



August
2015

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Scattered Seeds

Children of the Kingdom Sowing the Word
—Matthew 13



Tim Detweiler presents a plaque to Nadine and Willis Busenitz celebrating 50 years of ministry among the Cheyenne people.

Central Plains Annual Meeting 2015 Mennonites as joyful “abiders”

By Holly Blosser Yoder
West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa

Woodland Hills Church of St. Paul, Minnesota, which is also the home of Hmong Mennonite Church, was the venue for the 2015 annual meeting of delegates of Central Plains Mennonite Conference June 18-21. Greg Boyd, a best-selling author and pastor of Woodland Hills, was the featured speaker. Setting a festive tone for the gathering, Boyd highlighted the gospels' party analogies for the Kingdom of God, and the “joy over the possibility of redeeming the beloved,” in his opening message on the theme “Joyfully Following Jesus: Communities Centered in Christ.”

Preaching on John 15:1-11 Friday morning, Boyd noted that the Greek word for “abide” is “meno.” With this in mind, he lightheartedly suggested an alternative meaning for the term “Mennonite,” beyond its derivation from a man's name.

“Mennonites are ‘abiders,’” he told the gathering. In that sense, conference worship, workshops and delegate sessions were a special time for Central Plains Mennonites to become more fully ourselves, more fully “abiders” in Christ. (For more serious take-aways from Boyd's messages, see Susan Janzen's article also in this issue.)

Several special recognitions highlighted faithful work being done in the conference over a span of years. Willis and Nadine Busenitz were recognized for 50 years of ministry among the Cheyenne, and Shalom Readers Club was recognized for 25 years of ministry.

Another meaningful recognition was the presentation on Saturday afternoon of the Peace Mug to Max Villatoro, pastor of Torre Fuerte of Iowa City. The award was received on his behalf by his

continued on page 2

*And the
disciples were
filled with joy
and with the
Holy Spirit.*
— Acts 13:52



continued from page 1

wife Gloria and eldest son, Anthony. On large screens, delegates watched a skyped video exchange and prayer between Executive Conference Minister David Boshart and Pastor Villatoro, who spoke from rural Honduras, where he was forcibly deported in March. “It’s like they took my life away, my family, when they deported me,” Villatoro said. He also testified to his hope and faith, “God answered me before, he’ll do it again. I don’t know how long it’s going to take, but I’m going to keep asking, believing him. He’ll open a door and someday I’ll be able to testify of it.”

Boshart concluded the conversation with gratitude for Villatoro’s witness, saying, “You strengthen our faith as we see the strength of your faith. We pray that we will see you here next year—in person!”

As the Twin Cities is home to people of many cultural backgrounds, this diversity was conveyed in the delicious variety of food delegates enjoyed, beginning with a Hmong meal on Thursday night, as well as the languages used in worship. Along with hymns and songs of the Anabaptist martyrs, delegates joined members of the Northern Cheyenne churches of Montana to sing “Venaasenoota Jesus/Sing an Honor Song to Jesus,” and they learned the bi-lingual hymn “Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo/We are the Body of Christ” as the Annual Meeting’s theme song.



Top left to right: David Boshart interviews Max Villatoro via videoconference; Elizabeth Troyer-Miller of the Conflict Management Support Team; Central Plains children enjoy an Iced Lolly; Shana Peachey Boshart, Kiara Myron and Darissa Swank; Ratsamee Thosaengsiri and Pang Vang; Annual Meeting participants visit a mosque; Carol and Chris Eisenbeis.

Photos by Stan Harder.



Tending our joy

by David Boshart
Executive Conference Minister



Whenever folks from Central Plains gather I find myself falling in love with these people all over again. It is a beautiful thing to behold when our sisters and brothers gather to worship, fellowship, celebrate, and seek God's will together. Our life together is *good!* As we gathered for our Annual Meeting in June, there were so many things to celebrate as we joyfully follow Jesus:

- We celebrate the outpouring of support for our brother Max Villatoro who is in exile in Honduras. On this Father's Day weekend, it was a poignant thing to be physically present with Gloria and the children while conversing with Max electronically. Though there were many tears, our conversation was a sign that nothing can separate us from the love of God we have in Jesus Christ – and nothing can truly separate us from one another.
- We celebrated with congregations who have been in years-long search processes who have found and called leaders who will be starting ministry in the next months.
- We celebrated long-term pastors, Willis and Nadine Busenitz, on their 50 years of ministry among the Cheyenne people.
- We celebrated in lavish worship through singing and having front row seats to the inspired preaching of Greg

Boyd, who called us to tend to our joy in the face of the pain and lack that is in our world.

