



Fall
2012

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Scattered Seeds

Children of the Kingdom Sowing the Word

—Matthew 13



Journaling: A prayer exercise



Worship singing led by Jeremy Kempf

*The glory that
you have given
me I have given
them, so that
they may be one,
as we are one...
so that the world
may know that
you have sent me
and have loved
them even as you
have loved me.*

—John 17:22-23

Youth Escape 2012: Plugged In and Charged

by Marcos and Jessica Stoltzfus

On August 3rd over 80 youth, sponsors, presenters and staff arrived at Hidden Acres Christian Center ready to participate in Youth Escape 2012! The theme for Central Plains Mennonite Conference's bi-annual youth gathering was "Plugged In and Charging". Over the course of the three-day weekend the conference youth, sponsors and leaders spent time getting to know each other, worshipping, playing, laughing, resting and enjoying God's creation.

Initially this theme "Plugged In and Charging" may seem a bit odd. Shouldn't the theme for a retreat be "Unplugged and Resting"? Not according to Merv Stoltzfus and Marlene Frankenfield. Merv and Marlene led each worship

service and challenged the participants to recharge their spiritual relationships with God by plugging into Him. Over the course of the weekend participants were encouraged to reflect on their own lives and the distractions that stop them from plugging into God each day.

Merv and Marlene then presented a few unique ways to recharge our personal relationships with God. Examples included journaling, having a scripture passage sent to your phone each day, stopping to pray every time you plug in your cell phone and

continued on page 2



What Do Youth Have To Say?

Top Ten List from Youth Escape 2012

**The dodge ball tournament
was awesome!**

**The buffet, because I can eat
as much as I want!**

The music during worship

The grape Juice at breakfast

The Blob

The game Persecution was awesome!

Journaling as a prayer exercise

**Doing devotions at the end
of the night and talking with my
youth sponsor**

Making the prayer beads

Carpet ball



Top: The Blob!, Left: Guest Speaker
Marlene Frankenfield, Dodge Ball
Team



continued from page 1

many more. Each youth was encouraged to find time to 'plug in' using a way that would work in their own busy lives.

Jeremy Kempf and the talented worship band helped to lead the worship time and set the tone for each worship service (often with great energy). The youth also had a chance to reflect during breakout sessions led by conference volunteers, youth group debriefing times, and bedtime devotionals. It was so wonderful to see the youth of Central Plains Mennonite Conference challenging themselves to spend time with God each day despite their busy lives and schedules!

Participants also engaged in recreational activities throughout the

weekend. Free time included "The Blob" (a giant human-launching water toy), prayer bead making, painting as a spiritual practice, napping, dodge ball tournament, carpet ball, horseback riding and of course we can't forget the legendary game "Persecution". All of these events help to create a great balance to the weekend. Youth were challenged to reflect and challenge their relationships with God but also had time to kick back, relax and have a good time!

Thanks to Shana Peachey Boshart, the planning committee and all the volunteers who worked to make Youth Escape 2012 a success. We can't wait to see what Youth Escape 2014 will bring!

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.

Our Youth: Objects of Ministry or Partners in Witness?

by David Boshart, Executive Conference Minister



know what their parents believe and value. It is not so surprising, then, that they spend their teen years, and perhaps even a bit beyond, testing those beliefs and values to see what they will own for themselves. And that makes us anxious.

Take any conversation about what the church values and I will almost guarantee that concern for our youth will be on every list. That concern has to do with our fears, our wonderings, and our hopes. We *fear* that we will lose them. We *wonder* if they will have faith. We *hope* they will know the best that life has to offer them. That's a lot of freight for our youth ministries to bear. Under that freight, the fear factor can eclipse our wonderings and our hopes. Our anxiety takes us in two directions. We stand in front of our youth and offer more educational content hoping that the greater the volume of the content the more likely it is that some of it will stick. Or we get behind our youth and root for their success, telling them, "We're right behind you all the way!" But if we are always behind them, who is out front leading them? In either case it seems we make our youth the *objects* of our ministry rather than *partners* in our witness.

