



February
2014

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Scattered Seeds

Children of the Kingdom Sowing the Word
—Matthew 13



Photo by Stan Harder

Central Plains Mennonite Conference is... People

Simply put, conference is a group of congregations, and congregations are made of people. Actually, “conference” is you! Our conference is a fellowship of people who worship in 53 Mennonite churches in the Central Plains region.

How does conference work? Representatives from Central Plains congregations get together every June at Annual Meeting to elect conference board and committee members and to make other decisions together. The photo above shows these representatives (delegates) at work last June at our Annual Meeting in Ashland, Montana.

If conference is people, then what do these people do? Come and see...

The Conference Board

The conference board oversees the work of the conference and sets the spiritual direction.



Moderator: Nathan Luitjens, pastor at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa. *Pictured at left.*

Assistant Moderator: Margie Mejia Caraballo, associate pastor at Templo Alabanza, Moline, Illinois. *Pictured at left.*

Treasurer: Colin Hofer, Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota.

Secretary: Sherilyn Ortman, Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota.



At-large Members:

Jay Miiller, former pastor of East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

Elizabeth Troyer-Miller, Wood River Mennonite Church, Wood River, Nebraska.

Gene Troyer, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Staff: David Boshart, executive conference minister

The mission of Central Plains Mennonite Conference is to create settings for our congregations and partners to grow in holistic witness to God's reconciling mission in the world by developing leadership, encouraging fellowship, and promoting lifelong discipleship.

Committees

The committees plan and implement the work of the conference. Once a year, all the committees meet together with the conference board.

Pastoral Leadership Committee



The Pastoral Leadership Committee is responsible to call out, credential and nurture pastoral leadership within Central Plains Mennonite Conference.

Chair: Susan Janzen, pastor at Cedar Falls Mennonite Church, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Members:

Willis Busenitz, pastor at White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church, Busby, Montana.
Dennis Schrock, Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota.
David Breckbill, First Mennonite Church, Lincoln, Nebraska.
Kathy Harder, Bethel Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minnesota.
Lois Janzen Preheim, Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota.
Staff: Tim Detweiler, conference minister for ministerial leadership

Outreach and Service Committee



The Outreach and Service Committee assists Central Plains Mennonite Conference congregations in promoting peace, justice, evangelism and church planting efforts, both locally and globally.

Chair: Roger Farmer, Washington Mennonite Church, Washington, Iowa.

Members:

Gebremichael Heramo, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
Don Kempf, Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley, Nebraska.
Katie Spohn, Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford, Nebraska.
Holly Blosser Yoder, West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.
Jane Goering, Bethel Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minnesota.
Dennis Lehman, Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota.
Keshia Littlebear, White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church, Busby, Montana.
Staff: David Boshart, conference minister for outreach and service



Christian Formation Committee

The Christian Formation Committee assists the members of Central Plains Mennonite Conference to grow continually in Christ-likeness by promoting Christian formation resources and equipping formation leaders.

Chair: Lerace Graber, Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota.

Members:

Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, pastor at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City.
Andrea Wall, pastor at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Nebraska.
Lewis Miller, pastor at Beemer Mennonite Church, Beemer, Nebraska.
Ellen Miller, Cedar Falls Mennonite Church, Cedar Falls, Iowa.
James Poppelt, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
Staff: Shana Peachey Boshart, conference minister for Christian formation

Staff

The conference board employs several staff people to do the daily work of conference.



David Boshart, executive conference minister
Tim Detweiler, conference minister for ministerial leadership
Shana Peachey Boshart, conference minister for Christian formation
Ramiro Hernandez, Hispanic ministries coordinator
Monica Clem, office manager
Ted Widmer, finance officer



There are 21 other regional conferences, and together these conferences make up Mennonite Church USA.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference...

Empowers churches for mission

by Nathan Luitjens, moderator



Sometimes people will ask me questions about the value of conference. Why do we have conference? What does the conference do for us? How does conference work affect us here at our church?

We could talk about the ways conference leaders come into our churches to help mediate conflict, to work with

search committees, to assist churches in developing mission and vision statements for themselves, and to help youth sponsors and other folks involved in faith formation in our congregations. These are all vital parts of the work of the conference, but more broadly, the conference works at setting vision and empowering congregations to reach their potential as God's people in their local communities.