- We celebrated the offerings of our congregations and the support of many individuals that enabled us to end this fiscal year in the black for the 4th year in a row. Thank you for your strong support, and, please, may it continue!
- We celebrated our common life through communal discernment on the covenant of spiritual practices under consideration for Central Plains.
- We celebrated as we ended our delegate sessions with a time of testimonies offered for what God is doing in our Christ-centered communities.

Our life together is *good!* We need to tend to our joy in these days. It isn't easy to tend to our joy in the face of all the world's suffering and the challenges we face to church unity. When I read about the church in the social media, on Facebook, or other places, it feels like we've swallowed an anchor that is threatening to drown us dead in the depths of the sea. As I read the conversations about the church in the social media, I find a deluge of commentary and criticism, diagnosing the church as though it were fatally ill. Explanations for what the problem is and offers of the cure abound. And they sound like this: "Well, if someone would just..." or, "What we really need to do is..." or, "If someone *would just show some leadership* around here..." As though healing the church, *saving* the church, is something we can do in our own power.

But it is Jesus who saves us. It is Jesus who heals us. It is Jesus who renews us in joy. Our joy needs to be tended, and our only hope for tending our joy is to be communities who place themselves face-to-face with Jesus. *Jesus alone* can renew us in God's love and delight.

In our gathering, I see the face of Jesus and Jesus is joyful in spite of the challenges to unity we are facing in the church today. Jesus lives and because *he* lives *we* have crossed the boundary from death to life. We commune now with a deep sense of joy for the grace we have received in Jesus. Hallelujah! Thanks be to God.



Scattered Seeds

The newsletter of Central Plains Mennonite Conference is published six times a year at Kalona, Iowa.
Editor: Shana Peachey Boshart. Copy Editor: Erin Ramer. Editorial Council: David Boshart, Tim Detweiler, Roger Farmer, Lewis Miller, Willis Busenitz, Margie Garaballo, and Sheryl Ortman.
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Annual Meeting 2015

Greg Boyd calls us to joy in following Jesus*by Susan Janzen, pastor, Cedar Falls Mennonite Church*

As he introduced the annual meeting theme, “Joyfully following Jesus: Communities Centered in Christ,” on Friday morning, Dr. Greg Boyd, senior pastor at Woodland Hills Church, noted that Jesus called on his followers to “make my joy complete,” and then asked whether joy is truly our motivation for serving God.

He mused that Christians are often too serious and too somber, yet acknowledged, “there is so much pain and sorrow and struggle in the world” that it can be hard to have joy. The way to regain our joy, he said, is by remembering that we are precious to God and that our worth to God was revealed on the cross. Our relationship with God is our source of joy and abundant life, even when the suffering of the world overwhelms us.

On Saturday morning, Boyd focused on what it means to follow Jesus. “Salvation brings about a new reality,” he said, “we’re conformed to the image of the cross.” Belief is just the beginning; Jesus calls us to be disciples, living and working to bring God’s kingdom into being. Just as Jesus had a body attached to a head (God), so we are a body with the same head — but now we are Jesus’ eyes, feet, etc.

Presenting the church’s relationship to the state from Constantine to the present as a cautionary tale, Boyd reminded us that Jesus never let himself get sucked into the partisan politics of his day, though people tried. Rather, he did things like

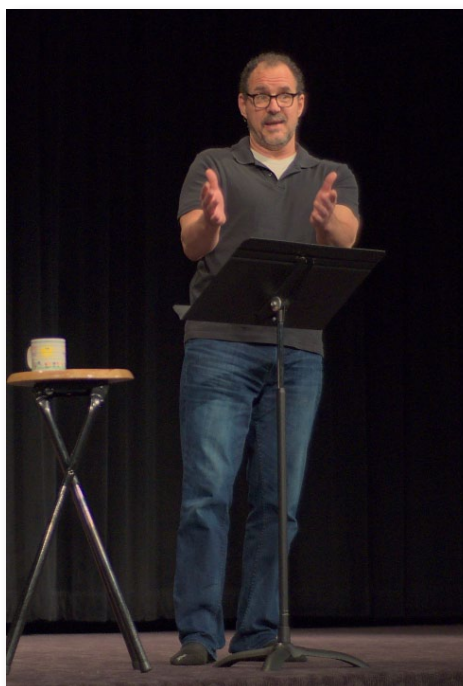
calling both Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot, who were polar opposites politically. Jesus simply would not let the world define his categories. “We’re not called to be the wise advisers of Caesar,” he implored, “our job is to do what Jesus would have us do.”

Central Plains attendees joined the Woodland Hills congregation for worship on Sunday morning, which began with singing and a prayer of lament for the tragedy at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and ended around the Lord’s Table.

