But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” — Luke 18.16

In early 2009 the Spirit was moving in a new way within different people at Bethel Mennonite Church in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Unbeknownst to one another, three different people where beginning to sense that God was about to do a new thing at Bethel Mennonite Church. So began Mission Possible.

Verlyn Nickel, Rachel Janzen and Sara Janzen were all beginning to feel a stir to offer something fun for children on Wednesday nights. Verlyn Nickel had been a long-time member of Bethel and felt a need to have something new on Wednesday night. I was the first to hear of Verlyn’s wondering about what it was that we could do on Wednesday nights. Neither of us had a clear sense of direction, or what it might look like, or even who in the congregation might be interested in such an endeavor. God was at work.

In the meantime, Rachel and Sara had ideas turning in their minds as well. Sara remembers as a child attending Wednesday night programs and having the feeling that you needed to be there from the beginning to “get it.” She began to dream of a place where children could come and ease into the routine even if they were coming part way through the year. As her creative juices began to flow, a theme of “Christians in training” emerged. This mother and daughter duo began to dream together about what shape such a program would take.

At some point along the way, the nudging that these three people were feeling came together. I believe that Verlyn and Rachel had a conversation one day, and that spurred the idea—as it does for most Mennonites—to form a committee! As associate pastor whose responsibilities included Christian Education, I was asked to give leadership to the development of the program and we added Lee Loewen and Galen Kauffman to the mix. The creative process was underway.

In those early days we gathered to dream. We began to dream about what it would sound like; what it would look like; who might come. We imagined with our voices as we thought God might imagine out loud.

In those times of initial planning we used plenty of what we would come to call “Holy Imagination.” We dared to think as God might think; to dream as God might dream, letting the possibilities of what God might do among us be like a wide open road that could take us anywhere.

Those early meetings were filled with much laughter and joy! It became clear that this new thing that was emerging should be called Mission Possible. The messages in the world around us and even in our community are that “good things are impossible,” and it was time for a different spin on the view the world has to offer. The shape of the evening began to become more clear as well. We wanted to offer something that felt manageable to both the kids who would

Mission Possible: Start a children’s ministry

“Nothing is impossible if you put your trust in God.”

by Amy Nissley
attend as well as the adults who would help and staff the program. The schedule for
the hour-long sessions began to fall into place.
Each week the doors of the church burst open and children run down the
stairs to hang up their coats and grab their name badge. They gather in the fellow-
ship hall for self-guided games until we begin with singing. To wrap up that time
each week, we sing our theme song, Nothing is Impossible by Eugene Clark. Then,
Agency Time starts, which is an introduction the story and the “mission” for
the night. For example, when we learned the story of the wise men, the mission for the
kids was “to search for God.” On stage there will be two skits each night, an agent
skit which puts the theme of the Biblical story into modern day language. Fol-
lowed by the Bible story in drama form. Persons of all ages from the congregation
offer their gifts in performing the skits.
Not all of the missions that we assign are missions that were successful in
the Bible. We want to be clear that sometimes people, such as Jonah and
Judas, choose not follow the call of God or see their mission through. We feel
it is important to see that at times people choose to go their own way, but that does not mean that God’s love
and grace stops. Instead, God is still present even when a mission fails.

Then they move on to the Academy Time, where they spend focused time
in classrooms with a teacher and all the students in their age group. This time is
focused on the Bible story and activities that bring the biblical text into their life
experiences. From there they move on to “Team Training,” team games designed to
teach the “agents in training” to work with one another. All too often kids engage
in competitive games that pit them against each other. These games build the
teamwork skills of those gathered.

From Team Training, they move to “CIA Time” which stand for Christians
In Action. This is a time where persons from the congregation come to share with
children ways they put their faith into action. These stories have range
from sharing about voluntary service assignments to sharing the everyday,
practical ways we live out our faith as followers of Jesus. Next, we give
these “agents in training” their mission for the week to come. Last, we
gather around the table for a snack.
Much joy and creativity has freely flowed around this calling we received almost two years ago. The commit-
tee began meeting weekly from May to July of 2009. Rachel and Sara were a witty
writing duo who turned out wonderful skits filled with humor. Sara Nickel joined
our creative team to create the classroom lessons, bringing her years of teaching
in elementary and preschool classrooms to the task of crafting the lessons. Verlyn
Nickel died in June of 2009 and was not able to see this dream come to fruition.
We dedicated the materials to his memory because of the deep love that he showed
for the children of our congregation. It has been a delight to have a front row seat
to the creative process that was called forth by the Spirit.

