



December
2014

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Scattered Seeds

Children of the Kingdom Sowing the Word
—Matthew 13



“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in the land of deep darkness — on them light has shined.”

— Isaiah 9:2

This is an exciting time for children and their teachers because we have a new Sunday School curriculum. Shine curriculum is written by and for the Brethren in Christ, Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. Most Central Plains churches with children's Sunday School are using Shine, so this issue of Scattered Seeds gives readers an introduction to it. —Shana Peachey Boshart

Shine curriculum from a writer's perspective

by Diane Zaerr Brenneman, West Union Mennonite Church

I enjoy writing curriculum for children. I have written for *Gather Round* and now I write for *Shine*. Two new features in *Shine* that capture my imagination are the sections called **Peace Notes** and **Spiritual Practices**. As Anabaptist Mennonites, we read the Bible through a lens of peace. That doesn't mean every Bible story has peacemaking as the “moral” of the story, but it does mean as we read the Bible we ask ourselves how it is speaking to God's overarching intention toward Shalom. For example, in the story of the Last Supper, I asked children to think about the offender, Judas, because peacemakers try to understand the offender too, not just the victim. Other stories, like Abigail preventing war in I Samuel 25:1-35, lend themselves

naturally to peace. Our society's response to offense is either “I'll sue you” or “I'll kill you.” People don't learn this response at 35, they learn it as children, and most violence erupts because those involved in a problem can't find a way to solve it. So in the Abigail lesson, I invite children to generate solutions together to typical problems they face in school and learn simple mediation steps. **Peace Notes** aims to cover the broad shalom arc: peace with myself, peace with God, peace with others and peace with creation.

We also want our children to develop rich lives of prayer, which, like any sport or musical instrument, benefits from practice. So a section in each

continued on page 2

lesson is devoted to practicing spiritual life; *Shine* calls it **Spiritual Practice**. This takes a variety of forms because as children learn in a variety of ways (seeing, touching, reading, hearing), so they are drawn to a variety of prayer forms. Examples from my writing include prayer walks, focused silence, making a string of beads to remember specific prayer requests, and drawing a web of gratitude.

One piece of advice I'd give to teachers: don't use everything I've written! You know your group best. I write a variety of options and possibilities (each session must include an **Other Ideas** section). Choose what works for your group on a particular day and banish any guilt for "not getting through the lesson." Curriculum is a guide, but interaction with a Christian teacher is how children learn God's love the best.

Two things you can do to help: Buy it and try it and send in feedback. And pray for the writers and editors that God will speak through our work and shape our children.

Why choose *Shine*?

As a teacher, you're creating a space for children to be open to God's Spirit. *Shine* sessions are easy for you to use and engaging for your children. They open you to God's Spirit so that you can do the same for your group.

Spiritual practices

Engage your children in the language and habits of worship through prayer, ritual, celebration, and silence. Each session has a spiritual practice to teach your group. Student activities reinforce these practices, helping your children to take these practices with them in their daily lives.

Peacemaking emphasis

The biblical idea of *shalom* encompasses right relationships with yourself, creation, others, and God. Each session includes "peace notes" which include connections to this vision of *shalom*. Lift up the call of Jesus and the prophets for righteousness and justice.

Interesting, engaging activities

How do your children best learn? Through active movement? Art activities? Retelling the story in their own words? *Shine* sessions include a variety of activities to engage learners of all kinds. Each session includes options for children to explore the Bible story through active movement, creativity and the arts, and engaging student resources.

Reflection and wondering

Children are gifted with a sense of wonder and vivid imaginations. Invite your group to wonder and reflect on the Bible stories, sharing reactions and connections to their own lives. Each session includes questions for reflection and discussion and encourages children to keep asking questions as a way to build faith.

Intuitive, easy to use

Harness your passion for faith formation! Teacher's guides give you tips and flexible session plans to meet your group's needs. Groups can also use the Multiage curriculum, created with smaller congregations in mind. Each session gives you ideas for media connections to enhance the learning experience for your children. When you run into a question or problem, the *Shine Together* handbook will likely address your concern.

Thoughtful theology

Shine lifts up the following theological convictions:

- we are known and loved by God
- Jesus said that becoming "as a child" is key to entering God's kingdom
- together, young and old can shine the light of Christ in the world around us

What have you learned from listening to a child's thoughts about God? Using *Shine*, children and adults learn together what it means to follow Jesus. Through imagination, boldness, creativity, and a sense of mystery, your children can inspire Christ's church today.



Shine! Living in God's Light

Spiritual practices help children to **pay attention to God's activity** in their lives, and show them ways that they can **shine their light to others**.

Engage your children in the **language and habits of worship through prayer, ritual, celebration, and silence**. Each *Shine* session has a spiritual practice to teach your group. Student resources will reinforce these practices, helping your children to take these practices with them in their daily lives. What are some of the spiritual practices that *Shine* sessions include?

