



April  
2015

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# Scattered Seeds

Children of the Kingdom Sowing the Word  
—Matthew 13



Screenshot from a "Tuesdays with Dave" webinar.

*The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.*

— Mark 4:26-27

## "Tuesdays with Dave" sparks new ideas for outreach

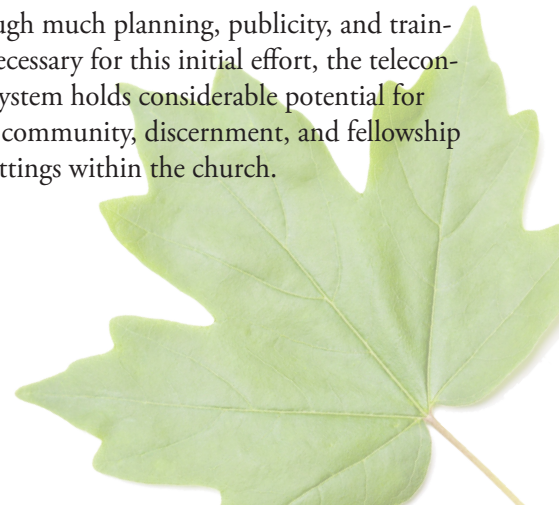
by Roger Farmer, Chair  
Outreach & Service Committee

"Tuesdays with Dave" was an online video teleconference taught by David Boshart, Conference Minister for Outreach and Service. For three consecutive Tuesdays in February, Dave addressed questions of congregational outreach, including how to talk to people about Jesus and what to do if a visitor shows up at Sunday morning worship service. Following Dave's presentations were discussion times using the chat option of the teleconferencing platform.

All three sessions of the teleconference were a resounding success with participation in each session of more than 100 persons from 25 locations in four states around Central Plains. Video recordings of the sessions are available on the web site at <http://www.centralplainsmc.org/tuesdays-with-dave>. Several congregations have already viewed these recordings.

The series grew out of discussions by the Outreach and Service Committee of Central Plains Mennonite Conference about ways that congregations might do a better job inviting people to faith. At the same time, technological change and declining cost has provided online conferencing software that is increasingly high quality, easy to use, and inexpensive.

Although much planning, publicity, and training were necessary for this initial effort, the teleconferencing system holds considerable potential for improving community, discernment, and fellowship in many settings within the church.



# Teleconference format shows great promise

## “Tuesdays with Dave” participants tell us about their experience

by Phil Lindell Detweiler and Robert Yutzy  
Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

**The content was very helpful.** We found the content stimulating. It was great to evaluate what keeps us from sharing our faith. Is it lack of good role models? Is it a fundamental lack of commitment to deepening relationships with people? Or is it simply that we forget how different our life was before deciding to follow Jesus – or that we grew up in the church and the before/after experience is not as stark for us as for others?

We were both quite surprised that David used shame as a central theme for our opportunity to bring hope in our culture. But we were both touched, in different ways, by this deficit of our common cultural life. Those themes of shame and the temptation to not be genuine about who we are in our churches have appeared in at least two sermons since February.

**The medium takes some getting used to but shows great promise.** It initially seemed intimidating for people to have the virtual floor. People responded more freely when David invited participants to use the chat feature.. Those comments provided fodder for our group’s conversation.

It was amazing to be in a “virtual room” with that many people from around the conference and to be able to draw from the rich resources available. We believe that the medium shows great promise for sharing of ideas and broad dissemination of best practices.

**Where do we go from here?** There are questions that remain for us as a congregation. How can we hold a broader discussion about outreach in our church? What do we do with the quote David shared from Patrick Kiefer who says, “You Mennonites are so good at welcoming the stranger into your space, as long as it remains your space.”

Will we allow those to whom we reach out to shape and mold our worship, intellectual, and spiritual space, as long as our foundational truths are not distorted? Could we set up a visitor follow-up team? Dealing with such questions growing out of this series would be extremely beneficial for our congregation.

## Learn, Grow, Serve, Repeat

### Anabaptist Faith Formation Launch

by Katherine Goerzen

An Anabaptist Faith Formation Launch will be held June 12-13, 2015 on the Bethel College campus in North Newton, Kansas. This event will kick off a focus on faith formation for Anabaptist congregations and introduce a new web site, [www.anabaptistfaithformation.org](http://www.anabaptistfaithformation.org). The web site is a joint project of Central Plains Mennonite Conference, Western District Conference and Mennonite Church USA.