You can do “Mission Possible” too!
Bethel would be happy to share the curriculum for Mission
Possible: Finding your place in God’s plan with other congrega-
tions. We will offer the material for each year on a flash drive
for a cost of $40 per year. The flash drive will contain all of
the materials needed for the Agency, Academy, and Team Training
Time. We will also include the promotional materials we use
and photos of the Mission Possible environment that we created
at Bethel Mennonite. We are very glad to share these materials
with other congregations in Central Plains. If churches outside
the conference are interested, they may contact the church
for availability. You may call Bethel Mennonite Church at
507.427.8907 or email bethelmennonite@frontiernet.net.

—Amy Nisley

Network and learn at our Fall gathering
In Fall 2011, Central Plains will sponsor a gathering for
those involved in mid-week ministry to children in the congre-
gation. Mary Ann Weber of Mennonite Publishing Network
and Marlene Harder Bogard of Western District Conference
Resource Library have agreed to come and present sessions on
foundational beliefs and on curriculum options for mid-week
children’s ministry. We will also ask several Central Plains
churches to share from their experiences in this ministry. Watch
for more information about this upcoming event.

—Shana Peachey Boshart

What we believe about children and faith
Herald Press published a little booklet in 1984 called, What We Believe About Children,
written by our own Marvin K. Yoder. This is a very helpful guide for parents, Sunday
School teachers, and others involved in ministry to in children. The booklet is out of print,
but not out of date. If you would like to read it, contact Shana Peachey Boshart.

Here is what the 1995 Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective says about children.

From Article 19: “Children are of great importance. Jesus saw them as examples of how
to receive the reign of God. Children are to be loved, disciplined, taught, and respected in
the home and in the church. Children are also to honor their parents, obeying them in the
Lord. Younger people are to respect their elders in the home and the church.”

From Article 11 Commentary: “Infants and children have no need for baptism, since they
are safe in the care of God. When they are able to be accountable for their own actions,
they are able to make the church’s faith their own.”

Find a list of suggested curriculum for mid-week children’s ministries at www.centralplainsmc.org.
**Nurturing faith in children**

**Stories of what is God doing in and through us**

Over the past several years, I have noticed that many of our congregations have started mid-week children's ministries. I believe this is a sign of the work of the Holy Spirit in our congregations. Without a formal effort from conference or denomination, individual congregations are sensing and responding to a prompting from God. This issue of Scattered Seeds tells and celebrates the stories of God at work through the children's ministries of our congregations. The stories below were submitted in response to this request: “What is your congregation doing to nurture faith in children? Many congregations have vibrant mid-week children's ministries—please tell us about yours! Also let us know what innovations you are implementing in children’s Sunday School. Share with your brothers and sisters so we can learn from each other!” —Shana Peachey Boshart, editor

**Manson Mennonite Church, Manson, Iowa**

**Creativity, fun and variety mark ten years of reaching families**

*by Debra Bachman and Kym Sutter*

We started our mid-week children's club because we had a strong desire to see Christian education for the children of the church and community. In the past, we have served preschool through eighth grade, but now we just go up to sixth grade. We meet from September through April. The meeting was called Pioneer Club for many years, but this year we have changed the name to ABC (All Because of Christ) Club.

Our format has changed over the years. At first we met every week for two hours. We now meet twice a month for an hour and a half. The evening starts with all classes gathering for opening time. Students are then divided into “classroom groups.” Classes then go around to different “stations.” The class leaders rotate with their class. In the past, there was council time, games and class time. This year there is council time and Bible memory time. We also have games, crafts or snacks that alternate every third week. We have different theme nights such as wild sock night, crazy hair night, or green night to keep things fresh.

During council time there are puppet shows, Bible stories, skits, treasure hunts, and holiday-based activities. We have had several different leaders throughout the years and have used several different curricula. We have used *Fun Bible Skits 1 & 2* from Mennonite Publishing Network, some ideas from books published by Group, some ideas from other sources. This year we are using Group's *One Worship* material.

When Club started, we used Pioneer Club student books, so classroom time was for filling out the books, doing the activities and memorizing Bible verses. We use the old verse list from Bible Memory Ministries. We have encouraged the third through sixth grade students to learn 50 verses or more each year. Younger students are taught verses also. They need to say each verse twice including the reference. We have also used the Bible Memory student material in the classrooms in past years.

