

“And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.” --Mark 4:20

The Sower

a newsletter for Central Plains Mennonite Conference leaders and pastors

April 13, 2011

Please forward this newsletter to (or print it for) these congregational leaders:

Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Treasurer, Delegates to Central Plains Annual Meeting, Church Council, Christian Education committee, Mission & Service Committee, Convention 2011 participants, VBS committee.

For Your Prayers

Please pray:

- For Conference Minister Tim Detweiler, who had rotator cuff surgery on April 5 and anticipates a six-week recovery during which he may not drive a car!
- For the Pastoral Leadership Committee, who met April 12, and the Congregational Ministries Committee meeting on April 27.
- For the church planters workshop April 29 and 30.
- For God's guidance in the planning for Annual Meeting, and for our speaker, Juanita Nuñez.
- That visas will be approved for our brothers and sisters from Ecuador and Columbia for the Ecuador Partnership meetings in June.
- For the mission and ministries of our conference and the funding to support them.
- For churches experiencing conflict or pastoral transitions and the conference leaders supporting them.

Finances

March was another positive month for our finances. Income totaled \$43,186.80, a slight increase over the previous month. Expenses totaled \$32,058.99. This created a net gain for the month of \$11,127.81, and more importantly decreases the overall deficit for the fiscal year to \$6,600.18. We are in our final month of the fiscal year (or 91.6%) and giving is at 80% of budget (\$492,284). Comparatively, expenses are at 81%. With less than a month to go, let's squash the deficit and end the Central Plains fiscal year in the black!

Staff News

Dave, Shana and Tim will be at Pastor/Spouse Gathering April 10-12. Dave attends Mennonite Church USA Executive Board meeting in Portland, Oregon, April 14-16. Dave and Shana will be in Freeman, South Dakota, April 17-21 for Pre-Easter Services, followed by a visit to Shana's mother in Kansas on Easter weekend. April 29-30, Dave and the Church Planting Strategy Team host a workshop for Central Plains church planters. That same weekend, Tim and Carol will attend their son Caleb's graduation from Goshen College. This month, Monica is putting together the workbook for Annual Meeting and looks forward to receiving many registration forms.

Church Planter Gathering

On April 29-30, we will be holding a church planting retreat and workshop at Crooked Creek Christian Camp near Washington, Iowa. This event is primarily for those who are actively engaged

in beginning new churches but is also open to anyone who is interested and would like to explore becoming involved in church planting. Seth McCoy will be presenting. –*Church Planting Strategy Team*

Deadlines to Note

Register now for Annual Meeting

Each congregation was sent a packet of registration materials for Central Plains Annual Meeting to be held June 16-19 in Moline, Illinois. Registration materials are also on the web site under Calendar & Events. Register before April 30 for the best rate.

It's time to submit seminary scholarship applications

Members of Central Plains congregations who are students in seminary or the Hesston Pastoral Ministries Program may apply for scholarships for the 2010-2011 school year. Information and applications are posted on the Pastoral Leadership Committee web page. Applications are due May 10. Contact a conference minister for more information.

Peace Mug nominations

The Outreach & Service Committee is taking nominations for the Peace Mug, to be awarded at Annual Meeting in June. Please send your nominations to Rosie Epp at rosiepp@gmail.com by **April 20**. See the criteria for nominations in the March edition of *The Sower*.

From the WDC Library

Free studies on Lent...or on Glee!

Greetings Pastors, Educators, Friends: Just a friendly reminder that you can have free access to hundreds of quality studies on current events, TV shows, movies, Bible studies, and topics. Studies are available for both youth and adult. Try this link to see the ones available for Lent: www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/Pages/Item/1769/Lent-Promotion.aspx. Since we have a paid subscription to The Thoughtful Christian, YOU may request any of these studies for free from me. Email me: crilib@mennowdc.org, name your request(s) and I will send you the PDF files. It's just that easy! –*Marlene Bogard, WDC Library Director*

VBS material

A team from Central Plains wrote the 2011 Vacation Bible School material, called *Taste & See: God Is Good*. Make sure to check out the curriculum's website, where you'll find a 5-day overview, samples and much more. Check back regularly as they continue to add resources for leaders and fun things for kids.

Shaping Families subscriptions

If you are interested in resources for families on some difficult issues – and everyday practical family challenges, too – you can receive a free weekly e-mail subscription, including links to the weekly radio program or podcast, *Shaping Families*. The e-mail newsletter is called *Shaping Families Update* and is sent out every Monday evening, including a link directly to the audio file to listen to the program. It also includes a family stress tip, a link to the week's featured recipe, prayer requests, and news. Go to www.thirdway.com/subscribe to sign up. Bethel Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minnesota, broadcasts this program on a local radio station. Contact them at bethelmennonite@frontiernet.net.

Lombard Workshop coming to Dubuque

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center is offering our *Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders* on **May 23-27, 2011** in Dubuque, Iowa, at Immanuel Congregational United Church of Christ. For more information, go to <http://www.lmpeacecenter.org/MSTI.html>. The

Outreach & Service Committee has grants available for this kind of education. See the information on their web page at www.centralplainsmc.org. Click on Ministries, Outreach & Service, Grants.

AMBS Webinar

Six Images of the Preacher Wednesday, May 11 from 2:00–3:30 p.m. EDT, by Ryan Ahlgrim. What is our primary task as preachers? Connected with this question are different understandings about the authority of the preacher and the proper use of the Bible. This webinar will explore six images of the preacher, each with different goals, ways of using the Bible, and assumptions about authority: The Teacher, The Storyteller, The Counselor, The Witness, The Prophet, and The Evangelist.

AMBS Workshop

Making Marriage the Church's Business: How congregational practices can support marriage covenants on Wednesday, May 25, 2011. This daylong workshop will examine how preaching, teaching and congregational practices can support marriage covenants in intentional, ongoing ways. It will look at how pastors and congregations can avoid waiting to talk about marriage until troubles emerge and instead take the initiative to help grow healthy marriages. This event will pay special attention to theological reflection on the issues, appropriate pastoral behaviors, effects on congregational dynamics and related available resources. Presented by Irma Dueck.

For registration information on either of these events, see www.ams.edu/programs-institutes/clc.

Upcoming Events

Pastoral Leadership Committee meets April 12 in Schuyler, Nebraska

Congregational Ministries Committee meets April 27 in Manson, Iowa.

Church Planter Workshop Friday -Saturday, April 29-30, Crooked Creek Christian Camp, Washington, Iowa

Central Plains Annual Meeting Thursday-Sunday, June 16-19, 2011 Moline, Illinois.

Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) training, Wed-Sun, June 22-26, 2011, Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Sower is published the second Wednesday of each month for Central Plains pastors, delegates, conference leaders and other interested persons. Please include items from this newsletter in your church bulletins and newsletters. Find back issues at www.centralplainsmc.org. Click on Publications.



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Central Plains Mennonite Conference leads congregations as they proclaim and become a sign of God's reconciling work in the world.