



Scattered Seeds

August 2018

“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity...for there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.”

— Psalms 133:1,3 NIV



Photo by Carol Eisenbeis

Annual Meeting 2018

Uplifting spirit reflected in delegate sessions

by Holly Blosser Yoder

West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa



Central Plains Mennonite Conference (CPMC) delegate meetings reflected the positive, uplifting spirit that characterized the annual meeting in Lincoln, a quality remarked upon multiple times during the two days of delegate meetings. Meeting around tables in the event center of the conference venue Capitol City Christian Church, delegates received and shared testimonies from around the region and across the globe, including the conference’s mission partnerships in Ecuador and Venezuela and Executive Conference Minister Dave Boshart’s recent trip to Tanzania in his capacity as moderator of Mennonite Church USA.

In his opening message to the delegate body,

Boshart referenced stories and messages shared from Mennonite brothers and sisters around the world, and said, “It is time for us to allow the global church to be our teachers.” Calling on delegates to consider how our fellowship might be transformed if we took the words of global brothers and sisters seriously, he said, “Let us walk together, holding hands with Jesus,” an allusion to the practice of hand-holding while walking together in Tanzania.

As a means of both practicing and seeking clarity on the conference’s Covenant of Spiritual Practices, delegates conducted Bible studies from Acts specifically focused on Covenant Practice #5, “We will study the Bible with neighbors and strangers, inviting them to become disciples of Jesus.” Participants shared findings during open

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mic time and designated reporters at each table submitted written responses for further discernment.

In recognition of excellent conference leadership and a sense of purpose about the ministries the conference is offering, delegates unanimously approved a budget increase of more than \$10,000, despite a shortfall at the end of the previous fiscal year. In discussion, delegates proposed ways to better communicate the conference's mission to congregations, including a suggestion to augment print and web-centered communication with regular video updates that might be shared in worship so that members can see conference ministers and hear the testimonies and stories of those who have benefited.

In congregational transitions, delegates read a litany of welcome to two new member congregations, White Chapel Mennonite Church of Glendive, Montana and Lao Christian Fellowship of Mountain Lake, Minnesota. The conference body also honored the history and ministry of Northside Mennonite Fellowship of Omaha, and Executive Conference Minister David Boshart presented a quilt made for long-time lay-leader Phyllis Campbell as a thank-you for her years as caretaker of the building. Organized as a church in 1969, Northside was a small, dynamic congregation in a section of the city that, over decades, suffered from economic decline and drug-related crime. As people moved away and membership declined, the church decided to close its doors. Northside's building has been sold to a local ministry.

Delegates responded to staff and committee reports with affirmation and suggestions--appreciation to the Christian Formation Committee for its webinars, but also a call for content created for a broader audience, such as how the practice of peace and justice might play out in congregations, an invitation to Outreach and Service Committee members to visit congregations to promote initiatives, and gratitude to the Pastoral Leadership Committee for their prompt support when leadership needs were presented.

The annual peace mug was presented this year to two recipients. Tim Kraybill, nominated by First Mennonite Church of Iowa City for his work for peace and justice, advocating for the Villatoro family as well as others who suffer oppression, and Jim Brenneman, nominated by Joel Beachy of East Union Mennonite Church, for his support of ministry to refugees on the Mexican border.

Pastors from the north cluster of the Southeastern Iowa churches announced that they will host annual meeting in 2019 in the Kalona/Wellman/Iowa City area.



Clockwise from top left: Pastors Fernando Ramos and Aureliano Vasquez; Speaker Rachel Springer Gerber; Delegate session; Saturday evening picnic at First Mennonite, Lincoln; Ratsamee, Aben and Anta Thsaengsiri and Mai Yang of St. Paul Hmong Mennonite Church. Photos by Stan Harder.

How good and pleasant: God's blessing in unity

by David Boshart

Executive Conference Minister



It was midway through Annual Meeting, things were going well, the fellowship was rich, people were enjoying each other. Moderator Sid Burkey and I were conferring on the agenda as we were walking back into the delegate hall for the afternoon session.

As we walked through the door, I turned and said to Sid, "Every year at Annual Meeting, I fall in love with these people all over again."

The scriptures tell us, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity...for there the Lord bestows his blessing, even *life forevermore*." (Psalms 133:1,3 NRSV). While Central Plains Mennonite Conference isn't perfect in unity, our love for one another is evident. When we come together at Annual Meeting, we are reminded again about how good and pleasant it is to walk together as brothers and sisters with Jesus. When we gather we experience the blessing of God in one another. We rediscover the newness of life that we share in the resurrection.

