



April
2014

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Scattered Seeds

Children of the Kingdom Sowing the Word

—Matthew 13



Photo by Rebecca Beachy Miller

God is calling young people to lead the church

by Shana Peachey Boshart, editor

Perhaps the most important thing we do in the Scattered Seeds is this: to notice what God is doing in our conference and bear witness to it. One thing God is doing recently is calling young people to pastor Central Plains congregations.

The trend started suddenly. In May of 2011, Aaron Carlson was installed at Manson Mennonite, and the following August, September and October we saw one young new pastor installed each month. In May of 2012, Jeff Miller stepped into a key interim role at Kalona Mennonite, and the following autumn saw a flurry of installations of young pastors: four in two months. Since May of 2011, more than half the new pastors in our conference have been in their twenties or early thirties.

We invited them to answer the question: **What is it about the mission of God and the mission of the church that inspires you to be a pastor?** Implicit in this question is another: **As a pastor, what gives you hope for the church?**

As you read their responses in these pages, listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit. What is the Spirit saying to Central Plains through these young pastors?

We also invited them to share with us one resource that they think would inspire people to have confidence in God's mission and/or hope for the church. Take up the challenge to read at least one of their recommendations!

Speaking of hope, when I read the testimonies of these young pastors, my hope for the church is renewed. On page 3, Tim Detweiler names the qualities we need in pastors. When I look at the new cohort of pastors, I see these very qualities.

God is at work among us, and will bring about his purpose for us. Thanks be to God!

"... this grace was given to me to bring... the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known ..."

— Ephesians 3:8b-10a

Aaron Carlson



As I look back on my childhood I can see many ways that God cultivated a shepherd's heart into my development before I even realized it. Over and over in Scripture God compares Himself to a shepherd. He is present in the wild environments of our lives. He rescues us, and even sacri-

fices Himself to care for us.

Although God finds us in our brokenness, He patiently works in our lives to change us into people that reflect His character. These realities inspire me to join God in pastoral ministry. 1 Peter 5:1-4 captures this calling to pastors. As I consider the people God has blessed me to serve as a pastor, what gives me great hope is that God chooses to use all of us regular folk to unveil His love and grace to the world, and one another. He uses analogies like calling us His body and His temple.

We don't always get the expression of God's love just right. But when we do, it is quite astonishing to see the effects His love can have. God must think we are capable of communicating His heart more than we give ourselves credit for. It is such a high calling to be identified by our love for one another (John 13:35).

It gives me great joy to venture into attempting to live this out with other believers before a watching world. It gives me great joy to witness brothers and sisters who creatively show Jesus' love in ways that both shout and whisper to a watching world "God is still present. His love is still reaching out. He loves you."

Aaron Carlson, 30, is pastor at Manson Mennonite Church, Manson, Iowa. He began there in May of 2011. Aaron says that a book that gave him fresh hope for the church recently was *A Contrarian's Guide to Knowing God-Spirituality for the Rest of Us* by Larry Osborne.

Amanda Beachy



I am endlessly inspired, as I approach the scriptures each week, by the living Word of God that continues to do new things in this time and this place and this church (and Church)! It is so quick and easy to give in to worry and fear, but I am continually reminded that the reign of God and the mission of the church work together to bring healing, hope, and wholeness into this broken world.

I believe that the church, and specifically, our Mennonite church, has a purposeful and practical mission; to provide a witness of simplicity in our world that is over-crowded by gadgets and *stuff*, to provide a witness of peace into our world of violence and vengeance, to provide a witness of wholeness (shalom) as we discern and speak together in love—refusing to give in to pervasive fear and hate, and to always, always witness to the unyielding and boundless love of God for all people.

I consider it a blessing to be able to walk with faithful people of all ages through important questions of life, faith, allegiance, spirituality, power, and justice—as we discern together what new things God is doing among us!

Amanda Beachy, 29, began as pastor at Washington Mennonite Church, Washington, Iowa, in August of 2011. Resources Amanda likes are *Living the Sabbath* by Norman Wirzba, *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson and femonite.com, the blog of Hannah Heinzekehr.

Matt Troyer-Miller



In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he writes "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross (Col. 1:19-20)." Our God is a

God of reconciliation, "who was pleased to reconcile to himself all things." Our God is a God of fullness, who is pleased to dwell among us, and who uses the mystery of the cross to make peace.

This gives me hope. It is not up to me to make peace and to reconcile. I do not have to be perfect, and I do not need to expect perfection from my brothers and sisters in Christ. It is God who is the Creator and the initiator. It is God who makes peace; it is God who is "pleased to reconcile to himself all things."

