



Scattered Seeds

February
2018



Christ Community Church members attend a house dedication.

Dear children, let
us not love with
words or speech
but with actions
and in truth.

— 1 John 3:18

Practicing hospitality by welcoming the stranger

Hearts full of love, joy, family and friendship

by Chris McDougal

Christ Community Church, Des Moines, Iowa

Over the last decade, Christ Community Church (CCC) in Des Moines has worked with agencies like Lutheran Social Services and Catholic Charities to help refugee families from other countries settle in Des Moines. These were families forced from their homes for various reasons, such as violence and war. CCC found this as a good way to show hospitality and the love of Jesus Christ, sometimes referred to as “welcoming the stranger.”

This ministry took the form of helping families move into affordable apartments or housing with donations of basic needs like furniture, cookware, linens, and help navigating an unfamiliar city and culture.

Relationships were established and some of the refugee families joined CCC. Soon, they were no longer refugees. They were part of the CCC family, worshipping and serving alongside us.

**“Soon,
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They were
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CCC family...”**

More recently, some of CCC’s partner organizations discontinued or changed their refugee programs. The CCC refugee ministry was unable to continue without the organization and infrastructure provided by the agencies. So, CCC went looking for a new partner and in early 2017 connected with the Greater Des Moines Habitat for

Humanity.

Seeking to put God’s love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build

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affordable homes, communities, and hope. Habitat homes are made affordable by the efforts and donations of the community. And, Habitat does Interfaith Builds where churches from different denominations and different faiths join to build a home.

CCC joined with five other churches, the synagogue that allows CCC to worship in their building, and the Muslim faith community associated with the refugee family purchasing the home. All began by raising money to help defer the cost.

The Interfaith Build project began August 16, 2017, with a site-blessing by Rabbi David Kaufman of Temple B'nai Jeshurun. In the next three to four months, volunteers from the faith communities worked with Habitat leaders to build the house.

On December 9, our hearts were full of love, joy, family, and friendship. The dedication of Hekmat & Abeer's Habitat for Humanity home brought together members of the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish faiths, along with local businesses, to celebrate the completion of our Interfaith Build. A brief liturgy of dedication was led by CCC's Pastor Kent McDougal.

Working shoulder-to-shoulder for a such a cause was a wonderful experience, established new friendships, and witnessed to the love of God. CCC recommends similar projects to our sister churches in Central Plains Mennonite Conference.



Top to bottom: Hekmat, Abeer, & sons – the family purchasing the home.
Hekmat receives the keys to the home on behalf of his family.



Now that's a 'blitz'!

Cedar Falls creates 35 comforters for MCC

by Florence Zehr

Cedar Falls Mennonite Church, Cedar Falls, Iowa

Cedar Falls Mennonite Church held a comforter-tying blitz in October. We heard that Mennonite Central Committee had a great need for comforters and decided we could do this even if we are a small congregation. We chose the Sunday in October when we normally have a carry-in meal. We started knotting as soon as Sunday school was over, and stopped to eat when the meal was ready.

We had a very good number that helped us tie. It was a first for many of us, especially the males. Some kept at it until the middle of the afternoon. Several ladies took them home and bound them. Then Susan Janzen, Cheryl Fish, Ellen Miller, and Florence Zehr drove to the Crowded Closet in Iowa City, where we delivered 35 comforters.

We were thankful we could serve the Lord by making comforters for those who will need them.

