



June
2012

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Scattered Seeds

Children of the Kingdom Sowing the Word

—Matthew 13



Photo credit: Tim Nafziger

A challenge becomes an opportunity to empower others

by Tim Detweiler, Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership



"How are you going to do the work of three people?" This is a question I heard several times when the new staff structure was first proposed. In the former structure, three conference ministers served our conference in three different regions. How

could the same work be accomplished by only one conference minister?

The answer is found in a network of trained volunteers. These gifted leaders assist me by helping congregations conduct pastor/congregation evaluations, search for a new pastor, manage conflict and (if needed) apply the clergy sexual misconduct policy.

What began as a challenge has become an opportunity to train more leaders in every region of Central Plains. I believe effective leaders share and multiply power. It has been a joy to see this new group of trained, competent leaders in action.

Developing this network of trained volunteers has been a two phase process. We completed Phase I

last fall by training 14 volunteers to assist with pastor and congregation evaluations and with congregations in a pastor search process. Terry Shue and Nancy Kauffman, denominational ministers for Mennonite Church USA, led this training event at Manson Mennonite Church on September 24, 2011.

How were these volunteers appointed?

Each pastor cluster was asked to submit names of persons gifted and trusted in their geographical area to help with this work. Inviting the volunteers turned out to be a joyful experience for me. It was exciting—their responses were overwhelmingly positive when I invited them to serve. People felt affirmed when pastors recommend them for this work.

Who are they?

Those who help with pastor/congregation evaluations:

- Nebraska – David Breckbill from Lincoln, NE
- Freeman/Sioux Falls/Mt. Lake – Stacey Waltner from Freeman, SD

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God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits.

—I Corinthians
12:7 The Message

- Twin Cities/Rochester/Eau Claire – Herman Weinlick from Minneapolis, MN
- Quad Cities Area – Ramiro Hernandez from Washington, IA
- Central Iowa – Glen Baughman from Des Moines, IA
- SE Iowa – Robert Hartzler from Wayland, IA
- East Iowa – Helen Lindstrom from Wellman, IA
- Montana – Tim Detweiler

Those who help with the pastor search process:

- Nebraska – E. James Friesen from Henderson, NE
- Freeman/Sioux Falls/Mt. Lake – Dennis Schrock from Freeman, SD
- Twin Cities/Rochester/Eau Claire – (still to be determined)
- Quad Cities Area – Ramiro Hernandez from Washington, IA
- Central Iowa – Susan Janzen from Cedar Falls, IA
- SE Iowa – Robert Hartzler from Wayland, IA
- East Iowa – Diane Zaerr Brenneman from Wellman, IA
- Montana – Tim Detweiler

What are they doing?

Since October 2011, trained volunteers have helped me with seven pastor/congregation evaluations and five pastor searches. When I receive a call from a congregation or pastor for help with evaluations, or when a congregation begins a search process for a pastor, it is a huge support for me to be able to call the volunteer in that cluster area for assistance. All requests for help in these areas do still come to me as the conference minister.

Is the idea working?

To answer this question, listen to what the volunteers and congregations have to say.

E. James Friesen said, “I have found that the volunteer support structure has accomplished a win-win situation. It has allowed the churches to have someone fairly close geographically with whom to interact, to attend their meetings in person and help guide them as well as answer their questions. It has also allowed lay members to utilize some of their acquired skills for use within the conference, thereby freeing conference staff to

function as resource leaders serving more churches at one time.”

At Sugar Creek Mennonite, Pastor Nathan Luitjens said, “We were very grateful for Helen Lindstrom’s involvement in our review process...she was a good resource the committee could turn to, as well as someone who from time to time could interject something into the conversation that was being overlooked.”

At Bellwood Mennonite, Pastor David Miller said, “Our experience with Jim Friesen has been helpful.... Jim provides what we need so we don’t have to reinvent the wheel. He is helping us make sure we do all of the proper steps.”

