

All the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord. I bring low the high tree, I make high the low tree; I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I the Lord have spoken; I will accomplish it. —Ezekiel 17:24

The Sower

a newsletter for Central Plains Mennonite Conference leaders and pastors

December 17, 2014

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

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 21

Pray for the Hmong Mennonite Church and their new pastor, Pornchai Thosaengsiri (Seng). Pray especially for housing for Pastor Seng and his family.

For Sunday, December 28

Pray for the pastors and lay leaders of our Spanish-speaking churches as they carry out the ministries to which God has called them.

For Sunday, January 4

Pray for pastors and lay leaders of our Northern Cheyenne churches as they lead the Ashland, Lame Deer and White River Cheyenne Mennonite congregations.

For Sunday, January 11

Pray for Pastor Andrea Wall and the Bethesda Mennonite Church in Henderson, Nebraska, as Andrea is ordained today. Pray for God's wisdom and guidance for Andrea and the congregation as they minister together in Henderson.

Next month, The Sower will be dated **January 21**.

Finance Update

In November, Central Plains' budget fell below the break-even line for the fourth straight month. Income for the month was at \$34,185.70. Expenses for the month came in at \$36,207.27, generating a small deficit of \$2,021.57 for the month. This result increases the overall deficit for the fiscal year to \$55,938. December is usually a very good month to help us lower the deficit and we would ask that you prayerfully consider your support during this time so we can start to reverse this trend! We are thankful for the support we have seen thus far. —*Stewardship Task Group*

Staff News

December 28 Tim preaches at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.
January 11 Tim will ordain Andrea Wall and Shana will preach at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Nebraska.
11 David preaches at Kalona Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.
13 Dave attends Church Planting Strategy Team in Manson, Iowa.
16-17 Tim and wife Carol help lead at respite retreat at Crooked Creek camp for adults facing grief and illness.
18 David preaches at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.
18 Shana leads a workshop at Wellman Mennonite Church for teachers of adult Sunday School.
19-21 Tim attends Pastors Week at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia.
21-22 David and Shana attend Annual Meeting Task Group in the Twin Cities.

Church workshop blends relational healing with spiritual formation

How are your church members dealing with past relational hurts that don't seem to fully heal? Ted Lewis of Duluth, Minnesota, now features the [Hagar Workshop](#) which is designed for Christians who want to find new perspectives and skills for coping with interpersonal hurts and regrets. Ideal for a full Saturday with lunchtime, this workshop does not aim to address corporate conflicts within the church, but rather addresses the individual's own journey with past wounds. Even so, the topics lay good groundwork for helping congregants to become more comfortable with corporate practices of apology, trust-building, and reconciliation.

As a mediator and trainer, Ted Lewis also provides other services for churches that want to address issues of conflict and communication in both prevention and intervention capacities. He previously worked with the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference as a mediator for church conflicts. Check out his website: www.restorativetrainer.com.

Congo Mennonite Church requests work team

In 2010, a windstorm blew down the Kanzala Mennonite Church at Tschikapa, Democratic Republic of Congo. The Congo Mennonite Church is asking for a work team to come and help put up the church rafters and roof. Arnold Harder of First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minnesota, was in Tschikapa during that windstorm and is now organizing a team to go help with the repairs in February. The team would leave between the 11th and 15th and return February 28 or March 1. Each participant needs to deposit \$4000 with Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM) for all expenses and travel to Chicago at your expense. Team members will need a passport and a yellow fever shot.

Those who would like to go to Congo on the team or who would like to donate to this venture should contact AIMM at 574-535-0077.

Mennonite Church USA Convention information

Visit www.mennoniteusa.org/convention, Mennonite Church USA's Kansas City convention website. As planning continues, this website will be the one-stop-shop for the many details you'll need to know to start planning your participation in next year's convention. Please bookmark it, forward the link to others and check back often to see the promo videos and find out the unique things we are planning for Kansas City 2015. —*Mennonite Church USA Convention Staff*

Mennonite World Conference

Are you planning to attend Mennonite World Conference July 21-26, 2015, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania? North American Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren, and Brethren in Christ are encouraged to honor next summer's guests by starting to prepare now.

"Most of us probably can't become fluent in Indonesian or Amharic or French between now and July. But we can certainly learn to know more about our sister churches before we're sitting next to their members at next summer's Assembly!" commented Richard Thomas, chair of the National

Advisory Council for the event. [Follow this link](#) for a recommended reading list. Also, the latest issue of MWC's *Courier* is now available online.

Resources on immigration

MCC Washington Office created [a resource page](#) on President Obama's executive action announcement. Many of these resources are available in both English and Spanish. The most helpful one is the very first one on the list, the USCIS page [in English](#) and [in Spanish](#).