One of the most important things that our conference staff does is stay in contact and build relationships with member congregations in Central Plains. As they listen to what is going on in different congregations, themes begin to emerge about what God is doing in the midst of our churches and also the challenges that our churches are facing. Several years ago conference staff visited every congregation in Central Plains and out of those visits, themes emerged about what our churches feel that God is calling us to be.

This led to the adoption of a mission statement for our conference: *The mission of Central Plains Mennonite Conference is to create settings for our congregations and partners to grow in holistic witness to God's reconciling mission in the world*

by developing leadership, encouraging fellowship, and promoting lifelong discipleship.

Once our staff had identified a mission and priorities, they went to work to develop a strategic plan that would give focus and shape to the work of conference as we sought to help congregations carry out God's reconciling mission in their contexts. This plan was adopted by the delegates in Moline in 2011 and it has guided us as a conference over the last three years.

"...more broadly, the conference works at setting vision and empowering congregations to reach their potential as God's people in their local communities."

You may have noticed that we have invited congregations to relate to one another through visiting other congregations and doing joint activities. We have worked hard to train volunteers to work alongside our staff to help search committees, assist with pastoral evaluations, and more recently formed the Conflict Management Support Team. We have developed the New Ministries Grant fund which allows individuals, committees and congregations the opportunity to access some seed money to experiment with new ideas for reaching out into their communities. An annual church planters gathering has also been established to support, train and develop those in our conference who are working at church planting.

Probably one of the most significant areas of development has been the creation of congregational partnerships to support leaders of developing congregations. Several established congregations will covenant to partner with developing congregations. While these partners do provide financial support to allow church planters more freedom to engage in their work, they do much more. Partners provide fellowship and learning opportunities for the congregations involved. The older churches bring a sense of history and continuity while the emerging churches bring a sense of energy, vibrancy and creativity.

These relationships contain the potential to develop leadership, fellowship and discipleship as we seek together what God might be calling us to be and to do as we engage with one another. And these relationships are made possible through the work of conference. If your church is not involved in one of these partnerships, talk to Dave and see what possibilities there might be to get involved in this way.

The work of conference is to support our member churches that together we may bear witness to God's reconciling work in our communities.



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, Lerace Graber, Susan Janzen, Nathan Luitjens, Sheryl Ortman.
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Help for church council, sabbatical, spiritual nurture of adults

I am so impressed by the amazing conference leaders we have. They are each so knowledgeable in their field and never hesitate to give guidance, discernment, and support. Most recently, Shana helped our parenting class with some new curriculum ideas. Dave gave advice to our council on how best to respond to media on those issues that try to divide our churches and our denomination. And Tim was a wealth of information and support as I put together my first sabbatical plan. We have leaders who are there for us. I advise everyone to take advantage of this wonderful team!

-Karen Dalke, pastor, Des Moines Mennonite Church

Help through conflict

Our elder/pastor team has been the recipient of both gentle counsel as well as solid expertise from the Conflict Management Support Team (CMST). To have a resource ready and waiting for congregations dealing with conflict is truly a blessing. Through the CMST we have repeatedly heard that conflict is a normal presence in all of life, enabling our congregation to flourish healthy even as we strive to better manage conflict.

-Head elder of a Central Plains congregation

Central Plains Mennonite Conference is... Help

Conference offers practical help for your congregation's leaders:

- thinking theologically together about how to be the church in a changing world
- guidance for search committees, church councils, elders and deacons in pastoral searches
- credentialing pastors
- advice for pastoral evaluations, sabbaticals and other employment issues
- help for strategic planning and church structures
- guidance through conflict
- counsel in the case of an ethical lapse
- curriculum and support for the spiritual nurture of children, youth and adults
- ideas and resources for Sunday School, kids clubs, Bible studies and leadership groups

Help for pastor search

Our congregation recently went through the process of searching for and ultimately hiring an associate pastor of youth. Since this is not something a church does on a regular basis, we initially felt a bit overwhelmed. "Where do we even start?" "Do we have to re-invent the wheel?" Thankfully, we were able to utilize the experience of Central Plains Mennonite Conference leaders in assisting us with the entire process from beginning to end. Central Plains provided very helpful resources and made good suggestions while still allowing us the freedom and flexibility to choose the person we felt was most suited for our congregation and context. We appreciate that Central Plains walked alongside us and we praise God that we now have the right person in place.

-David Miller, pastor, Bellwood Mennonite Church

Support for spiritual nurture of youth

I really appreciate how Central Plains staff led a retreat for our youth group. They helped open the eyes of our youth to have hope for our future. Now I have a better understanding of who we are as Mennonites, and that has made a huge difference in my walk with God, strengthening my relationship with the Lord. I can now say that I have the confidence to let others know about us, about me, without questioning my faith, or wondering, who am I?

