



Scattered Seeds

October
2016

We always thank
God, the Father
of our Lord
Jesus Christ,
when we pray
for you because
we have heard
of your faith in
Christ Jesus and
of the love you
have for all God's
people.

— Colossians 1:3-4



The Ecuador Partnership group visits the offices of the Federation of Evangelical Indigenous Churches in Ecuador (FEINE). Left to right: Linda Shelly, Daniela Sanchez, Marisa Smucker, FEINE Vice President Blanca Guaman, Doyle and Anne Roth, Don and Shirley Kempf, FEINE president Manuel Chugchilan, David Boshart, Peter Wigginton, Peter Stucky, Jane and Jerrell Ross-Richer.

Ecuador Partnership 2016

Our partners in Ecuador, Venezuela and Colombia

by Shana Peachey Boshart, Editor

Since our founding, Central Plains has been in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network (MMN) and Mennonite Church of Colombia (IMCOL) to support ministries in Ecuador. About every 18 months, representatives of the partners get together for Ecuador Partnership meetings. This year, the meetings were held in April in Ecuador.

A number of people are included in Ecuador Partnership meetings. Representing Central Plains were Don and Shirley Kempf of Shickley, Nebraska; Doyle and Ann Roth of Milford, Nebraska; and Executive Conference Minister David Boshart. Don Kempf is the Central Plains coordinator for the partnership. Representing Mennonite Mission Network were Linda Shelly, Latin America director, and Marisa Smucker, church relations

associate. From Mennonite Church Colombia were Oscar Herrera, coordinator of IMCOL's mission committee, and Peter Stucky, an IMCOL pastor. Lay leaders together with Pastor Luis Tapia represented the new conference, Iglesia Cristiana Anabautista Menonita de Ecuador (ICAME).

A highlight of this trip was spending several days in the rainforest where MMN workers Jane and Jerrell Ross-Richer and their children live six months of the year. They are building relationships there with indigenous families, churches and leaders. Partners from Colombia, the United States and the Quito Mennonite Church were introduced to the people, food, animals and plants of the Ecuadorian rainforest. See photos on page 5.

In this issue

- 3 Partnership report
- 4 Venezuela visit
- 5 Goal met for property fund
- 6 IBA graduates
- 7 Churches worship together
- 8 Finance report

Ecuador Partnership 2016 report

Our mission partners and what they do

by Shirley Kempf, Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley, Nebraska



Gloria Showalter, from the United States, started a two-year volunteer position in March with MMN to support the work of the

church in Quito. She sees her role as collaborating with others in their work. She assists with Sunday School teaching, home visitations, and Bible studies. She also works with Vida Juvenil and assists Peter Wigginton with music.

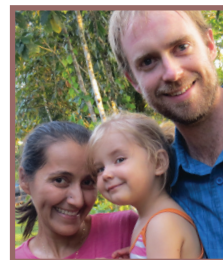


Jane and Jerrell Ross Richer and family are located near Tena in the rainforest region. They spend the first six months of each year in Ecuador and have completed their second period. They are learning about the indigenous context and encouraging churches leaders and neighbors. This is two-way mission, with the other six months in the U.S., where they share in churches and Jerrell teaches at Goshen College.



Maria Elena Lopez is a Colombian who has been in Ecuador a little over a year. She is pastoring the congregation

in Calderon that is almost totally Colombian refugees. She works with Bible studies and with women's groups. A refugee congregation is by nature very transient. After having worship services, they discontinued them for a time and then started again. Now they are calling it a fellowship, instead of a church. Maria Elena has also provided valuable assistance to ICAME in her co-coordinator role, bringing experience in conference development from Colombia. She plans to return to Colombia at the end of the year.



Peter Wigginton and Delicia Bravo are partnership coordinators in Ecuador. **Peter** manages much of the

communication and relates with FEINE. He uses his gifts in music in the churches and did a lot to plan the logistics for our visit and the church retreats they have from time to time. **Delicia** spends time with the Vida Juvenil project in the Jardines del Inca neighborhood. She loves the country and the children and youth and finds joy in working there. Their 2-year-old daughter, **Aliyah**, is a joy and it was fun to see how she communicates in both languages already.