This year, I came to Annual Meeting having just returned from meetings of the Mennonite World Conference General Council near Nairobi, Kenya. The MWC General Council is a gathering for leaders of 107 national Mennonite Churches. It, too, was a rich time of fellowship as these leaders affirmed the unity we share in the body of Christ. In our deliberations it was apparent that our unity is not borne of our agreements, for there were many ways that national delegations disagreed with one another on how the church best meets the world's deep need. No, the unity of this global family is found in a common desire to walk together as we discern how to bear witness to the reign of God breaking into the world in each of our contexts. In both of these gatherings, we studied the Bible together. We listened to powerful stories from teachers in the global church. We listened for the leading of the Holy Spirit calling us to walk together with Jesus.

In our Annual Meeting, we wrestled with our covenant practice of entering the space of our neighbors and strangers with a testimony of God's love and

salvation. In the feedback from delegates in response to all our deliberations, some common themes emerged. Our delegates noted the need in our culture to slow down, grow in humility, listen much and be slow to speak. As one table group captured the sense of a number of table groups: "Plan A – we want to solve the problem and make a plan. We need to let 'Plan Be' trump Plan A... 'Be' present and 'be' transformed." Our delegates believe that patience and presence are key prerequisites for transformation. Indeed, maintaining unity in the bonds of peace is always patient work.

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When we come to Annual Meeting, many participants race down the interstate, trying to cover as much ground in as short a time as possible. But when we get out of our cars, these meetings offer us the opportunity to slow down, to listen, to be present *and patient with* one another. When I was in Africa, I and two Americans were going to be late for an appointment. As we took off at our very American "speed walking" pace, our Tanzanian brother called to us, stopping us in our tracks. "Nobody's going to panic," he said. "We will arrive in time." He lumbered up to us, walking at a snail's pace, took us by the hand, and we walked, slowly – *painfully slowly*. We arrived at the appointed place, later than we said, but still in time. The walking was not without tension. I'll be honest that my Tanzanian brother's pace tried my patience. But the fellowship on the way was sweet.

In Central Plains Mennonite Conference, we are not perfect in unity. But neither is our unity the product of uniform agreement. It is the product of our covenant to walk together, patiently, in the light of God's love. The global church is a trustworthy teacher. Our Tanzanian family is telling us that what we say to one another on the way is more important than the amount of ground we cover or what we are able accomplish by the clock.

Is it possible that when we are anxious because agreement is elusive, we are overlooking the fact that where we gather together in unity is where God has bestowed his blessing, *even life forevermore*.

Worship enlivens fellowship

by Michael Swartzendruber, co-pastor

Wayland Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa



One of the joys of Annual Meeting is experiencing different styles of worship with the various flavors of our conference. This year in Lincoln, the worship services reflected what I assumed to be representative of the local churches. Being set in a sanctuary with special lighting and praise music, the worship team helped us to enter into worship through a more contemporary style. Each service was focused on a theme with songs to fit, which complimented the messages well. It seemed a lot of the service was singing, and singing is something we do very well together. Familiar songs especially allowed the congregation to burst out into song, overpowering the instruments which were never too much.

Amidst the singing were readings and prayers that gathered us together, acknowledging the purpose for our gathering; the worship of God who brought us together and holds us together. We were also blessed to be led in song by our Cheyenne brothers and sisters from Montana, Hmong brothers and sisters from Minnesota and in Spanish by our Hispanic siblings in Christ. We are truly blessed by the diversity of the family of God.

In the opening service on Thursday evening, our conference ministers continued the tradition of bringing the symbols of our conference; the convergence of three streams of our conference history. Being raised in what was once an Iowa-Nebraska congregation and now pastoring a former Central District congregation, I am always impressed and appreciative when we bring together these symbols, as they acknowledge a diverse past and a shared church.

Also in the opening service, David Boshart spoke prophetic words into the world in which we met. Combining current events and the social climate, as well as the state of our conference, we are welcomed into a conference in which we are to seek how we are called to faithfully be the body of Christ in our world.

Our speaker this year was Rachel Springer Gerber. She brought to us honest messages about how we nurture faith in our congregations. She spoke frankly about youth and the challenges that face ministry in a changing world. She stressed the importance of being intentional and devoted in all levels of faith formation; of meeting brothers and sisters where they are and walking alongside in ways that uplift the community of faith. Especially meaningful was Rachel's sharing the songs of her sons as a way of showing the individualized and embracing nature of communal nurture.

