

“Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” Jesus answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom...” Matthew 13:37-38a

The Sower

a newsletter for Central Plains Mennonite Conference leaders and pastors

March 9, 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.

For Your Prayers

Please pray:

- For God’s guidance and grace as the leaders of our conference and congregations gather on Saturday, March 12, for [*That the World May Know: A Conference on Christian Unity*](#).
- For the Pastor/Spouse Gathering Sunday through Tuesday, April 10-12, 2011 in Schuyler, Nebraska.
- 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

The Central Plains budget experienced a positive month in February! Income totaled \$41,407.08. Expenses totaled \$35,701.30. This provided a net gain for the month of \$5,705.78, which decreased our overall deficit for the fiscal year to \$17,727.99. We are 10 months (83.3%) into the fiscal year and giving is at 71% of budget (\$492,284). Meanwhile, expenses are at 74% of budget. There are two months to go so please prayerfully consider what your congregation can give to support the work of Central Plains Mennonite Conference and end this fiscal year on a positive note!

Staff News

Diane, Dave, Tim, Shana and Monica are working together to plan the March 12 conference. Monica is working on registration materials for Annual Meeting and will send them out later this month. March 13 and 19, ministry staff will be working with churches working toward healing of relationships. Dave attends a meeting for the Missional Lens project March 16-18 and Constituency Leaders Council with Ramiro Hernandez and Diane Zaerr Brenneman March 28-30. Dave and Shana are looking forward to Schmeckfest in Freeman, S.D., the first weekend of April.

Samuel Lopez to present workshop

On Saturday, April 2, Samuel Lopez will give a day-long workshop on Mennonite history for the Spanish-language churches in Eastern Iowa and Moline, Illinois. Lopez is a past member of the

Mennonite Church USA Executive Board, past president of Iglesia Hispana Menonita, and was a member of the Inter-Mennonite Confession of Faith Committee responsible for drafting the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. He is currently a bishop in Lancaster Mennonite Conference. The workshop will take place at Washington Mennonite Church in Iowa.

Pastor/Spouse Gathering

The annual Pastor/Spouse Gathering will take place from Sunday evening, April 10 through noon Tuesday, April 12, at St. Benedict Center near Schuyler, Nebraska. The Pastoral Leadership Committee is planning a time of relaxation and input. The theme will be “Life-Giving Spiritual Practices that have Saved our Lives, Built our Faith and Energized our Ministries,” using the Exodus story of slavery, deliverance, wilderness and Promise Land to describe our life journey.

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 several sessions on how we work at the process of vision development for new churches. Topics will include articulating theological and missional foundations, defining the community of need, and developing funding streams for support. Interested persons may contact me at davidboshart@centralplainsmc.org or 319-936-5904. —David Boshart

Lenten Resources for Children

Lent begins today!

Called and Shaped by Jesus, a family devotional for Lent, is a perfect way to nurture faith at home. This free download includes worship ideas, pondering questions, prayers and activities for families to do together. It follows the texts and themes of the worship materials in *Leader* magazine. **Download it for free** at www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre. Also check out [A Journey with Jesus: Stations of the Cross for School Children](#) for use in the congregation.

Mug Someone! ...Nonviolently, of course!

Calling for 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 rosieepp@gmail.com by

April 20. Nominate persons who:

- have been involved in peace and justice work for a long period of time;
- have worked at educating, advocating, organizing for peace, justice, reconciliation and community building;
- have modeled a Christian lifestyle of peace and justice;
- have been a founder or leader of a church or community peace and justice organization;
- should be publicly recognized for their ongoing work

Book Recommendation

Worship and Mission after Christendom by Alan and Eleanor Kreider

I highly recommend this resource for pastors and all congregational leaders. It would be an excellent book to read and discuss in pastor clusters/peer groups. Reading this book feels like waking up to a new reality that 21st century congregations need to understand. Grounded in the biblical narrative and the Spirit's quickening, the Kreiders have given us a long-needed resource that

rebuilds the proper connections between worship and mission. They describe a Spirit-filled church whose mission grows out of worship that will cause seekers to ask, “What kind of people are these? What do they know?” and, “Who is this God they worship?” –*David Boshart*

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: crlib@mennowdc.org, name your request(s) and I will send you the PDF files. It's just that easy! –*Marlene Bogard, WDC Library Director*

Have a Little Faith!

This listing of new items from the WDC Resource Library features faith and spirituality books, just in time for Lent. Whether you sense a call to live fully, explore Celtic spirituality or discover daily prayer, we have great new stuff for you. Find the list at www.mennowdc.org/2011-03-CIO.pdf. To reserve these resources, call 316-283-6300 or email crlib@mennowdc.org.

Upcoming Events

That the World May Know: A Conference on Christian Unity Saturday, March 12, 2011, First Christian Church, Des Moines

Pastor/Spouse Gathering, Sunday-Tuesday, April 10-12, 2011 in Schuyler, Nebraska

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

Central Plains Annual Meeting Thursday-Sunday, June 16-19, 2011 Quad Cities, Iowa/Illinois

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

Employment Opportunity with Mennonite Church USA

Executive Director – MPN/Thirdway Seeking a visionary leader with passion for a publishing and media ministry. Reporting to the binational board and based in Harrisonburg, VA, the Executive Director will lead the integration of Mennonite Publishing Network and Third Way Media in the transition to a new multi-media agency providing Anabaptist formation and witness resources. Five years or more executive leadership experience and the willingness to regularly travel within North America. See www.mpn.net/about/openings.html or e-mail indication of interest to search@mpn.net

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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.