

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. — Luke 1:78-79

The Sower

a newsletter for Central Plains Mennonite Conference leaders and pastors

December 16, 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, Mennonite Women.

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 20

Pray for Max Villatoro as well as for Gloria and the children as they spend their first Christmas separated from each other. Pray that God will make a way for Max to return to his family soon.

For Sunday, December 27

Central Plains leaders join you in giving thanks to God for the gift of Emmanuel, God with us. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among people!

For Sunday, January 3

Pray for the Annual Meeting Task Group which meets next Tuesday in Des Moines to tour the site and make plans for Central Plains Annual Meeting next June 16-19, 2016.

For Sunday, January 10

Pray for the workshop on Conflict Transformation Skills to be held next weekend in Freeman, South Dakota. Pray that many will learn valuable skills they can put to use in their relationships and congregational leadership roles.

For Sunday, January 17

Pray for those planning Youth Escape 2016, the weekend retreat for all Central Plains youth to be held July 15-17, 2016 at a camp in central Iowa. Pray that many youth will participate and deepen their relationship with Christ.

Next month, The Sower will be dated **January 20**. Send submissions to shanaboshart@centralplainsmc.org by **January 5**.

Finance Update

Central Plains budget reversed its monthly deficit trend in November! Income for the month came in at \$43,091.22. Meanwhile, expenses for the month held steady at \$32,485.41. As a result of this positive month, we were able to lower our overall fiscal year deficit to \$49,185.43. We still have some work to do, but we are very grateful for your contributions. We continue to ask for prayer and to invite your financial support as we enter the final month of 2015! —*Stewardship Task Group*

Staff News

January 10 Dave will be at Church Planting Strategy Team in Des Moines

12 Dave, Shana and Monica meet with Annual Meeting Task Group in Des Moines.

15-16 Tim and the Conflict Management Support Team host a Conflict Transformation Skills Workshop in Freeman, South Dakota.

22-23 Snow date for both Annual Meeting Task Group and the Conflict Transformation Skills Workshop.

The Sower will get a new look in January

Starting in January, we plan to send out The Sower via Mail Chimp. By using this format, we can more effectively tailor the content to your needs. Until I understand better how MailChimp works, the Spanish version (*El Sembrador*) will continue to be sent as it currently is: via regular email with a PDF attachment. –*Shana*

Conflict Transformation Skills Workshop for church leaders

You are invited to attend the **Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches** workshop planned for **January 15-16, 2016**, from 7 - 9:30 pm Friday and 9 am – 4 pm Saturday at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota. 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

The cost is \$45 per person which covers the cost for the workbook and other programming expenses except lunch on Saturday. An additional lunch fee will be charged at the event. **Bring your payment to the workshop.**

This workshop is open to pastors, elders/deacons, congregational chairpersons, and all persons who want to want to improve their interpersonal peacemaking skills for managing conflict more effectively.

Please register by January 8 by using the form on the [Conflict Skills Workshop page](#) under Events at www.centralplainsmc.org.

Christ Community to host seminar on sexuality

Christ Community Church in Des Moines invites sisters and brothers from Central Plains to join them for a seminar on **Saturday, February 6**, called **God's Bodies: Theology and Sexuality in an Age of Certainty**. The seminar runs from 9 am to 2:15 pm. Here is an abbreviated description:

“Sex is important. But our disagreements concerning sexual practices and policies raise urgent questions about how our human sexuality can be understood in Christian perspective. Unspoken, often unexamined assumptions lead to bitter, seemingly intractable conflict over how we are to act and think sexually. There is no magical solution to the disputes afflicting and splitting so many churches. But we ought to get clear, and be candid, about how theology and sexuality are related at a level far deeper than quoting (or rejecting) individual verses.”

Find a flyer with the full description, speaker bio and logistical details on the [Central Plains home page](#).