-Mai Ying Yang, youth sponsor, Hmong Mennonite Church of St. Paul.

Fellowship with emerging church

I have experienced a lot of support from Tim, Dave, and Shana. For example, we are building leaders in our congregations through Instituto Anabautista (IBA), and as a pastor I have also participated in continuing education. During my ordination this past year it meant a lot to me that they delivered the message, David prayed for me as I was being ordained and Shana was present. It conveyed their confidence for my success in my ministry.

-Martha Hernandez, pastor, Iglesia Centro Cristiana

Help with strategic planning

When we at Zion Mennonite wanted to begin a visioning process, Dave Boshart was not only willing to drive the distance, but brought good energy for meeting with deacons and pastor, council and congregation. He came as a servant leader, yet offered good wisdom and experience. He preached when asked, focusing on God's purpose and mission and giving us a framework for vision. Dave helped us begin by writing and talking about what we value, our concerns, hopes and dreams for our congregation. He guided us in successive steps of the process with much encouragement and affirmation until our mission statement was formed. I most appreciated his praying with and for us, recognizing the spiritual realities of this process.

-Marcia Yoder-Schrock, pastor, Zion Mennonite Church

Help through conflict

When our congregation went through the conflict mediation process, at least one of the conference ministers was in attendance at every session. I remember one particular Sunday, when we were tired and at a low point in our process, one of the conference ministers brought the message that God still loved us even though we were not being particularly lovable at that time, and it was exactly what we needed to hear. We greatly appreciated the wisdom and pastoral care shown by our conference ministers.

-Moderator of a Central Plains congregation

Central Plains Mennonite Conference is... Fellowship

Conference gives us opportunities for fellowship with the church beyond our own congregation:

- with other Central Plains congregations through Annual Meeting, retreats, workshops and discernment meetings
- with churches and leaders in Ecuador through the Ecuador partnership
- with emerging churches for mutual support and learning together how to do mission
- with Mennonite Church USA through events like convention and initiatives like the 12 Scriptures Project

Help for pastor search

Tim Detweiler and Robert Hartzler were extremely helpful in assisting our pastor search committee by giving us information on prospective pastors and direction in how to choose a pastor. Without the help of the conference, it would have seemed overwhelming to look for a pastor on our own. With God's guidance, the six-month process went smoothly, resulting in a 100-percent affirmation vote for Dave Schooley as our next pastor.

-Jim Freyenberger, Search Committee Chair, Eicher Emmanuel Mennonite Church

Fellowship with emerging church

Without the help and support of the conference leaders for the past years I think the local church would not be able to continue to preach God's message and accomplish God's work. The result would be diminishing members and closing down the local church. Here are some of the ways we have received help from conference leaders:

- Provide leadership training (adult and youth)
- Church visit and communication with local church leaders
- Financial support from conference and churches
- Willing to help the youth to explore God's love and message
- Continuing support to find a new pastor for us
- Communicate and teach at the level which applies to us
- Understanding the culture and language barrier

-Bee Her, moderator, Hmong Mennonite Church of St. Paul

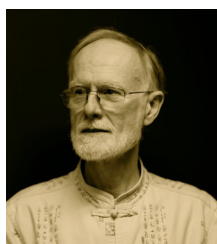
A new Partner in Mission

Philip Friesen brings his ministry home to Central Plains

Leader Transitions

Dave Schooley was installed as pastor at Eicher Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa, on January 5, 2014.

Christopher Montgomery was installed as pastor at Sermon on the Mount Mennonite Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota on January 12, 2014.



On November 15, the Conference Board approved Philip Friesen as a Central Plains Mennonite Conference Partner in Mission. The purpose of the Partner in Mission designation is to link with groups or individuals with whom we have a spiritual and missional affinity that will mutually benefit us in carrying out God's mission. Through a relationship of trust and mutuality, we will seek to exchange gifts and enlarge the mission of one another.

Philip's ministry has involved evangelistic and service outreach to international scholars and visitors at the University of Minnesota since 1996. He has been a cross-culture consultant who serves the international university community and raises his own support for this ministry.

Before serving in outreach to the community of international scholars who come from universities all over the world, Philip served as "English Pastor" in a local Taiwanese church for seven years, and before that he and his wife, Kim, spent ten years as Mennonite missionaries in Taiwan. Philip feels it is time to bring home the lessons he has learned over decades to the churches that nurtured and sent him, and that is why he has requested Partner in Mission relationship with Central Plains.