Our group was blessed to experience Sunday morning worship with First Mennonite Church of Lincoln. Here, we were again reminded of the coming together of our conference as a way of being sent out. I wish more people would stay around for the Sunday morning service as it feels like such an important way of concluding our time together. We end in worship, in teaching and in communion. And enlivened by such a spirit, we go again to our various communities and congregations, looking forward to the next time we are gathered.



Want to know more? Find these on the Annual Meeting 2018 web page:

- Summary video of Annual Meeting 2018
- Videos of Rachel Gerber's sermons
- Video of David Boshart's Thursday talk
- Stories from the Global Church
- Photos from Annual Meeting
- Bible Study on "reading the Bible with neighbors and strangers"

Farewell and blessing to formation minister

by Lewis Miller, former chair

Christian Formation Committee



On Friday evening at Annual Meeting in Lincoln, we celebrated and recognized Shana Peachey Boshart for her work and ministry among us for the past twenty years. The party planning was a joint effort of the Christian Formation Committee, staff and moderator. Comments, gifts, anointing and a prayer of blessing were followed by cake and fellowship.

Attendees also had the opportunity to share encouragement and thanks with note cards available on tables.

Lewis Miller and Tim Detweiler shared comments as representatives of CFC and staff. Tim reminded Shana and all of us how her “fingerprints” are all over Central Plains Conference through the many ways her work and life have touched each of us.

St. Paul Hmong Mennonite Church provided a magnificent prayer shawl, which was presented by Barb Tieszen. A beautiful border highlighted open hands surrounding the Mennonite Church USA logo, with the words from 2 Thessalonians 1:11 below: “That is why we always pray for you. We ask our God to make you worthy of the life he has called you to live. May he fulfill by his power all your desire for goodness and complete your work of faith.”

Martha Yoder presented a work of art based on a favorite verse of Shana’s: “The kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 14:17) She combined this with the themes of the kingdom parables in Matthew 13 to create a beautiful framed masterpiece.

The youth gathered around Shana for a group hug and showered her with streamers from party favors. The Christian Formation Committee presented a gift certificate to a favorite store, and Rachelle Luitjens led in a service of anointing and prayer of blessing to complete the formalities.

All of us have benefited greatly from Shana’s gifts and her passion for the church and Christian formation, from her generous sharing of resources and knowledge, and from her genuine care and concern for us as congregations and individuals. This night we wanted to recognize and express appreciation for her work and the many ways she reflects God’s love in her life and ministry. We also want to wish her God’s blessings as she soon begins her new role as denominational minister for faith formation for Mennonite Church USA.

So Shana, thank you for your investment of time, energy and gifts with Central Plains. You have guided us in learning to listen for, and to hear, our song (quoting Rachel). We wish you God’s rich blessings in your new role with Mennonite Church USA. You will be missed, but we look forward to following your work as you serve the larger church. Our prayers and deep gratitude will be with you as you enter this new chapter in your life.





Annual Meeting 2018

Children learn that ‘God is always with us’

by Erin Sams of Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Nebraska
and Suzanne Nolt of Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley, Nebraska

Children also look forward to getting together at Central Plains Annual Meeting. This year, the theme of the children’s activities was “Babylon: Daniel’s Courage in Captivity.” Friday and Saturday morning children explored the world of Babylon from Daniel’s perspective. Each morning began with “Celebration Time” which included singing and learning Bible verses and Bible points. These centered on remembering that no matter what, God is always with us!

From there, kids split into two groups and rotated between crafts, games, snack and storytelling. During Story Time kids (and adults) joined in telling the story of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar, Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego. With an array of hats representing each character, we saw how faithful Daniel and his friends remained even in the lion’s den and the fiery furnace. But we also saw how their faithfulness changed how the king thought about God.

During Friday afternoon, the children enjoyed playing games inside and outside, with many wonderful volunteers. The next day, on Saturday, around 30 children and volunteers ventured to the Lincoln Children’s Zoo. We offer a huge “thank you” to the many volunteers who engaged the faith formation of the next generation! It was a great two days of making new friends and reconnecting with old friends.

Special thanks is in order to Erin and Suzanne for coordinating these wonderful activities for our children at Annual Meeting.

Leaders credentialed

Joshua Lundberg was ordained on June 10, 2018, at Kalona Mennonite Church in Kalona, Iowa.

