



Scattered Seeds

August
2019



Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns, keynote speaker for Annual Meeting 2019.

ANNUAL MEETING 2019

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"

— Psalm 133:1

Worship inspired by the movement of the Holy Spirit

by Elisabeth Harder Schrock

First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minnesota



Worship services at Central Plains Mennonite Conference are a highlight for many of us who attend Annual Meeting, and this year was no exception. From beautiful banners and joyfully on-theme announcements to harmonious singing in multiple languages and communion on Sunday morning, we were led in worship inspired by the movement of the Holy Spirit.

This year's annual meeting took place at Iowa Mennonite School near Kalona on June 20-23 – two weeks after the church's celebration of Pentecost. But Pentecost has not merely come and gone, said Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns, keynote preacher for the weekend. Pentecost is no less than "God's great reclamation project," and we are called to participate in that project of reclaiming *all* of creation.

Dr. Bridges Johns is Professor of Spiritual Renewal at Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, Tennessee, and has directed

the Society for Pentecostal Studies. She has participated in major ecumenical conversations, including the ongoing Mennonite Church USA–Church of God dialogue. In addition to her many credentials, Dr. Bridges Johns is a gifted, passionate preacher who filled us with a sense that the Holy Spirit was present in our midst.

And how we need the Spirit's presence in our "postmodern wilderness," which she vividly described as an age of absence: absence of truth, absence of norms, and absence of identity. Friday morning's sermon was rooted in Exodus 33:12ff, in which Moses pleads with God to know God better. The worst he can imagine is the absence of God: "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here" (v15). The Israelites were in the wilderness, still in search of their identity and purpose and not yet in covenant with God. In that absence, they had turned to "spectacle" – in their case, worship of the golden calf. In our times, the spectacle has moved into the world of government, church (think strobe

continued on page 2

In this issue

3 Annual Meeting in photos

4 Celebrating transitions

5-7 Annual Meeting

8 Farewell from David

9 Meet your new conference minister

lights and smoke machines), and of course, social media. But spectacles quickly turn cruel and dark, where people without a sense of identity and purpose participate with their claps or boo's from a distance, not fully engaged.

What the church has to offer in this postmodern wilderness is presence. Where God's Word is given, said Dr. Bridges Johns, there is always God's presence. Where Jesus, the living presence of God, is followed, there is God's presence. And the Holy Spirit that inspired the Word is always present when scripture is read and studied.

Dr. Bridges Johns noted that Central Plains Mennonites are a people of the covenant. As such, she encouraged us to also be people of presence, to hunger for God to go with us as Moses did. "This time we're in doesn't look too good," she admitted, "and we can't go there unless God's presence goes with us. That is enough." We do not need to fear the future, for God rushes in when we ask.

In her second sermon, Dr. Bridges Johns extended the theme of presence to Jesus' promise in John 14:15-24 to not leave his disciples orphaned. The "Spirit of truth" will bring them through dark times to come – again, dark times not unlike our own reality, where "truth has forsaken these lands."

Dr. Bridges Johns pointed out that Anabaptists have a particular commitment to obedience to the way of Jesus. CPMC bears witness to that in our Covenant of Spiritual Practices, in which we as a group "seek transformation toward Christlikeness and renewal by the Holy Spirit." If Anabaptists have focused on Jesus as the way, Evangelicals

and Baptists lead the church toward following Jesus as the truth. And Pentecostals' contribution is to point to Jesus as the life, living in us: "On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (John 14:20).

This indwelling of the Spirit isn't so much about suggesting an appropriate Bible verse to us here and there, but rather a whole new level of existence. In Dr. Bridges Johns' description, "it is the arm of God reaching out, sweeping down and taking us into God's economy, into God's life." She encouraged us to hunger for this mystical way of life, where we get to enter into the household of the church and where we in turn can say to *anyone*: "welcome to our new world – the place where Jesus abides and where you are loved."