In his book *Sibling Society*, Robert Bly says, "What is asked of adults now is that they stop going *forward*, to retirement, to

Costa Rica, to fortune, and turn to face the young.... One can imagine a field with adolescents on one side of a line drawn on the earth and adults on the other side looking in their eyes. The adult in our time is asked to reach his or her hand across the line and pull the youth into adulthood.... If we don't turn to face the young ones, their detachment machines, which are louder and more persistent than ours will say, 'I am not a part of this family,' and they will kill any real relationship with their [elders]."

Most of us who have been in the church for a while, including our youth, are educated beyond our obedience. That is *not* to say that Christian education is a waste of time. But what determines whether our faith lessons "stick" is not likely the volume of the content. Rather, beliefs and values are *claimed* and *owned* when faith is put to the test, when we face situations that raise questions such as, "Do I have what it takes?" "What is the value of another human being?" and, "Where do I go when my resources are not adequate to meet the need in front of me?" These are faith questions that matter, questions that form character.

In this issue of *Scattered Seeds*, youth groups share the stories of their service trips. As you read their stories consider how these experiences invite youth to become partners with the church, bearing witness to the reign of God in the world. Service trips offer an opportunity that no classroom can. They provide our youth to be led by adults where fears are confronted, wondering is rife, and hopes for a new creation are inspired. In these experiences, our youth are no longer objects of our ministry but partners in our witness.



Scattered Seeds

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Youth Minister at



by Jerry Kroeker

At the end of August, I received a reminder about the October *Scattered Seeds* edition, which would include articles about service projects done by youth from Central Plains. I want to share with our Central Plains ministry partners about a youth group service trip whose destination was to come to Swan Lake Christian Camp. During the last week of May, the youth from Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church of Goessel, Kansas came north to help us get ready for the camping season. Their friends and older siblings were here in 2004 as well. Many of you are very aware of our connections with Goessel. Former directors Elton and Denise Nickel (1980-1992) and Rick and Denise Woelk (1992-1996) live in Goessel. Judi and I moved to camp from Moundridge in 1997, which is just nine miles west of there. SLCC has strong ties to that area in Kansas.

Service trips generally have two objectives. One is to offer help to an area of need and the second is to build relationships with others as we recognize what Christ is doing in His church outside of areas that are familiar to us. The Alexanderwohl youth certainly were able to help us get ready for the camping season. They painted the outside of the chapel and cleared the shoreline in front of Twisted Shack in preparations for the new cabin which will be built right on the lake there this fall. They also helped us place several large rocks in strategic locations as permanent, no maintenance sitting stones. Already this summer, kids and adults alike have sat on those rocks for quiet time devotions and as great places to sit and visit. The bigger blessing for me, though, was to be able to work and play with these kids and to build those relationships. We shared how Christ is evident in our work here at camp as we also listened to how Christ is working in their lives. On their last full day with us, we toured the Wolf Creek Hutterite Colony west of Freeman. It was pouring rain as we saw how this community intentionally lives life in obedience to their understanding of Jesus Christ. One of the Goessel leader's curiosities about the maintenance shop led to a full tour of their operations including the hog farm and the plastics roll forming. We also drove through the Freeman Academy parking lot, as many of the students were aware and curious about the private Christian school. Several of the boys were so excited to actually be in Freeman as they had heard that it was the pheasant capital of the world, never mind that some of their relatives had roots in this community!

I fully believe that Christ's church is strengthened when we build relationships with other believers. I have no doubt that some of those youth from Alexanderwohl will meet up with some of our staff members, either at Bethel College or at some other church event, and continue those conversations started here at Swan Lake Christian Camp. I want to thank them again for their efforts and for the life that they shared with us through their exuberance. God bless them.

Alexanderwohl
Mennonite Church,
Goessel, KS
Youth Group

Scattered Seeds Fall 2012





Youth Service Reports

West Union Mennonite: Urban Ventures

By Anita Yoder Beachy

In July, eight youth and four adult sponsors from West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa, traveled to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where they spent a week working with the program *Urban Ventures*. The youth spent their days working at a summer day camp for children in grades one through eight, located in an underprivileged community. Each youth was paired with one or two children with whom they spent the week interacting as they went about their day camp activities.