David Breckbill wrote: “I met with a committee charged with revising their evaluation policy and I felt it was a productive meeting. Between my opening questions asking for clarifications of their church structures and polity, my sharing of my own experiences and perceptions that related to their prior policy, and my pointing to a number of relevant passages and tools in the training materials you and Terry Shue provided, I believe (and have heard) that good progress has been made in thinking about pastoral evaluations in new and constructive ways.”

The Wayland Mennonite pastor search committee was very appreciative of Robert Hartzler’s help. “Bob helped us in our discernment of what attributes we were looking for in a minister and helped guide us through the process.”

What’s next?

Phase II of this network support structure is now underway: putting together a team of four persons well-trained in conflict management. The article on page 4, *New Team to Guide Congregations Through Conflict*, describes how this will work.

The last part of Phase II will be the formation of a team of trained persons who will be able to assist us in implementing the process outlined in the clergy sexual misconduct policy, if needed. My goal is to have this team up and running by May of 2013.

I am grateful to see how this challenge has become an opportunity to train and empower others for leadership throughout our conference. I find great joy in seeing these trained competent leaders in action!

What leadership training opportunities would you take advantage of? Write to a conference minister; we want to provide more opportunities to train and empower congregational leaders. timdetweiler@centralplainsmc.org, davidboshart@centralplainsmc.org, or shanaboshart@centralplainsmc.org. To contact Ramiro Hernandez, call him at (319) 621-3725.

Living toward a future with hope

by David Boshart, Executive Conference Minister

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. — Jeremiah 29:11



There is no freeway to the future, no paved highway from here to there. There is only wilderness, uncertain terrain. There are no roadmaps, no signposts. So pioneering leaders rely upon a compass and a dream. — James Kouzes and Barry Posner

Traveling across Central Plains Mennonite Conference, we often leave paved roads in rural areas and the GPS sometimes forgets to tell us about road closures in urban areas. It seems no matter where we are going, we are always asking, “What’s the best way to get from here to there?” As we visited every congregation in our conference in 2010, we listened to the wilderness wonderings of many people. We also listened to stories of hope and aspiration. Out of that listening, we refocused our conference mission statement and we recast our priorities. Out of a strong call to empower congregations to more fully participate in God’s mission in the world, we framed our three priorities toward holistic witness: Leadership Development for Holistic Witness; Fellowship as Holistic Witness; and Discipleship for Holistic Witness.

With our mission articulated and our priorities named, we set our compass toward our mission and asked the question, “What’s the best way to get from here to there?” We developed strategies around each priority, forty-eight strategies in all; forty-eight routes that we hope will lead us from here to the fulfillment of our mission. (The complete strategic plan can be found at www.centralplainsmc.org)

They say that when you aim for nothing you hit it every time. While we may not achieve everything we set out to do, naming what we hope for is the first step in realizing our aspirations. As Barbara Kingsolver writes, “The very least you can do in your life is to figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope.” As the prophet Jeremiah has shown us, God’s plan is also a plan that ends in hope.

Of course the loftiest goals, the highest aspirations, mean little if on the way we idle at every crossroad or get stuck in deep ditches. The plan has to be put into action. Since you can’t go in every direction all at the same time, we assigned a timetable to our strategies, an “Estimated Time of Arrival” for each. As our attention turns toward planning for the agenda of this summer’s annual meeting, I find myself going over our plan, accounting for our work in light of our hope:

- We will work with congregations to call pastors trained and grounded in Anabaptist theology. Check.
- We will provide training and networking opportunities for church planters. Check.
- Every staff person, moderator and conference board member will receive anti-racism training within the first two years of their tenure. Check.
- And this accounting goes on for 27 other strategies we have worked at this year. Check times 27. (Come to annual meeting this summer for a full report!)