In his final sermon, Boyd spoke on Jesus’ relationship with the poor and outcasts. “Jesus loved with an indiscriminating mind, apart from all hierarchies and categories and judgments.” The poor, those considered sinners, outcasts: that’s who Jesus related to and that’s who responded to him. Those who were “healthy” were scandalized by him.

When our identity is in Jesus Christ, he concluded, there is no need for playing games or for trying to “game” the system. Rather, “there is a oneness because we are all welcome and equal and empowered to love and live out [God’s] kingdom.” The poor will always be with us because they will gravitate towards us and we will gravitate to them. In the end, he said, “if the Pharisees are outraged, you’re doing the kingdom of God.”

Left to right: Greg Boyd; Russell Adrian, Steffie Williams and Lee Williams



Annual Meeting 2015

Children focus on being part of a worldwide community

by Tammy Lundquist, children's program coordinator
Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

During our two days together, the children and their leaders explored three Latin American countries where Mennonite Central Committee is involved: Colombia, Bolivia and Guatemala. On Saturday, June 20, we did a service project helping to package food at Feed My Starving Children. This fit in nicely with our theme, "We Are Part Of A World Community." We talked about some causes of starvation and how we must help one another when we can. We did not know ahead of time, but the food we packed at FMSC that morning was heading to Nicaragua, a fun coincidence with our Latin focus.

The children also made an *alfombra*, an Easter tradition from Guatemala. Made with dyed sawdust, *alfombras* are beautifully artistic "carpets" made for the King. Created in the streets on Easter eve, people work on them into the early morning hours and they are completed just in time for a parade to march through them.



Fall Women's Retreat September 19 & 20 at Swan Lake

Luann Yutzy to speak on "Time in a Bottle"

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Women invite you to their annual retreat at Swan Lake Christian Camp near Viborg, South Dakota. Bring a friend and enjoy a weekend of inspiration, relaxation, interest sessions, and fellowship in a retreat setting.

The speaker for the retreat, Luann Yutzy, is a 2006 graduate of Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia and an ordained minister in Mennonite Church USA, serving most recently in Central Plains congregations as a transitional pastor at Bethesda Mennonite in Henderson, Nebraska, and Salem-Zion Mennonite near Freeman, South Dakota. She also was a part of the Emmanuel Mennonite faith community, worshipping with them while her husband served as their interim pastor. She has served in congregations in Pennsylvania and Kansas and has been a staff chaplain at Wesley Medical Center in Wichita, Kansas.

Luann's journey has had many twists and turns and she counts it a privilege to walk with others in the ups and downs of their lives. She has found God's presence always with her from the farm where she lived for 35 years and in the people she has been privileged to know in the places she has lived since. Luann is married to her long-time friend, Robert and they have five children who live in many places, refreshing Luann's life with their experiences and views of life.

Did you ever wonder what everyday objects in our life would say if they could talk? Luann weaves poems, prayers and scripture as she tells stories of sadness and joy contained in the bottles that have sat on her shelves. Her session topics include: "All she needed that day," "Trees don't seem to have trouble," "Give me someone," and "Blessed are you." May we, with Luann, celebrate each other as we gather as women who are continually being shaped by, and living out of, the stories we hold inside.

Cost for the entire weekend is \$80, Saturday only \$40, and Sunday only \$30. Prices include meals, camp fees, and retreat expenses. Registrations are due by **September 13, 2015** to Arlyce Friesen, P.O.Box 488, Henderson, NE 68371; 402-723-4414 or 402-364-3220; myarfriesen@mainstaycomm.net.

—Barb Voth, Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Nebraska

Leader Transitions

Bob and Mag Richer Smith, pastors at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City, retired from ministry effective June 30, 2015.

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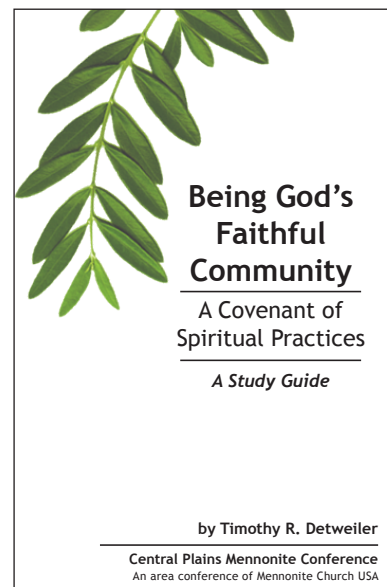
To receive this newsletter in Spanish, call Shana Peachey Boshart at 319-936-5905. Para recibir este boletín en español, llame a Shana Peachey Boshart al 319-936-5905.

Covenant study available

In our last issue of Scattered Seeds, we introduced *Being God's Faithful Community: A Covenant of Spiritual Practices for Central Plains Mennonite Conference*. Annual Meeting participants also discussed the covenant and gave feedback, which has been incorporated into the next draft.

