

'Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.' And he said, 'Let anyone with ears to hear listen!' --Mark 4:8-9

The Sower

a newsletter for Central Plains Mennonite Conference leaders and pastors

September 14, 2011

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

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

Pastors, Elders/Deacons, Church Chair/Moderator, Treasurer, Christian Education/Nurture Chair, Mission Committee Chair, Delegates to Central Plains Annual Meeting

For Your Prayers (weekly bulletin announcements)

At Annual Meeting, many delegates said that they would like to see weekly bulletin announcements from Central Plains. In each issue of *The Sower*, we will provide a short prayer request for every week for your bulletin. You may choose to use the heading "Prayer requests from our conference" or something similar. **We ask you to please print these in your bulletin every week to keep your congregation connected to Central Plains**, and we thank you!

For Sunday, September 18

This Friday, September 23, the Pastoral Leadership Committee will meet at Manson, Iowa. They ask that you pray for them as they conduct two credentialing interviews, plan for the Spring 2012 Pastors & Spouses Gathering and discern God's direction in a number of issues.

Conference Minister Tim Detweiler would like you to pray for the September 24 event in which Mennonite Church USA Denominational Ministers Terry Shue and Nancy Kauffman train Central Plains lay leaders to accompany search committees and pastoral evaluation committees.

For Sunday, September 25

On Friday, September 30, 2011, the Central Plains Outreach & Service Committee will meet in Rochester, Minnesota with Roger Farmer as the new chair. Roger asks that you pray he will have wisdom and insight to lead this meeting and that committee members will be able to discern God's will together for the outreach and service activities of the conference.

For Sunday, October 2

Steve Nelson will be installed today as associate pastor at Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church near Kalona, Iowa. Pray for Steve and his wife Ashleigh and their children as they transition and for the congregation as they welcome and support a new pastor.

For Sunday, October 9

Pray for *Loaves & Fishes, A Consultation on Children's Ministry*, hosted by the Central Plains Christian Formation Committee this Saturday, October 15 in central Iowa. Please pray that all who participate will be inspired and equipped to faithfully carry out ministry to children in their context.

Finances

Central Plains experienced a difficult month in regards to the finances. Income was at \$14,052, while expenses remained consistent to the expectation for the month at \$32,358. This resulted in a deficit of \$18,306. This fiscal year deficit is now at \$40,536. --*Stewardship Task Group*

Staff News

Sept 7-11 Tim was in Nebraska for annual pastor visits and installed Gordon Scoville as interim pastor at Wood River, NE.

11 Dave preached at Sermon on the Mount in Sioux Falls, SD, and spent the day in Freeman on the 12th.

15-18 Dave will be in Newton, KS, for MC USA Executive Board

19-22 Shana will attend Values-Based Leadership Program in PA

24 Tim will host and Dave will attend the training for leaders who will help with pastoral searches & evaluations

28-29 Shana will be in Milford, NE

October 3-7 Tim will attend Lombard Mennonite Peace Center's Mediation Skills Training in Dallas, TX

Workshop on children's ministry

Loaves & Fishes: A Consultation on Children's Ministry Saturday, October 15, at Hidden Acres Christian Center near Dayton, Iowa. This one-day consultation will offer a wonderful opportunity for congregational leaders to get advice regarding theological grounding, curriculum, problem solving, and the rewards of children's ministry. All interested persons are welcome, whether or not you are currently involved in children's ministry. Special speakers are **Mary Ann Weber**, managing editor for curriculum at MennoMedia (formerly MPN) and **Marlene Bogard**, minister of Christian nurture in Western District Conference. Registrations are due Wednesday, October 5. See www.centralplainsmc.org for a registration brochure and other information. Questions? Contact Shana at 319-936-5905 or shanaboshart@centralplainsmc.org.

Would you like to go to Ecuador?

Ecuador Partners are tentatively planning for two teams to visit Ecuador this winter. If you are interested in participating in a Fellowship and Service Team, which would likely involve construction on a church building or school and visiting the churches in Ecuador, contact Doyle Roth at doylethor@hotmail.com or 402-641-0266. If you are interested in participating in a Fellowship and Learning Team, which would involve participating in the Peace Workshops, assisting at the Refugee Center, and learning about the ministries of the Ecuadorian churches, contact Don Kempf at donaldkempf@windstream.net or 402-759-1285. For more information about the Ecuador Partnership, see our web page at www.centralplainscmc.org/Ministries/Outreach_Service/Ecuador.

Newly updated Ecuador Partnership pages

The Outreach & Service pages at www.centralplainsmc.org are continually being updated, so come and see what's new!

