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AROUND THE CONFERENCE

Focusing on Ministry to a Community

by Adam Magill, *pastor at Zion Congregational Church in Treynor, Iowa*

With God's help, Zion Congregational Church is seeking to become a missional community church where all our members see themselves as ministers in their own context. To that end, we have tried some out-of-the-box ministries. Some have been successful, others have not. But the journey of experimenting and discerning where God is moving among us is paying rich dividends.

One of the recent transitions at Zion is in our staffing. The church leadership spent the last two years discerning the needs of the church and learning where God is calling us to move in our community.

We are located in what is largely a bedroom community. Treynor is about fifteen minutes away from the Omaha metropolitan area. As such, there are many in our community who live in Treynor, but whose

work and social lives are found in either Omaha or Council Bluffs.

As our church leadership prayed and studied our community, we identified a major community need: a place for elementary students to go after school until their parents can arrive home from work. We also discerned some major needs within our own congregation, the need to increase our communications and technology, and the need to expand our youth ministry program. With these needs in mind, we began to ask the question of what kinds of positions/staff would we need in order to address those challenges.

So this summer our congregation decided to step out in faith. We eliminated our part-time secretary position and added a second full-time pastoral position: the Pastor of Youth, Communications, and After School Care. Our previous part-time and bi-vocational youth pastor was hired to fill this expanded role. The new position addresses the needs of Zion and prepares us so we can join with God by serving our community through an after-school care ministry which will begin this next school year.

Another ministry that our church has been active with is Zion's Drive-In Movie Theater. Three years

ago, Zion decided to begin to try to deepen our relationship with our neighbors by creating a drive-in movie event. This event ballooned into a full blown summer ministry. Some church members hand-designed and cre-

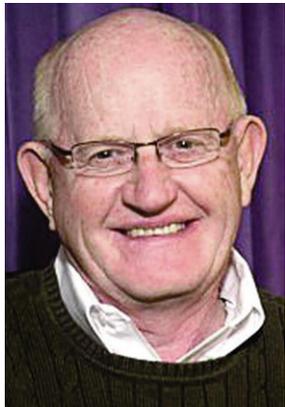


ated a movie screen that was sixteen feet wide by nine feet tall. A high-lumen projector was donated and the youth set up a concession stand, complete with freshly popped popcorn. Bible studies that go along with each film are handed out to those in attendance. Speakers are positioned so people can hear even if they are at the back of the parking lot. We have shown everything from Disney classics to John Wayne westerns to more intense films, including "World Trade Center" and "The Passion of the Christ." All movies are free, and for the most part, family friendly.

CM COMMENTS

A Renewed Spirit

Ron Hamilton, *Conference Minister*



The 65th annual meeting of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference was held in St. Paul, Minnesota last month. It was an exciting time of fellowship and learning, and many people said that it was among the best annual meetings that they have attended as they sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit in our gatherings.

The theme for the meeting was "Being Changed" and the theme verse was

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
(2 Corinthians 3:18)

We have faced some challenging circumstances in the past three years as we prepared for our annual meeting. In 2011, we were forced to switch venues for our meeting due to an HVAC failure at our hotel in Cleveland, Ohio. In 2012, wildfires in the Colorado Springs area threatened the region close to our meeting place and were not brought under control until a few days before our meetings started. This

year our featured speaker was unable to attend due to illness. In the face of these challenges, we committed all of this to the Lord in prayer and were dependent on Him for His work. God clearly heard and answered our prayers and we experienced wonderful annual meetings in spite of the adversity.

We should be reminded that the life-transforming work of God that is promised in 2 Corinthians 3:18 "comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." This produces a spiritual energy to do the will of God and an earnest desire to see Him work in a new and fresh way in our lives. I believe that our dependence on the Lord in these challenging times opened the door for us to experience a special work of the Spirit in our Conference.

This lesson reminds us of the promise of spiritual transformation flowing from the saving work of Jesus Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God desires that such energy and desire is the norm for our lives of faith. We should not be surprised when God shows up in a mighty way. Rather, we should expect His life-changing work in our lives each day. ♦

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND READERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome your contributions!

If you have comments on what you read here, please e-mail them to
kenandjoy@bellsouth.net.

If you have other comments or articles you wish to contribute, including "Something to Think About," please send them to the same e-mail address.

NE REGIONAL NEWS

Being Changed

Terry Shanahan, NE Regional Minister

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

(2 Corinthians 3:18)

As I write this we have just returned from our Annual Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota with the theme, Being Changed. What a glorious moving of the Holy Spirit as we celebrated our 65th anniversary as a Conference. We were inspired by the speakers, we were moved by the fellowship and we came away transformed as the Lord placed upon our hearts how He is at work in our Conference. The change that has occurred and is occurring in the Conference is clearly a work of God.