In her final sermon, Dr. Bridges Johns again linked Pentecostals' and Mennonites' gifts to the larger church by asking what could happen if the Spirit of power were to be joined with the Spirit of peace. In fact, that is what living in the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) is all about. The powerful wind and fire of that day were signs of God's plan to reclaim and restore the entire cosmos to shalom. Our own restoration – our salvation – brings us into active participation in God's great restoration project. And in being the present, patient, faithful church – "singing together in beautiful harmony" – we are pointing to, and preparing for, the day when *all* shall be filled with the glory of God.

"Don't grow weary, but hunger for the new," urged Dr. Bridges Johns, because we know that it will be good.



Top left: Retiring Conference Minister, Tim Detweiler serves communion at Sunday morning service. Bottom left: Conference is for children! Top right: Conference leaders prayer for Pastor Ngun Lian Bawi and Congregational Chair, Kuhl Lian. Delegates welcomed the Omaha Chin Christian Church in Omaha into membership during the Saturday morning delegate session.

Photos by Carly Voht Unruh



Top left to bottom right: Voices united in praise; Saturday evening outdoor pizza party at Geyer's Farm with the entertainment by the Old Man Band; In delegate sessions worship and work are one; Passing the conference symbols to Amanda Bleichty, Susan Janzen and Shawn Nolt during the installation service for Amanda and Susan, our new Conference Ministers; Worship music leaders; Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler reads the scripture during the Saturday morning worship service; Margie Mejia Caraballo leads an immigration workshop

Photos by Carly Voth Unruh



Celebrating transitions

by Lois Janzen Preheim

Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota



Central Plains Mennonite Conference celebrated several transitions as we met for Annual Meeting this year. On Friday afternoon, delegates and guests gathered for the installation of new ministry staff, Amanda Bleichty and Susan Janzen. Then on Friday evening the assembly celebrated and gave thanks for the ministries of Tim Detweiler and David Boshart.

At the installation service on Friday afternoon, incoming Conference Moderator Shawn Nolt humorously referenced his background in computer engineering when he invited CPMC to think about what installation means. In addition to other considerations and often lengthy installation processes, he suggested that when choosing new software, one needs to think about what you want the system to do. In the same way, the conference churches need to be thinking again as we work with new staff, “What do we want the new people to do?” Unlike a computer, the church is an organic body, and there are at least two callings to new staff: one from God and one from the community. Each of the new staff have their own internal sense of these two callings. So when these callings mesh together into decisions we all affirm, it is a wondrous thing.

Amanda Bleichty, former pastor of Washington Mennonite Church, was installed as the Conference Minister for Christian Formation. Amanda began her position in January and she and her husband are expecting their first child in July. As she reflected on these changes during her installation response, she expressed a note of excitement for the future. “While changes can bring anxiety and fear, I am excited for all of these life transitions. I’m excited for the possibilities as a new ministry team begins working together. I’m excited about building a family here amid the larger family of brothers and sisters in Central Plains.” Amanda has taken over the role that Shana Peachey Boshart vacated in July of 2018.

Susan Janzen, the former pastor of Cedar Falls

Mennonite Church, was installed as the Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership. Susan will begin her position in August, taking over for Tim Detweiler as he retires. Susan reflected that it has been 21 years since she began in pastoral leadership and that lately, she has been living with a growing sense that it is time for her to begin mentoring another generation of ministering people.

At the farewell celebration for Tim Detweiler and David Boshart later Friday evening, Tim also expressed the idea that “it is time.” For him, it is time to lay down responsibilities and awareness of the whole conference and to attend to his wife, children and grandchildren, and maybe a woodworking project or two. He said, “It has been an honor to serve Central Plains Mennonite Conference and there will be many parts of this work that I will miss, but I am also looking forward to the next chapter in my life called retirement.”

David Boshart will also leave Central Plains at the end of July to pursue other opportunities, and said of this transition, “Every year at Annual Meeting, I fall in love with the people of God who make up Central Plains. It was a powerful experience to pass the symbols of our conference (the basin and towel, the pitcher, and the peace pipe) to such warm, capable, and competent servant leaders who will guide Central Plains to a new level of witness and faithfulness.”