The trip impacted the group in various ways including helping their group draw closer together. When asked what the highlights of the trip were, many youth responded that the devotion and reflection times they participated in each evening were important. Another highlight was being able to work with the children each day. Through this work, and the time spent living in this setting for a week, the youth were reminded that life is different for others. They didn't have to go too far from home to find themselves in a world strikingly different from their own. Yet despite those differences, they also realized that one thing is shared by people everywhere: we all need to be hugged and loved. It was a good trip, and the group saw that God is working in that urban, underprivileged community just as He is working in their rural community back home.



Top left: Junior Shay Durlinger with one of the students from the summer day camp.

Top right: West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, IA MYF.

Bottom: Sophomore Hannah Miller with one of the students from the summer day camp.

Salem Mennonite: Mennonite Disaster Service

By Brad Carlson

The Salem Mennonite ("South") Church youth, of Freeman, South Dakota, traveled to Minot, North Dakota July 1-7 to serve with Mennonite Disaster Service. MDS is working to rebuild and repair homes in Minot following the devastating flooding of June 2011. We chose this service venture because none of our youth had ever participated in any kind of disaster relief effort. Being able to serve our neighbors to the north - within driving distance - was a bonus.

The fact that we were all able to stay together at MDS's headquarters in Minot at the Bible Fellowship Church was great. This church had been destroyed by the flood and then repaired by MDS in exchange for the use of the facility for its

volunteers. Eating breakfast and supper in the fellowship hall every day and sleeping in Sunday School rooms temporarily converted to camp-style bunkrooms were part of the bonding experience we shared.

A typical day consisted of rising around 6 a.m. to pack our sack lunches for noon, followed by breakfast and morning devotions. After breakfast we headed out in our work crews to our designated houses. A large portion of the work involved dry-wall mudding and sanding, priming and painting - along with plumbing, flooring, and hanging siding! Between 4 and 5 o'clock, we would return to the church, tired and dirty, to shower up before supper. After supper, there was time to share about our day's experiences, to help with dishes, and to play board games in

the sanctuary. Playing sand volleyball in a nearby park or walking to Dairy Queen were popular, too!

July 4 and 5 were two special evenings. On the 4th, the entire MDS group was invited to Bible Fellowship Church's pastor's home, where Duane and Linda Deckert treated us to a barbecue picnic. We were able to watch the fireworks displays all over Minot from the top of a hill next to their home! The next evening, Duane and Linda shared their church's experience of the flood with us, followed by a time of hymn singing.

We learned a great deal about the specifics of flooding and flood damage, a disaster none of us have ever experienced. We bonded with the long-term MDS volunteers on site and now will always consider them friends - several kids said that leaving at the end of the week felt like leaving camp - and we grew closer as a group through working hard, getting dirty and being tired together! It was a deeply rewarding experience to be able to be the hands and feet of Jesus for our brothers and sisters in need.



A work crew poses with their homeowner. L to R: Justin Eisenbeis, Brooklyn Ries, Adam Unruh, Brittney Ries, Craig Miller, homeowner Jane, Sonja Waltner, and Megan Eisenbeis.

Volunteerism at Crooked Creek Christian Camp

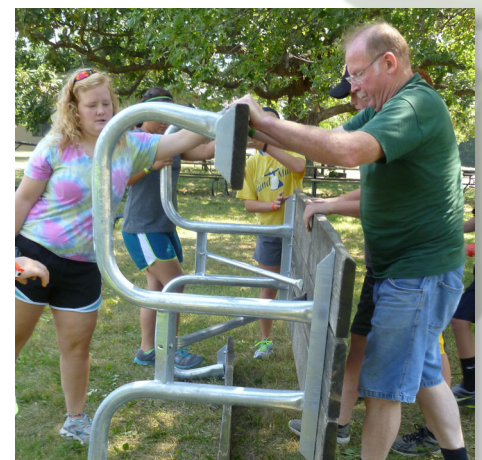
By MaryLou Farmer

What do Topeka, Kansas and Crooked Creek Christian Camp have in common? After this summer, a lot! Steve and Glenna Lowry from Topeka answered an ad for volunteers and spent 7th-9th grade week at camp this summer. They did everything from washing dishes to putting together picnic tables. The highlight was seeing them participate with the youth in the Thursday night variety show. Thanks to the Lowrys, camp was blessed with fresh enthusiasm and energy for our final week of camp. They indicated that it was a good balance of work, rest and interaction with the kids and that the accommodations were great. And they want to come back next year.