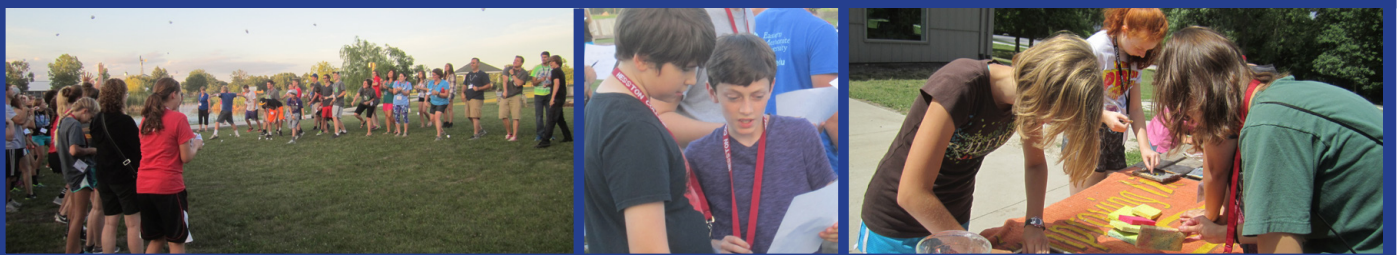


Left to Right: Tom Kessler, Arleen Cook; Joan Farstad, Carolyn Brown, Katheryn East; Andrew Wind, Alice Rohret, Adel Kessler, Susan Janzen, Agnes Berky.

YOUTH ESCAPE 2018

→ July 20-22 ←

at Hidden Acres Christian Center,
near Dayton, Iowa



A call to serve: From retirement to new ministry

by Carol J. Eisenbeis

Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota

Pastor Bob Engbrecht clearly recalls watching a video in the dimmed sanctuary of Salem Mennonite Church near Freeman, South Dakota. It was a summer Sunday morning and the year was 2012. Congregants were asked to remain for a brief meeting following the morning worship service.

Known as the “South” Church, Salem Mennonite had recently called a young pastor, Nicholas Detweiler-Stoddard, to lead the congregation. Changing demographics, however, caused many to sense the need for a ministry focusing specifically on aging members of the congregation and community. A way of responding to the Great Commission of Matthew 28 had presented itself, yet it would certainly involve more time than just one full-time pastor could invest.

Enter Bob Engbrecht. Retired in 2007 after serving as pastor of Salem’s sister congregation, Salem-Zion (“North” Church), just two and a half miles up the road, Engbrecht continued to serve as an occasional Sunday morning supply pastor in the area. Leaving church that morning, Engbrecht sensed something significant about the fact that he just happened to be present at Salem Mennonite on this particular morning. Was it coincidence or calling? Was this a ministry opportunity that would call him out of retirement?

Maybe the church already had someone in mind to fill this role. Engbrecht certainly didn’t want to overstep bounds by inquiring about this, yet he did receive nudges from members of the congregation who clearly told him that he would be well suited for this role.

Pastoral ministry for Engbrecht began in the late 1960’s. He served a number of churches over the years, including his home church, Bethel Mennonite of rural Marion, South Dakota. Additionally, Engbrecht spent a number of years as a hospital and nursing home administrator. His familiarity with a nursing home setting would equip him well for ministering to those residing in local care facilities.

A life experience that perhaps deepened Engbrecht’s compassion even more was the journey he navigated alongside his first wife, Joan. While he was pastoring at Salem-Zion, Joan was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. For a period of more than 10 years, Engbrecht served as Joan’s primary caregiver with support and assistance from Salem-Zion. Joan passed away in 2005.

Engbrecht’s retirement from ministry coincided with his 2007 marriage to Marla, a widow from Nebraska. Blessed with quick wit and an endearing sense of humor, many recall the time Engbrecht shared with the congregation that he found his new bride, Marla, on eBay. He quickly corrected himself, explaining that what he really meant, of course, was eHarmony.

Marla, however, did not go into this marriage anticipating a role as a pastor’s wife. Would it be fair now to add this new dimension to their relationship?

Another consideration for Engbrecht was the new dynamic of altering his relationship with the people of Salem-Zion Mennonite Church. He had served as their pastor, and while the North and South Churches are sister congregations, it is not quite that simple. Could pursuit of a pastoral position at Salem be interpreted in a negative way or hurtful toward the people of Salem-Zion?

After prayerful consideration and the blessing of both his wife Marla and the Salem-Zion church, Engbrecht accepted the call to serve Salem Mennonite. He ended his retirement and was installed as half-time pastor in October of 2013.

