

He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come." — Mark 4: 26-29

The Sower

a newsletter for Central Plains Mennonite Conference leaders and pastors

November 13, 2013

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 or Deacons, Central Plains Delegates, Church Moderator, Treasurer, Christian Education Chair, Church Librarian, Missions Committee, Worship Committee, Youth Sponsors

For Your Prayers: weekly bulletin announcements

Here are weekly prayer requests for each week between now and the next issue of *The Sower*. Please share them with your congregation by whichever method works best, whether it be in your bulletin, in the pastoral prayer or some other way. *Thank you!*

For Sunday, November 17

Pray for the Central Plains Annual Meeting Task Group as they meet on Wednesday of this week to begin to plan for our 2014 Annual Meeting in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

For Sunday, November 24

Pray for the team of pastors working to create a study resource for Central Plains congregations on the topic of how the church stays true to the Way of Jesus as we engage the culture around us.

For Sunday, December 1

Pray for the annual gathering of the conference ministers of MC USA happening Wednesday through Saturday of this week. Pray that our conference ministers will gain much from the gathering and have safe travel.

For Sunday, December 8

Pray for congregations in Central Plains who are seeking pastors, and for the church in Quito, Ecuador, seeking a pastor.

Finance Update

We had a very strong October as income for the month was at \$46,958.63. Expenses came in at \$36,787.90. This positive surplus of \$10,170.73 helps lower our fiscal year deficit down to \$18,400.31. We appreciate the continued support as we work towards lowering the overall deficit even more in the coming months. —*Stewardship Task Group*

Staff News

November 11-15 Dave is in Freeman, South Dakota, with Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA.
15-16 Dave, Shana, Tim and Monica attend Conference Board and committee meetings at Swan Lake camp in South Dakota.
17 Tim preaches at Sermon on the Mount in Sioux Falls; Dave preaches at Hutterthal near Freeman.
20 Dave, Shana and Monica attend Annual Meeting Task Group in Manson, Iowa.

24 Tim preaches at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City; Dave preaches at Templo Alabanza in Moline, Illinois.
December 1 Dave preaches at Bethel Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minnesota.
4-7 Dave and Tim attend conference ministers' meeting in Denver, Colorado.
8 Dave preaches at Kalona Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

New at www.centralplainsmc.org

We have videos and mp3s to share with you from our Advent Planning Workshop! Find them under Resources or [click here now](#).

Youth sponsors: Save these dates

Youth Escape 2014 will be **August 1-3, 2014**, in central Iowa. This is a conference-wide weekend youth retreat for youth groups which focuses on connecting youth to Jesus, the church and each other. Please put this date on your church calendar and youth group calendar.

Youth Ministry Council, in Kansas City, **May 12-15, 2014**, is a NEW gathering of Mennonite youth ministry workers. Youth pastors, youth sponsors and other Mennonites connected to youth ministry are invited to the site of the 2015 convention to learn, worship, grow and connect with other youth workers. Participants will tour the convention center and have input into convention planning.

Watch for more information about both of these events in the coming months.

Reminders for pastors

12 Scriptures Project. When your congregation does the 12 Scriptures Project, take a look at the [12 Scriptures page](#) on our website for inspiration and ideas. Also, remember to send Shana your congregations creative ideas and your list of 12 texts to post on the web site.

Biblical Discernment Study. Please contact Shana if your congregation is interested in piloting the [study on biblical discernment](#) that is being developed in response to delegate feedback at Annual Meeting.

Been wanting to go to Ecuador?

Anyone interested in going on a Fellowship and Learning Tour to Ecuador from January 16 to 28, 2014, please contact Don Kempf at donaldkempf@windstream.net or 402-759-1285. This is an excellent opportunity to know our brothers and sisters in Ecuador intimately as you visit them in their homes and communities, and you will be able to observe the amazing things that God is doing through the Ecuador Partnership.

Anyone interested in going on a Fellowship and Work Team to Ecuador this winter, please contact Doyle Roth at doyleroth@hotmail.com or 402-641-0266 for more information and scheduling. Exact dates will be confirmed as peoples' schedules allow. This is a great opportunity to work alongside brothers and sisters from Central Plains in a different culture and climate and to deepen our relationships with our Ecuadorian friends.

Quito Mennonite Church is seeking applicants for a full time pastor. Interested persons should contact Don Kempf.

News from Shalom Readers

Fall is a wonderful time to make sure that the children in your congregation have the opportunity to participate in [Shalom Readers](#). Each congregation received a packet at Annual Meeting with information about Shalom Readers and there is also information on the Central Plains website. Hopefully, your congregation has a person who is willing to serve as the leader for the children. The purpose of Shalom Readers is to nurture children in the Jesus way of love, peace and justice by reading carefully selected age appropriate literature.