In the cover story of this issue, Tim Detweiler reports on one of the key strategies in leadership development that we’ve worked on this year: developing a network of volunteers trained to facilitate evaluation processes and pastoral transitions. This year we have seen ministry staff capacity greatly expanded through the work of ten volunteers in 13 locations.

As we get set for another year, our compass points toward our dream, “to grow in holistic witness to God’s reconciling mission in the world by developing leadership, encouraging fellowship and promoting lifelong discipleship.” There is a future with hope.



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Please send subscription requests and changes of addresses to office@centralplainsmc.org.

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New team to guide congregations through conflict

by Tim Detweiler

Conflict is natural and common to all human relationships—even in the church! Jesus offers the church a model for managing conflict in Matthew 18: 15-20 which envisions conflict as an opportunity for discovering the reconciling presence of Christ among us.

As conference minister for ministerial leadership, I am assembling a Conflict Management Support Team (CMST) that will be able to help pastors, congregations and conference leaders manage conflict in ways that offer opportunity for forgiveness and reconciliation as Jesus envisioned.

The CMST will be a team of four people from different regions of our conference with extensive training in conflict management. Preferably, they would receive Lombard Mennonite Peace Center's three core training events. I will serve as the team leader.

This team will be available as a resource for the whole conference. When the services of the CMST are needed, I will meet with them to discern whether they should work together as a team on a given conflict or whether one team member will call upon other trained persons in their region to assist them.

From time to time, we will offer workshops designed to educate pastors and congregational leaders in conflict transformation. These workshops may be led by members of the CMST. People who attend these workshops could become a pool of resource people that could be called upon to assist the CMST in their region as needed.

I'm excited about the possibilities for both serving our congregations and training more leaders. The more people who are trained in conflict management skills, the better it is for our congregations.

Pastor trains new leaders as he retires

by Neng Chue Vang, Retired Pastor, Hmong Mennonite Church



Chue Vang

As the pastor at Hmong Mennonite Church of Saint Paul, I began a program of leadership training two months before my retirement which continued four months after my retirement. I trained the leaders in two specific stages which will help the congregation to carry out its ministry.

The first stage included training a group of seven leaders in a general training of all areas of church leadership. This included two leadership classes, "Introduction to the Bible" and "Stages of Sermon Development."

The outline of "Introduction to the Bible" is the following: A. What is the Bible? B. What does the Bible mean? C. How did we get the Bible? D. The Bible since then. E. The Parts of the Bible. F. The Contents of the Bible and G. Reading the Bible.

The sermon development class includes: Beginning with Holy Spirit, work with the text, purpose statement, form/organization, support material, preparation and delivery of the sermon.

The second stage of leadership training consisted of three leaders chosen from the original group of seven and focused for three months on practical preaching. Each of the three leaders took turns preaching for the congregation.

After these leaders completed each class, they were able to preach and they were able to understand how to use the Bible by observation, interpretation, and apply the scriptures to make it easier to understand God better.

The leadership classes were very important and effective for these leaders as they learned a lot about leadership. They learned the need to have patience and forgiveness for others in all circumstances. They were able to understand that a leader should be a forerunner in decision-making and problem-solving, and they learned how to understand verbal and non-verbal communication. They also developed an understanding of different types of leader characteristics: those who talk a lot and do a lot, those who talk a lot but do little, those who don't talk but do good things, and those who don't talk and don't do anything. This helps our leaders understand how they want to position themselves in order to see movement in their ministry.

In April, Pastor Xeng Thao arrived in Minnesota from Thailand on a visitor visa. He is interested in becoming a missionary in this country. He currently acts as pastor in the Hmong Mennonite Church of St. Paul for the three months that he is visiting. The ministry of Hmong Mennonite Church continues to develop a future by teaching Mennonite Anabaptist history for these congregational leaders.