Of course, I have a responsibility to share this good news with those around me. I have a responsibility to keep my eyes open to God's activity in my family, church, and community, and a responsibility to use my gifts to further God's kingdom. Yet I find comfort in the fact that God is bigger than my mistakes. God is able to work through the clay jars of the church, and is even able to make the life of Jesus visible in our human flesh (2 Cor. 4:10)!

As a pastor, what gives me hope for the church? That the Kingdom of God is something far bigger than I can grasp, and that I am not alone. That we are not alone; that we are not entrusted with a message of reconciliation on our own power. It is Christ that holds all things together, and it is through Christ that God reconciles all things. That gives me hope.

Matt Troyer-Miller, 31, was installed as pastor at Wood River Mennonite Church, Wood River, Nebraska, in August of 2012. He recommends *A Culture of Peace: God's Vision for the Church*, by Alan and Eleanor Kreider, and Paulus Widjaja.

Calling out leaders for the church of the future

by Tim Detweiler, conference minister for ministerial leadership



I often ponder the qualities needed in pastors today for leading the church toward God's mission in the world. We live in a society that is becoming increasingly more polarized and anxious. This calls for pastors and leaders who are able to manage their own anxiety while staying focused on the mission

that God has for the church. I believe Christ continues to call pastors and leaders for the church today, "to equip God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:12). Calling out pastors and leaders for the church is an ongoing practice we must tend to.

As I listen to "call stories", I am struck by how often pastors say that a turning point for them in moving toward pastoral ministry was when someone they trusted tapped them on the shoulder to offer a word of encouragement to consider a call to pastoral ministry. My own call story has a "shoulder tapping" experience.

A question worth pondering is how do you know who to tap on the shoulder? What are the qualities we look for in calling out pastors for the church? This question has led Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada to compile a list of six competencies essential for pastoral ministry – qualities we look for in pastors.

We need pastors who are formed by the **Biblical story**. By this I mean pastors who know the story of God's salvation history, who place themselves in God's salvation story and who see truth anchored in Jesus and scripture. We need

pastors who can not only preach and teach the Biblical story but who can also lead congregations to become hermeneutical communities for discernment.

We need pastors who are able to communicate and embody **core Anabaptist values, beliefs and practices** within the context of the wider Christian church.

We need pastors who **live a life of discipleship and who practice spiritual disciplines** for ongoing growth. These are leaders who are formed by God's love and purposes; who are committed to following Jesus in discipleship and who seek to be led by the Holy Spirit. They know how to invite others along on the Christian journey with them.

We need pastors with **self-understanding and self-awareness**. These are leaders who have a clear sense of call to ministry, who are clear about the values that guide their living, who know the gifts they bring to ministry and who are committed to life-long learning. They are able to listen to and welcome differing points of view while clearly stating their own position. They can stay engaged in relationships even when there are differences and conflicting opinions.

We need pastors with good **contextual awareness**. These are leaders who are able to help a congregation engage its context with the gospel of Jesus Christ. They see the church as a sign of God's reign in the world and encourage the church to participate with what God is doing in their community and in the world.

We need pastors with the gift of **leadership**. These are leaders who have the capacity to influence others and lead the congregation toward God's mission and vision. Yes, pastors need to be gifted in preaching and the public ministries of the church. They also need to know how to equip others for ministry. They lead with clarity and resolve and cultivate an environment of trust and collaboration. They are able to embody the ministerial office and help the church to discern how and where God is at work.

These are six important competencies we look for in pastoral leaders. I trust they can be a guide for you in knowing who to tap on the shoulder, giving someone an encouraging word to listen for God's call to pastoral leadership.

"What are the qualities we look for in calling out pastors for the church?"



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Nathan Ramer



The most beautiful thing about the mission of God that I've been able to witness as a pastor is the diversity of ways in which the Holy Spirit touches peoples' lives. In church work I have been invited into significant points in the life journey of both parishioners and strangers; and these have been the places where I see

God's holiness most clearly and the transforming power of Jesus most actively. You don't have to be a pastor to have these experiences, but I've found that in this role the opportunities and invitations to these moments have greatly increased.

The images, sounds, smells, tastes and textures that God uses to crack into peoples' lives through objects and people blow me away, even though I notice them only sporadically. This keeps me coming back for more even when I get discouraged, because it re-convines me that God's mission is at work even in places that look dark. I've experienced enough to wonder what all else God is doing that I don't even begin to see!