The conference board and ministry staff is encouraging each congregation to study the covenant in the coming months. Tim Detweiler has written a four-session study guide, which you can order from Amazon.com. Just do a search for the title of the covenant; the cost is only \$3.59 per booklet. Orders over \$35 are eligible for free shipping.

—Shana Peachey Boshart, Conference Minister for Christian Formation



Hmong retreat inspires spiritual growth

Hmong Mennonite Church of St. Paul Men & Women Retreat

by Mai Ying Yang, Hmong Mennonite Church of St. Paul

During Memorial weekend May 22-24, the Hmong Mennonite Church of St. Paul held the biggest retreat that our church has ever had for the men and women. The theme of the retreat was “Ruaj Khov Rua Ntawm Vaajtsuv,” meaning strong, stable and faithfulness in God. We had about 64 people, 45 adults, 9 youth and 10 kids. The adults included members of our congregation and members of other congregations, drifting believers and non-Christians.

The retreat consisted of Bible study and activities to teach us about our faith and how can we work together as a team so we can support each person physically and spiritually. Some of the things that we learned from the Bible study are love, forgiveness and humility. We must love God in order to have love, because God is love. We must have love in order to be together and work together as a team and as a church. By learning and being able to forgive, we can dissolve problems within our group. With humility within ourselves we will know to let go of our pride and work together. With these things in our hearts it will help us built a stronger relationship with God and become a faithful child.

The activities showed us many ways to strengthen our faith. In one activity, the first step that we had to do was to carry a cross. As we carried our cross, some of us thought, “If only all our problems and trouble in our lives were this light!” The Pastor’s reply to that was, “Yes, your problems in life can be as light as these crosses if you lift it all to Jesus. If we lift our struggles to God and trust in Him, what then is there to worry and trouble us?”

As we carried our crosses down to the field, we came

across a tunnel made up of hula-hoops. Crawling on the ground in these small spaces made us understand that life with Christ is not always easy. There will be times when we struggle, but if we are patient and keep on going we will reach the end of the tunnel and there’s something better on the other side. After crawling through the tunnel, we had to grab our cross and go up a hill to the top where the three crosses were. As we climbed the hill, it made us think back to Christ dying on the cross: how much suffering he went through, how far the distance was and how heavy it was for him to carry his own cross just to die on, not because of what he had done but because of what we had done. As we walked down from the hill to the other side we came across a tomb like Jesus’ tomb. This reminded us that through all of that suffering and torture, Jesus Christ still has victory over everything. Even death could not pull Him down. This is what makes Him the one and only true King!

After this, everyone had their feet washed by Pastor Xeng. This shows us that no matter who you are or what position you are in, you must remember to humble yourself. This set a great example for us to follow. Not only that, but it is the first time that many of us ever had done footwashing within our church.

The retreat was a great spiritual transformation and refreshment for many of us. It was a great reminder to us of what Jesus Christ dying on the cross meant, as well as teaching us what it means to be a team and work together so that we all may become spiritually strong.



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to God's
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in the world through
fellowship,
discipleship
and leadership

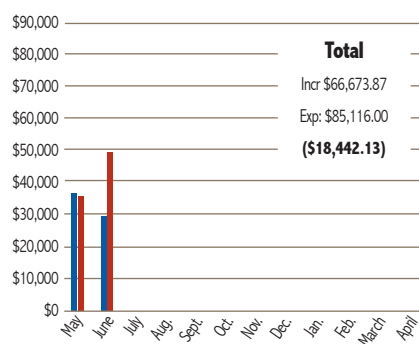
Blueprint approved at Annual Meeting!
Central Plains has set a new budget for a total of \$485,905.72 starting in May and going through the end of April 2016. You can view our progress in the graph at right. As you can see, there is a deficit the first two months of the fiscal year. In May and June, income totaled \$66,673.87. Expenses for the two months totaled \$85,116.00. This result creates an \$18,442.13 deficit. We are thankful for the continued support of conference and as we continue to give witness to God's work in the world.

—Stewardship Task Group

Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Income (blue) vs. Expenses (red)

Fiscal Year 2015/2016



UPCOMING EVENTS

Conference Board and Council of Committees will meet August 28 & 29 at Swan Lake Christian Camp, Viborg, S.D.

Women's Retreat will be held September 19 & 20 at Swan Lake Christian Camp, Viborg, S.D.

Conference Board will meet October 30 & 31 in the Twin Cities, MN.

Central Plains Annual Meeting 2016 will take place June 16-19, 2016, in Des Moines, IA.

Youth Escape 2016 will take place July 15-17, 2016 in central Iowa.

An area conference of



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