At both of these transitional celebrations, symbols and gifts were exchanged, laughter was heard, and tears were shed. One powerful gift was a set of plaques expressing gratitude to Shana, Tim and David from the Hispanic churches in our conference. After giving the plaques, Ramiro Hernandez led in circles of prayer and blessing for these three leaders who have led Central Plains so wisely for so many years. These prayers echoed and affirmed Amanda’s call to prayer, “I ask that as these changes happen, you keep all of our ministry team in your prayers, and that you give us grace and encouragement as we continue the good work of this conference.”

“While changes can bring anxiety and fear, I am excited for all of these life transitions. I’m excited for the possibilities as a new ministry team begins working together.”

By the power of the Holy Spirit

by Carol J. Eisenbeis

Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota

Iowa Mennonite School's gymnasium, temporarily transformed into a meeting space, was abuzz with conversation. Small groups of delegates representing the churches of Central Plains Mennonite Conference could be seen collectively leaning in around each of the 25 circular tables arranged for this gathering.

Michael Danner, Mennonite Church USA's Associate Executive Director for Church Vitality and Engagement, was invited to facilitate this particular delegate session. The focus was to actively seek where God is leading CPMC during a time of transition.

In order to work toward the intended goal, delegates were asked to reflect together on a series of four questions. The questions crafted for this time of reflection focused on the following topics: 1) ways we've experienced the fruit of the conference living into its vision, 2) times when Central Plains Mennonite Conference is at its best, 3) times when we tend to get stuck, and 4) things we want to celebrate and continue to do in the future.

The vision and mission statements of CPMC served as grounding points of reference as delegates reflected together in small groups. The vision: "God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, *by the power of the Holy Spirit*, to grow as communities of grace, joy, and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world." Danner reminded delegates that while a time of transition certainly brings grief, it also opens a space for new opportunities. Laughing, gesturing, and nodding provided

cues of affirmation as groups recounted times when the conference body has been at its best. Reflecting on practices to celebrate and continue brought expressions of joy.

After time was spent sharing and listening and compiling notes in small groups, individuals were invited to come to the microphone to give witness to the stories that most strongly resonated with them. "Look around," one delegate shared. "We enjoy being together! How do we bring that back to our churches? How do we help others understand why our conference is important?"

Additional comments gave testimony to the many ways the Holy Spirit has been at work within Central Plains Mennonite Conference. We celebrate the involvement and gifts of our young people. We celebrate our cultural diversity. We celebrate the blessings that have come from doing outreach, from giving and receiving hospitality, and from the willingness to share praises in our local congregations.

It seemed like no small coincidence that the theme of this year's annual meeting was "A Covenant People: Living in the Holy Spirit." As defined by our vision statement, all is done *by the power of the Holy Spirit*. All will continue to be done *by the power of the Holy Spirit*. We celebrate evidence of the Spirit in our past and we look forward to the opportunities in our future.

Note: As the minutes from these table group discussions are collated, they will help to lead the staff during this transitional year.





ANNUAL MEETING 2019

An iPhone, sticky notes, and Christian formation

by Dylan Keller

Zion Mennonite Church, Donnellson, Iowa, and Des Moines Mennonite Church, Des Moines, Iowa

The Central Plains Mennonite Conference Christian Formation Committee actively worked to make Annual Meeting a more formative experience for attendees this year. In addition to two experience-based formation workshops, we also began each delegate session with a time of centering worship. We focused on different sensory messages including listening, sight and touch, and our practices relied on relevant scriptures, reflective periods of silence, and visionary instructions. We began each delegate session by reminding ourselves that the work we did around tables was not just “business,” but worship.

Another way we promoted formation at Annual Meeting was to invite people to reflect on four important questions...on video.

The quickest way to incite fear, anxiety, or disdain in a group of people is to suggest that you want to record their thoughts on video. And that is what I did at our annual meeting in Kalona.

It was a little ironic that we were meeting in Iowa Mennonite School, because I felt like the principal walking the halls during break and transition time. As I walked down the halls, people would pull out their phones to show they were busy, divert their attention, or turn around and walk the other direction. Nevertheless, I recorded nearly fifty videos on my iPhone of attendees sharing their perspectives. Participants were asked the following questions: Why do you attend Annual Meeting? What brings you joy? Where do you see the Spirit at work? What is one word that describes Central Plains Mennonite Conference?