Peace and gospel are close to his heart, and in 2010 he published *The Old Testament Roots of Nonviolence*, after which he was invited for a short term to teach in a Presbyterian seminary in Cairo on this topic. Currently he is preparing material for speaking on peace and gospel and will be available to visit churches who would like thoughtful, biblical input on the topic. As a fellow for global perspectives in a small group of interdenominational scholars, Philip's writing is available at galileanfellows.org and on Facebook.

Philip is a member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he is the mission/service chair. He has many connections and partnership relationships, all involving evangelism. Two of these are Christians Meeting Muslims and the Wilberforce Academy, an organization that seeks to prepare Christian international scholars as witnesses in their places of leadership when they return to their home countries. —David Boshart, executive conference minister

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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.

Invest in your marriage relationship

Marriage Enrichment Weekend March 14-16

by Tim and Carol Detweiler



Married couples all want the same thing whether their relationship has just begun or they've been married for many years: a healthy, mutually-satisfying and growing relationship. Marriage Enrichment is designed for couples who want to invest in their marriage relationship. We invite you to join us at our next Marriage Enrichment Weekend, March 14-16, at Crooked Creek Christian Camp near Washington, Iowa.

We are often asked, "What is Marriage Enrichment?" First, we'd like to say what Marriage Enrichment is NOT.

- Marriage Enrichment is NOT marriage counseling or marriage therapy.
- Marriage Enrichment is NOT for couples facing trouble in their marriages.

So what IS Marriage Enrichment?

- Marriage Enrichment is for couples with a stable marriage who want to make their marriages better.
- Marriage Enrichment helps couples develop communication skills through couple dialogue.
- Couples who attend a Marriage Enrichment weekend will be encouraged to grow in effective communication, make creative use of conflict, be committed to relationship growth and grow toward greater intimacy.

We are pleased to be able to host you at Crooked Creek's beautiful Shepherd's Inn. The weekend starts at 6:30 p.m. Friday and goes until noon Sunday. The cost is \$260 per couple for the entire weekend including meals, lodging, and materials. **Registration is limited to 5 couples, and a \$100 deposit is required to reserve your space.** Register by contacting Crooked Creek at cccamp@iowatelecom.net or 319-653-3611.

We are trained as a Better Marriage Leader Couple through the Better Marriage Training Program. Our mission is to promote better marriages by providing enrichment opportunities and resources to strengthen couple relationships, increase intimacy, and enhance personal growth, mutual fulfillment, and family wellness. As a Better Marriage Leader Couple, we are committed to work for better marriages, beginning with our own.

Quick Facts about Central Plains

Founded: 2000

Number of churches in each state

Iowa: 21
Minnesota: 9
Nebraska: 9
South Dakota: 8
Montana: 3
Colorado, Illinois, Wisconsin: 1 each

Number of members: 7,502

Annual Budget: \$467,215



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

The Central Plains budget took a huge leap forward with a very strong December. As you can see from the graphs, November income didn't exceed expenses, but December's leap forward not only erased this small deficit, but put the conference in a net positive position (\$7,589.55) entering 2014. We are grateful for the continued support by congregations and individuals and pray we can continue this momentum through the final months of the fiscal year. —*Stewardship Task Group*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Conference Board meets at Omaha, Nebraska, Saturday, March 1.

Church Planters Gathering will take place April 11-12.

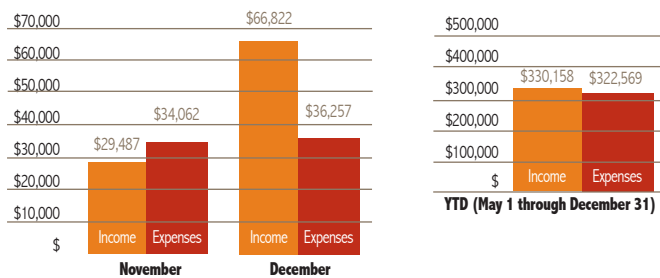
Marriage Enrichment Weekend with Tim and Carol Detweiler, March 14-16 at Crooked Creek Christian Camp

Annual Leaders Retreat for pastors and spouses will take place April 25-27 at Schuyler, Nebraska

Central Plains Annual Meeting will take place June 19-22 at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

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

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Income vs. Expenses



An area conference of



Mennonite
Church
USA