



Scattered Seeds

April
2019

"The LORD bless
you and keep
you; the LORD
make his face
shine on you and
be gracious to
you; the LORD
turn his face
toward you and
give you peace."

— Numbers
6:24-26

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Photo by Stan Harder

Farewell Reflections

by Tim Detweiler

Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership



It is an honor to have served as one of your conference ministers these past 19 years. When I was younger, I thought retirement was a long way off. When my father retired at 62, I thought he was "really up there in years." Now I am the one the younger generation sees as being "up there." At age 67 it is now my time to retire from my work as Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership for Central Plains Mennonite Conference. I am looking forward to what God has in store for Carol and I as we enter this next phase of life called "retirement."

Serving in this conference from its beginning has been an enriching experience. I began work with Central Plains in June 2000 as a half-time regional conference minister serving the churches in SE Iowa including Cedar Falls and Moline, Ill. In June 2019 I began my current role as the Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership for the whole conference.

Conference ministry work was a huge learning curve for me, work that I came to love

and find much appreciation for. Early on I had to trust that God was in this work, calling women and men to pastoral ministry. I learned patience and to trust God with the call process. I worked with some 50 pastoral searches over these 19 years, some lasting 3 months and one lasting 3 years. It is not easy for congregations to wait on God's timing. I learned the importance of slowing down the process (but not too much) and to challenge search committees to stay with the process and find pastors who would be a good fit, rather than just filling a pastoral position. Pastoral searches require much prayer, patience and trust in God's timing.

There is a significant trend toward calling younger pastors in our conference. Currently, 40% of our pastors are age 50 and younger, 29% are in their 50's and 31% are 60 and older. I think this is a healthy balance. Our younger pastors give me hope for the church. As congregations call younger pastors, they must be committed to walk with, support, encourage and nurture young pastors as they grow into and develop their pastoral identity.

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Our pastors also need a pastor to walk with them. I always looked forward to my annual visits with our pastors and chaplains. The time spent with them was important. These visits were a time to focus on self-care, leadership development, a time to talk about leadership issues and anything else the pastor needed to talk about. I always came away from these visits feeling blessed and grateful for the pastors and chaplains serving in our conference.

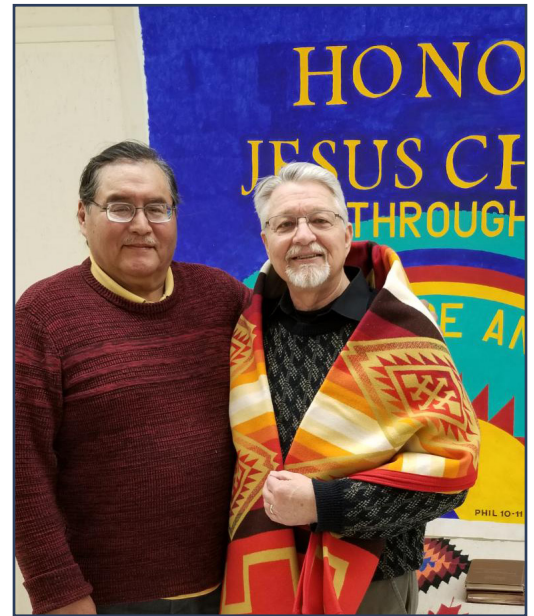
I enjoyed being the staff person for the Pastoral Leadership Committee. It was rewarding to work with the credentialing process as we listened to the call and faith stories of pastors and chaplains. I enjoyed working with the Annual Leaders Retreat and developing and working with the support network of volunteers for pastor searches, pastor/congregation evaluations, Conflict Management Support Team and the Ministerial Misconduct Investigative Team.

Serving in this role also meant having to deal with hard issues. My biggest learning curve was in managing my own anxiety and finding patience and trust in God's wisdom and guidance for all the work I was called to do.