For your Covenant Study

Many churches plan to begin the covenant study in January. Remember, there are teaching videos and several new worship resources on the [Covenant Resources page](#) of our website.

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.

Youth and sponsors: Come to Youth Escape 2016!

Plan now to attend Youth Escape 2016, the youth retreat for Central Plains youth and sponsors. The weekend will include worship, breakouts and free time activities like swimming, zip line, climbing wall, mini-golf and much

more. Popular youth speaker Michele Hershberger will speak in three worship sessions. Mark your calendars now. Contact Shana for more information at shanaboshart@centralplainsmc.org or 319-936-5905.

Support the Max Villatoro Family

- **Give Villatoro Family Blend coffee as Christmas gifts!** 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.
- 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.

Elective curriculum for adult Bible study

Teachers and Superintendents, when you are looking for an adult study, check out [MennoMedia's Study Shelf](#). Study Shelf titles can be purchased at a 25% discount when you buy five or more copies of the same title. In addition, for many Study Shelf books there are free downloadable study guides. A few of the titles on the Study Shelf are *Please Pass the Faith: The spiritual art of grandparenting*; *Relentless Good-bye: Grief and love in the shadow of dementia*; *Seven Things Children Need*; and *Go to Church, Change the World: Christian community as calling*.

WDC Library

If you've ever wondered how the first Christians practiced their faith, view *The Faith and Practice of the Earliest Christians: A DVD Study of the Didache* or read *The Teaching of the 12*, both by Tony Jones. The Didache is a short "guide to living the Jesus Way" as perceived by a very early Christian community. A short book, the Didache provided a source of direction for new Christians instructed by the 12 apostles before the New Testament books were available. The entire Didache is available online--at Paraclete Press, for example. The DVD and book by Jones are tools to study the Didache.

Either resource or both would be a fascinating study for Sunday School groups, Bible study groups, or individual study. Both Jones titles are available at the WDC Resource Library. E-mail crlib@mennowdc.org or call

Dove's nest receives grant for video project

Dove's Nest will soon be able to expand the number of faith communities it helps to keep children and youth safe, thanks to an \$8000 grant from the Schowalter Foundation.

The "Child Protection 101 Video Project" will include a series of short, captivating videos that give practical tips to increase child safety in faith community settings. These videos will present bite-sized information in a format that can be shared online and through social media. Topics may include the two-adult rule, a church facility checklist, a plan for reporting possible abuse, an overview of a [child and youth protection policy](#), and a [Circle of Grace](#) meditation.

Pastor's weeks at AMBS and EMS

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](#).

Trauma Awareness Training from STAR

[STAR-Lite Training: Learning Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience in a Single Day](#)

Saturday January 30, 2016 in Minneapolis Special early tuition \$55 Standard tuition \$155

Details at: www.starlitejan2016.eventbrite.com

[Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience - the STAR Training](#)

Monday-Friday August 8-12, 2016 in Minneapolis Details at: www.staraug2016.eventbrite.com

Both trainings have been approved for continuing education for all licensed mental health providers, nurses, and teachers. STAR-Lite has also been approved for continuing legal education (CLEs) for attorneys.

Also, EMU is now offering an online webinar STAR Basics Class beginning the end of January 2016.

It's five weeks and only \$79 with Carolyn Yoder, who I call the brilliant mind of STAR.

Here's the link: <https://carolynyoder.leadpages.co/online-star-basics-class-2016/>

Carolyn's website www.peaceaftertrauma.com has tons of free resources that CPMC pastors and laypersons no doubt will find useful. —*Donna Minter, director of the Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute.*

Upcoming Events

Annual Meeting Task Group meets January 12 (snow date January 23) in Des Moines.

Conflict Transformation Skills Workshop will be held January 15-16 (snow date January 22-23) in the Freeman, South Dakota, community.

God's Bodies: Theology and Sexuality in an Age of Certainty will be held February 6 from 9 am to 2:15 pm in Des Moines.

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.