Andy Brubacher Kaethler, assistant professor of Christian Formation and Culture at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), will kick off this event with an address on how Jesus and the Bible inform how we do faith formation. Rachel Miller Jacobs, assistant professor of Congregational Formation at AMBS, will preach Friday evening on how worship informs our faith formation.

This launch will also include 14 breakout sessions, which will speak to different aspects of faith formation and different ways to do faith formation. Shana Peachey Boshart and Rachel Springer Gerber will conclude the event with a presentation of the Anabaptist Faith Formation website and a discussion of next steps for moving forward.

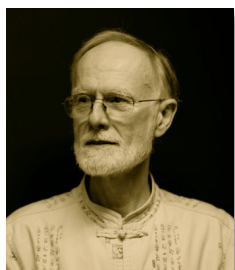
The purpose of the launch is to provide practical, meaningful ways for congregations to build on the good faith formation that is already taking place. Western District Conference is hosting the launch and invites Central Plains folks to attend. Register and find more details at [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org).



# Muslims are meeting Jesus: Mary's story

by Philip E. Friesen

Central Plains Partner in Mission



In October 2011 in a private conversation in a church near Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, I heard the following testimony from an Egyptian actress. On one occasion she had played the part of a Christian character in a play, and somehow this experience stimulated a curiosity about Christians. At the same time, her life had become a terrible struggle, and one day as she walked down a narrow city street, her desperate cries to God were heard and Jesus spoke to her. Jesus was framed in a picture at the front of a Christian-owned shop, and when she saw him, he said, "I am the one you have been addressing. I have heard you and I can help you. Believe in me." This was her Damascus road experience. I will call her Mary, which is not her real name.

When Mary proclaimed her faith in Christ, her father expelled her from home, but at times when Dad was absent, she could visit her mother. Her parents' apartment was in a secure courtyard with two watchmen at the gate. Two of them happened to be Christians, however there was one man at a shop in the courtyard who threatened her. Still, she was not intimidated and returned a few days later. When the two guards saw her they immediately broke into laughter. Perplexed, she asked them why. They told her the man who had threatened her was now in the hospital from a serious accident and would be there for at least a couple of months. The guards were not laughing at the man's tragedy, but in relief at knowing she would be safe. Soon afterward she received an unsolicited letter of apol-

ogy from the man who had threatened her previously.

Mary wanted to be baptized, but church after church refused her request. In Egypt, any church that baptizes a Muslim will be closed by the authorities. Every church she visited had an excuse. Usually they said that they did not do baptisms in this particular church, and she would need to go elsewhere. Then one day she happened upon a church where a baptism was being conducted. "Aha," she thought. "I have caught them in the act." After the service she went to the leader and demanded to be baptized, and having no excuse, the leaders agreed to baptize her. Mary said she will never go back to that church again, as her presence could be dangerous for those leaders.

Mary showed us her hands. On each wrist was tattooed a cross. She said, "I have placed the mark of the cross on my body so that whatever may happen to me, I will never be able to deny my Lord." Do you have a cross on your body? What does the cross look like for you in your place of service?

Mary's story is not that unusual today. A DVD called "More than Dreams" that dramatizes five other recent examples is available online at <http://morethandreams.org/>.

*Philip Friesen is an advisory board member for Christians Meeting Muslims in Minneapolis, Minnesota, a member of Galilean Fellows ([www.galileanfellows.org](http://www.galileanfellows.org)), and a Partner in Ministry with Central Plains Mennonite Church.*



## Scattered Seeds

The newsletter of Central Plains Mennonite Conference is published six times a year at Kalona, Iowa.  
Editor: Shana Peachey Boshart. Copy Editor: Erin Ramer. Editorial Council: David Boshart, Tim Detweiler, Roger Farmer, Lerace Graber, Susan Janzen, Nathan Luitjens, Sherilyn Ortman.  
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For the June issue, please send stories, news and photos by **May 1, 2015** to the address above.  
Please send subscription requests and changes of addresses to [office@centralplainsmc.org](mailto:office@centralplainsmc.org).

Graphic Design by Erin Ramer.

Printed by Kalona Graphics in USA



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.

## Central Plains Annual Meeting 2015

# Greg Boyd to speak as we gather at Woodland Hills



Internationally recognized theologian and author Greg Boyd will be the featured speaker at Central Plains Annual Meeting June 18-21, 2015. He will speak on the theme, "Joyfully Following Jesus: Communities Centered in Christ."