I am often asked how many miles I travel each year for conference work. I added up the miles from this past year and was surprised when the calculator read 26,368. At least 20,000 of those were driving miles. We use ZOOM video conference calling for meetings when possible, but much of this work requires getting in the car and driving.

I have always been blessed to work with and learn from a great ministry staff. Yes, I have been blessed by my work with CPMC. Now as I leave this position, my love and prayers for Central Plains will be ongoing. I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may continue to have power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge so that you may be filled to the measure of all of the fullness of God. Blessings to you all.

Tim Detweiler will be retiring from his role of Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership on April 30, 2019. Because we do not have his replacement identified yet, Tim has agreed to continue on a half-time basis through June 30. We will celebrate Tim's retirement as a conference at our Annual Meeting in June.



Conference Leaders Express Gratitude for Tim's good work in CPMC

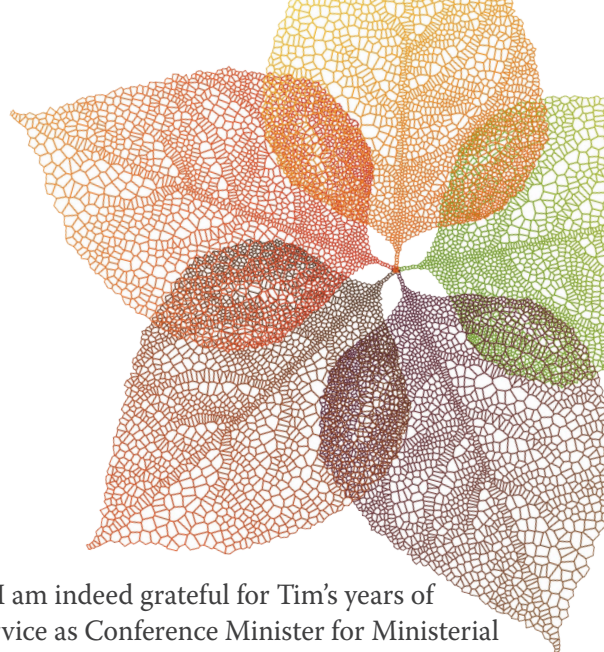
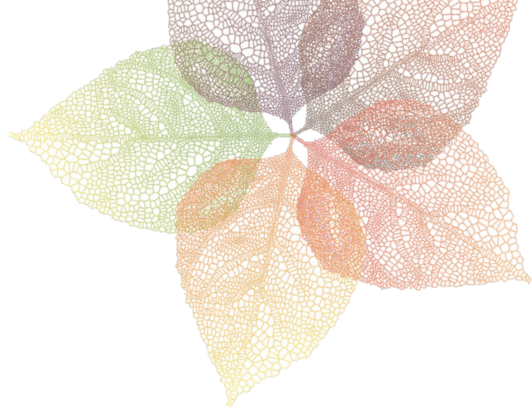


Tim has been a trusted mentor through most of my 20 years in pastoral ministry. Somewhere along the way, he and Carol also became friends. Through crises and celebrations, his quiet encouragement and steadfast hope in the good news of the gospel have been a steadying influence on me and on our conference.

During my years on the Pastoral Leadership Committee, I observed Tim navigate deftly between search committees and prospective pastors as he listened carefully and asked the right questions. His caring, compassion, and desire for health and wholeness in the body of Christ were evident. In interviews, he was able to elicit what was in people's hearts and help them articulate that to the rest of us. Beyond that, I always felt that when Tim prayed for someone, they were prayed for thoroughly and well.

Thank you for your faithful service, Tim. Blessings as you embark on the adventure of retirement!

*Susan Janzen, pastor
Cedar Falls Mennonite Church, Cedar Falls, Iowa*



I have known Tim for all of the years he has served the Central Plains Mennonite Conference as Conference Minister. As a pastor, I knew him as my Conference Minister, as well as the close working relationship as a member, and as chair of the Pastoral Leadership Committee. As part of PLC, I used to tease him that I was his “boss” and as a Conference Minister, he was my “boss.” In actuality, it was more of a comradery relationship which I deeply cherished. He is a close Christian Brother and Friend and we had many experiences together. We talked, laughed, cried and prayed together.

