



Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

It is with great pleasure and gratitude to God that we announce to you the hiring of David Boshart for the position of Executive Conference Minister (ECM) for Central Plains Mennonite Conference (CPMC). After a search process involving several candidates, we feel that Dave's gifts and abilities make him that right person at the right time for CPMC.

Dave has spent more than 20 years pastoring CPMC churches, during which time he has often served in a volunteer capacity with the conference (both Iowa-Nebraska and later CPMC). He has served on all of the standing conference committees or their predecessors as well as conference council. Dave is currently leading the church planting task group. These experiences give Dave an intimate knowledge of our conference, both its strengths and weaknesses, and also reveal the importance he places on the conference and its work.

Dave has thought extensively about what it means to be a missional church. Consistently the search committee heard that what the conference needs is a strong, missional leader. Dave feels passionate about the witness of the conference and its congregations, and is excited by serving the witness and partnership role of this position. His PhD work was in the area of missional church and church planting. Dave advocates building bridges between young congregations new to conference, and older congregations who have been around a long time. These bridges will help to give grounding and history to younger congregations and also bring excitement and missional impulses to more established congregations.

Dave is a talented speaker, able to articulate profound theological principles in everyday ways. He sees the role of ECM as that of resident theologian for the conference, someone who is able to give overall thought leadership to conference issues. Unless our ECM is able to articulate those thoughts well, the theology will never be received or understood; thus the importance of his speaking/teaching gifts.

Dave is not afraid of conflict and is able to create an environment where everyone is heard and understood, while holding firm to an Anabaptist understanding of what it means to be Christian. His work on the task group that planned our hermeneutical discussion in Des Moines this past year is evidence of his ability to bring different voices together to be heard. His love of Mennonite Anabaptist theology will go far in helping us with our identity and articulation priorities, and while he recognizes that our confession of faith may change in the future, he holds to it as the best document for articulating faith that we have at this point. Dave is a good listener, willing to hear what others are saying, and is able to remain in relationship with people with whom he disagrees.

Dave is an able administrator who also has experience in development work, and is eager to work with the finances of our conference. He recognizes the fiscal difficulties that are facing the conference, but suggests that we need to produce a budget for CPMC that is both realistic and

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visionary, while also being flexible enough to allow us to get involved where we see God at work.

Dave is an extremely gifted leader who we believe will be an effective team leader for our other conference staff. He is a nationally recognized figure who currently serves on the executive committee for the executive board for MC USA. During his work there (as well as at the conference level), he has shown himself to be someone others can work well with.

Dave (full-time executive and witness/partnerships) will join a staff team of Tim Detweiler (full time ministerial leadership) and Shana Peachey Boshart (3/4 time communication and nurture).

Executive Committee recognizes that hiring Dave as ECM will likely raise certain concerns, which we want address at the outset. We expect that there will be some perception in the conference that the balance of power has shifted to southeast Iowa, and that those congregations will receive the bulk of the time and energy of the conference ministers. All three staff (along with EC and SC) have given this much time and consideration and believe the benefits to having all conference ministers in one place counteract the misgivings people may have. Some ideas that could make this work: First, we propose staff spend significant blocks of time (a week or more) in different areas of the conference as a way to get to know not only congregations, but communities. We believe people may actually see more of the conference ministers this way than under the previous system. Second, with today's technology, work can be done from almost anywhere. Third, staff suggested keeping record of how and where their time is spent to show the various areas of the conference exactly how much time they are getting with staff. Fourth, staff meetings would become a lot simpler; currently staff must spend a day driving to attend staff meetings. All have indicated they would be willing to relocate, but would like the opportunity to try it from their current homes in Iowa for a period of time.

The second issue we anticipate being raised is having two conference ministers from the same household. The search committee discussed this at length with all three staff. Dave felt he would be able to supervise Shana with regards to timelines and completion of work, but that he would be unable to evaluate her work, and some sort of committee would need to be set up for that. He and Shana both noted that they would need good boundaries in their lives; times and places that were not dedicated to work. They also both noted that good communication would be vital, especially with Tim, making sure that they were not spending time dreaming and visioning without him. Tim feels the three of them will work well together. Dave and Shana note one benefit would be their freedom to join each other on conference ministry trips. This would allow the members of CPMC greater opportunities to see their conference staff, and when one of them was not needed in meetings, they could bring work along with them. Dave and Shana also noted that both of them hold their positions lightly and that, if after a trial period it was not working, either one of them would be willing to resign and pursue other opportunities.

Praise God with us for answering many prayers and providing leadership for this conference of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,

Executive Committee of Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Diane Zaerr Brenneman, Blaine Friesen, David Quiring, Norma Miller