We always close the club season with something special. We have had a hayride, a program given by special puppeteers, our own students giving a program, or a fun night. We have a "prize table" for students to choose a prize according to the points they have accumulated during the year. We invite the parents and families of the clubbers to come and enjoy this evening with their children.

We have tried to have one adult in class for every three or four students. This was one of the biggest challenges over the years. Several of the students would come back to Club as a junior helper when they reached junior high and high school. We were encouraged to see the youth giving back.

Club has touched the children by making church a place for them. One clubber was so excited about Club that he came to Club even though he started confirmation class in his own church. Many of the children—and their families—called our church their own just because the children came on Wednesday nights. Some of the students attended our high school youth group.

Now we face the challenge of deciding whether to continue with Club. The number of students has dropped off greatly. Many families are very busy with other activities and commitments. We also find it challenging to keep Club appealing to the students; it’s getting harder to keep the students focused during activities or council time. We once again need the Holy Spirit to show us what God would have us do in and for our communities.

**Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley, Nebraska**

**Sharing the gift of the Bible with children**

*by Jan Noel, Sunday School Superintendent*

The goal of our Sunday School Department is to help our children to understand God’s plan for their lives and how He has provided gifts to us as his children to follow Jesus. In the 5-10 minute opening each Sunday morning, we have been talking about the Bible, what it is, who wrote it, interesting facts about it, the structure of the Bible, how to use it and learning the order of the books.

We’ve talked about God’s Word being a light to our path and a lamp to our feet. We also talked about the importance of hiding God’s word in our hearts so that it would go with us wherever we go. I’ve used a colorful bulletin board on which we add new facts and information each Sunday. Children participate by writing the new facts in designated areas. It has been a good learning experience for both the children and myself.
Pulaski Mennonite Church, Pulaski, Iowa

Pulaski adapts AWANA to its rural context, Mennonite beliefs

by Chris Payne

At Pulaski Mennonite Church we host the AWANA program every Wednesday evening from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. from after Labor Day through the end of March. Our program serves children three years of age through high school. The high school students are invited to become Leaders In Training. They work alongside a leader and help the younger children during handbook time when they are memorizing Bible verses.

Because our church is in the country and 20 minutes from town, we have chosen to start earlier in the evening so children can get back home and to bed. We serve supper and encourage parents to stay and eat with their children if they can.

The evening starts at 6 p.m. with the opening. The AWANA program typically starts with the pledge to the American flag and to the AWANA flag. We have chosen not to do this and each year we choose a passage of scripture for the group to memorize together and say each night to start the program. This year it is the Lord’s Prayer.

We sing a couple of songs, make any announcements and then send them off to handbook time, which is the “meat and potatoes” of the evening. Each student has a book of activities and scriptures to memorize. Those who can memorize will pass a section if they can recite it with no more than three helps. For those who struggle with memorization, we just have them read through it and discuss it with them. If they can tell you what the scripture means or what it is telling them, we will pass them. We feel it is more important for them to do that than get so frustrated that they stop coming.

The junior high and high school groups have more of a Bible Study format with discussion. At 7:10, the groups come together in the sanctuary for “council time.” This year our pastor, Darrell Zook, is telling the story each evening using story boards. He started in Genesis and is working his way thru the Bible. Each week the children get a paper with the pictures for the story on it so they can go home and retell the story to someone else. The hope is that the children will see how the story of the whole Bible goes together. And if they go home and retell it to a parent, sibling or neighbor, not only will it help the child remember it, but hopefully it will plant a seed in others.

Working with the children each week has many rewards! You get to see them struggle with a passage and work so hard and finally get it! They are so happy and proud of their accomplishments! It is neat to see a child who lacks loving contact and encouragement at home just blossom as trust is built and they experience God’s love. For some children this is the only place they get it.

Along with all the rewards there are challenges each week. Having enough leaders each year is a big one. We need a minimum of 16 adults each evening, not counting the cooks. And anytime you work with children there are always challenges! How to keep them motivated, how to help them learn better, how to keep their attention?

But we are blessed. Some years we have started short-handed and then someone comes along to fill the spot. God is good! Sometimes it feels like you get all of the “difficult” children and wonder why. Then one evening it just clicks and you find that key to open their heart. We just need to remember we are only required to plant the seed, love each child where they are, and pray.