Because of our location (1000 miles away) and setting (cross cultural), Nadine and I had the privilege of hosting Tim for lodging (often 3 or 4 nights) and meals in our home many times. One time when a meeting was cancelled in our area, Tim and I drove to a basketball tournament together 100 miles away. After he asked me, I shared with him the “wilderness journeys” in our lives and ministry. That confirmed what I already knew, that Tim was a good listener and I never felt judged by him. I could trust him and share anything with him.

Tim’s brother-in-law from Illinois has been coming here under the SOOP Program for the past 10 years to help us with the mechanical work at our Camp at Crazyhead Springs. Two years ago while on vacation, Tim and Carol, and a sister and brother-in-law (from Ohio) came here to visit their brother. They stayed in our home and ate at our table. During that time they helped with work on our new Thrift Store project. We had so much fun and I appreciated Tim’s construction abilities. He wasn’t afraid to get dirty. On other visits Tim helped with whatever we were doing, ie: shoveling snow and planting shrubs.

Our church (and I personally) deeply appreciate Tim’s willingness to come all this way to “walk with us” in ministry. Even though we are 1000 miles away, he came here regularly. We will miss you Tim, and we wish you God’s blessing.

Willis Busenitz, pastor

White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church, Busby, Montana



I am indeed grateful for Tim’s years of service as Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership in CPMC. On Pastoral Leadership Committee, I have appreciated Tim’s steady, thoughtful approach, his experience and counsel. As the PLC has interviewed pastors for credentialing, Tim has guided us in discerning pastoral leaders who are grounded in Anabaptist-Mennonite theology. Tim’s searches for pastoral leaders in congregations often led him far (AMBS recent graduates) and near (local communities).

When, as a pastor, I was in transition, I visited with Tim. In our conversations, Tim helped me by planting seeds of opportunity for pastoral leadership in particular congregations.

I have appreciated Tim’s commitment to support and stay in touch with CPMC pastors and congregations given the hundreds of miles and hours on the road from one end of our conference to the other. Tim’s work, with others, in planning the Annual Leaders Retreat, a two-day retreat for pastors, chaplains and spouses to be together, re-connecting with other pastors, listening to a special speaker, worshipping together, enjoying the outdoors, resting and being renewed, is further proof of his commitment to the well-being of CPMC pastors and leaders.

I am further grateful for Tim’s guidance for PLC when we have faced differences, conflict, or disciplinary situations. He has always suggested good processes in these situations and has met these challenges with wisdom, care and clarity.

Tim has served with a pastor’s heart in building up the ministry of pastors and congregations within CPMC. Thanks Tim!

*Marcia Yoder Schrock, chair
Pastoral Leadership Committee*

Crowded Closet Thrift Shop Celebrates New, Larger Facility

By Julie Birkey

Crowded Closet Marketing Director

In 1978, a small group of visionary Mennonite women started a thrift shop in Iowa City, Iowa, offering lightly-used clothing and household items. With the support of sixteen area Mennonite churches and hundreds of local volunteers, Crowded Closet has experienced steady growth over the last 40 years, moving three times to accommodate growth.

Last month, Crowded Closet Thrift Shop relocated to a new, larger facility at 851 Hwy 6, Iowa City, its fourth location. The board, staff, volunteers and supporting area churches gathered to celebrate the new shop home with an open house and special dedication ceremony Sunday, March 24th. Doors opened to the public the following day with a grand opening celebration including a ribbon cutting, live music and prizes welcoming shoppers to the expanded retail space.

The new facility, part of a former Kmart location, enhances and improves accessibility for customers and donors. The retail floor is about fifty percent larger at 22,000 square feet with wider aisles and wheelchair accessibility, and a new covered drive-thru lane makes donating easy.