Transitions

Terri Churchill joined the pastoral team at Third Way Church, Saint Paul, Minnesota, on February 1, 2018.

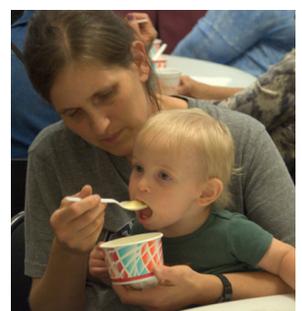
Gordon Scoville began as transitional pastor at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford, Nebraska, on May 20, 2018.

Josias Hansen resigned from the pastoral team at Third Way Church, Saint Paul, Minnesota, effective May 31, 2018.

Christopher Montgomery resigned as pastor at Sermon on the Mount Mennonite Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, effective May 31, 2018.

Shana Peachey Boshart began August 1 as denominational minister of faith formation for Mennonite Church USA.

Adam Nussbaum resigned as pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, effective August 26, 2018.



Photos by Stan Harder and Carol Eisenbeis



Photos clockwise starting with top left photo: Aubrey McClanahan at delegate table group; Clockwise from left sitting at the table: Timothy Bender, Gensyn Emerson, Gloria Nolt (leaning forward), Jareya Harder, Aubrey McClanahan, Ashley McConnell, Daniel Harder, Courtney Nolt and Alyssa Nolt; Timothy Bender and Dylan Keller play corn hole; Youth delegate orientation; Frazel Bigback, Willis Busenitz and Ashley McConnell. Photos by Stan Harder and Carol Eisenbeis.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Job Openings

Central Plains Mennonite Conference is seeking a Conference Minister for Christian Formation (.5 FTE). The Conference Minister for Christian Formation leads the conference in thinking theologically about formation in the missional Anabaptist church, networks with formation leaders across the conference and denomination to learn and discern the formation practices of the missional Anabaptist church, equips formation leaders in congregations with training tools and resources as they nurture faith in people at every stage in life and in any congregational setting and the home, and promotes Mennonite resources for Christian formation.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference is also seeking a Communications Director (.25 FTE) The Communications Director edits the monthly electronic newsletter to congregations, a bi-monthly newsletter to all members, and oversees the website design and content.

For a job description, to make nominations, or for more information, contact Executive Conference Minister David Boshart at davidboshart@centralplainsmc.org or at 319-936-5904. Applicants for the Conference Minister for Christian Formation should submit a completed Ministerial Information Form. Applicants for the Communications Director can submit a letter of application and resume. Applications will be considered until the positions are filled.

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FINANCES

The Central Plains budget began the fiscal year with a bumpy start in May, but with the help of Annual Meeting, came back strong in June. Income through June came in at \$72,103.54. Expenses came in at \$80,161.82. As a result, we begin the first two months of the fiscal year at a deficit of \$8,058.28. We are thankful for your continued support and we invite you to remember Central Plains in your prayers. — *Stewardship Task Group*

UPCOMING EVENTS

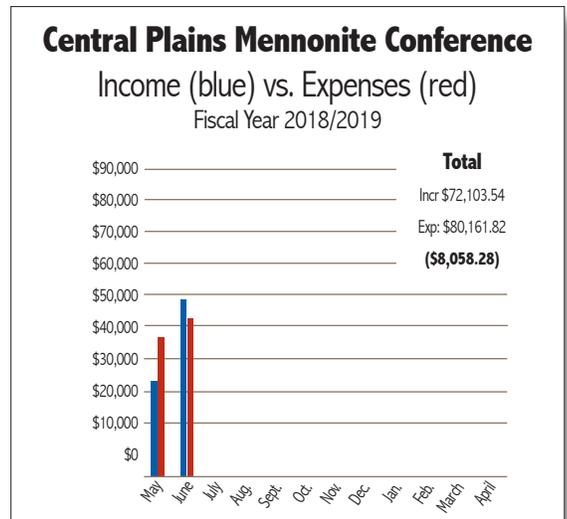
Conference Board and Committees will meet September 14-15, 2018 in the Kalona area.

Ecuador Partnership meetings will take place November 16-20, 2018 in Ecuador.

Women's Retreat will take place September 15 & 16 at Swan Lake Christian Camp near Viborg, South Dakota.

Nebraska Women's Retreat will take place March 1-3, 2019, in Aurora, Nebraska

Annual Leaders Retreat will take place March 24-26, 2019, at Swan Lake Christian Camp, Viborg, South Dakota



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