This is why it's worth the stress of a pastor to be "on call" all the time, or to be asked to attend many events even when my wife and I are tired. Because God might spring up and do something new! Church doesn't give me hope because of its institutional power and resources, which seem to be dwindling more all the time, but church gives me hope because it is still one of many places where the Holy Spirit can reach people and it is still the primary place where disciples of Jesus can organize, strengthen and position themselves for the ministry of daily life.

Nathan Ramer, 29, was installed as pastor of Wellman Mennonite Church, Wellman, Iowa, in September of 2011. Nathan finds hope in the book, *Messy Spirituality* by Michael Yaconelli. "It is the hope for the Spirit transforming individuals that gives me hope for the church hanging in together."

Steve Nelson



Ever since the fall of man, the mission of God has always been to fix what is broken, to seek what is lost, to heal what is sick. The message and mission of His church is the same: to bring repentance, redemption and reconciliation through Jesus to a world that desperately needs

it. God loves us so much that he gave his only Son to save me and to save you and to save the whole world through Him. Jesus came to earth, lived a perfect life without sin, died for our sins, and rose again overcoming death. That is the God I love and that is the God I serve.

Recently, I was asked by someone two questions. The first was "Where do good people go when they die?" and the second was "Where do bad people go?" It was a reminder that the simple message of salvation through Jesus Christ alone through faith must be a regular part of our church's message. Jesus says in Matthew 29:18-21 "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (ESV)

Jesus calls us, the church, to GO! He calls us to share and teach of the hope we can find in Him. If the church can learn to accept God's love, to trust Him and to be obedient to His word, we will see and experience Christ's redemptive power. Moving a congregation towards that mission is why I'm inspired as a pastor.

Steve Nelson, 32, became associate pastor at Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa, in October of 2011. His chosen resource is the Gospel of John.

Jeff Miller



What gives me hope for the church is the knowledge that the church belongs to Christ, so the powers of darkness cannot prevail against it. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said to Peter, "I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (NIV). I often witnessed this truth when I was previously serving the Lord in South Asia. I met a lot of believers there who were facing persecution for their faith, but no amount of opposition was ever able to stop the church or keep the church from growing stronger.

As a pastor in Christ's church, sometimes my task can feel daunting, but it's extremely encouraging to remember that the church doesn't belong to me, but to Christ. I also find great encouragement in the words Jesus spoke to his disciples as he commissioned them and sent them out saying "surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20, NIV). The church is Christ's, He is with us, He will prevail, and therefore I have hope.

Jeff Miller, 30, began as interim associate pastor at Kalona Mennonite Church in May of 2012.

Nicholas Detweiler-Stoddard



At least since Abraham, God blesses the families of the earth through God's people. God's people do not hoard the blessing for themselves, but become a conduit of blessing for all nations. This is why I am a pastor. I am a church member because Jesus has blessed me, but I have stepped out as a church leader because

Christ's Body is for the sake of the whole world (not just me, my family or even my congregation).

God is a missionary God and God's people are a missionary people. In Jesus, God is reconciling all things. That's right. *Everything* (2 Cor. 5:16-6:1; Col. 1:19-23). God's mission is to restore and make right all that is sinful, wrong, diseased, broken, abused. Jesus is tearing down all the walls that divide us (Eph. 2:13-22). And this is being done not simply so I can be assured of my place in heaven, nor so the church can feel safe against the gates of hell, but "in order that *all the nations* might glorify God for his mercy" (Rom. 15:8-9).

This is why I have responded to God's call to lead the church. This is why I can see the desperate pain in the world and can stare incredible challenges to the church in the face and still walk away with great hope: God in Christ by the Spirit is reconciling *all things*—and the church has been called to be a coworker in that same ministry (2 Cor. 5:19b-21). I lead today with unwavering hope because Christ is bringing the church peace, and does so to bring peace to the whole world. May it be so among us!

Nick Detweiler-Stoddard, 28, became pastor of Salem Mennonite (South Church) near Freeman, South Dakota, in August of 2012. He recommends *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing* by Emmanuel Katongole & Chris Rice.

Taric Leichty



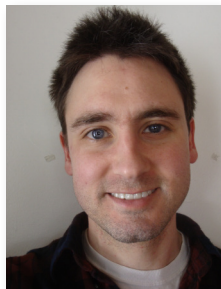
We live in a culture that is so full of things to do and yet so empty of purpose on the inside. Many long for something more. Many are broken, hurting, and calling out for help. Those of us who are following Jesus Christ have been given the opportunity and command to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with all people. Our doors need to be open so that these people may come in.

I believe that God desires to impact people's lives and bring them out of the darkness that they are in. God has a plan for each person's life and I am blessed to be able to have a hand in that process.