Crowded Closet Thrift Shop is a community non-profit thrift shop, including a gift shop with fair trade items. A group of ten full and part-time staff and over 300 regular volunteers serve to offer a wide variety of household and other items, including books, toys, clothing for all ages, vintage, international, and one of a kind items. Together with countless donors and shoppers, Crowded Closet makes a generous impact on the community and world having achieved 8 million dollars in giving to support local and global relief through Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). This includes more than \$50,000 in resources shared annually through partnership with local helping agencies such as CommUnity, an organization based in Iowa City that provides immediate support for individuals facing emotional, food, or financial crisis. Crowded Closet is part of the MCC Thrift Shop network.



Community Good Friday Service

by Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, pastor

First Mennonite Church, Iowa City, Iowa

Since 2013, seven churches in eastern Iowa have joined together on Good Friday evening for a Service of Darkness commemorating Jesus' death on a cross. The pastors of Kalona, East Union, Wellman, West Union, Torre Fuerte, First, and Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Churches have provided leadership for planning the event. Held at Iowa Mennonite School's Celebration Hall, the service has drawn hundreds of people from the participating churches and the community.

The service features testimonies of high school students from the 7 churches. Each student reflects on one of Christ's seven last words spoken from the cross, and connects Christ's words with their own life journey. Over the years, these testimonies have been heartfelt and profound!

Musicians from the seven participating congregations lead the congregation in song, and an offering is collected for a need identified by the churches.

This year's service will take place at 7 p.m. on April 19 at Iowa Mennonite School, Kalona, Iowa.



The following is a testimony given at the Community Good Friday Service in 2018.

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34

by Brandon Jimenez

Wellman Mennonite Church, Wellman, Iowa

Forgive them.

They do not know what they're doing.

Christ. Unfairly judged. Crucified.

Murdered.

They don't know what they're doing.

They...

I am they...

Who am I?

Who is Ignacio Brandon Jimenez Ascencio?

What am I doing?

I don't know. I don't know who I am. I don't know what I'm doing.

What do you want me to say?

I'm a middle class 17 year old brown boy from an immigrant family.

Life has never been easy. It isn't easy, and it'll never be easy.

And I know you knew that. I know you knew under this façade there was hurt.

I know you understand.

But your words are lies.

Or are they mine?

Who am I? Who do you think I am?

So selfish, so self-absorbed.

What am I doing? We all have it bad. I don't know your life.

I don't know your story.

Forgive me.

Forgive me, because I don't know if you struggle with loving yourself.

I'm sorry, I don't know the number of silent tears you cry.

Wishing you were someone else.

Wishing you didn't have these thoughts.

Wishing you could say something. Wishing you could tell them.

What am I doing judging you, not worthy of judgment.

Forgive me.

Forgive me because I don't know if they look at you differently too.

If they follow you in the store too.

I don't know if you have a panic attack every time you see

P-O-L-I-C-E.

And I'm sorry.

I'm sorry that I thought I was the only one translating at the doctor while you were at home playing video games.

I'm sorry, I don't know if they murmur “speak English” while you shop with your family.

I'm sorry because I don't know if your mamá y papá cry because they think they're stupid porque no pueden hablar ingles.

Perdóname.

Perdóname, no sé si tú también te preocupas de volver a ver a tus padres cuando salen.

Y perdóname because I don't know if los tacos de la veintiseis are the only thing that give you a taste of what the old country was—what home was.

I don't know if you also feel like you don't ever truly belong.

What am I doing thinking you don't have it bad?

Forgive me.

Because I don't know if you also feel bad.

I'm sorry because I don't know if you also wake up hoping that your mamá will too.

Hoping that she can see her mamá after ten years.

Hoping that you can see either of them in ten years.

And I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Because I know you lost her too and I know you miss her too.

But I still think we miss her more.

You heard her song, but we still sing it...

