



Scattered Seeds

May
2016

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

—John 20:21-22

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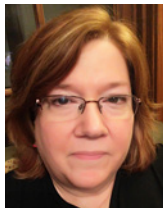
Sent 2016: A gathering of Mennonites planting Jesus-centered communities

Gathering of church planters energizes Central Plains leaders

by Susan Janzen

Church Planting Strategy Team member

pastor, Cedar Falls Mennonite Church, Cedar Falls, Iowa



A few days after Easter, around 100 church planters, pastors, and denominational leaders gathered in Metairie, Louisiana, to experience the presence of God's Spirit and the joy of learning from one another.

Sent 2016 was the first such gathering sponsored by Mennonite Church USA (MC USA), with financial backing and logistical assistance from Mennonite Mission Network and a grant from the Schowalter Foundation.

As he welcomed participants—including 13 people from Central Plains Conference—Mauricio Chenlo, denominational minister for church planting, likened the gathering to the disciples huddled together the evening of Jesus' resurrection. Citing John 20:21-22 (*sidebar, left*), Mauricio noted that just as Jesus spoke words of peace to his closest followers and then exhorted them to go out and share the Good News, we are Anabaptist-minded people with a call to be sent.

"Spiritual entrepreneurs" is how Mauricio suggested church planters ought to see themselves. As living examples of what he meant, he introduced Karl & Marlene Bernhard, who give leadership to Iglesia Amor Viviente, an MC USA

congregation affiliated with Gulf States Conference.

Amor Viviente, or *Living Love* in English, was invited to host SENT 2016 because they are living out Jesus' call to make disciples. Amor Viviente is part of a network begun some 40 years ago in Honduras that has now grown to nine faith communities in the United States and more than 30 others in Honduras and several other countries.

And host us they did! In addition to providing a beautiful worship space and meeting rooms for breakout sessions, the congregation's worship team led us in singing and prayer. Church members served delicious meals featuring New Orleans specialties such as a jambalaya with andouille sausage, a crawfish boil, and muffaletta sandwiches.

Ervin Stutzman, MC USA executive director, reminded participants that most of the advice in the New

Testament was written to new churches. This was echoed in a workshop led by Alan Kreider, retired church planter and seminary professor, who said the rise of Christianity was improbable given the disincentives heaped on new religious movements during the Roman Empire and the mistakes made by those who planted the first Christian churches. Despite these obstacles, he said Christi-

"Christianity thrived because the way believers lived was attractive to their neighbors and because they practiced the virtue of patience."

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anity thrived because the way believers lived was attractive to their neighbors and because they practiced the virtue of patience.

The first Christians understood that God is constantly at work but not in a hurry. After all, God chose to be incarnated as a human being, which required patience as Jesus grew and matured into his calling; Jesus himself is patient with us, never coercing faith and loving even his enemies.

Other workshops explored missional covenantal partnerships (led by our own David Boshart!), growing church plants into ministries that transform lives, the messiness of church planting, peacemaking as church planting, being Christ to the families of immigrants in detention centers, creating a culture of discipleship, life in unsalaried ministry, house church networks, encountering the “nones” by embracing Jesus’ peace theology, basic church planting principles, and experiments in multi-cultural church planting.

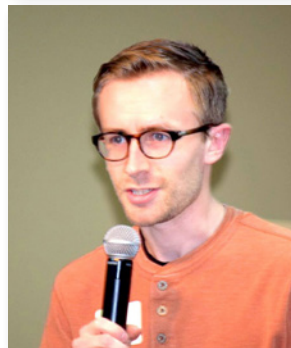
One of the blessings to me of Sent 2016 was the rich diversity of those who gathered in Metairie. We came from many ethnic backgrounds, spoke different languages, had vastly varied life experiences, and encompassed the broad theological spectrum that is MC USA. We were young and old and in between, eager people just starting out and more seasoned veterans, urban and rural, church leaders and those seeking to know where they fit in. We heard testimonies of God’s mercy and grace toward Garifuna refugees and how the legacy of brother turning against brother during the Civil War still influences spirituality in some areas of North Carolina.

No two visions for church planting are the same. Yet we hold in common a faith in Christ and a commitment to live out his call to go and make disciples. This is what I found most exciting about the gathering. There is a place for every “spiritual entrepreneur” in this mission. Our strength is in having the patience to seek out what God is already doing and then having the humility to shape our ministries into the reflections of what we discover.