Greg is the co-founder of Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he serves as senior pastor. Greg has authored or co-authored 18 books and numerous academic articles, including his best-selling and award-winning *Letters From a Skeptic* and his recent books *Repenting of Religion* and *The Myth of a Christian Nation*.

The Twin Cities cluster of Central Plains churches will host Annual Meeting 2015 on the campus of Woodland Hills Church. Special features of this year's meeting include Friday workshops on-site at various ministries around the Cities and a joint Sunday morning worship and communion service with the Woodland Hills congregation.

Our meetings begin on Thursday evening with an introduction to the host churches. Friday and Saturday will begin with worship followed by delegate sessions. On Friday afternoon, choose from workshops offered on-site or off-site.

Off-site workshops will visit different ministries, and some will include supper at the ministry site. On Saturday, all workshops will be offered on site.

Saturday evening will feature a talent show (volunteer acts welcome!) mixed with testimonies (anecdotes welcome!) against the backdrop of an ice cream social. The ice cream will be catered by St. Paul favorite Izzie's Ice Cream.

Delegate sessions will include discernment regarding the adoption of a covenant to congregational practices of worship, teaching and discernment.

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 a chance to get to know one another. Children's activities will be provided for children through eighth grade. Simultaneous translation is available by request on the registration form.

Registration information will be mailed to churches in April. See the Annual Meeting 2015 page at [www.central-plainsmc.org](http://www.central-plainsmc.org) for detailed information on registration, youth delegates and delegate business.

## Fund established to assist churches buying Shine curriculum

### Donations to the fund are encouraged

by Shana Peachey Boshart

Conference Minister for Christian Formation

A fund has been established to offer financial assistance to Central Plains congregations to purchase Shine Sunday School children's curriculum. Shine curriculum, for children age three through grade eight, is jointly produced by Mennonite Church USA and the Church of the Brethren.

It nurtures trust in God and invites children to follow Jesus by encouraging imaginative, interactive biblical storytelling and by cultivating the inner life of the Spirit through spiritual practices.

The Shine Curriculum Fund was established with a \$5,000 donation from Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota.

"We are very pleased to have had the opportunity to assist other Central Plains churches with acquiring and utilizing the Shine curriculum," said Pastor Todd Jones. Other churches and individuals are encouraged to contribute to the fund so

that it can continue to be available to those who need it.

The fund will be administered by the Central Plains Christian Formation Committee. Churches may apply to the fund for money to purchase story Bibles in English or Spanish, poster packs, music CDs or *Shine Together* teacher handbooks. Congregations are expected to pay for student pieces and teacher guides on their own.

Those congregations who have never ordered Shine curriculum are eligible to apply for money to purchase a Shine Starter Kit in order to try it out.

Congregations may apply to the fund for up to \$500 per year. The funds will be distributed to applicants based on financial need. To apply to the fund, churches must fill out the Shine Fund Application, which can be found on the Shine page under Resources at [www.centralplainsmc.org](http://www.centralplainsmc.org).



# Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience

## STAR Training especially for Central Plains

by Donna L. Minter, Executive Director,  
Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute

"The general perception is that trauma healing is soft, a warm fuzzy, that it has little or . . . no role to play in reducing violence. Yet trauma and violence are integrally linked: violence often leads to trauma, and unhealed trauma, in turn, can lead to violence and further loss of security." -Carolyn Yoder, author of *The Little Book of Trauma Healing: When violence strikes and community security is threatened*.

Mennonite Anabaptists have a 500-year history of being people of peace. STAR Training offers an excellent opportunity to complement our Anabaptist biblical understanding of peace with knowledge of how psychological trauma results in violence. Proactive peacebuilding can transform psychological trauma into nonviolent power.

When harm is done and psychological trauma occurs, humans scream for fairness and justice. All too often, people confuse pursuing justice with the drive for revenge. With emotion-driven revenge, authentic justice is rare. Revenge fuels cycles of violence between those who do harm and their victims. Trauma begets violence, violence begets trauma.

With deliberate, nonviolent peacebuilding interventions we can realize peace at the individual, family, neighborhood, community, national, and international levels. Mennonites who care about peace and reconciliation can learn trauma-informed and resilience-oriented strategies to teach positive alternatives to revenge.

When we learn the links between the victim and aggressor cycles of violence, we can break free from these cycles and move toward reconciliation, as Jesus calls us to do. Peacebuilders are individuals and groups who use simple, effective strategies to interrupt the transmission of psychological trauma within their spheres of influence.

