

Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation.
— Habakkuk 3: 17-18

The Sower

a newsletter for Central Plains Mennonite Conference leaders and pastors

November 18, 2015

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, Youth Leaders.

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 22

Pray for Central Plains finances. Seven months into the fiscal year, we have a significant shortfall. Pray for generous giving to enable support for our congregations in the areas of pastor transitions, formation resources, church planting, resolving conflict and thought leadership.

For Sunday, November 29

Pray for Tim Detweiler and Dave and Shana Boshart as they attend the annual gathering of Mennonite Church USA conference ministers in Orlando, Florida. Pray that God's Spirit would be powerfully present in this gathering.

For Sunday, December 6

Pray for Tim Detweiler who will be having surgery on Tuesday, December 8, to remove the cancerous nodule in his right lung. Recuperating time at home is expected to be between two to four weeks following surgery.

For Sunday, December 13

Pray for our mission partners in the Quito Mennonite Church as they raise money to buy a building to house the congregation and its many ministries such as peace workshops for children and assistance for Colombian refugees.

Next month, The Sower will be dated **December 16**. Send submissions to Shana by **December 7**.

Finance Update

The Central Plains budget took another big hit in October. Income for the month came in at \$17,130.65. Meanwhile, expenses for the month held steady at \$34,000.88. As a result of another monthly deficit, we extend our fiscal year deficit to \$59,791.24. Please pray for strong contributions and consider what you or your congregation can contribute as we enter the final two months of 2015. We are very grateful for the support of our members. —*Stewardship Task Group*

Staff News

November 18 Today is Tim's birthday.

- 19 Today is Shana's birthday. She attends a Youth Escape Planning Committee meeting in central Iowa.
21-22 Dave preaches at Wood River Mennonite Church, Wood River, Nebraska.
22 Shana preaches at Zion Mennonite Church, Donnellson, Iowa.
30 Dave meets with Woodland Hills Church staff to explore future relationship with Central Plains.
December 2-5 Dave, Shana and Tim attend conference ministers meeting in Orlando, Florida.
8 Tim has surgery to remove the cancerous nodule in his right lung and will be out of the office for two to four weeks to recover.

Covenant resources

[*Being God's Faithful Community*](#), the study of the covenant of spiritual practices, is available for just \$3.59 per booklet at Amazon.com. Each congregation is encouraged to do this four-session study sometime before our 2016 Annual Meeting. Be sure to use the version updated October 22.

The Spanish translation of the covenant study guide, [*Ser una comunidad fiel a Dios, Un pacto de practicas espirituales*](#), can also be found available on Amazon.com or as a download on the [Covenant Resources page](#) of our web site.

Also find covenant teaching videos and several new worship resources on the [Covenant Resources page](#) of our website.

Support the Max Villatoro Family

- Visit www.friendsofpastormax.org and sign up for updates and action alerts.
- For historical information and updates see www.centralplainsmc.org/max-villatoro.
- Donate to the Villatoro Family Fund at www.centralplainsmc.org/donate.
- Follow [Friends of Pastor Max](#) on Facebook.
- Buy Villatoro Family Blend coffee. This organic, fair-trade Honduran coffee is available for purchase for \$15/bag. Proceeds from the coffee sales go to the Villatoro Family Fund. Place your orders at www.friendsofpastormax.org.

For pastor and elder/deacon teams

Develop your skills and sense of team by reading and discussing a good book. Here are two great resources for teams of pastors and elders/deacons! The premier Mennonite resource for ministry teams is the book by Anne Stuckey, [Training Ministry Teams: A manual for elders and deacons](#). If you've done that one already, Shana recommends [Blessings for Leaders: Leadership wisdom from the Beatitudes](#) by Dan Ebener.

For youth sponsors and teachers

Plan now to attend Youth Escape 2016, the youth retreat for Central Plains youth and sponsors. Youth Escape is for youth who are now in grades 7 through 12. Michele Hershberger of the Hesston College Bible Department will teach on how the Bible is relevant to our lives. More info coming soon; planners gather November 19.

Sponsors, [The Gathering Place](#) is a fantastic new resource for Mennonite youth leaders! Just one example: [this recording of a webinar on the topic of mentoring youth](#), led by none other than Michele Hershberger. Check it out and check out the other great conversations going on at [The Gathering Place!](#)

Advent Family Devotionals

Download the [FREE Advent Family Devotionals](#) that accompany the *Leader* worship materials, "Freedom Bound!" There are devotions and activities for families to use from November 29 through January 9. Download, print and show these to your families. This is a great way to nurture Christian identity during the Christmas season.

WDC Library

Looking for a teaching video for faith formation or a mini study retreat for yourself? Consider using the DVD *Discovering Christian Classics: Five Sessions in the Ancient Faith of our Future*. It draws upon the Desert Fathers and Mothers, St. John Chrysostom's sermons, St. Benedict's *Rule of Life*, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and the *Imitation of Christ* by Kempis. It includes a leader's guide and group activities.

We're happy to mail resources upon request! Contact us at crlib@mennowdc.org / 316-283-6300. Search at [Conference Resource Library](#).

Dove's Nest Speakers Bureau

The Dove's Nest has created a [national speaker's bureau](#) of highly qualified members who are available to train across North America. Presentations can be uniquely tailored to your faith community. Speaking events may range from a 1- to 8-hour community training, a 20-minute sermon, or a 10-minute outreach spotlight during worship. Dove's Nest also offers presentations for Sunday school classes, children's sermons, and other church presentations. Visit the Dove's Nest [website](#) to learn about current events or to request a training event for your faith community.

Pastor's weeks at AMBS and EMS

Continuing education with great fellowship too!

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, presents "The Bible Says What? Discovering Scripture Anew in Jesus' Company" with Jewel Gingerich Longenecker and Bryan Moyer Suderman presenting. Plan to come January 25–28, 2016, Monday 7pm to Thursday 12:30pm. [More info here.](#)

Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia, presents "Oasis" with presenters Matt and Liz Myer Boulton. Plan to attend January 18-20 from 7pm Monday until 5pm Wednesday. [More info here.](#)

Upcoming Events

Youth Escape Planning Committee meets November 19 in central Iowa.

Annual Leaders Retreat will take place April 22-24, 2016, in Schuyler, Nebraska.

Central Plains Annual Meeting 2016 will take place June 16-19, 2016, in Des Moines, Iowa.

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.