[READ PETER'S UPDATE](#) →

CONNECTING WITH INDIGENOUS LEADERS, MISSION AND VISION

We also had a time of sharing with Jane and Jerrell, listening to their thoughts and encouraging them in their ideas. Our original invitation to Ecuador was to be involved with the indigenous church leadership education, and it is taking a new form now through the Ross Richers. They see that the theology

of the indigenous churches has largely been borrowed from other cultures. Many pastors are finding that it is no longer working for them, especially with the youth. They seek a way to present the theology of God's kingdom happening here already. What does it mean to be a Cofán, or

Huarani, or Kichwa Christian in the present day?

In addition to hearing these reports from personnel, the group worked to update the covenant and draft a new mission statement. We also heard reports from the Quito congregation, including their

Ecuador Partnership 2016

Quito churches continue ministries to children, youth and refugees and orient new Journey International workers

by Peter Wigginton, Ecuador Partnership coordinator



The churches in Quito have been involved in many activities; we recently had a fantastic Vacation Bible School week at Vida Juvenil in Jardines del Inca and also many different meetings at church and with the Federation of Evangelical Indigenous Churches.

During the Vacation Bible School we had a great time with crafts, bible stories, games, and making pizza which was just as big of a hit as it was last year. We feel that as a program we are truly getting to know the kids in the neighborhood and plenty of parents are getting to know us as well.

We have been working with FEINE, the Federation of Evangelical Indigenous Churches in Ecuador, as they work on a long time dream of theirs of developing a curriculum for Evangelical Indigenous education, from preschool all the way to college. We ask for prayers as we work with the pastors on this project and for guidance and support for the future of it. We have been very pleased that Clever Mashiant, who is from the Amazon region, has been involved in the entire process and is very excited about it.

We also received three Journey International (MMN) volunteers from the United States in September and have been doing orientation with them. Seth Kurtz, Josh Schirch and Petra Showalter will be helping in various church projects for the next ten months. We pray for

smooth transitions and open minds and hearts for all the people involved. This is bound to be a fantastic experience for these young people and for the church as well.

MMN Workers Delicia Bravo, Peter Wigginton and Gloria Showalter were able to be a part of a delegation that spent a week in Bogota with Quito Mennonite Church members Daniela Sanchez and Gladys Montaluisa to learn about the history of Colombian conflict, the Peace Process, the reality of displaced people, and also about the Colombian Mennonite Church and Mennonite Central Committee and their programs. We learned a lot and we hope to apply some new strategies and information in Ecuador, especially to the Refugee Project.

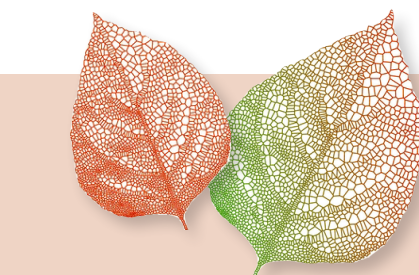
At the beginning of September, we had a church retreat to talk about the future plans for the church in Quito and church plants in Calderon and Jardines del Inca. This was a follow up from a retreat we had in March where the church worked on its updated vision, mission, and identity. We are very thankful for Paul Stucky who helped facilitate these meetings, and we also ask for prayers as we continue working on the planning and evaluation process.

On a recent Sunday morning Pastor Luis preached on a text from Luke 14:24. He challenged the church that Jesus asks us to serve and to give all that is around us. Then he asked us: Do we want to be a church of offers and schemes or a church of disciples? As a church we are true followers of Christ when we search for the happiness of others as Jesus did, not our own.

proposal for purchasing a property. We discussed budget, the work of the Ross Richers in relation to the Quito church, the work in Calderon, the work in Venezuela, and upcoming staff transitions.

Sunday morning, the church was full of people as all three churches

were meeting together, as they do once a month. David Boshart presented the message on how our visits to Ecuador have changed us and the way we “do church.” At the close of the worship, we all shared communion together followed by a meal which served as a fundraiser for the youth project.