I am inspired to be a pastor because of the plan God has for people. A plan to restore them to Himself and show all people their true identity in Him when they become His children. I have hope for God's church because He pursues those He loves with passion.

Taric Leichty, 23, is associate pastor for youth at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford, Nebraska. He began there in March of 2013. He recommends *Victory Over the Darkness* by Neil T. Anderson, a book that reminds us that our true identity is in Jesus Christ.

Adam Harder Nussbaum



For some of us, it's easy to become frustrated and cynical about the state of the world; meaning, it's easy to become cynical about people (including ourselves, of course). Greed, desire for power, self-centeredness, pettiness, laziness, rigidity, callousness, etc. For me, what's inspiring about God's mission is that in it, God

unabashedly challenges all of these things, and promises to set them right.

God's mission is difficult, but I'm never left feeling like it's ultimately up to me or the church to make it happen. Time and again, God has given me the energy and small moments of sensitivity I need to follow the call, and I know this is true of faith communities, too. So I guess the difficulty and ambitiousness of God's mission inspires me. God proves God's power to me most clearly when the call is difficult.

What gives me hope for the church is the faith of people in the church. I'm continually humbled by people's love for God and Jesus, and especially by their stories of God's influence and action in their lives. Jesus said that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, and I see the truth in this when members of the church share their faith with each other.

And it gives me hope that Jesus Himself articulated the humility of God's kingdom and mission. It means our churches aren't expected to be big. It reminds me that we don't determine the church's standards of success. God is always challenging us and inviting us to be changed, and to see the world from a different perspective.

Adam Harder Nussbaum, 31, began as pastor of Shalom Mennonite Church, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, in October of 2012. He recommends *To Live in Peace: Biblical Faith and the Changing Inner City* by Mark R. Gornik.

Leader transitions

Amanda Beachy is now the main contact pastor for Washington Mennonite Church, Washington, Iowa. **Grant Nebel** is now one-quarter time pastor for nine months of the year.

Sonya Stauffer Kurtz was installed as interim pastor at East Union, Kalona, Iowa, on Sunday, February 9.

Robert Yutzy began March 1 as transitional pastor for Emmanuel Mennonite Church in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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Central Plains Annual Meeting 2014 Longenecker to speak on being formed by the Bible



Come to Central Plains Annual Meeting June 19-22 to focus on how we are formed by the Bible. Jewel Gingerich Longenecker will speak on the theme "Joyfully Following Jesus: Formed by God's Word."

Jewel is Associate Dean for Leadership Education at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Indiana. A native of Kalona, Iowa, Jewel is a graduate of Iowa Mennonite School and AMBS. In May, she will receive a PhD in Leadership Studies at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

For the past several years, Jewel has been studying pastors who are successfully leading their congregations to informed, enthusiastic engagement with the Bible. Through her research, she has identified the practices that lead to high levels of engagement with the scriptures. She will speak three times: Friday, Saturday and Sunday mornings.

We will be hosted by the southeast Iowa cluster of churches on the campus of Iowa Wesleyan College in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. Our meetings begin Thursday evening at IWC with an opening worship service followed by an ice cream social and youth activities. Friday and Saturday will begin with worship followed by delegate sessions and workshops. Friday evening we'll enjoy an uplifting program of stories and testimonies about what God is doing in our conference congregations. Saturday evening, we'll enjoy fellowship and fun with a variety show.

Annual Meeting concludes with Sunday morning worship at Sugar Creek Mennonite Church, rural Wayland. All four Central Plains churches in Wayland plus Washington Mennonite will join the Sunday worship service at Sugar Creek.

Each congregation is encouraged to send one youth between the ages of 15 and 20 as a voting delegate. There will be special activities to orient the youth to the delegate sessions and give them opportunities to get to know one another. Children's activities will be provided for children through grade 8. Simultaneous translation is available by request on the registration form.

Registration information will be mailed to churches at the beginning of April. It will also be posted at www.centralplainsmc.org.

Annual Meeting themes for the next three years are based on John 14:12-18 and will be:

- 2014 Joyfully Following Jesus: Formed by God's Word
- 2015 Joyfully Following Jesus: Communities Centered in Christ
- 2016 Joyfully Following Jesus: Sharing God's Love

The hosting churches for Annual Meeting 2014 are Pulaski, Zion, Pleasant View, Sugar Creek, Wayland, Eicher Emmanuel, Bethel, Iglesia Cristiana and Washington.

To receive this newsletter in Spanish, call Shana Peachey Boshart at 319-936-5905. Para recibir este boletín en español, llame a Shana Peachey Boshart al 319-936-5905.

Tamara Gill



From a very young age, God placed a passion for working with children and youth in me.