Bethany Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota

Bethany ministry embraces children of the community and involves their parents

by Jadi Kroeker

Three young boys show up every Wednesday night about 5:45 at the Bethany Mennonite Church. Their mother is likely at work, and they have been at home alone since school. They don’t attend church on Sunday, and don’t even know what Sunday school is, but they are here for AWANA. Here, we teach them about Jesus and how he loves us and died on the cross for them and how he forgives us of our sin. This is our mission and why 30 adults give up their Wednesday evening: these children need—and want—to know about the love of Jesus. Our prayer is that as we reach these kids for Christ, we can reach their parents as well.

What started out as a program for 30 kids at Bethany quickly spread to a ministry to the community which now reaches about 90 kids between the ages of three and 18. Ten years ago, the Bethany Mennonite church embarked upon a mission to provide a Wednesday night program for our youth. After looking at several youth programs, it was decided to go with the AWANA program, which stands for Approved Workman Are Not Ashamed, taken from 2 Timothy 2:15, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (NIV)

We just need to remember we are only required to plant the seed, love each child where they are, and pray.

West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa

Adults join children in memorizing Lenten scriptures

by Martha Yoder, Associate Pastor

Bible memory will run concurrently with Wednesday evening Lent devotions at West Union this year. After the whole congregation participates in eating together, the children will go with their leaders to memorize scripture passages that relate to the season of Lent and Easter. They will begin by memorizing Philippians 2:1-11. These verses will also be memorized by the adults of the congregation during the season of Lent. On Palm Sunday, the children will participate in leading the congregation in this commonly memorized scripture.
Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Nebraska

**Bethesda Preschool serves both church and community**

*by Gina Mestl*

Our mission at Bethesda Preschool is to provide a Christian preschool education for young children within an atmosphere of love, acceptance and guidance. Bethesda Preschool began in fall of 1998 when a community survey revealed the need for a preschool.

The preschool serves families from our congregation and local and surrounding communities. We offer classes for three- and four-year-olds on Tuesday and Thursday and classes for four- and five-year-olds on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Gina Mestl is the director and teacher. We also have grandparent volunteers.

Beemer Mennonite Church, Beemer, Nebraska

**Beemer plants seeds, shows hospitality**

*by Janet Huber*

This is Beemer Mennonite’s fourth year of doing a children’s ministry program for Kindergarten through sixth graders. We meet each Wednesday at 6 p.m. for supper followed by story and activities from 6:30-7:30. We start in mid-September and go through mid-December, have a break over Christmas, then resume again in mid-January till the end of April. The opening story and singing time is done in one big group, then we break into three groups and rotate through three stations.

There are six or seven volunteers who cook the meal and clean up, and about seven volunteers who work at the lessons and activities. One of our junior high girls entertains three preschoolers whose parents are volunteers. Our pastor usually eats supper with us so the children get a chance to interact with him also.

Our attendance is between 10-18 children with only two of them being from our church. So we feel this is a significant ministry to our community. The majority of the children do not attend church anywhere, so we keep our curriculum very basic and currently use Group’s Faith Weaver material. Our challenge is to interest the children and their families in coming for Sunday School or our worship service.

It is hard to say what specific affect this program has had on the children, but it is common to receive big smiles and even hugs when we meet them on the street. In town one day, one of the little girls introduced me to her aunts as “a lady who goes to my church.” This was encouraging because I felt it shows that she feels she belongs to our church and is not just a visitor. One girl who always really enjoyed our time together but now has graduated from our group volunteers to help with our Vacation Bible School program.

The community has been supportive of our efforts in this ministry and generously supports our fundraiser which pays the expenses for this program. So we feel we are planting seeds and may not see the full results for many years. Even if children never attend our worship service, they have been introduced to Jesus and are learning about the Bible and how to use it.

Swan Lake Christian Camp, Viborg, South Dakota

**Daily Bible study enriches and guides camp leaders**

*by Jerry Kroeker
Executive Director, Swan Lake Christian Camp*

I have an interesting role here at camp. As the executive director, I become a spiritual mentor to the eight to ten college students that we hire each summer. These are the people who will run our youth camping program.

Each morning, we meet together and consider the Common Lectionary texts for that week. Using the lectionary causes us to consider parts of the Bible that we might not otherwise consider. I expect that each staff member to come to Bible study having already read the passage for the day. Early in the week, we consider the Old Testament passage. Then the next day we lay the Psalm as an overlay. I ask the young leaders what connecting points they see between the two passages. Next we consider the Gospel text and finally the Epistle, always looking for the way in which one passage adds color to the previous. Sometimes the connections are obvious. Other times we really have to challenge ourselves to look for God’s fingerprints.

