**Outreach and Service Committee** (3-year term) vote for 4  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2019) open position - finish out 1-year unexpired term by Jane Goering  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2020) open position - finish out 2-year unexpired term by Suzette Shreffler  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2021) Kate Friesen - 2nd term - Hutterthal Mennonite, Freeman, SD  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2021) Philip Friesen - 2nd term - Emmanuel Mennonite, Saint Paul, MN  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2021) (write in) \_\_\_\_\_

**Pastoral Leadership Committee** (3-year term) vote for 3  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2019) Marcia Yoder Schrock - \*1st term as Chair for final 1 year of 1st term –  
Zion, Donnellson, IA  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2020) Seth Miller - 1st term, after fulfilling 1-year unexpired term –  
Bethesda Mennonite, Henderson, NE  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2021) Kim Becker - 1st term - Emmanuel Mennonite, Saint Paul, MN  
\_\_\_\_\_ (2021) (write in) \_\_\_\_\_

\*Stan and Marcia are eligible for a 2nd (3year) term as member and/or Chair beginning in 2019

## **Bios for the Ballot of Election/Affirmation**

*(Conference Board Member-at-Large)* **Shella Franz** lives in Mountain Lake, MN where she is actively involved at Bethel Mennonite Church. She has served on a variety of boards and committees as well as in various capacities in worship. She is married to Duane Franz, who farms while she works as a Social Worker in long term care. They have 5 adult children and 8 grandchildren.

*(Conference Board Member-at-Large)* **Renea Reichenbach** My husband Neil and I live in Wayland, Iowa with our sons Gabe, Simeon, and Niles. I teach social studies at WACO High School and attend Wayland Mennonite Church, where I currently serve as church board secretary and youth group sponsor. When I'm not working, I enjoy reading, baking, and watching my kids in their activities.

*(Discernment Committee)* – **Glenn Geissinger** Arlene (former nominating committee member) and I are committed members of Faith Mennonite (Minneapolis) where I've served on every council commission/position over many years. We have 2 adult children and 3 grandchildren and are both retired, Arlene from social work and I from technical teaching. We live in Excelsior, MN where I enjoy working in my wood shop & Arlene enjoys flower gardening!

*(Christian Formation Committee)* **Corey Miller** is the pastor at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church in rural Freeman, South Dakota. He is married to Nancy and they have two lovely daughters, Hannah (21) and Rachel (18). Corey has been a youth pastor, lead pastor and solo pastor in Christ's church for over 30 years in Kansas, Iowa and now in South Dakota, where he grew up. When he's not gardening or thinking about running, he tinkers on Oliver tractors.

*(Pastoral Leadership Committee)* - **Kim Becker** -I am pastoring near St Paul, MN at Emmanuel Mennonite Church. My husband, Chris Becker, also pastors at EMC. We have four children and one grandchild. Our oldest daughter lives in California, where I am from originally. I have a BA degree in Studio Art and love to oil paint. I also enjoy playing bass guitar and singing. One of my favorite things to do is go camping and be in the great outdoors.