On Wednesday evenings, our church basement fills with community youth. The seventh and eighth graders are loud and wild, sometimes even completely chaotic. Nonetheless, as we reflect on faith together, they are eager to know more and ask questions—even the ones that may not generally be accepted in Sunday school.

A few weeks ago, we were invited to share our gifts at the local nursing home. We planned an evening worship service. Although quite nervous, every person did their part. Watching 16 junior high students sitting and talking with the eighty- and ninety-year-olds gave me tremendous hope that faith is indeed being passed on through the generations.

In August, I believed that my senior high youth group was only going to have one sophomore. He boldly stated, “This is my church. This is my group. I want to see what will happen if I stay this year.” One quickly grew to four area youth. Then, four grew to five . . . six . . . seven . . . twelve . . . seventeen youth in our community!

These ninth- to eleventh-graders are passionate about studying the scriptures. They want to know what the Bible says and they aren’t afraid to ask difficult questions. They are thrilled when adults in our community share faith stories with them. These youth, many of whom come from non-church families, are dedicated to “putting God first”. When I see their willingness to speak and act in Christ-like ways, I believe that the future of the church is strong—if our churches are ready to open ourselves to the ones who want to know Christ but may not always look or think exactly like us.

Tamara Gill, 33, has been the co-pastor at Wayland Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa, since October of 2012. She recommends *The Story* by Max Lucado, saying, “I believe that God’s story should give us hope for God’s people, which connected deeply with our stories.”

Christopher Montgomery



The Church, in its worship, proclaims and rehearses a startlingly alternative story to the narratives of the world. I have great hope for the Church, specifically our Anabaptist tradition, because of the ways in which we bring to the broader community and the world the necessity of this story of shalom. We are

a people whose theology is defined by action and whose action is characterized by reconciliation. I see the effort of groups like BridgeFolk, who are seeking to find common ground in worship and spirituality between Anabaptists and Roman Catholics, as positive and fruitful for Anabaptists. It is hope-filled because the greater the unity in our worship and spiritual practice, the greater our witness for peace in the world.

For me, being a pastor means guiding the congregation through the actions and rituals of this alternative story so that our longings are formed by that which is faithful to Gospel: longings for justice, reconciliation, and unity. The rites of the Church in its worship (baptism, Eucharist, singing, preaching, praying) are symbols of what God is doing, and desires us to do, in the world. I find hope in Sunday worship that sees no disconnect between the Church’s symbols and rituals and its action. In other words, how is our labor for shalom formed by our worship beyond the sermon?

I am inspired by the great possibilities for the Church and the world that are rehearsed in these actions, many of which can be appropriately borrowed from more liturgical traditions. To be part of that process in building unity and facilitating those disciplines of practice in the Christly community is what sustains me and gives me great joy and hope in my pastoral work for the Church.

Christopher Montgomery, 28, began as pastor of Sermon on the Mount Mennonite Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in January of 2014. A resource he recommends is *People of the Truth: The Power of the Worshiping Community in the Modern World* by Robert E. Webber and Rodney Clapp. He blogs at worshipcrafting.com.



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Growing in
holistic witness
to God's
reconciling mission
in the world through
fellowship,
discipleship
and leadership

The Central Plains budget continued its momentum in January, and then took another step back in February. As you can see from the graphs, we experienced a big difference in income for these two months as January came in at \$43,783.34 and February at \$18,774.13. Expenses held steady for these two months at \$34,517.31 and \$35,549.51, respectively. The large deficit in February put us back to an overall deficit of \$2,070.05. We are grateful for the continued support by congregations and individuals and pray we can experience a positive final two months of our fiscal year to end it in the black. Thank you so much. —*Stewardship Task Group*

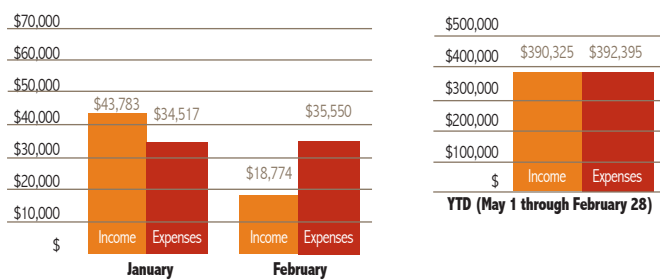
UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Leaders Retreat for pastors and spouses will take place April 25-27 at Schuyler, Nebraska.

Central Plains Annual Meeting will take place June 19-22 at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

Youth Escape 2014 will take place the weekend of August 1-3, 2014, in central Iowa.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Income vs. Expenses



An area conference of



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Church
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