Karen Swartzendruber served as nurse for three weeks with her husband, Woody, serving on maintenance for one of those weeks. Many other volunteers served this summer including daily kitchen helpers and activity leaders. Crooked Creek Christian Camp is grateful for over 1000 hours the volunteers served this summer.

If you are looking for a local, short-term volunteer assignment, consider coming to camp next summer. You will be blessed, as you are a blessing to us.

Kristin Unruh and Steve Lowry finish work on a new picnic table at Crooked Creek Christian Camp.



The entire Wood River service team.

Wood River: Opportunities at Home

By Kelly Boshart

The Wood River Mennonite youth group decided to find local projects to do for their service projects this year. They, along with other helpful congregation members, gathered at the home of a widow and her two children to paint their house. Clad in paint clothes, workers began the day by scraping (and scraping) the old paint off the house. They then applied a coat of primer to the house and trim in preparation for a fresh, new coat of paint. Throughout the day, the house changed from white with green to a refreshed yellow with white trim. Legs and arms also showed evidence of the color change!

It was great to see the improvement of the house in one short day. Both the adults and the youth enjoyed the day, which not only consisted of painting but also fun, fellowship, and the opportunity to help a community member. That day many people used their 'servant heart' to assist someone else with a difficult task.

Crooked Creek Christian Camp Upcoming Programs

November 30– December 1, 2012: Come to the Table and Create Come to camp and quilt, scrapbook, sew, make cards, work on Christmas gifts, or finish that special project that has been sitting untouched for too long! Karen Swartzendruber will share some creative ideas of how to help kids learn about God through making crafts. Contact the camp for more information and to register.

Jr. High WinterFest—January 11-13, 2013 Steve Nelson (Youth Pastor at Lower Deer Creek) will help us explore why we were created and how to honor God with our lives. If you are in grades 6-8, join us for Winter Fest 2013. See your youth sponsor for more information.

My Summer with White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church

by Ariane King

This past summer I was hired by the White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church in Busby, Montana. I applied to be a summer service worker, but Mennonite Central Committee only had two slots available and there were three applicants. Although I was not chosen, the Outreach and Service Committee of Central Plains Mennonite Conference provided a grant that made it possible for this amazing opportunity to take place. My first assignment at the church was working with Vacation Bible School. During that week, I was assigned to work with the K-1 boys and girls. Every day, we followed a schedule that included Bible story lessons, arts and crafts, and recreation. Helping out with the younger children was a challenge, but I wouldn't trade it for anything. It was an awesome learning experience to be working with members of the church and community, all for the benefit of the children.

The following week, the other two service workers and myself helped with the general upkeep around the church. We cleaned the church before the Sunday services and rearranged the setup after Bible School. We also began to prepare for the Family and Junior camps that would take place later in July. After a week, the workers that had been hired through MCC attended a workshop in California, as I continued with upkeep and helping out with anything that needed to be done. In the evenings, we would play with kids that came to the church for recreational time. These were some of the less busy times of the summer, but nevertheless enjoyable!

Another event of the summer was the Central Plains Mennonite Conference Annual Meeting in Henderson, Nebraska. During the conference, we sat in discussion groups and listened to the issues that were brought to the table. Although the conference was more for adults, it was exciting to observe what was going on inside the church. One significant event that really inspired me was when a need for funds to build a new building in a Mennonite church nearby my hometown of Busby, Montana, was brought to the group. One anonymous donor started the giving, and by the end of the day, people at the conference had generously donated \$40,000. Another area of the conference that I really enjoyed was the workshops; through them I saw perspectives of many different views on immigration, violence, and drugs/alcohol. The weekend in Henderson was inspiring and gave me more of an idea of what being an Anabaptist really means.

Church youth groups from Kansas arrived around the time we began to set up for camps at Crazyhead Springs. We installed campers, tents, teepees, basketball goals, volleyball nets, the generator, the kitchen, the staff house, and the outhouses. Connections were made and relationships were built with many different people. Family camp started on July 11th and featured several speakers with amazing testimonies. There was also a group that came from Pennsylvania to help out with Family and Junior camp. It was a great time!