Thanks be to God for an interesting and informative trip and for his protection as we traveled. Thanks for all the prayers!

Venezuela Partnership 2016

Learning from the Anabaptist movement in Venezuela

by Caleb Yoder, West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa



My first view of Venezuela from the plane was of a dry mountainous landscape with red soil. A drought is among Venezuela's many recent challenges. However, Mennonite leader Erwin Mirabal was there to welcome me at the airport with the first of many excellent fruit juices, and warm hospitality characterized

my week-long visit.

I represented Central Plains conference as part of the Venezuela Partnership delegation that included Marisa Smucker from MMN, and Carlos Moreno from the Colombian Mennonite Church. Pastor Peter Stucky also joined us from Colombia some days later. The Colombian Mennonite Church has had a long history of mission work in Venezuela, and invited Central Plains and MMN to partner together, growing from relationships developed in the Ecuador Partnership.

Venezuelan table fellowship

It was a steep climb up to the capital Caracas, on a very developed highway with several sets of tunnels. After a night's sleep, we took a flight out to Margarita Island where Erwin's family lived many years, and where the work of the Mennonite seminary first produced fruit. Margarita Island has a warm, desert climate with beautiful Caribbean beaches.

Our delegation spent about half our time in Margarita Island, before trekking by ferry and taxi through beautiful coastal landscape back to Caracas. In both places we experienced the warm Venezuelan culture of table fellowship with corn arepas, grilled meats, and a delicious sauce made from avocado and parsley called guasacaca.

Mennonite seminary fosters collaboration

The ministries we witnessed in Venezuela are part of a movement held together by the Mennonite seminary that works with both Mennonite church plants and churches of other evangelical denominations. Organic ministries serve their neighborhoods with collaboration from both Mennonite leaders and other Christian leaders. The seminary has fostered this collaborative spirit, teaching Anabaptist theology and values.

Erwin built up the Mennonite Seminary in order to provide church leaders spaces to reflect on their ministry practice. Erwin came to faith in a Mennonite church as a young person and attended classes of John Driver, a Mennonite missionary and teacher in Latin America. However, Erwin reports that it was many years later that he understood this teaching more deeply and became inspired by an Anabaptist vision of the church.

After the family moved to Caracas, Erwin and his spouse Haydee Vegas have continued leadership in ministries in Caracas. A Mennonite church plant meets in their home, and they coordinate seminary courses that take place in their home as well as neighboring Venezuelan states.

Ministries on Margarita Island

Euclides Bauza and Darlenis Estaba de Bauza, and several other leaders accompanied us on the island and the trip back to Caracas. The couple together leads a Mennonite church plant, while Euclides now coordinates the seminary's activities on the island. While there, we had the privilege of seeing the graduation of members of Ebenezer Pentecostal church. We met other Christian leaders as well, such as Inidida, who has carried out ministry with neighbors caught in drug addictions, gangs or prostitution.

Our delegation visited a neighborhood ministry that worked with underprivileged children at a local beach. Children swam, flew kites, and lined up for a cups of snow cones. It was a space of love and a care free spirit.

We also were able to serve breakfast to the homeless alongside a beach with the backdrop of the biggest area hotels. Omar Rodríguez, a former homeless man, now tirelessly preaches a message of freedom from shame to a difficult group to reach, as many struggle with addictions.

The severe economic crisis in Venezuela has impacted the witness of this growing Anabaptist movement. In Caracas, they have been sharing food with a group of homeless people and giving invitations to Sunday worship.

Our shared identity in Jesus

On my first evening, Haydee shared with me her conviction that in Jesus we have a new "gentilic" or identity as a new people that includes people from every nation and culture. I think that is ultimately why our conference seeks to be involved in these partnerships.

Ecuador Partnership 2016

Quito Property Fund: Goal accomplished

*by Don Kempf, Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley, Nebraska
Central Plains coordinator for the Ecuador Partnership*



God has blessed the Ecuador Partnership with some very generous donors in Central Plains. We have reached our goal of raising \$46,000 for the purchase of a property for The Christian Anabaptist Mennonite Churches in Ecuador (ICAME). This was

made possible through the generosity of individuals as well as a large donation from Christ Community Church of Des Moines.