What keeps me coming back to Annual Meeting is the opportunity to listen and share stories about our church communities and lives; our testimonies. While I did not

record stories or testimonies, I hope these recordings, which will be edited into four videos designed for social media that highlight the faces and voices of our conference, will stand as reminders of the work we do together throughout the year and at Annual Meeting. I hope they will break down perceptions and stereotypes that surround Mennonites and the people of our conference, and that they'll be a new medium to share our Anabaptist message.

The videos will be made available at various times throughout the year via social media or the CPMC website, and I encourage you to share them in your congregation, with your friends, and on your own social media platform. When you share these videos, feel free to respond with your answer to the questions also!

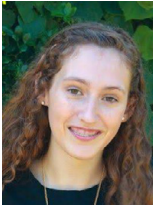
While the videos recorded messages, we also asked attendees to respond to two prompts on white boards with sticky notes. The first asked “Where do you see the Spirit at work?” and the second “What brings you joy?”

These boards allowed us to interact through a different medium than stories. We watched as responses grew each day and as the white space slowly filled with bright neon pieces of paper. The responses to the Joy Board were collected and entered into the word cloud seen above the article. The larger the word reflects how often it was used. From our weekend: friends, family, togetherness, singing and God were some of the strongest factors in our joy.

The Christian Formation Committee is diligently focused on providing our members the tools to succeed in all levels of Christian formation within an Anabaptist lens. We encourage your feedback and suggestions on how we can serve your congregation in this capacity--and how we can work to make Annual Meeting an even more formative experience.

Great experiences as a youth delegate

by Alyssa Nolt, Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley, Nebraska



I have had the great honor the past four years to be a youth delegate for Central Plains Mennonite Conference's Annual Meeting. It's an honor because the opportunities and leadership skills that I have learned while being part of the youth delegate program are invaluable; the experiences that I've had at the Annual Meetings have positively shaped me into the young adult that I'm becoming.

A youth delegate is a young person that is sent to represent their church, much like an adult delegate only younger. But being a youth delegate is so much more than just being a representative. Being a youth delegate means showing and learning responsibility and leadership, not just as a part of their congregation or Central Plains Mennonite Conference, but as an individual in a changing world. The youth delegate program that our conference utilizes cultivates the younger members in the church, encouraging our involvement and showing leadership possibilities as we move into adulthood.

Youth delegates do much of what other delegates do. At Annual Meeting, they get the opportunity to partake in meetings and vote on the blueprint, slate, and other important decisions that affect our Conference. There are also activities planned throughout Annual Meeting specifically for the youth delegates to assist us in understanding what it means to be part of the Conference, comprehending the processes during meetings, and connecting with other youth across our vast Conference.

I have really enjoyed being a youth delegate because of the great community that Central Plains Mennonite Conference has been to me. Annual Meetings have been a great time to get together with friends - new and long-time, young and old - and enjoy time with others knowing that we all share a common mission: loving Jesus and sharing that with others. Annual Meeting is also a great time to feel connected and get up-to-date on the doings of our Conference and our mission. One thing that I have particularly enjoyed about being a youth delegate is the positive response we have all received from adult delegates. Every year I have been involved, the other delegates at my table treated me with respect and grace which was refreshing in a society that sometimes looks down on youth.

Being a youth delegate isn't a burden: it's an opportunity to grow. I highly encourage other youth to take advantage of this program if given the opportunity, and to fully appreciate the gift the program is to us youth as well as the Conference as a whole.



Above: Willis Busenitz and summer service workers from the Northern Cheyenne Mennonite Church lead out in a Cheyenne praise song. Top right: Nathan Luitjens facilitates a conversation among the youth delegates and conference leaders. Bottom right: Youth delegates celebrate Tim and Dave at their farewell service.