So forgive me.

Because I don't know what I'm doing, thinking that your biggest problem is your chapped lips, while I have to find my way through a cruel and closed minded world?

What am I doing judging you like that?

You who have done nothing to deserve my judgment... my prejudice... my envy.

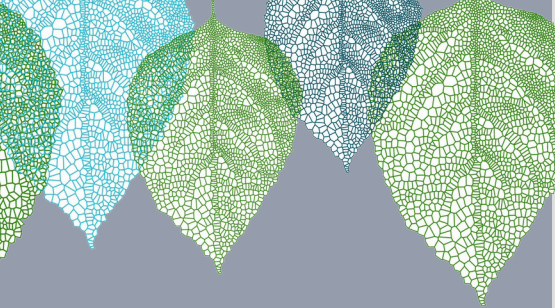
Perdóname.

Verdaderamente te lo suplico.

So forgive me Father.

Because truly,

I *don't* know what I'm doing.



Leaders credentialed

Michael Jinteh was ordained on March 31, 2019 at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Michael is a chaplain in the Twin Cities area.



Making Friends at The Gathering Table

by Amanda Bleichty

Conference Minister for Christian Formation

Communications Director for CPMC

The smell of lasagna is in the air as guests begin to filter in from the cold. They are warmly greeted by pastor Tim Springer, then make their way through the food line where they are served by smiling members of Milford Mennonite Church before finding a place to sit among the scattered round tables in the fellowship hall. Young volunteers are on hand to deliver beverages. The guests are here for “The Gathering Table,” a bi-weekly Thursday night meal hosted by Milford Mennonite Church for members of the surrounding community.

Started in February 2018, originally the meal was planned for lower-income people in the community, but it has become a place especially for widows and widowers and others who are looking for an excuse to get out of the house for a delicious home-cooked meal and company.

While the food is a draw, both organizers and guests contend that the best part of the evening is the fellowship and the relationships that are built around the tables. The Gathering Table has an average attendance of 125 people, and is always a mix of new and old faces. Very often, regulars invite a friend or two to join them, and many say they look forward to these community meals all week!

Sisters Kris Yeackley and Anika Upton have been in charge of The Gathering Table meals for the past year, calling on volunteers in the church for help with cooking, setting up and serving. In the coming year, they hope to become more ecumenical, involving other congregations in the community in the planning, cooking, hosting, and serving.

Organizers like Kris and Anika and Pastor Tim are clear that the purpose of The Gathering Table is to provide hospitality; a time and place and hot meal for the community to gather around, rather than evangelism. If people want to come to church on Sunday because of the hospitality they experience at The Gathering Table, that is a welcome bonus, but not the purpose.

The success of The Gathering Table has been energizing to the Milford Mennonite Community and Kris and Anika say that this endeavor has become “more than we ever imagined this would be.” They assure others who want to start projects like this one that you don’t have to “know” anything in advance. They jumped in and started cooking and God has taken care of the rest.

Before long, guests start pushing back empty plates, lasagna and salad and dessert long finished, but still, conversation buzzes throughout the fellowship hall. The Gathering Table, once just a wild idea, has indeed become a gathering place for many in the Milford community.

Annual Meeting 2019 Preview

You're invited to Iowa Mennonite School in Kalona, Iowa, June 20-23, 2019, to worship, learn and fellowship together as sisters and brothers in Central Plains Mennonite Conference! Our theme for this gathering will be "A Covenant People: Living in the Holy Spirit."

Worship: With our worship focus on the Holy Spirit, it seems right to welcome Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns, Professor of Spiritual Renewal and Christian Formation at Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, TN. Dr. Bridges Johns has represented the Pentecostal movement in ongoing Mennonite Church USA and Church of God (Cleveland) dialogues. Dr. Bridges Johns will share three sermons about the Holy Spirit with us.