In my annual report to the Conference I mentioned how our Northeast region is experiencing a season of change. This past year has been a year of stability and growth for the CCCC in the Northeast. Many churches and pastors have inquired about our fellowship. Some have made the decision to partner with us. Some churches have experienced significant revitalization, and a new church plant is under development with us. As I say that, I have to also mention that it has been a year of many transitions as well. At this writing eleven of our churches are between pastors and are working with Intentional Interims to cast a vision for the future which leads to the calling of their next settled pastor. Two of our churches are just beginning a search for an Intentional Interim. Six of our churches have recently called a new settled pastor.

Normally you wouldn't associate stability and growth with times of change and transition. Those two are often not compatible. In the past, churches without pastors felt they were in for unsettling times until the next pastor was called. This is no longer the case for a number of our churches. The CCCC considers a church's time of transition a most important time in the life of the church. It can be a period of positive growth and development. Since we first published our Transitioning Your Church manual, many churches have availed themselves of this great resource with positive results. The length of stay of a CCCC pastor far exceeds the national average. Many of our pastors have served in the same pulpit for 25, 35 and even 40 plus years. Although this speaks to the health of our churches, it also instructs that change is coming. In the next few years a number of our pastors will be retiring. The good news is that with the available CCCC resources and guidance, our churches can continue to experience stability and growth during these transitions.

As this year's annual conference focused on change, relating to us all, "being transformed into His image with ever increasing glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18), we marvel at the change God is bringing to our Conference and how that change strengthens us and brings glory to Him. ♦



CONFERENCE CARE

Intentionally Caring

by **Lenn Zeller**, (volunteer) *CCCC Director of Conference Care*



It is sometimes said that the larger the church the more impersonal it becomes. Steve Timmis and Tim Chester, in their book, *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community*, say: "Too often, however, churches are not a context for making disciples so much as occasions for acknowledging relative strangers. Experience teaches that there is also an inverse ratio at work: the larger the group, the more inevitable the superficiality of our relationships," (page 111). Others agree that larger churches cannot provide the kind of community and fellowship that is common in smaller congregations, where everybody knows not only your name but pretty much everything about you.

But I'm not so sure it always works that way. I have spent most of my ministry in smaller churches, and it is true that we have enjoyed many deep and abiding relationships with lots of church folks along the way. But at the same time, I have on numerous occasions been quite surprised to find that even in a smaller congregation people don't always know everybody else in the pews around them. There can be a remarkable lack of familiarity even among people who worship together on a regular basis.

Which says to me that in congregations large and small we need to be intentional about knowing and

caring for one another in the body of Christ. Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34) It's part of our "Irreducible Core": Love God, love others, and as you go, make disciples. But apparently, even in smaller congregations that love does not happen naturally or easily. We need to be purposeful and careful to make it so.

Loving one another is part of the goal and ministry of Conference Care. With so many churches, pastors, chaplains and missionaries spread across the nation, and literally the world, we have to work very hard to care for one another and to love as Jesus has loved us. We need to find ways to be intentional about getting and staying connected, supporting and encouraging one another through the tough times of life and ministry in a fallen world, and even sometimes holding one another accountable. Please join me in praying for our Conference as we seek to expand and increase the Conference Care ministry in our midst, so that we can be purposeful and more effective in knowing and loving one another. ♦

WORLD OUTREACH

...from Armenia

by **Kaarina Ham,**

(Dr. Kaarina Ham is a CCCC Commissioned Christian Worker ministering in the Republic of Armenia. Following is a recent letter from her to her supporters.)

Hello from Armenia at the height of summer! As people vacate the city to visit friends or relatives in the countryside, we're winding down our ministry schedule and looking forward to an August breather, too. Praise the Lord for the positive response to recent programs.

First in line was the Women's Seminar, with the topic Our Bodies — Temples of the Holy Spirit, when we once again (very happily!) hosted village neighbor women for afternoon tea. Then another group enjoyed the annual excursion in sweltering heat, this time to a village just outside the city, when the Bible lesson dealt with Struggles in the Christian Life.

During the last week of June, a great summer camp team of seven worked hard and well in three villages in the region where our Lighthouse located. Here's how things went, from the perspective of one of our volunteer helpers:

The six days that we spent with school boys and girls left an unforgettable impression in our hearts. I've been several times a team member, and every time I get a great pleasure during summer camp days. But this time our expectations were exceeded.

Working with energetic kids in provincial villages is a hard thing. We come back very tired each day. But at the same time it is very enjoyable as we see their excited faces and responses.

Our team did the best to give the programs more substance. For this reason we prepared games and sports, along with dramas and lessons from the Bible. They were all of great interest.