Photos by Carly Voth Unruh

STAFF TRANSITIONS

See how they love one another, a farewell from David Boshart

by David Boshart, former Executive Conference Minister, Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Early Christian leader, Tertullian said, “See how they love each other.” Over these past nine years as Executive Conference Minister, these words have come to me often. Most recently, these words came to mind on Saturday night of Annual Meeting. The delegate business had concluded. New conference ministers had been installed. The baton had been passed to new board and committee members for the coming year. Shana and I stood together on the side of the lawn at the Geyer Farm taking in the view: folks listening to a great band, eating pizza, relaxing and enjoying each other. See how they love one another!

In 2010 during my first 100 days as conference minister, our staff went on a road trip to visit all our member congregations. As we crisscrossed our conference geography, listening to the hopes and dreams of our churches, priorities for our work came into focus: leadership, fellowship, and discipleship. These priorities were not just good ideas. Our churches were asking to be equipped in these priorities for holistic witness to the reign of God. “Leadership *for* witness. “Discipleship *for* witness.” “Fellowship *as* witness.”

In these last nine years, I have come to understand that fellowship *as* witness is perhaps the most important of all our priorities. The love of Christian sisters and brothers in our fellowship *is* witness to who we are as God’s people and how we live together as a new humanity. Without fellowship, the task of leaders is fraught. Without fellowship, what compels us to work at our formation as “good news” people? The validity of our witness is revealed in the quality of our fellowship. Each of the preachers in our last three Annual Meetings have made the same exact observation to me: “these people really like to be together!” See how they love each other!

This fellowship is what makes Central Plains Mennonite Conference such a special place. It is our love for each other that raised \$42,000 one afternoon in one

delegate session several years ago for a new building at Ashland Christian Fellowship even as wild fires threatened to destroy the whole compound. It is love for each other that raised the deportation of Pastor Max Villatoro to national attention. It is our love for each other that raised money in support of the Everything Beautiful thrift store in Busby, Montana. It is our love for each other that brings our members back to Annual Meeting and gatherings when we face really hard issues. We come together because we believe that, in Jesus, everything that is necessary for the reconciliation of all things has been accomplished.

Fostering fellowship *as* witness has been central to my work. Through our study of Christian unity and adoption of our Covenant of Spiritual Practices we have been strengthened in our life together rather than being weakened by our disagreements. I cannot think of a more profound testimony to the transforming power of the Gospel!

While this work is hard work, it has been a great adventure to be part of a highly-skilled team of ministers and support staff. I have been so blessed to work with the strong support of a forward-looking, visionary board. Linking the executive ministry function to the ministry of witness speaks to the competent and innovative spirit many across the church have come to associate with Central Plains. This conference is a very special place and I have always understood my leadership role to be a sacred trust.

I have complete confidence in God’s providence for God’s people in any and all circumstances. While Shana and I will be sojourners in other parts of Mennonite Church USA in coming years, Central Plains Mennonite Conference will always be home to us. We will be cheering you on as new leaders continue to support and strengthen the fellowship that serves as the hallmark of this conference’s witness in the world. May you rely on God’s steadfast faithfulness and continue to seek God’s face with joy!



Meet your new Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership

by Susan Janzen, Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership, Central Plains Mennonite Conference



By the time you read this, I will have begun my new role as Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership in Central Plains Mennonite Conference. I was humbled by your affirmation and welcome when I was installed at Annual Meeting in June and delighted by your notes of blessing and encouragement. I intend to read one each day in these first weeks on the job.

Between our gathering at Iowa Mennonite School and when I officially began on August 1, I said good-bye to the good people at Cedar Falls Mennonite Church, whom I served as pastor for fifteen and a half years, and moved to the small town of Tiffin, which is just outside Iowa City. When I was growing up on a farm in south-central Kansas, becoming a conference minister was far from my mind. Let's be honest — being any kind of minister was far from my mind. In the 1960s and '70s there weren't a lot of women pastors to serve as role models for people of my generation.

Besides, in that post-Watergate era, my career goal was to become an investigative reporter and uncover the next great presidential scandal! When I went to Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, I worked on the student newspaper and chose a major (German) that I enjoyed but that also allowed me to take a broad array of courses in preparation for life as a journalist.

However, what I now understand as the moving of the Holy Spirit, began to nudge me ... slowly ... in another direction.