I have found that searching the scriptures with these young people has been refreshing and insightful. It is uncanny how often a lectionary passage connects with our summer theme planned months beforehand. These passages tend to show up during our camping devotions and other times of worship throughout the week. Often times, when we get a dozen minds together, God speaks to us through His word in voices that we might not have heard on our own. I relish these times of spiritual growth in my own self, and I really enjoy seeing these college students growing and applying God’s word. I have been truly blessed by these people, in these times and at this place.
Spanish churches will host Annual Meeting June 16-19 in Moline, Illinois

Annual Meeting 2011 promises opportunities for fellowship, learning

The Spanish churches of Eastern Iowa and Moline, Illinois, will host our 2011 Annual Meeting, giving our conference a great opportunity to fellowship with and hear from Hispanic brothers and sisters. Meeting in the home area of our Hispanic churches promises to be a rich experience, especially with the issues swirling through the broader church relating to immigration and the location of our 2013 Convention.

We begin our fellowship together on Thursday evening, June 16, at Templo Alabanza, the church in Moline. On Friday and Saturday, we meet at the Ramada Airport & Conference Center in Moline. This facility will be a blessing to the hosts because the hotel staff will take care of many meeting logistics, including lodging. The Annual Meeting Task Group was pleasantly surprised to learn that the meeting room rental will cost substantially less than renting a school, as we have done for the last several years.

We will begin each day, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, with worship. Our preacher will be Juanita Nuñez, a Mennonite pastor from Miami Florida. She works as a certified part-time chaplain with Marketplace Chaplains USA. She and her husband Eligio are co-pastors at Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer in Apopka, Florida where they were ordained into the ministry in 2008. Juanita is a past moderator of the Iglesia Menonita Hispana and sits on the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA. She studied theology in a local Orlando Bible Institute and has a bachelor’s degree in Theology and Arts from the International Seminary in Plymouth, Florida. She was born and raised in the Dominican Republic. Eligio and Juanita have raised three children.

Following worship on Friday and Saturday, we will gather for delegate sessions. “We are responding to the delegates’ request for more discernment and less business,” said moderator Diane Zaerr Brenneman. The morning delegate sessions will focus on business items, and afternoon sessions will be spent in discernment, particularly around the question, “What are the activities, practices, programs, and behaviors that will help our conference be faithful and united in mission.”

The themes for Annual Meeting over the next three years are from the prayer of Jesus in John 17:23, “I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” The themes are: Guided by the Spirit: Brought to Complete Unity (2011), Guided by the Spirit: To Let the World Know (2012), and Guided by the Spirit: Knowing God’s Love (2013).

Congregation studies “Immigrants Among Us”

by Pierre Gingerich-Boberg

During the month of January, Faith Mennonite Church (FMC) hosted a Christian education series, “Immigrants Among Us,” examining the U.S. immigration system. Worship services during the month also focused on the theme. In four sessions, participants heard from a variety of experts on topics ranging from the origins of our own ancestors to immigration law to the reasons people leave Mexico and Central America to come to the U.S.

In the final session, FMC pastor Joetta Schlabach reviewed the commitments of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Central Committee toward immigrants and immigration reform. Mennonite Church USA Executive Board Member Kim Vu Friesen, of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, spoke of the board’s recent decision to keep Phoenix the venue for the 2013 Assembly.

The series ended with a congregational brainstorming session on fulfilling the commitments of the 2003 Mennonite Church USA Statement on Immigration and how to be prophetic in light of the Mennonite Church USA decision to go to Phoenix.

The following Sunday, a group of FMC members joined a monthly interfaith Immigration Faith Action at the Ramsey County Detention Center to witness to the presence of detained immigrants and to call for comprehensive immigration reform.
Tools for missional discernment

Workshop focus on God at work in local context

by Dave Miller
Pastor, Bellwood Mennonite Church

About 30 pastors, leaders and people with a passion for God’s mission gathered at Bellwood Mennonite Church for an interactive workshop entitled “From Reality to Hope: Road Signs for the Journey” with author Conrad Kanagy. A professor of sociology at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College, Kanagy shared data from the Mennonite Member Profile of 2006 reflecting the spiritual and sociological location of Mennonites in the U.S. today.

The judgment and exile story of God’s people as conveyed by Jeremiah was the Biblical context for the workshop. Kanagy also challenged the group to consider Jesus’ sending of The Seventy in Luke 10. Kanagy reminded us that “God so loved the world and still does.” Participants discussed how they might see God’s Spirit at work in their own congregation’s context. Discussion questions included, How are we showing God’s love to our neighbors? To what extent have congregations discovered their missional vocation? What would be required for your congregation to be fully aligned with God’s mission? Where do you see the presence of God’s mission in your congregation and community?