While the focus of Sent 2016 was on new churches and church plants, there was much to offer every church seeking renewal. I came away with ideas I plan to share with my well-established congregation. I encourage you to consider sending people from your church to future Sent gatherings. You will be inspired, encouraged, and energized.

Top to bottom: Sent 2016 participants from Central Plains, from left to right: Josias Hansen, Ramiro Hernandez, Galen Penner, Elizabeth Troyer-Miller, Martha Hernandez, Matt Troyer-Miller, Emma Ramos, Joel Beachy, Fernando Ramos, Susan Janzen, David Boshart, John Glassbrenner, Adam Harder Nussbaum; David Boshart leads a workshop on missional covenantal partnerships; Josias Hansen of Thirdway Church in Minneapolis was on the planning committee for Sent 2016; Karl Bernhard of Amor Viviente; David Boshart leads a panel discussion with Olak Sunuwar, Matt Pritchard and Sara Wenger Shenk.

Photos by Craig Morton and Ken Gingerich



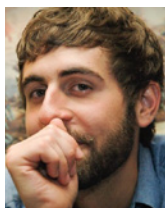
Church Planting Strategy Team supports new churches

Calls all Central Plains churches to partner with a developing congregation

by Matt Troyer-Miller

chair, Church Planting Strategy Team

pastor, Wood River Mennonite Church, Wood River, Nebraska



The Church Planting Strategy Team (CPST) is an extension of the Outreach and Service Committee. We work closely with both Outreach and Service and the Pastoral Leadership Committee to encourage, support and credential church planters in our conference. In addition to being a pastor, a church planter functions as an entrepreneur working to form a new worshipping community.

Our God is a sending God. The Church Planting Strategy Team keeps this idea at the front and center of our work. God loves the world so much that he sent his son, Jesus, to save the world from sin, injustice and evil. Just as God has sent his son, so we are sent into a hurting world to continue his work. While this can feel overwhelming at times, we do not travel alone. God has sent the Holy Spirit to guide us and open our eyes to God's healing work around us.

The CPST supports church planters in a variety of ways. We work with them to develop a vision for their context that is consistent with the Anabaptist tradition and the Confession of Faith. We help them to find support networks within the conference who might offer prayer and physical and financial support. We identify their challenges and seek to equip them to meet those challenges.

One example of a Central Plains church plant is Iglesia Menonita Centro Cristiano in Washington, Iowa. Martha Hernandez pastors this congregation. The congregation reaches out to Hispanic families in the area and estimates that they have worked with over 140 individuals in the past six years. These families are highly mobile and often move away out of fear of deportation and detention.

Six Central Plains congregations have pledged financial support to Centro Cristiano, allowing Martha the freedom to devote more time to ministry and evangelism. These congregations receive as much from this partnership as they give.

They meet together regularly for prayer, mutual encouragement, and storytelling. They hear stories of what it means to minister among the most marginalized people in American society and hear stories of death being trans-

formed into life. As they develop deep relationships with a new congregation, it is not unusual for renewal to happen in an existing congregation. They begin to ask themselves, "What is God doing around *us*? What are the best ways we can join in?"

If you are interested in the exciting work of church planting in our conference, there are many ways you can join.

One, visit the Central Plains website (<http://www.centralplainsmc.org/church-planting.html>) and familiarize yourself with the church planters and church plants of Central Plains.

Two, pray for them regularly. Their work relies on prayer! You could even write them notes of encouragement.

Three, keep an eye out for them at Annual Meeting in June because many of them will be there. Introduce yourself and learn about their ministry.

Four, are *you* an entrepreneur exploring a call to ministry? Or do you know of people in your congregation who have interests in entrepreneurship and church ministry? Perhaps God is calling you, or them, to be a church planter here in Central Plains. Talk with your pastor about this possibility, and he or she can help you make connections with the Church Planting Strategy Team.

Finally, Central Plains has made church planting a conference-wide priority. ***We have challenged each existing congregation to become a support partner in the development of at least one new congregation.*** Is your congregation involved with a partnership? Great! Talk with your pastor and find out how *you* can be involved. If your congregation is not involved yet, call Conference Minister David Boshart and find out how your church can get connected with this important part of God's work. There are few things more exciting than partnering together with new churches to do ministry!