Don Kempf and Linda Shelly have rewritten and updated the History of the Ecuador Partnership. I've also updated the timeline of Partnership meetings from 1990 to the present and added brief descriptions of present and past mission workers from both North and South America as well as news reports of past Ecuador Partnership meetings, as well as plans for future fellowship visits with the churches in Ecuador.

We have also added descriptions of service projects supported by the Outreach & Service Committee, such as the report from Todd Raining Bird's service work this past summer. We hope to post book reviews from young readers involved with the Shalom Readers Book Club.

—Roger Farmer, Chair, Outreach and Service Committee

From the WDC Library

Children's Ministry Resources available for your congregation!

Need a boost? Some new ideas? What works, what's new in children's ministry? Take a look at one of these resources from the Western District Conference Resource Library, and if you dare, call or

email us to borrow them. Remember, all Central Plains congregations have free access to our 12,000 resources. For more resources, search "Christian education of children" at www.mennowdc.org/library/catalog. --Marlene Bogard, director / 316-283-6300 / crlib@mennowdc.org

The Child Friendly Church: 150 models of ministry with children / Boyce A. Bowdon. Abingdon, 1999. A compilation of dozens of models for ministry to children.

Out of the basement: a holistic approach to children's ministry / Diane C. Olson. Discipleship Resources, 2001. Helps leaders in local congregations examine their children's ministry in a comprehensive and holistic manner.

Young Adult Retreat at Swan Lake

Swan Lake Christian Camp invites young adults post high school to age 26 out for our first ever Young Adult Retreat December 18-20. Adam Sieff will be our speaker. His specialty is using hip-hop to tell God's story and our relationship with God. Registration deadline is December 5. Email Renee at Neufeld at programdirector@myslcc.com for more information.

Curriculum for keeping kids safe

The children and youth in your church want to be safe; you want them to be safe too. The **Circle of Grace** curriculum helps to open channels of communication between adults and children and youth in your congregation about this important subject. Supplement your current Sunday School curriculum with **Circle of Grace**. Lessons are self-contained and grade-specific, with 1-4 age-appropriate lessons each year for children and youth in preschool through 12th grade. The curriculum is available in English and Spanish. It is provided on CD, and it includes training and an implementation checklist.

Thanks to a generous donation, **Circle of Grace** is available to Mennonite Church USA churches for no charge. Visit the Dove's Nest website (www.DovesNest.net) for an overview of the curriculum and to request a copy of the **Circle of Grace** curriculum for your church today. For information, email CircleOfGrace@DovesNest.net.

Conference on defining our theological center

This was a strong theme that emerged from the visits Central Plains ministry staff made to congregations last year. Consider going to Hesston College Oct. 28 to 30 for the annual Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series conference with the theme **Getting Beyond Them and Us – to We**. The conference will explore the tension of the church's call from an Anabaptist perspective to be both distinctive and open to others. Find the schedule and registration information at www.hesston.edu/avds. Or, contact Elaine Schmidt at elaines@hesston.edu or 620-327-8290.

Webinars from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS)

Advent Planning: Awesome deeds we do not expect, presented by Marlene Kropf and Rosanna McFadden on Tuesday, October 18, 6:30-7:45 p.m. CDT. [Get details and register by October 14.](#)

Engaging the Bible in the Congregation, presented by Robert J. Suderman on Tuesday, November 8, 12:45-2:00 p.m. CST. [Get details and register by November 4.](#)

Identity crisis in the pulpit: What is the preacher's purpose and authority? Presented by Ryan Ahlgrim on Wednesday, November 16, 1:00–2:30 p.m. CST. [Get details and register by November 12.](#)

AMBS also offers one-day workshops for pastors. To learn more, go to www.ambs.edu and click on “Pastors and Church Leaders.”

Upcoming Events

Sister Care Seminar, Saturday and Sunday, September 17 & 18, at Swan Lake Christian Camp, Viborg, South Dakota

Pastoral Leadership Committee meets Friday, September 23 at Manson, Iowa

Outreach & Service Committee meets Friday, September 30 at Rochester, Minnesota

Church Planting Strategy Team meets Thursday, October 6 location TBD

Loaves & Fishes Consultation on Children’s Ministry, Saturday, October 15 at Hidden Acres Christian Center, Dayton, Iowa

Conference Board and Committees meet Friday and Saturday, November 18 and 19 at Swan Lake Christian Camp, Viborg, South Dakota

Young Adult Retreat, Sunday through Tuesday, December 18-20 at Swan Lake Christian Camp, Viborg, South Dakota

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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The mission of Central Plains Mennonite Conference is to create settings for our congregations and partners to grow in holistic witness to God's reconciling mission in the world by developing leadership, encouraging fellowship and promoting lifelong discipleship.