Junior camp consisted of children ages 9 to 13. For a whole week we camped in tents and teepees and had various activities daily such as group devotions, class time, recreation, swimming, a movie and a nighttime worship session. I was placed as a counselor for the 13 year old girls. Junior camp was really one of the most highlighted parts of my summer because of the opportunity it gave me to be a good role model for those young girls. Kids came to me for many different things, whether it was just to play, or to talk to me about things going on in their lives. I tried my best to listen, be open, and pray with them. I really hope that I made an impression on their lives as they keep moving forward.

The day after Junior camp ended, we were off to Native Assembly which was held in Choctaw, Mississippi. It was a two and a half-day journey but we made it and had a great time. There were specific sessions for the youth at this Assembly as well as worship times for everyone. I had a blast listening to the testimonies of other Native Americans who led their lives through God.

This fall, I will begin my freshman year at Linfield College, in Portland, Oregon, where I'm planning to study nursing and play volleyball. I'll never forget what being a summer service worker has taught me. It has shaped me into being more responsible and has taught me a better work ethic. It has also inspired me to continue leading a life through God, every day.

Annual Meeting 2013 in Montana promises new perspectives

by Shana Peachey Boshart

At Annual Meeting 2012 in Henderson, Nebraska, Joe Walks Along Jr. extended an invitation on behalf of our three Montana congregations to meet next year in Ashland, Montana. This will be an important “first” for our conference, to be hosted by these three churches: Ashland Christian Fellowship, Lame Deer Mennonite Church, and White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church.

These century-old churches have a rich and interesting history, and we will be sure to give you opportunities to hear their stories at Annual Meeting 2013. Conference ministers David Boshart, Tim Derweiler and Shana Peachey Boshart were in Montana in late August and discussed preliminary plans for Annual Meeting with the church leaders there. Having annual meeting in this setting opens new possibilities to plan worship, business, and other activities that will deepen our understanding of the Native people and the Cheyenne Mennonite churches. We expect to spend less time than usual in business sessions to give adequate time to fellowship and cross-cultural learning.

The meetings will be held on the campus of St. Labre Indian School in Ashland. The facilities are beautiful; see the Central Plains Mennonite Conference Facebook page for photos. Lodging options include dormitories at St. Labre, a small hotel in Ashland, and hotels at Colstrip and Hardin. It would also be possible for some people to camp on the church grounds at Ashland.

Annual Meeting 2013 will give you the opportunity to visit other places in Montana and South Dakota like Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks, The Black Hills, the Badlands and Mt. Rushmore. And there are countless opportunities to learn the stories of the many Indian Nations.

The Annual Meeting Task Group meets this fall to begin planning. Please keep them and the host churches in your prayers. We’ve started the Annual Meeting 2013 page on our web site at www.centralplainsmc.org. Check it periodically for updates and information.

Looking for a way to serve while sharing your faith?

Menno-Hof in Shipshewana, Ind., needs individuals and couples in agreement with Anabaptist values and beliefs to serve as host and/or hostess for a minimum of one month April – December 2013. Responsibilities include conducting tours and some light housekeeping. Menno-Hof offers visitors from around the world accurate information about the faith and life of the Amish and Mennonites. Two furnished apartments are available on-site. For more information contact Susan Miller, managing director: 260-768-4117 or smiller@mennohof.org. www.mennohof.org

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) is seeking two energetic Disaster Response Coordinators. One to be based in the Central States and cover the western half of the US. The other to be based in and cover the eastern half of the US. The primary responsibility is to train, mentor and encourage the MDS units and regions to respond to disasters, from investigation, cleanup, and project setup through completion. Extensive travel required. Applicants must be active in an Anabaptist church and committed to the Anabaptist faith and peace position.



**Mennonite
Disaster
Service**

See the full job description at

<http://mds.mennonite.net/about-us/employment>. Resumes may be sent to jobs@mds.mennonite.net or MDS, Attn: Human Resources, 583 Airport Rd, Lititz, PA 17543. Review of resumes begins immediately. Recruitment continues until the positions are filled.

