



Fellowship, worship, prayer, sharing

Southside Fellowship, Open Table Fellowship and Camp Friedenswald got the spotlight at the first 2017 regional gathering of Central District Conference.

Thirty-five people from ten congregations in the central region gathered at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary on Saturday, Feb. 25, hosted by Southside Fellowship, Elkhart, Ind. The purpose was not to do conference business, but instead to fellowship, worship, pray and share information.

Learning about each other

Host congregation story

Southside, the host congregation for this gathering, was featured as David Moser, pastor, shared the vision, history and emphases of the 130 people related to the congregation.

A current emphasis is building relationships with the mosque in nearby South Bend, Ind. A

group from the congregation recently visited the Friday evening prayer service at the mosque to signal support in the current climate of fear.

“Its own peculiar way”

In the historical vignette of the gathering, Jenna Liechty Martin, executive director of Camp Friedenswald, described how already in the 1920s, there were people in what is now CDC who had a vision for retreats that encouraged deeper relationships with God. Finally in 1950, that vision took shape as land was purchased on Shavehead Lake in southern Michigan.

In 1951, after the first summer retreats, Robert Hartzler—a church leader who was instrumental in establishing the camp—wrote:

There, in the inspiration of God’s handiwork and in fellowship and communion of other seeking spirits, the souls of young and old may feel anew the lifting and enlarging ... power of the presence of God.... Friedenswald is



Doug Luginbill, CDC conference minister, led the regional gathering participants in praying the Lord’s Prayer with motions at the beginning of the day, Feb. 25, in Elkhart, Ind.



Eliana Neufeld Basinger (right) works on a drawing that shows significant points in her faith story during the gathering at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Eliana is part of Open Table Fellowship, Goshen, Ind.



The regional gathering ended with time for prayer as each person shared how they see and are seeking God, then another person prayed for the one who shared and that congregation. Above Richard Hirschler, Leonard Beachy and Joyce Hostetler formed one triad for prayer.



Photos by J. Tyler Klassen

Three CDC pastors formed another prayer group at the conclusion of the gathering: David Moser, Southside Fellowship; Brenda Sawatzky Paetkau (back to camera), Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen; and Russell Jensen, Maplewood Mennonite Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.

designed and destined to do that in its own particular, peculiar way.”

The first structures are currently being replaced or renovated and Jenna invited people to come on May 13 for a work day to help prepare the camp for this summer’s programs.

Learning about ourselves

Karla Minter, representing Open Table Fellowship in Goshen, led participants in a guided reflection on how they are called to the work of reconciliation, justice-making and anti-racism. She asked each person to list the gifts and strengths they have for their calling and ways in which this calling is difficult for them. “Look at yourself with the eyes and heart of compassion,” she said. “You need both of these lists. The first list provides competence; the second list provides humility. Bring them both ... into your transformation, into your call to be disciples of Jesus Christ.”

Karla will lead this reflection at the two successive regional gatherings. It is a way for people across the conference to learn to know more about Open Table Fellowship, which has requested membership in CDC.

Later in the day, Doug Luginbill conference minister, invited participants to reflect on a place, time or experience that was significant in their spiritual growth and to draw or describe this to share with their table group. Drawings of grapes and leaves were available, linking to the John 15:1-17 text that will be a theme text for the CDC annual meeting in June.

Upcoming events

March 4: Regional gathering, First Mennonite Church, Urbana, Ill.

March 11: Regional gathering, First Mennonite Church, Wadsworth, Ohio

May 13: Work day, Camp Friedenswald
Help prepare the camp for the summer program following the new construction and renovations

June 22-24: CDC Annual Gathering, Bluffton, Ohio

We will gather at Bluffton University, hosted by the CDC West Ohio Region: First (Bluffton), Cincinnati, Grace, Lima, Emmaus Road, and Shalom Community

July 4-8: Mennonite Church USA Convention, Orlando, Fla.

<http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/>

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