

LMPC Newsletter

Lombard Mennonite Peace Center

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Mediation Skills Training Institute Offers Hope

In the last four years, LMPC has presented its *Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders* forty-eight times. A total of 1,430 pastors, judicatory officials, and other church leaders have attended the institute over those four years.

The five-day training event, led by Richard Blackburn, is being presented another ten times during 2004. That means that, by the end of 2004, the LMPC Executive Director will have devoted fifty-eight weeks, more than a full year, to leading this event over the course of five years.

While the above numbers are in some ways astounding, the testimonies shared by those who have attended the *Mediation Skills Training Institute* are both gratifying and humbling. Often pastors who attend the institute are currently in the midst of a challenging conflict situation in their church.

Such pastors typically testify to the healing impact of the training event. Having experienced the pain of being in the overfocused position during a time of intense anxiety, finger-pointing, and blaming in the church, such pastors have said that the Christ-centered, transformational model of mediation being presented gives them new hope.

A Conference Minister from the United Church of Christ summarized the point when writing: "I saw in your carefully developed strategies the possibility of contributing to the church I have always dreamed of... a church that models for the world how the way of

Jesus Christ can transform destructive conflict into reconciliation."

That testimony is typical of those heard from judicatory leaders who attend the institute. A Lutheran Bishop noted that it is "the best and most thorough model for mediation with individuals and congregations that I have experienced in more than three decades of ordained ministry."

A Presbytery Executive wrote: "[It] provided a variety of opportunities to engage in self-reflection and learn new skills that I can use to assist congregations in seeking solutions to their conflict." An Episcopal Bishop succinctly said it's: "A must for leaders in the church, lay and ordained!"

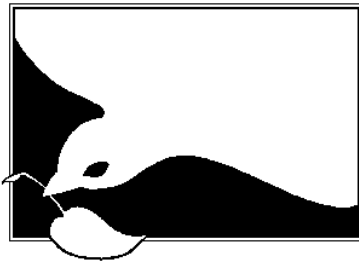
Many judicatory offices of various denominations have seen the value of hosting the *Mediation Skills Training Institute*, as a way of equipping a large group of pastors and lay leaders to provide

mediation and conflict transformation skills training services to churches in their region.

One such example is Shalom Zone Ministries of the Texas Annual Conference, United Methodist Church. They contracted with LMPC to present the *Mediation Skills Training Institute* in February, 2003. Working with two neighboring conferences, they invited us back in December, 2003, to train all of their District Superintendents. We've now been invited to return there to train another group of pastors and lay leaders in October, 2004. Thus, the Texas

Conference and Shalom Zone Ministries is to be applauded for their effort to infuse the conflict transformation vision throughout the churches of their region.

They can serve as a model for other judicatory offices to do the same. Judicatory leaders can contact LMPC, if interested in hosting an institute to train pastors and others to become agents of healing and hope in Christ's sacred ministry of reconciliation.



2004 Training Events

Mediation Skills Training Institute:

- May 17-21 - Prairie Village, KS
- Aug. 2-6 - Orland Park, IL
- Sept. 20-24 - Washington, DC area
- Nov. 15-19 - Winston-Salem, NC

Here I Stand:

- April 19-21 - Dallas, TX
- June 8-10 - Cleveland Heights, OH
- Aug. 17-19 - Hinsdale, IL
- Oct. 19-21 - Denver, CO

Healthy Congregations:

- March 26-27 - Cuyahoga Falls, OH
- April 23-24 - Souderton, PA
- Oct. 15-16 - San Francisco, CA

Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations:

- May 14-15 - Portland, OR
- Nov. 12-13 - Hinsdale, IL

God's Own Peace:

- March 30 - Denver, CO
- April 22 - Wheaton, IL
- May 19 - Bethesda, MD
- Nov. 3 - Bow, NH

Leadership & Anxiety in the Church:

- May 26 - Hicksville, NY
- Oct. 13 - Orland Park, IL

For registration brochures contact
LMPC at 630-627-0507.

LMPC Seeks to Hire Additional Program Staff

Due to the growing demand for our services, LMPC is seeking to hire an additional Assistant Director. The new staff person will assist in all aspects of the LMPC ministry, focusing particularly on providing educational programs and mediation services for churches and other organizations. Interested candidates can contact Richard Blackburn, LMPC Director, at 630-627-0507 to request a job description and application materials.