Hernandez begins four IBA centers

Leadership training is a strength of our Hispanic churches

by Shana Peachey Boshart



As coordinator for Hispanic ministries in Central Plains, Ramiro Hernandez has brought a rich variety of leadership training opportunities to the Hispanic churches. Ramiro has been trained as a teacher and mentor for *Instituto Bíblico Anabautista*, or IBA (pronounced ee-bah), the Spanish language leadership training program of Mennonite Church USA.

Ramiro has started or served as a mentor for IBA centers in Mountain Lake, Minnesota; Moline, Illinois; Washington, Iowa; and Iowa City, Iowa.

Instituto Bíblico Anabautista

IBA offers two levels of study. The first level is a two-year program that introduces the student to the Bible, theology and ministry. It is open to all believers who are interested in equipping themselves to serve Christ and the church. Students receive a certificate of completion when the requirements are met.

The second level of IBA consists of an additional two years of study designed for those who feel called to ministry as pastors, teachers or church planters. Students at this level are expected to take part in ministry in the local church. Students who complete level two receive a diploma. Each level contains 20 credits.

Twenty-four from Central Plains are currently enrolled in the first level: five in Mountain Lake, seven in Moline, five in Iowa City and seven in Washington. Most of Central Plains's Hispanic pastors are enrolled.

The Moline and Iowa City groups will receive their certificates this coming fall. Steve and Judy Harder are the Mountain Lake teachers, Martha Corpus Hernandez teaches the Iowa City and Washington centers, and Ramiro teaches the group in Moline. Ramiro mentors and supports Martha and the Harders.

At each IBA center, students gather one night a week for class, a significant time commitment for both students and teachers.

Ramiro has also arranged workshops for both IBA students and others. In the past two years, German Vera presented a workshop on ministerial ethics; Alberto Parchment presented on leadership; Samuel Lopez presented on Anabaptist history; and just recently IBA students attended the Church Planters Gathering organized by Central Plains. (See story on page 7.)

"We did not require IBA students to go to the church planters gathering, but we urged them to go," says Ramiro. "Any opportunity I see that's going to benefit our students, I encourage them to participate. Last year I encouraged them to go to a continuing education class offered by MEA in Elkhart, Indiana."

Two workshops are in the works for the coming year. Rafael Barahona, Director for Hispanic Pastoral Leadership Education at Mennonite Education Agency (MEA), will present a workshop soon. He oversees the whole IBA program. Also, Eduardo Escamilla will be offering a workshop on church planting.

"I want students to be exposed to other thoughts as they go through IBA. These workshops are part of their training," says Ramiro.

IBA has been such a successful program that English speaking churches have requested this training program. Production of an English/Spanish version of IBA is underway.



IBA students in Moline, Illinois, (top) and Mountain Lake, Minnesota (bottom).

Box of books perfect for summer reading

by Marlene Bogard, Director, Western District Conference Resource Library

Ready to s-t-r-e-t-c-h that budget? A great solution for pastors, congregational leaders and church libraries is the Box of Books program from the Western District Conference Resource Library. It works like this: The Library will prepare a box of 20-25 resources according to your preferences. This customized box will be sent to your church for an 8-week block of time.

While these fine resources are visiting, multiple folks can use them for leadership development, study, preparation, enrichment and more. We can fill the box with just children's books if you wish to have a children's reading program, fill it with books on peace-making, prayer, creation care, and more. Your responsibility is to pay shipping both ways (less than \$18 total, the cost of one book), and to keep track of the materials while they are in your church.

To sign up, just email crlib@mennowdc.org and indicate your interest. Marlene will be right back in touch with you and make sure you get a box within a week. Visit our web site real soon to get a taste of the 12,000 resources you can request in your Box of Books: mennowdc.org/library.

Leaders Credentialed

Max and Gloria Villatoro were each licensed toward ordination on Sunday, May 6, 2012 at Iglesia Torre Fuerte, Iowa City, Iowa.

Karen Dalke was ordained on Sunday, June 3, 2012 at Des Moines Mennonite, Des Moines, Iowa.