Remember, our God is a sending God. God sent his son to save the world, and we have been sent into the world to carry the Good News. God sends believers around the world and around the corner for ministry. Where is God sending you and your church?



Sent 2016: A gathering of Mennonites planting Jesus-centered communities

Reflections from a pastor of a 'traditional' church

by Joel Beachy

pastor, East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa



One may ask, why would a pastor from a 'traditional' church setting in a sparsely populated, rural-Iowa community attend a church planters' conference in Metairie, Louisiana?

The state of churches in rural America is at a crossroads. In the past, churches like East Union Mennonite Church, where I am the pastor, were able to sustain modest growth simply by maintaining relationships with existing families and members. The natural "growth" arose not out of some intentional methodology of outreach or evangelism, but simply from the natural return of young people to the community to raise families as they had been raised.

Although Kalona, Iowa, is still a vibrant community, our Mennonite churches are recognizing that the model of church growth that sustained our numbers in the past is changing. Growing a church community from within was probably never our best model for church growth.

A small rural congregation embraces change

Decision to sell building underscores challenges of rural congregations

by Tim Detweiler

Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership



First Mennonite Church in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, sold its building and held their last worship service in their facility on December 27, 2015. The church will continue to worship together in rented space. (You can read a full report in the February 29, 2016, edition of the Mennonite World Review.) This decision underscores the many challenges our small rural congregations face in the midst of the changing rural landscape.

First Mennonite made the decision to sell its building as Sunday morning attendance shrank from around 500 in the mid-1950s to the current attendance of around 40 people. It is challenging for a smaller congregation to keep up with maintenance costs of a building designed for a much larger congregation.

Truth is, congregations in rural areas are faced with numerous challenges. The shift from the family farm to larger corporate farms makes it more difficult for young people to come home to farm. Smaller congregations are faced with facilities in need of repair. Aging congregations

Churches regardless of locale need to be forward-thinking in how they want to reach people who are ready and eager to hear the message of Christ's love and mercy.

One of my takeaways from the Sent 2016 church planting conference is that we have to be intentional in raising leaders within our churches to plant and maintain churches. Our members need to re-vision themselves: from being passive-participants to active-apostles.

The Sent 2016 gathering opened my eyes to the intentional and important work of church planting that is taking place in many parts of Mennonite Church USA. Churches are being planted and are thriving! People are hearing God's call to reach out and minister to those who do not know the love of Christ.

The same can be—and is—true for our rural and traditional church communities. We simply need to be creative about how we are going to respond to God's call in each of our unique contexts.



become a reality. Sometimes it is difficult to find pastors who feel called to ministry in small rural churches. (I am pleased to say that we have been blessed in Central Plains with many pastors who feel called to ministry in rural congregations.) Burnout among members is a common challenge as persons serve in numerous roles at the same time.

In spite of these challenges, small rural congregations continue to play an important role in our conference and in the life of the church. In fact, 45 percent of Central Plains congregations are located in rural areas. Rural areas need the church as much as urban and suburban areas need the church.

Much can be said about the strengths found in small rural congregations. It is clear however, that those congregations who survive will know how to make changes. It may mean letting go of an aging facility. It may mean letting go of programs and committees that are no longer needed.

Change that helps a congregation live into a new vision and that helps a congregation line itself up with God's mission can bring renewed vitality and strength to any congregation, no matter what size.

Everything Beautiful Thrift Store update

Construction is underway; funds are still needed

by Willis Busenitz, board president, and Suzette Shreffler, manager

Greetings from Northern Cheyenne Country in Montana! We have been invited to give you a brief update about Everything Beautiful Thrift Store, since our last report in spring 2015. First, we want to thank individuals and churches in the Central Plains Mennonite Conference for your prayers and financial gifts. You have been a great encouragement to us.

Since opening our doors in May 2012, the store has grown steadily and we have served communities on the reservation and surrounding areas with good quality, low cost clothing, quilts, blankets, small household items and occasionally furniture and appliances. We soon realized that we had outgrown our rented facility and so we began planning and fundraising for a much larger, energy-efficient building of our own. To date we have raised approximately \$125,000. A little over a year ago we purchased five lots which are located closer to downtown Lame Deer.