Dr. Bridges Johns comes highly recommended, having given lectures across the country and around the world. She is the author of *Finding Eternal Treasures and Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy Among the Oppressed*. We look forward to worshipping with Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns this year! *Annual Meeting worship services are free and open to the public.*

Workshops: Our workshops this year feature wide-ranging topics such as race in the central plains, using Matthew 18 for hard conversations, sustainable agriculture and cottage industry, preserving the Cheyenne language, singing hymns as Christian formation, talking about disabilities, and many more. Come to Annual Meeting and be enriched!

Delegate Sessions: In delegate sessions our congregations will be equipped to live out our Covenant of Spiritual Practices by focusing on the spiritual practice of reconciliation. We will also receive the Omaha Chin Christian Church into our fellowship, and celebrate the installation of new conference ministry staff.

Youth Delegates: Each congregation is invited to bring one youth delegate to be a voting member of the delegate body (and additional youth, if desired). In addition to having a voice around the tables in our delegate hall, youth will also have fun learning to know one another and our rich conference community.

Children: Childcare at Annual Meeting is always lots of fun!. Childcare will be offered at Iowa Mennonite School for children through grade 8 in the 2018-19 school year.

Special Events: This year, there's lots to celebrate and even more fun to be had.

Thursday evening: Enjoy a pie and ice cream social sponsored by Everence.

Friday evening: Celebrate with Tim Detweiler as he retires after 19 years as Conference Minister in CPMC.

Saturday afternoon: Installation of new conference ministry staff.

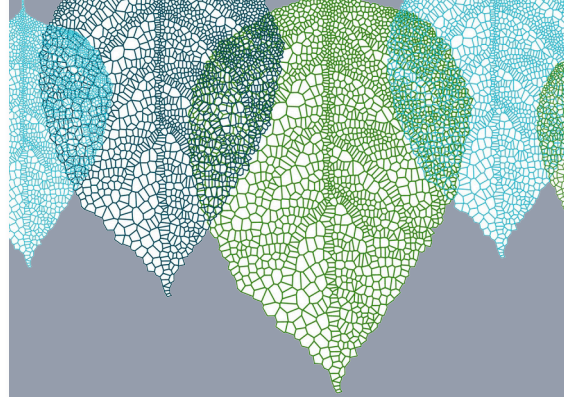
Saturday evening: Eat outdoors at a local farm and enjoy pizza fresh from a wood-fired oven, live music, and fellowship at Geyer's Oven Pizza. It promises to be a great time!

Scattered Seeds

Scattered Seeds April 2019

The newsletter of Central Plains Mennonite Conference is published five times a year at Kalona, Iowa. Editor: Amanda Bleichty. Copy Editor: Erin Ramer. Thanks to Peg Burkey, Mary Lou Farmer, and Verna Zook for proofreading.
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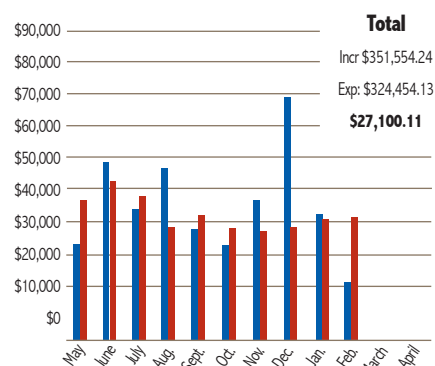
The Central Plains budget had a positive month in January and then much like the weather this winter, we saw more snow and ice than income in February! Income through February came in at \$351,554.24. Meanwhile, expenses came in at \$324,454.13. We give thanks for each of you again and ask that you keep Central Plains in your prayers and in your future charitable plans.

— *Stewardship Task Group*

Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Income (blue) vs. Expenses (red)

Fiscal Year 2018/2019



UPCOMING EVENTS

Central Plains Annual Meeting will take place June 20-23, 2019, in southeast Iowa.
MennoCon '19 will take place July 2-6, 2019, in Kansas City, Missouri.



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