Leadership Transitions

John Zimmerman has resigned as pastor of Pleasant View Mennonite in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, effective May 20.

Jeff Miller will be installed as interim associate pastor at Kalona (Iowa) Mennonite on May 20.

Daniel and Kristi Winings have been working since 2006 to begin a new Mennonite Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. On April 22, the congregation bade farewell to their founding leaders. Daniel shared the following reflection with conference ministry staff as he concluded his ministry at Shalom Mennonite Church:

“There are a plethora of emotions at this time but our sense of peace has only grown. It has been encouraging to watch members of Shalom embrace a new or growing sense of ownership in the life of the congregation. I also remain confident that the Spirit is at work calling new pastoral leadership to Shalom. I am almost as excited as I was as we prepared for the first services in the fall of 2006.”



Corey Miller and Willis Busenitz (top);
Lois Janzen Preheim and Karen Dalke
(bottom)



Pastors and spouses retreat to seek balance

by Lois Janzen Preheim, Pastoral Leadership Committee

The Benedictine monastery at Schuyler, Nebraska, became a sacred place as 43 pastors and spouses gathered for rest and renewal the final weekend of April. The theme for the weekend was finding balance in the midst of ministry. Resource leaders were David and Janice Yordy Sutter, pastors from South Bend, Indiana.

The Sutters used stories from their own years of ministry to help us think about what strategies one might employ and the resources one might draw on. They emphasized the importance of caring for oneself physically, spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually because offering the picture of a healthy person might be among the best gifts one could give a congregation.

The Rembrandt painting of Jesus with his disciples in a storm on Lake Galilee might be a good icon of how the religious life is. Life is full of storm and change and uneasy footing, but there is also the possibility of exhibiting Jesus' calm presence while surrounded by fearful people in a dangerous situation. Jesus' ability to live calmly and non-anxiously is a worthy example to follow and to meditate upon. Jesus seemed to know when he needed to withdraw to sleep and to pray, and he seemed to be able to do both even in the middle of pressing concerns.

The time spent worshipping together both framed and extended these considerations. The group also had free time on Saturday afternoon for rest, visiting and playing games.

This year the conference staff sent notices of the pastors and spouses gathering to deacon/elder boards, asking them to encourage pastors and their spouses to attend. Todd Jones, pastor of Hutterthal Mennonite, rural Freeman, South Dakota, told the group how important it is to him that his deacons pray with him before he comes. Their support and affirmation of his time away for even a short time has helped him maintain his spiritual health.

Zaerr Brenneman to write for Gather 'Round

Diane Zaerr Brenneman, a member of West Union Mennonite, has been chosen as a writer for the Gather 'Round curriculum. She took part in a week-long writers' conference in Chicago, Illinois as preparation for the writing assignment.

Gather 'Round is produced for preschool, primary, middler, multiage, junior youth, and youth groups. Zaerr Brenneman is writing the middler level for the winter quarter of the 2013–2014 Sunday school year.

Gather 'Round: Hearing and Sharing God's Good News is a project of MennoMedia and Brethren Press.

Church planters gather for training and fellowship

by Susan Janzen, Church Planting Strategy Team member

Church planting is an intense, time-consuming ministry. It can also be a lonely calling. That's why every year, the Central Plains Church Planting Strategy Team hosts a retreat for people involved in planting new congregations. This year's gathering was held March 30-31 at Crooked Creek Christian Camp near Washington, Iowa.

Twenty-five people spent time worshipping and learning together. Many of those who participated attend new Hispanic congregations, so the retreat was presented primarily in Spanish with English translation. While the adults met together, about a dozen children enjoyed the many activity options at the camp under the leadership of Andrea Nussbaum.

Along with time to share the joys and challenges of church planting, participants learned from Pastor Joel Ramirez. Pastor Joel has planted more than ten churches in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and the United States. He currently lives in Minneapolis with his wife, Jeanne, and children. Jeanne led a session about children's ministry.