While raising funds, we also began contacting Mennonite Mission Network's SOOP staff and other individuals about the possibility of having volunteers come to help us. Through these contacts we received commitments from LeRoy Troyer (architect), Terry Schultz (cement contractor) and Lynn Miller (general contractor) to come and help us. With the volunteer commitments, and after much contemplation by the board, the decision was made to begin construction this spring and put in the lower level with the funds on hand.

On Sunday afternoon, March 20, a number of people gathered onsite for a groundbreaking ceremony. During

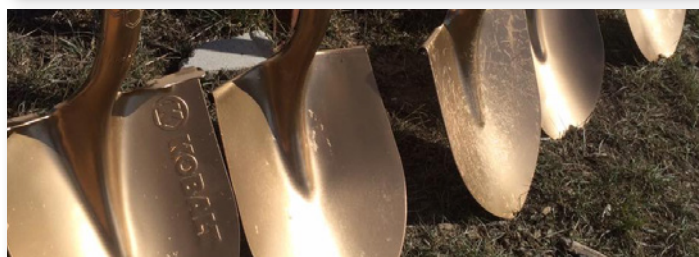
that time, Terry Schultz and another volunteer arrived from Avon, South Dakota, to pour the footings and basement walls.

Lynn Miller, general contractor from Bluffton, Ohio, will supervise putting on the floor for the second story. When this portion of the building is complete, present funds will be depleted. We continue to do fundraising and have hired a grant writer to see if we can get some much-needed grants. We will need approximately another \$600,000 to complete the project.

We continue to be excited about how God is using this ministry and anticipate even greater ministry when the new building is completed. We are hoping to start a "work for food" program as well as a beadwork co-op in the new store which are in keeping with our philosophy of "a hand up" instead of "a handout." The beadwork co-op has already begun with volunteers taking turns beading a large cross which will be auctioned off with proceeds going toward the new building project.

Please continue to pray with us as we continue to serve the Cheyenne People and for funds to complete this project. Visit our web site, www.everythingbeautifulthriftstore.com, or our fundraising page, www.gofundme.com/kuqxh0.

Willis Busenitz is the lead pastor at White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church and chair of the Pastoral Leadership Committee of Central Plains. In addition to her job as thrift store manager, Suzette Shreffler is pastor of community outreach in the same congregation.



The groundbreaking on March 30, 2016, construction as of the first week of April, gold shovels for the groundbreaking



Delegate sessions and meals will take place in the Student Center at Grand View University.

Host churches invite you to Annual Meeting

*by Chris McDougal and Karen Dalke
Annual Meeting Task Group*

As host churches for the 2016 Central Plains Mennonite Annual Meeting, Des Moines Mennonite Church and Christ Community Church extend to you a personal invitation to join us in Des Moines, June 16-19. Our venue this year is Grand View University (GVU), www.grandview.edu. GVU is a one-stop-shop for meetings like ours with a newly constructed Student Center and Conferencing Facility that includes modern meeting rooms and a multi-station cafeteria (food choices!).

You can stay in the very reasonably priced dorms adjacent to the conferencing facility or choose a local hotel. Luther Memorial Church, also right on campus, will house our worship services through Saturday. Our Sunday morning worship will be hosted by Christ Community Church that meets at Temple B'nai Jeshurun; a local Jewish temple that graciously allows Christ Community to use their beautiful facilities.

The structure of our meetings will be similar to previous years with worship, delegate sessions, workshops, and social activities. Saturday evening, we will gather for an informal hymn sing at 7 pm. Plans are in place for children and youth activities with a team of adults ready to make Friday and Saturday full of joy, learning, sharing, and connecting. Go to www.carebags4kids.org to check out the mission project planned for our children. The registration materials will provide more details.

In case you are able to arrive early or stay around after the conference, you will receive welcome materials pointing you to information about attractions in Des Moines. For its size, Des Moines has a surprising number of interesting dining choices and things to see and do. If you want to learn more before you arrive, just Google!

We look forward to your visit when we will work, worship, and fellowship together around our common bond. We hope your experience with us will be characterized by our 2016 Annual Meeting theme, Joyfully Following Jesus: Sharing God's Love.

Chris McDougal serves as administrator at Christ Community Church in Des Moines, and Karen Dalke is the pastor at Des Moines Mennonite Church.