It started when my aunt invited me to help her research my great-grandmother, who had no formal theological training but wrote sermons for church gatherings and Mennonite periodicals. She was asked to write these sermons, but they were either preached by men or published under her initials or her husband's name. I was intrigued by the affirmation of her gift for theological reflection but angered by the limitations placed on her gender.

Then, as a senior at Bethel I did an internship with General Conference Mennonite Church (one of the predecessor denominations of MCUSA) News Service and The Mennonite magazine. Little did I know the chain of events that would put into motion! The short version of the story is that through the internship I experienced a happy union of my excitement for journalism with my passion for the church.

That internship led to my first job writing for Mennonite Weekly (now World) Review. Two years later,

I was invited to edit *With*, a monthly magazine by and for Mennonite youth, which I did for seven years. After that, I served another seven years as editorial director for Faith & Life Press. That's when I began taking seminary classes — not with pastoral ministry in mind, but as biblical and theological underpinning for my job.

When I amassed a year's worth of credits, the seminary invited me into a time of discernment with several other students. Our convener was Dotty Janzen (no relation), one of few early women pastors. She was the first person to suggest that perhaps I was being called into pastoral ministry, and I pondered her words carefully. I had come to see my publishing work as ministry, and I enjoyed leading worship. But that was a long way from being a pastor! Could I do the tasks of parish ministry?

The answer didn't come quickly, but it came. A few years later I moved to Elkhart, Indiana, to finish my Master of Divinity degree. An internship at First Mennonite Church in Nappanee helped me realize that I could preach and do pastoral care. Upon graduation from Associated (now Anabaptist) Mennonite Biblical Seminary twenty years ago, I became the pastor at New Hope Mennonite Church in Omaha, Nebraska.

Five years later we made the difficult decision to close that congregation. Discouraged, I found new confidence and direction with Cedar Falls Mennonite Church. Their patience and encouragement helped me heal and grow as a pastor. Over time, we saw one another through some of the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. We challenged one another, had hard conversations, and made some difficult, life-altering decisions; together we celebrated births and baptisms and marriages, and grieved the passing of too many dear friends.

It was not an easy decision to leave Cedar Falls. But, over the past few years, I've had a growing realization that my calling at this point in life includes empowering and encouraging both my own and the next generations of leaders — and being a conference minister promises many opportunities to do just that.

I love being a pastor and look forward to mentoring those who are being called into this vocation. I look forward to walking in faith with my pastoral colleagues, with chaplains, and with those called into service with schools, camps, and other institutions. I look forward to nurturing relationships with Central Plains congregations as we endeavor together to ensure that we are healthy and life-giving expressions of God's love in the world.



STAFF TRANSITIONS

Interim leadership

Transitions

Kelsey Guckenberger was installed as pastor at Christ Community Church in Des Moines, Iowa on June 30, 2019.

Susan Janzen resigned as pastor at Cedar Falls Mennonite Church in Cedar Falls, Iowa effective June 30, 2019. Susan began her new position as Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership with Central Plains Mennonite Conference on August 1, 2019.

Two students connected with Central Plains Mennonite Conference congregations participated in the **May 4 commencement service of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary**, Elkhart, Indiana.

Suzanne Engle Ford of Fort Collins, CO graduated with a Master of Divinity with a major in Pastoral Ministry. She is serving as Pastor at Zion Mennonite Church in Donnellson, Iowa.

Renee Epp Reimer of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, graduated with a Master of Divinity with a major in Christian Faith Formation. In August she will begin as Associate Pastor of Faith Formation at Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, Kansas. Reimer's home congregations are Sermon on the Mount Mennonite Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City, Kansas.

Greetings in the powerful name of Jesus who gives us peace. It is a privilege to serve you as the new Moderator of Central Plains Mennonite Conference. As a conference, we have experienced an unprecedented amount of staff turnover over the last 14 months. As these changes bring transitions, possible anxiety, and possibility, we look to this peace from God to pattern us in our shared conference life. I would like to communicate with you the prayerful plans for leadership at the executive level for the coming months in the absence of an Executive Conference Minister.