Reflecting on his ministry four years later, Engbrecht describes how his ministry has truly reached beyond the walls of the church as intended. He serves communion and visits residents regularly at Freeman’s Oakview Terrace Nursing Home and Salem Mennonite Home for the Aged and at Tieszen Memorial Home in Marion. He preaches several times a year, has conducted many funerals, and has orchestrated three Blue Christmas services that provide support to those in the community approaching the holiday season following the loss of a loved one.

Engbrecht describes his current ministry role as a definite call from God. He urges others to be open to God’s leading. “God’s full of surprises. You never know what he has planned.”



Pastor Bob and Marla Engbrecht recently celebrated their tenth wedding anniversary.

Practicing kindness and compassion

Des Moines youth enact Ephesians 4:32

by Lloyd Kaufman

Des Moines Mennonite Church, Des Moines, Iowa

Youth from the Des Moines Mennonite Church reported in the congregation recently about the results of their summer project of “random acts of kindness.”

In February 2017, the youth provided a Valentine Brunch for the congregation, complete with pancakes, pastries and eggs for the congregation. They used the freewill offering to put Ephesians 4:32, “Be kind and compassionate to one another,” in action in our community by providing surprising acts of kindness.

After a time of prayer, scripture and discernment over some snacks, the class made a plan of action. Their first acts were providing snacks and gas money to a long time member who was driving and moving to Pennsylvania, supplying a nearby fire station with some needed kitchen supplies, and giving coffee and small gift cards to both workmen and mall shoppers a few blocks from the church.

Some time for conversation took place with a younger woman and man at a local laundromat while waiting for

their clothes to wash. Both were very grateful, posing for pictures later shown in the church’s presentation and the woman expressing unhappiness with her present church and saying that she had passed our building many times and now felt an incentive to visit.

The last visit of the class was to the US Committee for Refugee and Immigrants office. The director was a member of our church in past years and a refugee whom our church welcomed in our resettlement program in the 1970’s. Our youth and their sponsors came bearing sacks of household supplies that were readily put to good use by recent refugees from Africa. A good connection was made with this agency, and the director was invited to our church on a Sunday morning to speak about the agency’s mission. New and renewed friendships took place with many that Sunday.

What started as a fun Valentine Brunch coupled with free will gifts from the congregation enabled our youth to put the Ephesians text into practice, fostering kindness and the fruits it grows.



Left to Right: Samantha Baccam Huynh from the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants accepts household supplies from sponsors Kristen Leichty and Myron Zehr and church teen Isaiah Riggs. Myron Zehr and Kristen Leichty flank church youth Brandon Zehr and Isaiah Riggs as they deliver treats to a local fire station.



Annual Leaders Retreat

Leaders to explore studying the Bible with neighbors and strangers

by Tim Detweiler

Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership



Annual Leaders Retreat is planned each year by the Pastoral Leadership Committee for pastors, chaplains and their spouses. This year's Annual Leaders Retreat is scheduled for April 27 – 29 at the St. Benedict Center in Schuyler, Nebraska.

Bryan Moyer Suderman, musical artist and Bible teacher from Kitchener, Ontario, will be our guest presenter. He will guide our reflections around the theme, “Reading Scripture with Neighbors & Strangers.” With Bryan’s focus on reading the Bible with Jesus and engaging all ages in the scriptural story of God’s love, he is an excellent resource for helping us reflect together on spiritual practice #5 in our Covenant of Spiritual Practices for Central Plains Mennonite Conference, *We will study the Bible with neighbors and strangers, inviting them to become disciples of Jesus.*

Of the six spiritual practices, this one seems to give us more angst. It raises some interesting questions: Who is my neighbor? Who is the stranger? How do we read and study the scriptures with strangers? How might we open up the scriptures for and with the stranger, and how might the stranger open up the scriptures for and with us?

Plan now to attend Annual Leaders Retreat as we allow the familiar Emmaus Road Story in Luke 24 to open up doors for exploring “Scripture and the Stranger” in our times of worship. In our three retreat sessions, Bryan will help us reflect on ways we use and engage “Scripture with Neighbor and Stranger” by looking at stories and examples from scripture.