WDC Library: Neighboring Challenge!

The WDC Resource Library has wonderful books on connecting with your community. In *The Art of Neighboring*, author Jay Pathak talks about the "map of shame" exercise he uses when encouraging folks to be better neighbors. He provides a chart with your house in the middle, and all your neighbors houses around the edge. The task is to fill in names, and more information about each household. It's a great way to expose the limitations that many of us place on who our friends are. Call 316-283-6300 or email crlib@mennowdc.org to request these books:

[City of God : faith in the streets / Sara Miles](#)

[Dirty faith : becoming the hands and feet of Jesus](#)

[Missional Essentials / Brad Brisco and Lance Ford](#)

[Celebrating the third place: Inspiring stories about the "great good places" at the heart of our communities / edited by Ray Oldenburg](#)

—Marlene Bogard, WDC Resource Library

Learning opportunities from AMBS

Lent worship planning

Explore resources for Lent worship, including scripture presentations, sermon ideas, children's worship ideas, hymns and visuals. **Day-long workshop:** Saturday, Jan. 17, at AMBS, led by Rebecca Slough, Rachel Miller Jacobs, Allan Rudy-Froese and Rosanna McFadden. **Webinar:** Thursday, Feb. 5, 6:30-7:45 pm CST, led by Rachel Miller Jacobs.

Rural Ministry Seminar: The Mission of a Rural Congregation

AMBS-Kansas Center, in conjunction with Central Plains Mennonite Conference and Western District Conference, will be hosting a Rural Ministry Seminar on Saturday, January 24, 2015 from 8 am – noon at Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston, Kansas. This seminar is presented by S. Roy Kaufman and will explore the unique mission of the church in a rural context. This seminar will include lecture, case studies, discussion groups, and a catered lunch. Cost is \$39 per individual and \$100 per congregation to bring an unlimited number of congregation members. For more information, please see www.ambs.edu/ruralministry.

Rural Ministry Course

AMBS-Kansas Center will be hosting a Rural Ministry Course January 20-24 at Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston, KS. This course will be taught by S. Roy Kaufman, author of *Healing God's Earth: Rural Community in the Context of Urban Civilization*. This course will explore preaching and pastoral care in a rural setting, the mission of a rural congregation, and the prophetic calling of rural ministry in the face of some of the systemic issues that arise in a rural context. This one-credit hour course is available for both credit and audit. [Find more information here](#) or register by sending an email to registrar@ambs.edu.

Anabaptist Short Course

“Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture: What's Different and Why?” is a six-week online course, taught by Loren Johns, professor of New Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical

Seminary. The course is taught at a seminary level but for no credit. It is highly interactive, drawing on the wisdom among students. The course runs from Feb. 11–March 25, 2015. Learn more: www.ambs.edu/anabaptistshortcourses.

Spring online course

An online course, “History of Christianity in Africa,” will be offered by Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary from February 3 to May 20. It examines the history, missionary dynamics and current changing demographics of the African church. The instructor is James Krabill, PhD, Mennonite mission worker in Ivory Coast for almost two decades and senior executive for global ministries with Mennonite Mission Network since 1996. Anyone not enrolled in a theological program who is taking a first AMBS online course gets a 50 percent tuition discount. To learn more and to register: www.ambs.edu/christianityinafrica.

Pastors weeks at the Mennonite seminaries

Eastern Mennonite Seminary School for Leadership Training, January 19-21, 2015

A Church for All Generations in an Age of “Nones” Featured speakers are Lauren Winner and Dan Aleshire. See www.emu.edu/seminary/slt to learn more.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary Pastors Week, January 26-29, 2015

Where Culture Blurs Theology: What is an Anabaptist Christian? Greg Boyd, Drew Hart, Janet Plenert and Elizabeth Soto Albrecht explore what it means to be an Anabaptist today. Learn more at www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek.

Upcoming Events

Sister Care Seminar will be held April 17 and 18, 2015 in southeast Iowa.

Annual Leader's Retreat will take place April 19-21, 2015, at St. Benedict Center in Schuyler, NE

Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience - The STAR Training will take June 13-17, 2015 in Minneapolis, MN.

Central Plains Annual Meeting will take place June 18-21, 2015, in the Twin Cities.

Mennonite Church USA Convention and Delegate Assembly will be held June 30 to July 5, 2015, in Kansas City.

Mennonite World Conference Assembly Gathered will take place July 21-26 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Youth Escape 2016 will take place July 15-17, 2016 in central Iowa.

The Sower is published the third 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.