The Conference Board is in the process of hiring an Executive Conference Minister. The Search Committee has been made up of the Executive Committee of the board, and included outgoing Moderator Sid Burkey, Assistant Moderator Shawn Nolt, Treasurer Kent Blossom, and outgoing Secretary Mary Yoder, along with outgoing staff member Tim Detweiler, minority representative Fernando Ramos, outgoing Pastoral Leadership Committee Chair Marcia Yoder-Schrock, and Outreach and Service Chair Chris Eisenbeis.

The Search Committee has been in prayerful discernment and has come to a place where it feels best to them and the Holy Spirit to hire Interim Executive Conference Ministers to lead during this time of transition.

We have asked two very seasoned, wise and experienced pastors among us to consider serving in this role for a period of six months, based on staff needs and availability. Firman Gingerich and Marcia Yoder-Schock have graciously agreed to serve on a part-time basis sharing the work that is needed.

We have invited Firman to serve with his gifts and passion for team building and mentoring of staff. We have invited Marcia to serve with her gifting and experience in pastoral presence and in tending to administrative tasks and staffing the board. We thank both Marcia and Firman for saying "yes" to this interim call and we look forward to their leadership in shaping these months of transition. They will both begin their terms on August 1.

The Executive Committee will continue to discern with the Conference Board next steps in the Executive Conference Minister search process.

Also on the Executive front, I would like to announce our newly appointed Assistant Moderator. John N. Murray, from Third Way in the Twin Cities of Minnesota, has been approved by the Conference Board. I look forward to the leadership gifts and experiences that John brings to this position.

We ask for your continued prayers for discernment in the Executive Conference Minister search and for our staff as they transition into their roles and as they lead us into faithful following of Jesus in each of our local contexts.

May Christ be our peace,
Shawn Nolt, Moderator

Firman Gingerich and Marcia Yoder Schrock will begin their interim roles on August 1, and they may be reached at fjgingerich@gmail.com and myoderschrock@gmail.com.

Susan Janzen is beginning her role as Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership in August. She may be reached at susanjanzen@centralplainsmc.org. Amanda Bleichy will be on maternity leave through August.

For questions/comments regarding the Executive Conference Minister search process, moderator Shawn Nolt can be contacted at snolt7@gmail.com

Men and Women's Retreat 2019

by Mai Ying Yang

For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Matthew 23:12

In the spring, I can see the rebirth of all the plants, trees, leaves and flowers. I am deeply reminded of the importance of nurturing my spiritual needs. Attending our annual Men and Women's Retreat was a great way to rejuvenate my spiritual side as I dwell in the scriptures and surround myself with God's beautiful creation instead of modern technology.

On May 24-25, 2019, the St. Paul Hmong Mennonite Church held our fifth annual Men & Women's Retreat at Camp Courage in Maple Lake, Minnesota. We had a total of 12 men and 12 women who attended the retreat. Our theme focused on "unity", and we learned that for teamwork and unity to happen, we must be humble (Matthew 23:13, 1 Peter 5:6) To be humble is to let go of your pride, to be the first one to admit that you were wrong or the first one to say "sorry." It is to be willing to learn from others and listen to their opinions regardless of their status, age or gender. It is to stop thinking that you are always right. To be humble is to be willing to practice the ways that Jesus has shown us, serving and washing one another's feet.

Each morning some of us woke up early to cook breakfast and to read the Bible and pray together. We had Bible study sessions, worship services, women's fellowship and foot washing. We also played games and had activities for all to participate in to strengthen Biblical knowledge, hymn memorization and building stronger relationships.

Women's Retreat 2019: Joy in the journey? Making peace with our inner Jonah

Do you feel a bit grumpy about what life requires from us...or about what God calls you to? Might we be taking ourselves a bit too seriously?! Join us in experiencing the book of Jonah through a variety of Scripture Engagement practices. Together we will engage multiple senses to understand more deeply what God might be calling us to do, or perhaps how we are called to live out our vocation. We will also enjoy good food and company, worship, rest, nature, and interest sessions, Ten Thousand Villages shopping, and much more. Join us this year for a memorable Women's Retreat!