Annual Leaders Retreat is a place for pastors, chaplains and spouses to come together for renewal, resourcing, conversation, building relationships with peers and for finding space to relax. More information and registration material will be posted on our Central Plains Conference website at www.centralplainsmc.org/annual-leaders-retreat. I hope to see you in Schuyler!

Bryan Moyer Suderman

Leaders credentialed

The ordination of **Pastor Aureliano Vazquez** was affirmed at Templo Alabanza, Moline, Illinois, October 15, 2017.

Fernando Ramos was licensed toward ordination at Casa de Oración, Davenport, Iowa, on November 5, 2017.

Transitions

Eicher Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa intends to celebrate their 150th Anniversary on Sunday, July 1, 2018.





Sister Care coming to Nebraska Women's Retreat

The Nebraska Mennonite Women's Retreat will host "Sister Care: Equipping Women for Healing Ministries" at the Leadership Center in Aurora, Nebraska, on March 3-4, 2018. Sister Care seminars are a ministry of Mennonite Women USA. These seminars provide women with tools for ongoing personal healing, for recognizing and celebrating God's grace in their lives, and for responding more confidently to the needs of others.

Past director of Mennonite Women USA Rhoda Keener and psychotherapist Carolyn Heggen have been leading Sister Care seminars in the USA and around the world. This retreat will be the last one they lead before passing it on to others. Registration information was sent to Nebraska Mennonite churches in January. All women are welcome. Register online at: www.fmclincoln.org/Womensretreatsistercare. For more information, please contact Lincoln First Mennonite Church member Carol Knieriem at carolknieriem@hotmail.com or text or call 402-366-6598.

Resources for Covenant Practices



www.AnabaptistFaithFormation.org

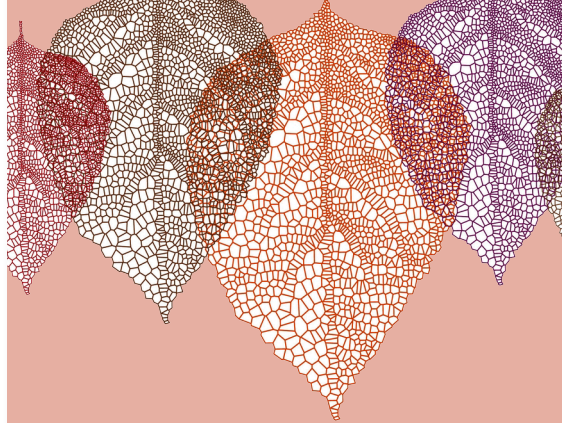
The formation resource web site of Central Plains Mennonite Conference.

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Central Plains Mennonite Conference
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FINANCES

The Central Plains budget shows surpluses in November and December which helped to lower the overall deficit experienced in the first half of the fiscal year. Income through December totals \$274,388.33. Expenses total \$300,149.87. As a result, our fiscal year deficit has been decreased to \$25,761.54. We are thankful for the continued support and we invite you to consider giving to Central Plains as we look to decrease this amount even further moving into the last third of our fiscal year. We thank you!

— Stewardship Task Group

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nebraska Women's Retreat hosts Sister Care March 3-4, 2018, in Aurora, Nebraska.

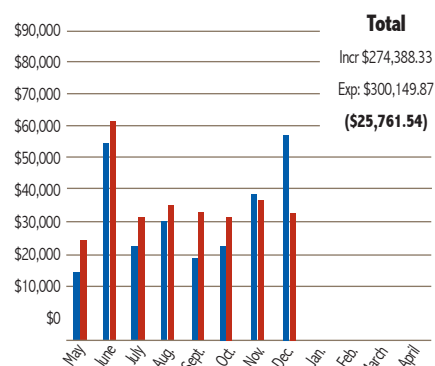
Annual Leader's Retreat will be April 27-29, 2018, at Saint Benedict Retreat Center in Schuyler, Nebraska.

Central Plains Annual Meeting will meet take place June 21-24, 2018, in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Youth Escape 2018 will take place July 20-22 in central Iowa.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Income (blue) vs. Expenses (red)
Fiscal Year 2017/2018



An area conference of
**Mennonite
Church
USA**

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