

*He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. -- Isaiah 2:4*

# The Sower

a newsletter for Central Plains Mennonite Conference leaders and pastors

December 11, 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, December 15**

Pray for the Hmong Mennonite Church of St. Paul as they seek to train their young people for church leadership.

**For Sunday, December 22**

Pray that in this Advent season God's Word would come to life in new and various ways that challenge, convict and transform us.

**For Sunday, December 29**

The team of pastors working on a Bible study for conference congregations is working on a very tight deadline. Please pray for God's guiding hand on their work.

**For Sunday, January 5**

Pray for our conference that God would shape the desire of our hearts toward being biblically-grounded, Christ-centered communities.

**Finance Update**

The conference took a slight step back in November as income for the month was at \$29,486.74. Expenses came in at \$34,061.85. This led to a monthly deficit of \$4,575.11 which does increase our overall fiscal year deficit to \$22,975.42. We appreciate the continued support as we work towards lowering the overall deficit even more in the coming months. —*Stewardship Task Group*

**Staff News**

December 15 Dave preaches at Pleasantview Home, Kalona, Iowa.

21 & 22 Shana meets with Hmong Mennonite Church of St. Paul leaders in St. Paul.

8 Dave preaches at Kalona Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

January 5 Tim preaches at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa,  
and Dave preaches at Eicher Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa.

## New at [www.centralplainsmc.org](http://www.centralplainsmc.org)

Youth leaders, check out the new [Youth Ministry blog](#) under Youth Leaders heading for advice, announcements and practical help.

Check out the [“Support for Conflict”](#) page under “Congregational Leaders” for an introduction to the Conflict Management Support Team and the ways they can help congregations.

## Workshop: Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches

You are invited to attend the **Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches** workshop planned for February 8, 2014, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Kalona Mennonite Church in Kalona, Iowa. The Conflict Management Support Team will lead the workshop, addressing these topics:

- The Nature and Role of Conflict
- Conflict in the New Testament: Finding Renewal in Conflict
- Self-Assessment Exercise: Understanding and improving your own style of response to conflict
- Interpersonal Peacemaking Skills: How to be effective when people are angry
- Congregational Conflict: Understanding conflict in groups and how to manage it

Cost for the workshop is \$45 per person. This covers the cost of lunch and the workbook. This workshop is open to pastors, elders/deacons, congregational chairpersons, and all interested persons who want to learn more about using conflict transformation skills for managing conflict in the congregation.

Please register by January 24. For registration information, see the [Conflict Skills Workshop page](#) under Events at [www.centralplainsmc.org](http://www.centralplainsmc.org). This workshop will be offered in other regions of our conference too.

## Take an online class with David Boshart

David Boshart will be teaching *The Church and Contextual Witness*, a new course being offered online through Eastern Mennonite Seminary. The course will run from January 7 – April 26.

Increasingly, we recognize that each congregation functions within a culture or sub-culture wherever they exist in the world. Much has been written on the importance of understanding the context of mission for international missionaries. As Western societies move increasingly toward a post-Christendom milieu and the church seeks a missional identity, new leadership skills for contextual awareness are needed. This is particularly true in communities where declining church participation is becoming normal. This course will help participants gain theologically informed and scientifically reliable skills for leading congregations to develop relevant witness for transforming impact in the local context of ministry.

To register for the course go to: <http://www.emu.edu/seminary/distance-learning/>. Click on the “Register Now” button on the right hand side of the page. For more information, contact David at 319-936-5904 or at [davidboshart@centralplainsmc.org](mailto:davidboshart@centralplainsmc.org).

## Ecuador tour updates

The Fellowship and Learning Tour to Ecuador with Don Kempf is now full. The tour filled up after the December issue of *Scattered Seeds* was sent to press, so you will see the announcement there even though it is now full.

There is still space in the Fellowship and Work Team with Doyle Roth. Interested persons should contact Doyle Roth at [doyleroth@hotmail.com](mailto: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.

## 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 gathering of Mennonite youth ministry workers. Watch for more information about both of these events in the coming months.

## Sheet music from the WDC Library

Church vocal musicians and choir directors, we have a great deal for you! Imagine having FREE access to over 450 anthems for your choir or ensemble. Imagine having this GIGANTIC list organized by composer, title, season and voicing. Imagine finding it EASILY on the web: <http://mennowdc.org/library/music-library/>. Simply call or email and I will be happy to send you multiple copies of sheet music (up to 30 copies) at no charge. There is still a very large selection of Advent and Christmas available, and of course lots of choices for Lent and Easter. I hope to hear from you soon! —*Marlene Bogard, WDC Library Director* 316-283-6300 / [crlib@mennowdc.org](mailto:crlib@mennowdc.org) / [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org)

## 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. See the full ad here: <http://www.iowamennonite.org/about/job-opening/>.

## 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 by five AMBS professors. See [www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek](http://www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek) for details and registration.

## 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. Keynote speakers are [Ruth Haley Barton](#) and [Ervin Stutzman](#). Details at [www.emu.edu/seminary/slt/](http://www.emu.edu/seminary/slt/).

## Upcoming Events

**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](http://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.