The STAR Training, Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience, was developed in the months following the tragic events of September 11, 2001 at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, Eastern Mennonite University. It now has a 13-year national and international reputation of successfully training thousands of professionals and laypersons how to be

trauma-informed and resilience-oriented to empower their communities.

STAR incorporates biblical principles and integrates neuropsychology, trauma healing and resilience, restorative justice, nonviolent conflict transformation, and spirituality, setting the stage for authentic reconciliation. Since 2010, the Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute has offered twelve STAR trainings in Minneapolis/St. Paul.

To accommodate those attending the June 18-21 Central Plains Annual Meeting in St. Paul, STAR has been scheduled immediately before: Saturday, June 13 to Wednesday, June 17, 2015 in Minneapolis. For Sunday worship, the Mennonite Worker and Third Way congregations welcome you to their 5pm Sunday services. STAR offers group discounts and low-cost, in-home lodging. Mental health professionals, nurses, and educators can earn 27-29 hours of continuing education.

We hope you'll come learn to instigate peace together in June at STAR! Questions? Email: [donna@mnpeace.org](mailto:donna@mnpeace.org) and visit our website: [www.mnpeace.org](http://www.mnpeace.org).



## Transitions

**Robert Yutzy's** term as transitional pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite in Minneapolis, Minnesota, ended on February 28, 2015.

**Iglesia Cristiana El Balsamo**, Muscatine, Iowa, dedicated a new worship space March 1, 2015.

## Leaders Credentialed

**Nathan Ramer**, pastor of Wellman (Iowa) Mennonite Church, was ordained January 25, 2015.

**Donna Stucky** was licensed toward ordination as a chaplain on February 15, 2015, at Faith Mennonite in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**Aaron Carlson**, pastor of Manson (Iowa) Mennonite Church, was ordained February 22, 2015.

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# Emahepeva'e Netao'o Hova'ehe Everything Beautiful Thrift Store launches building fund drive

*by Willis Busentiz, pastor*

*White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church, Busby, Montana  
President of the Thrift Store Board*

For a number of years, the Northern Cheyenne Ministerial Association, which includes three Central Plains Mennonite Churches, has talked about the need for a thrift store on our reservation. The local economy with the high unemployment rate and resulting poverty on the reservation call for an outlet that would provide low-cost clothing and small household items.

Our mission statement says, "Reflecting God's love for all, in Christ Jesus, we seek to serve our people's needs, protecting each one's dignity." After incorporating and receiving our 501c3 non-profit status, the Everything Beautiful Thrift Store was opened in May 2012. The store/ministry is growing and doing very well. Present proceeds are sufficient to cover the operating costs, including utilities and a modest salary for our manager.

We have even outgrown our rented facility and we are hoping to build a much larger, more energy-efficient building. Land has been purchased and we are raising funds to make this a reality. At the present we have approximately \$60,000 in our building fund.

Our board (made up of eight members from five church groups) continues to have the philosophy that "handouts" are not the best way to deal with poverty (with some exceptions). We believe that providing needed items at a low cost gives *dignity to our people*. This is a "hands up" philosophy. Hopes and dreams for this new, larger building include a "work for food" program and a beadwork coop.

The local Thrift Store Board has made pledges, and local churches and individuals have made donations. We are writing grant proposals seeking some larger gifts. Now we are contacting churches and individuals and giving them an opportunity to be involved in this important and exciting project.

Would you consider investing in this project? For further information you can check our website, [www.everythingbeautifulthriftstore.com](http://www.everythingbeautifulthriftstore.com), or request a brochure by emailing me at: [wnbusentiz@gmail.com](mailto:wnbusentiz@gmail.com). Financial reports are compiled after each month and are available upon request.



# Bearing witness to Jesus as Lord: **Learning to peacefully embrace conflict as an opportunity**

by *Lon Marshall*

*Conflict Management Support Team*

Nearly 25 people from six churches from the Twin Cities cluster gathered early Saturday morning, January 31, 2015 to participate in a workshop given by the Central Plains Conflict Management and Support Team (CMST).

The name of the workshop? Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches. This might not strike you as unusual, but consider for a moment why you might get out of bed so early on a Saturday morning? Conflict? Nobody likes conflict. And no one wants to talk about how to transform conflict. But these rare souls were there bright and early, with bells on.