We thank Janelle Ortman for serving faithfully as the west regional director for churches in CO, MT, NE and SD. Joan Friesen will be taking her place starting this fall and here is her contact information: Joan Friesen, Box 682, Henderson, NE 68371, jfriesen@mainstaycomm.net or 402-723-5868. Please contact Joan this fall with the names of your participating children.

For congregations in IL,IA, MN and WI, contact Ellen Miller with the names of participating children. Ellen Miller, 2131 Grand Blvd., Waterloo, IA 50701, ellenkmiller@gmail.com or 319-235-9130.

Advent Family Devotionals

Download the [FREE Advent Family Devotionals](#) that accompany the *Leader* worship materials, "Oh the Mystery of God's Dwelling." There are devotions and activities for families to use from December 1 through January 11. Download, print and show these to your families. This is a great way to nurture Christian identity during the Christmas season.

Advent and Christmas resources from the WDC Library

Advent and Christmas Planning! Now would be a great time to explore the 300 resources we have on Christmas and Advent at the WDC Resource Library. Need monologues or dramas? Readings for the children? Family reading and activities? Services for Hanging of the Greens or Christmas Eve? We really do "have it all." Call or email NOW to get the best selection of materials for your congregational planning or household reading. Perhaps...you may even want to order a Resource Bundle from the library for December reading. I am happy to select 15 of our finest seasonal resources and mail them to you! —*Marlene Bogard, WDC Library Director*
www.mennowdc.org / 316-283-6300 / crlib@mennowdc.org

Business Leaders and Pastors: Partners in leadership and ministry

This workshop will explore how business leaders and pastors can connect meaningfully with each other and jointly contribute to "God-activity" both inside and outside the congregation. It will explore how pastors and business leaders can empower each other for ministry and shape a shared mission for their churches and communities.

The workshop will be held at the Parkside Activities Center in Wellman, Iowa, Saturday November 23, 2013. Go to www.ambse.edu/businessleaderspastors to register or for more information.

Iowa Mennonite School seeks principal

Iowa Mennonite School is seeking a dynamic, qualified educational leader for the position of Principal/Chief Administrator in rural Kalona, Iowa for the 2014-2015 school year. The successful candidate must have the following:

- Master's Degree or equivalent in educational administration
- Possess a valid Iowa Administrator and Evaluator License
- Serve as Christ-centered spiritual leader
- Demonstrate success working with culturally and academically diverse students
- Effective interpersonal and communication skills

Candidates should complete an application found on the IMS web site at:

<http://www.iowamennonite.org/about/job-opening/> submit a letter of interest, resume, supporting documentation and three letters of recommendation to pbuckwalter@iowamennonite.org or contact Paula Buckwalter at 319-646-2456.

EMS School for Leadership Training

“Discerning Together, Shaping the Future” is the theme of Eastern Mennonite Seminary’s School for Leadership Training (SLT) to be held January 20-22. The goal of SLT 2014 is to offer both theory and practice, examples and opportunities on the topic of discernment.

Keynote speakers are [Ruth Haley Barton](#) and [Ervin Stutzman](#). David Brubaker, a practitioner from the Center for Justice & Peacebuilding at EMU, guides us through three case studies. Seven workshop leaders help us explore scripture, personal experience, spiritual disciplines and family systems as resources for our discernment. Details at www.emu.edu/seminary/slt/.

AMBS Pastor’s Week

Pastors Week, January 27–30, at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary will explore how different points of view can bring unity and clarity. “Help me see Jesus! Help me see, Jesus!” is the theme that will link presentations from five points of view by five AMBS professors. These presenters believe that helping the congregation focus on Jesus is an essential leadership task, and that diverse points of view make the picture of Jesus clearer.

Pastors Week is an annual AMBS event, offering congregational leaders an opportunity for learning, worship and fellowship. See www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek for details and registration.

During the day on Jan. 27, before Pastors Week begins in the evening, AMBS offers three Leadership Clinics. Details at www.ambs.edu/leadershipclinics.

Upcoming Events

Conference Board and Committees meet together November 15 & 16 at Swan Lake Christian Camp, Viborg, South Dakota.

Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches will be offered February 8, 2014, in southeast Iowa.

Church Planters Gathering will take place March 11-12.

Annual Leaders Retreat for pastors and spouses will take place April 25-27 at Schuyler, Nebraska

Central Plains Annual Meeting will take place June 19-22 at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

Youth Escape 2014 will take place the weekend of August 1-3, 2014, in central Iowa.

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.