Neighborhood Sustainability Fair

Held at Faith Mennonite Church

By Phil Stoltzfus

Leaders Credentialed

Nicholas Detweiler-Stoddard was installed and licensed as pastor at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D., on August 5.

Matt Troyer-Miller was installed and licensed as pastor at Wood River Mennonite Church, Wood River, NE, on August 26.

Shawn Nolt was ordained at Salem Mennonite, Shickley, NE, August 26.

Pornchai Thosaengsiri was licensed toward ordination at the Hmong Mennonite Church, St. Paul, MN, September 9.

Leader Transitions

David Schooley and **Joe Telgren** were installed as pastor team members at Pleasant View Mennonite, Mt. Pleasant, IA on September 2.

Alberto Parchmant was installed as pastor of Templo Alabanza, Moline, IL, September 16.

James Lapp and **Miriam Book** completed their interim ministry at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, NE on September 23.

Tamara Gill was installed as pastor at Wayland Mennonite Church, Wayland, IA, October 7.

Adam Nussbaum was installed at Shalom Mennonite Church, Eau Claire, WI, October 21.

Leader Awarded

David Boshart, executive conference minister, was given Eastern Mennonite University's Distinguished Service Award at a banquet on campus October 16. He is a college and seminary graduate of EMU. For details, see the *Crossroads*

This past spring the Missions & Service Commission at Faith Mennonite Church in Minneapolis experimented with a new model of community engagement – a “Neighborhood Sustainability Fair.” Faith partnered with the Missio Dei community, the Community of St. Martin (a congregation which meets in our church building), and the local neighborhood environmental committee to plan and host the fair on Saturday afternoon, March 17. The purpose of the eclectic event was to invite neighbors into our church space in order to receive valuable services for free, learn about the environment, foster relationship building among neighbors, and have fun.

Fairgoers were greeted outside the church entrance by Sisters’ Camelot, a local sustainability organization that serves free organic food out of an old bus they have converted into a full-service kitchen. Some 175 meals were served throughout the afternoon. Another activity outside was a temporary chicken coop—popular with the kids—set up by Missio Dei members, who shared about their experience of raising chickens in the city.

Inside, visitors circulated around exhibits set up by environmental advocacy groups, organizations, and businesses, as well as activity stations for gardening, household “more-with-less” tips and projects, children’s activities, a used clothing exchange, plastics and electronics recycling, and a bike repair station. Joan Kreider, a member at Faith, demonstrated how to make fire starters from old egg cartons, dryer lint, and candle wax. Patricia Mack, a member at St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship, displayed strategies for alternative gift giving. At a gardening table organized by Faith member Melissa Hochstetler, fairgoers swapped seed packets for trying out new garden vegetables or flowers. A local recycling organization, Free Geek, collected five pickup loads of computer and electronic equipment to be taken away for refurbishing, recycling, or responsible disposal. Bike repair technicians from the sponsoring congregations donated their time in the church library, which was temporarily converted into a bike repair shop. Bikers also learned about new initiatives in the city for developing bike lanes and paths.

At Faith, we learned how to collaborate with neighborhood organizations to host a festive community event. We also learned to know some new neighbors, several of whom have subsequently come to visit our Sunday morning worship. Next year we’d like to continue to experiment with the “fair” model and try to encourage more members of the congregation and neighbors to think of creative ways to share their everyday sustainability skills and wisdom with one another.



Outdoors, fairgoers are served free food out of a kitchen bus.



photos were provided by Maria Kummer

An Intentional Community Garden

by Margalea Warner

On Earth Day, Sunday, April 22, 2012, a group from First Mennonite Church of Iowa City marked the beginning of the third year of a community garden with a Garden Blessing. Beginning in 2010, the Open Circle Sunday School class at FMC pondered the concept of intentional community. Out of this study they decided to create a garden intentionally for the community. With help from others in the congregation, they forged ahead. They obtained two large lots in the Miller Orchard neighborhood. These lots had long ago held a house and a garage that had since been torn down. They connected up with a community association called {reclaiming roots}. From their first work party they took two tons of waste to the landfill. They got help plowing the ground. The first year there were 10 to 12 garden plots. Eventually they acquired a shed with lawnmowers and tools. That year they broke three lawn mowers because of unseen tree stumps that bent the blades. They worked to pull up more stumps. At the end of the year they had a harvest party.