On Friday evening, Pastor Joel laid out the scriptural basis for planting churches, focusing on Jesus' method for preaching the gospel in Luke 10:1-9. He noted seven principles found in this passage: All churches need to be involved. Jesus sent people out in pairs for counsel and protection. Preaching the gospel to all the nations is the heart of God. Prayer is key, because planting churches is not only our business but God's. Be humble. God will provide what you need. Keep your focus on your mission. Jesus is our model for preaching the Gospel.

Two presentations on Saturday focused on ministry among Hispanics in an Anglo-dominant culture. In the first, Pastor Joel emphasized the importance of gaining an accurate and thorough understanding of the multi-cultural environment in which we live. To cross cultural boundaries, we need to first understand how culture affects our behaviors, beliefs, and our understandings of what it means to be a Christian.

After describing several models of church planting in intercultural settings, Pastor Joel offered a final meditation, based on the prophet Jeremiah during the Exile. When faced with the day-to-day difficulties of church planting, we have a choice, "Will we grow stronger—or will we give up?" With God's help and the support of allies, including our conference, he said, we can remain faithful in sharing the Good News.

New at Swan Lake: Family camp

A perfect way for families to focus on faith together

by Jerry Kroeker, Camp Director

This summer, we are planning a Family Camp for July 5-7. This three-day camp will have a relaxed schedule designed mainly to allow families to enjoy camp and to worship together with other families. We will have times for devotions and singing, along with other camp activities. Please call the camp office to make housing arrangements. We do have several 30-amp RV hookups available as well as cabins. Nearly all of the cabins are air-conditioned. We will also make the upstairs rooms available in the main lodge. The cost for the camp will follow our usual rental rates with price breaks for families. This camp is not listed in our other camp literature, so call for specifics: (605) 326-5690.



Youth Escape 2012

August 3-5

Dayton, Iowa

Come to Youth Escape 2012 the weekend of August 3-5 to deepen relationships within your youth group and focus together on getting closer to God.

The theme, **Plugged In & Charging**, reminds us that sometimes we need to give ourselves a break from texting, Facebook, and gaming to connect with the God who loves us and calls us. Knowing God is more vital to faith formation than knowing about God, so everything we do in worship and breakouts at Youth Escape will show you new ways to communicate with God.

Find details about Youth Escape at www.centralplainsmc.org.

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

Good news!

We ended the fiscal year in the black! Thanks to both congregations and individuals, income met expenses for the fiscal year. Income for the year came in at \$443,674.31, and expenses for the year totaled \$438,968.66. Thanks to each congregation and individual who contributed to our financial well-being. We thank God for the blessing of adequate resources. May 1 marked the start of the 2012-2013 fiscal year; please help Central Plains begin the year strong!

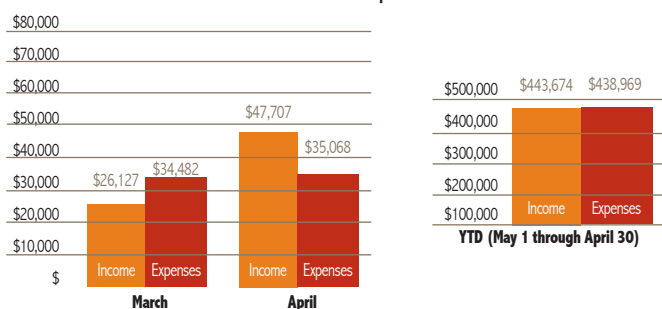
—Stewardship Task Group

FYI: COMING EVENTS

Central Plains Annual Meeting, Thursday through Sunday, June 28 – July 1, at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Nebraska

Youth Escape 2012, Friday through Sunday, August 3-5, at Hidden Acres Christian Center, Dayton, Iowa

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Income vs. Expenses



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