In the end, summer camp days passed in harmony. Let us praise God that every year we can help with this work, because teenagers with few positive influences so much need principles from God's Word to guide them.

On July 14th Hiking Day in the beautiful mountains, I enlisted the (secret) help of this camp team in creating the "Longest Ice Cream Sundae" in the village for around fifty participants — eleven new to our programs. It went over extraordinarily well!

Finally, the Thursday evening Bible Study Retreat July 27–28 topped things off, with lessons on the theme Light From the Scriptures. Whew! Thank the Lord for bringing us through a busy summer of activities, when the "net of the Gospel" was thrown out in new directions.

As the Lord brings us to mind, please pray for the crisis situation here in Armenia. Twenty years after the implosion of the Soviet system, things are not looking up. Each month more people are giving up and trying to find ways to exit for what they think will be better political and economic conditions — in Russia, Europe, North America. May God be merciful in somehow securing a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11) for His people in this struggling First Christian Nation (301 A.D.). Many thanks for your faithful, prayerful support as we try to reassure in the faith those who are increasingly desperate and full of anxiety.

In Jesus' Love, Kaarina ♦



Hiking Group



Bible Study Group.



Children raising their spoons for ice cream.

NEWS AND UPDATES

Anniversary Celebration

The Conservative Congregational Christian Conference celebrated our 65th anniversary July 22–25 in St. Paul, Minnesota as part of our Annual Family Conference. We had 348 registered attendees, with 210 delegates. They came from 27 different states, Minnesota having the largest representation at 56. There were also 27 youth and 6 adult leaders; and 34 children with 9 adult leaders. We also had 25 exhibitors. We all shared in fellowship and inspiration during our time together at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and Conference Center.



The setting was beautiful and the weather was cooperative.

Our scheduled Morning Bible Hour speaker, Leith Anderson,

recovering from a concussion suffered in a fall, was unable to be with us. But that hour was ably led by John Kimball on Tuesday, Ron Hamilton on Wednesday, and on Thursday, Paul McPheeters spoke as he combined the Bible Hour with the communion service.

The theme, “Being Changed,” was emphasized throughout. From 2 Corinthians 3:18 we are taught that we are being “transformed into the image of Christ.”

On Monday evening, Ron Hamilton emphasized that “God’s life-changing touch is available to all who trust in him.” His three main points were 1. Expect God to work in your life, 2. Give your stubborn will to him, and 3. Invite God to change you. His conclusion was, “Change for change’s sake is not always good; but change for God’s sake is always good!”

Tuesday evening Alvin Helms brought the message, and on Wednesday evening it was Rob O’Neal. These messages and those from the Morning Bible Hour were recorded. They are currently being digitally mastered and will be posted on the website as soon as they are available.

Next year’s Annual Conference will be held July 21–24 in Providence, Rhode Island. ♦

MINISTRY (cont. from page 1)

In some years we have shown films once each month and in other years we have gone every two weeks. The ministry has seen varied participation, from around a dozen to over a hundred people in attendance. Currently, we are experiencing a lull in participation, so we are exploring options to change or retire this ministry. But it has served its purpose, and was a highly visible sign that we are trying to get out into our community and build relationships with our neighbors.

Another family event that has seen even greater community success is an annual stick horse rodeo. One of our deacons remembered this event from her youth in rural Nebraska and wondered if we could adapt it for Zion. Each summer, kids of all ages compete in barrel racing, pole jumping, bronco riding, straight racing, calf roping, and more, with the fastest stick horse they can find. A congregation member who enjoys woodworking has spent the last two years building up a reserve “stable” of stick horses, so that even kids who do not have their own horse can come and participate.



Stick Horse Rodeo participant

The night begins with the pledge of allegiance to the flag and a prayer for the riders. We have a current deacon who dresses as a clown and does cowboy and cowgirl protection all night. There is music over the PA system and an emcee walking us through each event and calling out riders. A chute and swing gate were created out of an old baby crib for the bronco event. A church group puts on a supper with hotdogs and baked beans.

At the end of the night, awards and prizes are handed out. We’ve noticed an ever-increasing number of community members who enjoy coming to watch. All in all, the stick horse rodeo takes about two hours, and has been a great way for our church to get to know our neighbors. ♦

CHANGES & OPPORTUNITIES

PASTORAL CHANGES

Gardner, MA Mission Street Congregational Church*
David Bodanza

Otsego, MI First Congregational Church of Otsego*
Darin Youngs

PASTORAL OPPORTUNITIES

LaMoille, IL First Congregational Church*

Peoria Heights, IL Peoria Heights Congregational Church* (*Youth Pastor*)

Seward, IL Seward Congregational Church*

Haverhill, MA West Congregational Church * (*Worship Pastor*)