Leaders Credentialed

Chris Becker and Kimberly Becker, co-pastors at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Minneapolis, were licensed toward ordination on March 13, 2016.

Ecuador tour rescheduled

We are postponing the June 2016 trip to Ecuador until January 2017, since we did not have enough people registered for this trip. We are in the process of setting new dates for January 2017 and will post them on the Central Plains website. It's not too soon to communicate your interest in the January trip! Would you like to make a mid-winter trip to the "Land of Eternal Spring"? Contact Joetta Schlabach, jschlabach@faithmennonite.org or 612-375-9483.

Check out our formation library!

Formation Minister Shana Peachey Boshart curates a library of formation resources for you to use. Find curriculum for children's ministry, youth ministry and adult Bible studies. Other topics the library includes are parenting, Christian practices, spirituality, immigration, peacemaking, and conscientious objection. We are also up-to-date with material from MennoMedia related to formation. Find a list of library items at www.centralplainsmc.org. Hover on Resources then click on [Resource Library](#).

Wilderness Wind to cease operations in 2016

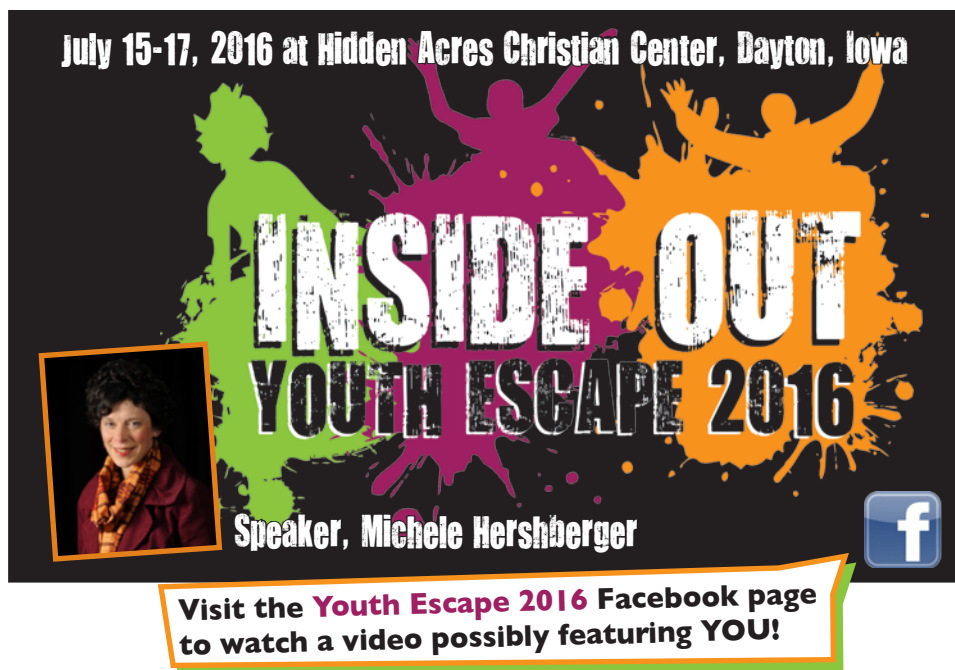
The board of directors of Wilderness Wind, Inc., Ely, Minnesota, has determined that it will cease operations no later than December 31, 2016.

Wilderness Wind began in 1986 and has offered programmed canoe trips into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area for church groups, youth groups, and families. It is a member of the Mennonite Camping Association.

The last decade has seen a steady decline in both the number of group trips and lakeside cabin usage. This, coupled with increased operating expenses, has made the fiscal model for Wilderness Wind increasingly unsustainable.

The organization hopes to run a full season of trips in 2016. Individuals interested in organizing a trip in 2016, volunteering as staff, or making tax deductible donations can find information at www.wildernesswind.org. — *Wilderness Wind*

July 15-17, 2016 at Hidden Acres Christian Center, Dayton, Iowa



INSIDE OUT
YOUTH ESCAPE 2016

Speaker, Michele Hershberger

Visit the **Youth Escape 2016** Facebook page to watch a video possibly featuring YOU!

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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.

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FINANCES

The financial report for the 2015-2016 fiscal year will be sent to churches as a bulletin announcement mid-May.



UPCOMING EVENTS

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

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



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