We have also been blessed that an anonymous couple in Central Plains is willing to provide an interest free loan for the final \$50,000 needed for the \$200,000 project.

In Ecuador, they are still waiting for a final signature in order to be legal to purchase property. Because of a faltering economy, real estate values are falling at this time in Ecuador, and it may be prudent to not be in a hurry to make the purchase. We will keep you informed as things develop.

May God bless all of you who have given so abundantly to our sisters and brothers in Ecuador.

Last call for Ecuador Learning Tour

Now is the time to signal your interest in the January 7-19, 2017 Learning & Fellowship Tour to Ecuador. Organizers would like firm participant commitments by October 31, 2016. Find a description of the trip at www.centralplainsmc.org/upcoming-trips. To confirm your place on the trip or to request more information, please contact Joetta Schlabach, 651-290-2185 or jschlabach@faithmennonite.org. A blessed adventure awaits us!



Gloria Showalter, Patricia Miranda, Pastor Luis Tapia, Peter Wigginton, Peter Stucky and Don Kempf in Partnership meetings at Quito Mennonite Church.



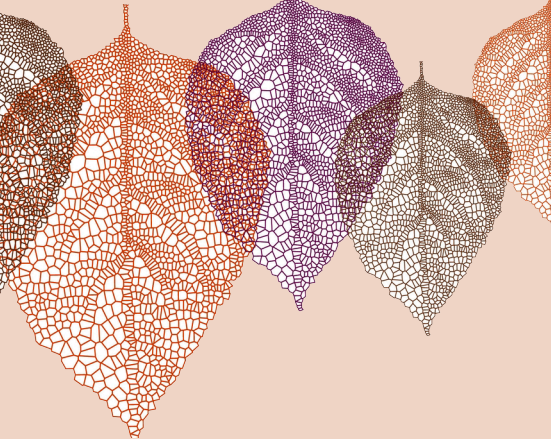
Delicia Bravo teaches Sunday school at Quito Mennonite Church.



Daniela Sanchez and Teresa Ross Richer swing the jump rope for Teresa's brother Jordan (middle) and neighbor children Paola, Paul, Soraida and Yamile.



At the Yachana Ecolodge the partnership group learns from their guide Alfonso about the biodiversity of the Napo River basin, which is very important for the indigenous people with whom Ross Richers relate.



left to right: Marco Guete, Ramiro Hernandez, Gloria Villatoro, Enriqueta Paredes, Maria Mendoza, Enrique Mendoza, David Boshart, Martha Hernandez, Violeta Ajquejay.

Four celebrate IBA graduation

Four students graduated from Instituto Biblico Anabautista ("IBA" or Anabaptist Bible Institute) at Iglesia Menonita Torre Fuerte in Iowa City August 7.

Receiving certificates were Gloria Villatoro, co-pastor of Torre Fuerte; Enrique and Maria Mendoza, lay leaders at Torre Fuerte; and Enriqueta Paredes, a lay leader at Iglesia Menonita Centro Cristiana in Washington, Iowa. Ramiro and Martha Hernandez who tutored the students were also present.

Marco Guete, who works for Mennonite Education Agency as the director of Hispanic Ministries for Leadership Development & Pastoral Education, was present to award the graduates their certificates. Associate Director Violeta Ajquejay was also present for the celebration.

Congratulations to these sisters and brother for working hard and persisting to meet the requirements for graduation.

—Ramiro Hernandez, Hispanic Ministries Coordinator

Transitions

Beth Peachey Miller was installed as part-time pastor September 18, 2016, at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

Corey Miller has announced he will resign as pastor at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa, on December 11.