Haverhill, MA West Congregational Church * (*Children's Pastor*)

Aurora, MN Palo Congregational Church*

Cook, MN Ashawa Chapel* (*Part-time*)

Mitchell, NE Federated Church*

Scottsbluff, NE Emmanuel Congregational Church*

Seabrook, NH Rand Memorial Church*

Inwood, NY Community Bible Church* (*Part-time*)

Sardis, OH St. Paul's Church* (*Part-time*)

Reynoldsville, PA Paradise Community Church (UCC)

Warren, PA Good News Community Church* (*Part-time*)

Orwell, VT First Congregational Church (Independent) (*Part-time*)

Hillsboro, WI First Congregational Church*

* = Conference member

+ = In process

HEALTH NEWS

Motorcycling

Betty Mitchell RN BSN, Parish Nurse,
Emmanuel Bethel Church, Royal Oak, MI



Motorcycles are a popular mode of transportation, since the initial cost can be low and in some cases achieves good fuel efficiency. They are also a good vehicle for pleasure rides.

Once you have selected the proper vehicle for your use, there are some safety tips to consider. It is very important that a motorcycle operator successfully complete a motorcycle training course. Get to know your vehicle, the location of the controls and how it handles by practicing in a vacant parking lot or other safe area.



Driving a motorcycle requires different skills and knowledge than those needed to operate a passenger car. Riding a motorcycle requires dexterity and coordination; so it is imperative that you do not operate a motorcycle after consuming any alcohol. Driving a motorcycle requires different skills

and knowledge than those needed to operate a passenger car.

Wearing proper protective clothing helps save lives and reduce the severity of injuries in the event of an accident. Two important pieces of equipment the operator and passenger need on each ride are a certified motorcycle helmet and eye protection.

Durable gloves, jackets, trousers and proper footwear are good choices for your protection. Wearing light colored clothing on your upper body will help make you more visible to other motorists. Reflective material assists with visibility, especially if you are driving at night. Clothing should not be too loose to avoid getting caught in the chain or other protrusions on the sides of a motorcycle.

Motorcycle operators must follow the same traffic rules and regulations as other motorists and be aware of any special requirements for motorcycles. Be sure you are visible to the other drivers and avoid riding in another vehicle's blind spot. You do not want to be the cause of an accident.

Following a few simple guidelines will help make your motorcycle adventure safe and enjoyable for all involved. ♦

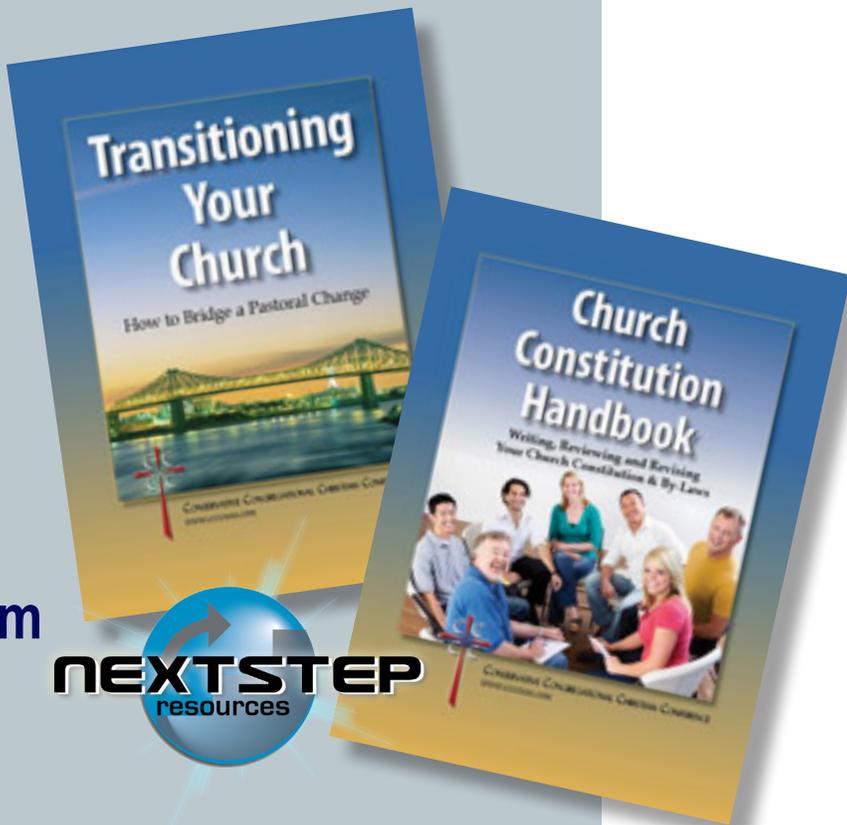


CCCC Church Resources

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