Friesen’s Isaiah study cut short by weather

by Elaine Kauffman

Together, Bethel Mennonite and First Mennonite Churches hosted the Annual Mennonite Bible Study Series in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Our speaker, Ivan Friesen, of Bluffton, Ohio, spoke on Isaiah. He wrote the Isaiah volume of the Believers Church Bible Commentary series from Herald Press.

On Friday evening, February 18, topics were how Isaiah fits among the prophets and tending to the call of God’s Spirit through the text. Severe weather aborted the conclusion of the series. A sermon for Sunday morning was titled “Power to the Faint,” and the Sunday evening presentation was to have been on Isaiah’s peace testimony. While we were disappointed by not being able to complete the series, we give thanks for the continued interest in our congregations for an in-depth, winter series exploring biblical and theological topics.

Swan Lake considers adding facilities for adults

by Jerry Kroeker
Executive Director, Swan Lake Christian Camp

Swan Lake Christian Camp has been a powerful tool for reaching our youth. Now we are beginning to explore what it will take for Swan Lake to effectively promote growth as Christ’s disciples in people of all ages. We believe that God is laying on our hearts the need to provide facilities that work for adults as well as kids.

We have prayed about the need for more adult guest rooms for a long time, and now we are beginning to discern God’s will. The type of facility that we are considering is more than what we can build of our own accord. If this project is designed by God then nothing we do will stand in the way of its completion. If it is of our own pursuits, then we cannot possibly succeed.

Our board and I want very much to be sensitive to God’s leading, and we are asking for your prayers towards that end. If you are interested in specifics of the project, I would love to share some ideas with you. Give me a call or invite me to meet with your Sunday school class.

Sharing God’s love for children at camp

by Johanna Bontrager
Program Director, Crooked Creek Christian Camp

At Crooked Creek, the summer months are filled with the laughter of children, the smell of a campfire, the cool splash of the pool, a perfect s’more and children learning about God’s love. Everything we do at camp is meant to be an expression of God’s love poured out on each camper in great abundance.

Intentional and child-focused worship bookends each day. We learn about our faith and just God when we play games and learn to play by the rules. We experience our God that has no boundaries as everyone is welcomed into the cabin and is treated as member of the family. We discover how wise and creative our God is as we learn about creation and the nature that surrounds us. We feel God’s great joy in us as we delight in those around us and participate in true community. Camp does have a lot to offer, especially to the faith journey of a child.

Nebraska women gather for reflection, encouragement

by Glenda Maury

Women from Bellwood Mennonite hosted approximately 60 Mennonite Women from across Nebraska at the Aurora Retreat Center on March 5 and 6. Diane Zaerr Brenneman, Central Plains conference moderator, shared from her personal life experiences with her father’s death and how she found joy, peace, encouragement.

The emphasis of the weekend was “Discovering the Joy of the Lord and Going Out with Joy.” Sharing times and fun activities were planned throughout the weekend, which included two workshops of a foot spa and water aerobics. Laughter abounded during the show which was hosted by “Beulah & Gracie.” Participants enjoyed a book table from Mennonite Publishing Network.

Next year’s annual retreat will be hosted by First Mennonite Lincoln ladies the first weekend in March of 2012. Mark your calendars to attend!
Let’s end the year strong

The slight deficit experienced in January was offset by a positive net gain in February. Overall, the conference is experiencing a deficit of $17,727.99 for the fiscal year. At the beginning of March, income was at 71% of the blue print ($492,294) and expenses were at 74%. Both income and expenses were below their mark through 10 months, but hopefully continued support can push us through towards a positive result by April 30, the end of our fiscal year.

Cash reserve fund

By Annual Meeting in June 2010, individuals throughout the conference had donated $25,000.00 for our Cash Reserve. Next, we asked the churches of Central Plains to match this amount. As of March 1, churches had donated $40,000 and we are thankful for that. May the Lord richly bless you for this. Now we are looking for the other churches to help us reach the goal of $50,000.00 by Annual Meeting 2011 in June.

Please prayerfully consider contributing to this fund. Contributions may be mailed to the conference office at P.O. Box 101, Freeman, SD 57029 and designated “Cash Reserve Fund” or “Back in the Black.” —Stewardship Task Group