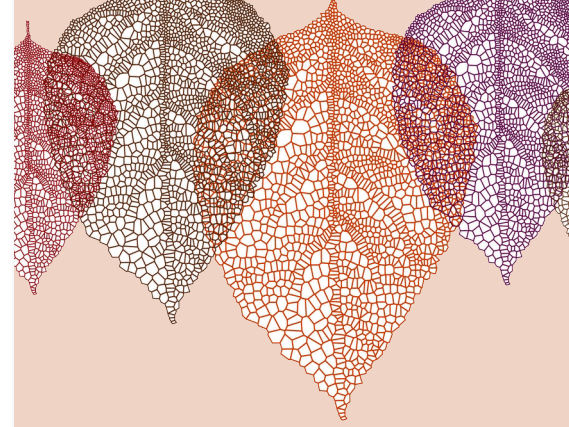
Leaders Credentialed

Josias Hanson was licensed toward ordination September 11, 2016, at Third Way Church, Minneapolis.



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Urban and rural sister churches meet together

Country barn offers setting for VBS, joint worship

by Glenn Baughman, Des Moines Mennonite Church

The last weekend of July saw two Central Plains churches, one rural and one urban, learning and worshipping together.

On Saturday and Sunday, July 30 and 31, a Davis County bed & breakfast hosted Vacation Bible School for a group of twelve Des Moines-area children and their parents. Trimble-Parker Guest House near Bloomfield, Iowa, was the scene of the weekend children's event called "Digging for Treasures," an experience that gave clues to various barn locations where Bible scripture 'treasures' were located.

In the afternoon, the children participated in a mission project that assembled over fifty school kit bags for Mennonite Central Committee for distribution to children in third world countries. An evening bonfire event featured entertainment created by the children who then camped outdoors with parents in a small tent city under the stars of a very clear night. The clear night allowed views of various constellations--a treat for city dwellers whose views are usually limited by trees, lights, and buildings.

On Sunday morning, Des Moines Mennonite church members made the two hour trip to Bloomfield. They were joined by Pulaski Mennonite Church members to worship in the 115-year-old U-barn west wing hay mow. Des Moines Pastor Karen Dalke preached on 'The Majesty and Sovereignty of God.' Nearly 100 people attended the service, which was followed by a jointly furnished potluck lunch in the shaded back yard. (Photo shows children digging near a barn for a symbolic ark of the covenant.)



VBS children dig for a symbolic ark of the covenant.

Webinars: How to read and interpret the Bible

Don't miss the Bible Study webinars with Meghan Good, offered at no charge to equip Bible study leaders and others to read and interpret the Bible together. Those who teach the Bible in congregational settings are especially encouraged to participate; however, everyone is welcome. This opportunity grows out of our Covenant of Spiritual Practices, in which we covenant to study the Bible together and with our neighbors. Find details and an RSVP form at www.centralplainsmc.org/bible-study-webinars.

Scattered Seeds

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FINANCES

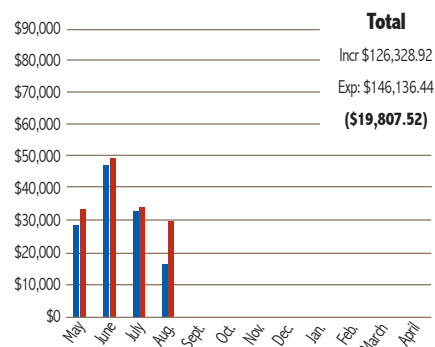
The Central Plains budget continues its downward trend of lower income through the summer months. Income for July and August came in at \$49,472.98. Expenses for the two months came in at \$63,403.84. As a result, we have increased the overall deficit for the fiscal year to \$19,833.36. We are thankful for the continued support of our conference and continue to see God's work in many different ways.

— Stewardship Task Group

Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Income (blue) vs. Expenses (red)

Fiscal Year 2016/2017



UPCOMING EVENTS

Bible Study webinars will be held Monday, October 24, and Monday, November 21.

Ecuador Partnership Learning and Fellowship Tour will take place January 7-19, 2017.

Central Plains Annual Meeting 2017 will take place June 15-18, 2017, in South Dakota.

Mennonite Church USA Convention & Delegate Assembly will take place July 4-8, 2017 in Orlando, Florida.



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