Location: Swan Lake Christian Camp

Dates: September 21 & 22, 2019

Cost: \$95 (includes meals, lodging, and linens)

Register: by September 9 online: myslcc.campbrainregistration.com or by calling the Swan Lake Christian Camp office at (605) 326-5690

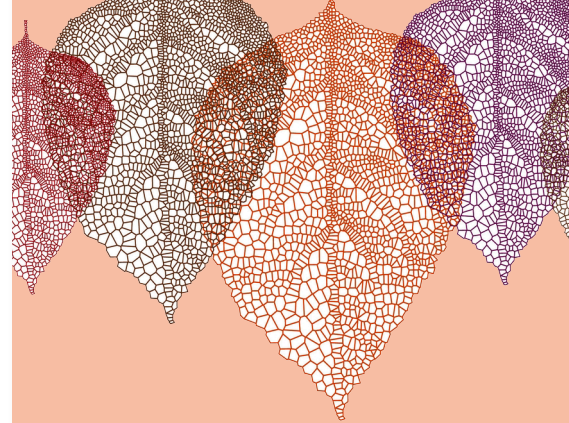
More information: www.myslcc.com, www.facebook.com/CPMWomen, or contact Elisabeth Harder Schrock (eharderschrock@gmail.com), (507) 304-2324

Scattered Seeds

Scattered Seeds August 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.
E-mail: scatteredseeds@centralplainsmc.org. Telephone: 319-325-4522.
For the October issue, please send stories, news and photos by **September 3, 2019** to the address above. Please send subscription requests and changes of addresses to office@centralplainsmc.org.

Graphic Design by Erin Ramer. Printed by Kalona Graphics in USA



Contact information

Moderator

Shawn Nolt 402-364-3493
slnolt7@gmail.com

Assistant Moderator

John Murray 620-951-0176
John.murray951@gmail.com

Office

P.O. Box 101, Freeman, SD 57029

Monica Clem, Office Manager
605-929-3325
office@centralplainsmc.org

Hispanic Ministries Coordinator

Ramiro Hernandez 319-621-3725
rmhems@yahoo.com

Conference Ministers

P.O. Box 352, Kalona, IA 52247

Amanda Bleichty 319-325-4522
amandableichty@centralplainsmc.org

Susan Janzen 319-610-1007
susanjanzen@centralplainsmc.org

Marcia Yoder-Schrock: Interim Executive
Conference Minister 319-371-7333

Firman Gingerich: Interim Conference
Minister for Staff Development
319-855-8379

To receive this newsletter in Spanish, call Amanda Bleichty at 319-325-4522. Para recibir este boletín en español, llame a Amanda Bleichty al 319-325-4522.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference
P.O. Box 101
Freeman, SD 57029

change service requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Freeman, S.D.
Permit No. 12

FINANCES

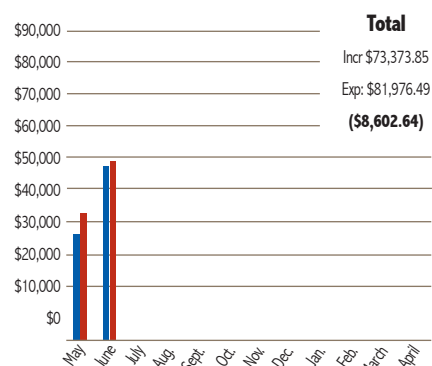
The Central Plains budget began the new fiscal year with a slight deficit in May and June. Income through June is at \$73,373.85, while expenses are at \$81,976.49. This leads to a \$8,602.64 deficit. Despite this, we are extremely thankful for the passion and financial support we witnessed during Annual Meeting through great participation in those registering and attending and through our offerings during worship. We are very thankful for all your support.

— *Stewardship Task Group*

Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Income (blue) vs. Expenses (red)

Fiscal Year 2019-2020



UPCOMING EVENTS

Conference Board and Committees will meet September 6-7, 2019 in Freeman, South Dakota.

Central Plains Women's Retreat 2019 will take place September 21 & 22, 2019, at Swan Lake Christian Camp, near Viborg, South Dakota



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