In 2011 a University of Iowa Ecology and Arts class helped further develop the garden. As part of their class project they built two booths, a compost bin, and made a more welcoming garden entrance. A large area was plowed allowing for 35 10' x 10' plots. A workshop was led on growing sweet potatoes in tire towers. At the end of that year they again had a harvest party.

"We grew more than vegetables and flowers," said Marcia Widmer, one of the group organizers. "We grew community."



Anyone interested in traveling to **Ecuador** for a **Fellowship and Learning Tour** from January 24th to February 5th should contact Don Kempf at donaldkempf@windstream.net or 402-759-1285.

Mennonite Women Retreat at Swan Lake

by Cathy Wismer and Barb Voth

September 22 and 23, 2012 found 50 women attending the annual Central Plains Mennonite Women's retreat at Swan Lake Christian Camp near Viborg, South Dakota. What a beautiful setting for a season of retreat which included singing, renewing old friendships and making new ones, tying comforters, making a craft, listening to "4ever", a young ladies quartet from Freeman, South Dakota and just enjoying creation. Faith and Life Bookstore from Newton, Kansas and Ten Thousand Villages from Freeman, South Dakota had booths there as well. Evie Shellenberger from Paoli, Indiana was the retreat speaker.

Singing God's Song in a Foreign Land was the focus of Evie's presentations. The sessions she led filled us with stories from her MCC terms in Iran where she was warmly welcomed as a new friend in that foreign land and where she learned the life stories/songs of the people she met. Evie received gifts of friendship, rocks, and prayer from Christian and non-Christian Iranians. She experienced God's love and song among the people and the place of Iran. Our Sunday morning communion service invited us to join in remembering Christ's vision and way of living. We recommitted to living in Christ's hope and dream for the world that all would be God's people living in love, so we could go forward with right relationships, and in justice and peace together.

Thanks to all who made this retreat a reality! The 2013 retreat will be September 21 and 22, same location!

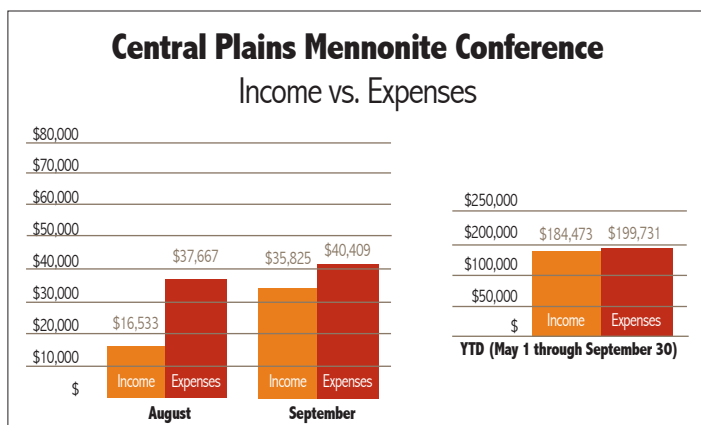
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Growing in
holistic witness
to God's
reconciling mission
in the world through
fellowship,
discipleship
and leadership

The Central Plains Conference experienced a large swing in the months of August and September, as you can view from the graphs at right. Income for August totaled \$16,533.03, while September was over double this amount at \$35,824.74. Expenses were consistent with budget during these months. As a result, these first five months of the conference fiscal year has created a net deficit of \$15,257.75. We thank you for your continued support of Conference. —*Stewardship Task Group*



FYI: COMING EVENTS

Conference Board and Committees meet Friday and Saturday, November 9 and 10 at Crooked Creek camp.

Regional Meetings for Counsel in Nebraska on November 17 and in Iowa on December 15.

Central Plains Annual Meeting will be Thursday through Sunday, June 20-23, 2013, at Ashland, Montana.

Mennonite Church USA Assembly and Youth Convention will take place July 1-6, 2013, in Phoenix, Arizona.

Youth Escape 2014 will take place the weekend of August 1-3, 2014, in central Iowa.

An area conference of



**Mennonite
Church
USA**