Imagine, a Peace Church people seeking peace among themselves. What became evident was that this unusual assortment of Central Plains Mennonite Conference representatives wanted to be ambassadors for Jesus and his Kingdom. They were all in agreement that bearing witness to Jesus as Lord can be done by peacefully embracing our conflict as an opportunity and showing those looking on that we love each other. The workshop was hosted by Faith Mennonite Church in St. Paul. The Hmong church prepared a delicious lunch.

The group shared lively dialogue and asked thoughtful questions. The CMST presented conflict theory and skills, while facilitating discussion and application of ideas such as sharing of power and consensus development. All was discussed from a biblical perspective.

If your cluster or church would like to have the CMST team come to present a workshop or offer consultation please contact Tim Detweiler at 319-458-0224 or [timdetweiler@centralplainsmc.org](mailto:timdetweiler@centralplainsmc.org).

## Nebraska Women's Retreat **Connecting worship and self-care**

by *Elizabeth Troyer-Miller*

*Wood River Mennonite Church, Wood River, Nebraska*

Nearly 65 women gathered the first weekend of March to be stretched physically, spiritually and mentally at the Nebraska Women's Retreat. Guest speaker Stacey Waltner of Freeman, South Dakota, provided input over four sessions on the importance of self-care and how caring for our bodies has a direct correlation to caring for our relationship with God.

Stacey led us through body stretches; invited us to try green smoothies; challenged us to consider what we put in our bodies; and encouraged us to see self care as an act of worship.

Saturday evening entertainment included a rousing round of minute-to-win-it games and a few fiercely competitive rounds of Bible trivia. You can congratulate the women of Salem Mennonite, Shickley, for their successful domination of toilet paper tossing and Bible trivia knowledge. The Nebraska Women's Retreat is an annual event held the first weekend in March. All are welcome; we hope to see you next year!



## **You can help Congoese college students attend MWC assembly**

To honor historic connections to the Mennonite Church in Congo, the Outreach and Service Committee has been working for the last two years to identify and sponsor several Congoese college students to attend the Global Youth Summit and the Mennonite World Conference Assembly this summer in Harrisburg, PA. They are Alpha Mavungu Kivuvu, Rince Longo Kabondo and Deborah Kankolongo Tshidimu, students at Hesson College. It will cost about \$1000 to send each one to MWC.

This would make an excellent offering project for families or children/adult Sunday School classes. If you are interested in helping with this sponsorship, please send your contributions to Central Plains Mennonite Conference, designated for the Congoese Student Sponsorship. —*David Boshart, Conference Minister for Outreach & Service*



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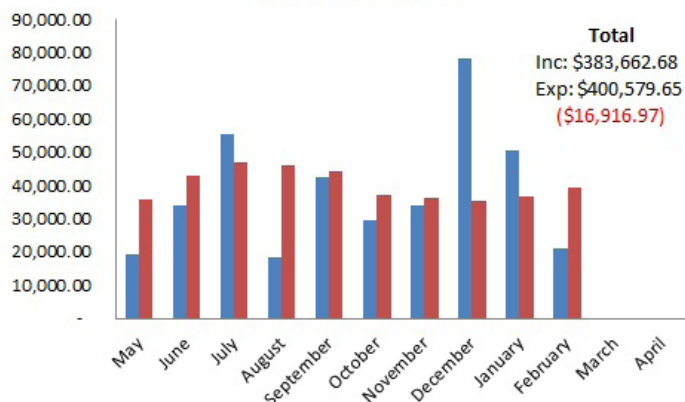
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Growing in  
holistic witness  
to God's  
reconciling mission  
in the world through  
fellowship,  
discipleship  
and leadership

The Central Plains budget experienced a very positive month in January and then it turned again in February. Income in January and February totaled \$71,727.87, while expenses came in at \$75,752.96. As a result, the budget deficit increased to \$16,916.97 for the fiscal year. We are thankful for the continued support of conference and continue to see God's work in many different ways. —*Stewardship Task Group*

**Central Plains Mennonite Conference**  
**Income (blue) & Expenses (red)**  
Fiscal Year 2014/2015



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Annual Leaders Retreat** will take place April 19-21, 2015, at St. Benedict Center in Schuyler, Nebraska.

**Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR Training)** will take place June 13-17, 2015 in Minneapolis.

**Central Plains Annual Meeting** will take place June 18-21, 2015, in the Twin Cities.

**Mennonite Church USA Convention and Delegate Assembly** will take place June 30 to July 5, 2015, in Kansas City.

**Mennonite World Conference Assembly Gathered** will take place July 21-26, 2015 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

An area conference of



**Mennonite  
Church  
USA**