Breath prayer . . . Centering prayer . . . Collage prayer
Examen . . . Giving . . . Grace at meals . . . Hospitality
Intercession . . . Labyrinth . . . Morning and evening prayers
Noticing God in creation . . . Prayer doodling
Reciting scripture . . . Sabbath keeping
Service . . . Silence . . . Solitude . . . Thanksgiving prayers
Walking prayer . . . Whole body prayer . . . Worship

Shine testimonials

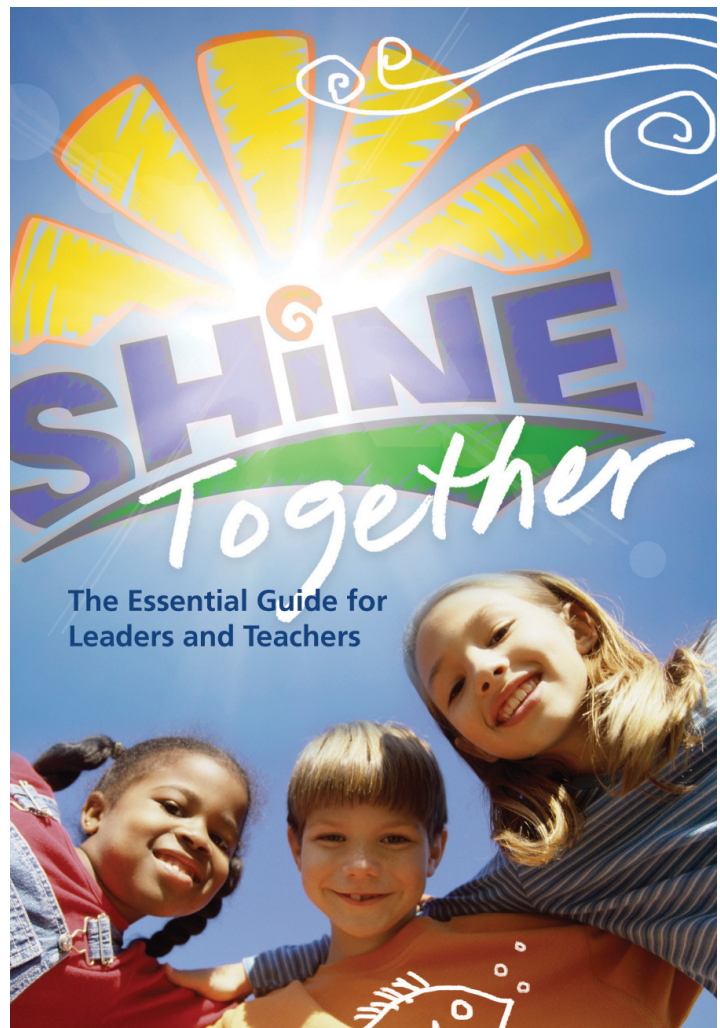
"The biblical background page is helpful to me as a teacher and seems to be more in-depth than I remember from previous curriculums. The peace emphasis section is new and I appreciate it although we have not made much use of it. The spiritual practice part has become a regular addition to our lessons and seems to be both age-appropriate and helpful in making the 'lessons' stick." *Andi Kuenning, Faith Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota*

"I love the 'Shine On A Story Bible' and I trust that our children's families are using it at home." *Rosie Koerner, Kalona Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa*

Shine Together: The Essential Guide for Leaders and Teachers is an excellent resource for teachers, pastors, and congregations that can help transform Sunday School into a time of nurturing faith and experiencing God's love. It can be used as a guide to help leaders welcome children, teach them, and ponder ways to learn from children at each level. *Shine Together* helps teachers focus on the spiritual practice of teaching and includes tips from experienced teachers and questions for reflection. Congregations are strongly encouraged to purchase a copy for every teacher/classroom or make it available for checkout from a resource library.

Chapters include:

- Welcoming and nurturing our children
- The nuts and bolts of a *Shine* session
- The spiritual practice of teaching
- Worshiping together
- Transforming Sunday School
- Growing in faith
- God's shalom
- Index of *Shine* scriptures
- Bible outlines



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Women's Retreat focuses on Growing in God

by Elizabeth Janssen, Salem-Zion Mennonite Church

"Growing in God...What is working for you?" was our theme for the 2014 Women's Retreat held September 20-21, at Swan Lake Christian Camp in South Dakota. This annual gathering brings together women from Nebraska, Minnesota, South Dakota and Iowa each fall. Shana Peachey Boshart was the featured speaker and she led us to focus on three areas, or times, of spiritual growth. Shana used art and poetry to give us a small understanding of the Masters Heart and Love to God's love. We also took time to share with each other how our own churches foster growth in God.

The first session, "Awareness: As a child", focused on knowing God and understanding that we are welcome to run to Him. As the Bible tells us, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." (Mark 10: 14 b-15)

The second session, "Presence: Here am I", focused on the difficulties in paying full attention to what really matters. The busyness of new jobs and little kids, new relationships or getting started with your independent life brings many distractions. Shana shared some practices, which can provide brief pauses with God on a crazy day.

The third session, "Benediction: And now, may...", focused on a later stage of life when the kids are out of the house or when one enters the middle and latter ages of life; the time when one begins to see oneself differently. Here a woman can slow the pace a bit and renew the soul. Overall we learned that truly "Growing in God" is a lifetime endeavor.

We also enjoyed singing led by the ladies from Minnesota. The Nebraska group planned the interest sessions: prayer beads, soul journals, coffee talk, nature hike, nature photo scavenger hunt and tying a comforter for MCC. Even with all these great activities, we still had time to visit, make new friends, catch up with old friends and play a round or two of "Gestures".

The next Central Plains Women's Retreat will be September 2015 with actual dates to be announced. Information will come your way following Central Plains Annual Meeting in June.



Top: Women from Mountain Lake prepared a special song for worship; Jill Hofer and Kim Jones of Hutterthal Mennonite Church in Freeman, South Dakota, made journals during one of the interest sessions; Shar Doell of Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Nebraska, organized a beautiful coffee and conversation interest session; Women of all ages enjoyed rich times of worship together.



Dove's Nest holds first annual conference and worship gathering:

Faith leaders and mental health professionals learn about keeping children and youth safe

OMAHA, Neb. – “How steadfast is your unfailing love, O God! All your children take refuge in the shadow of your wings,” was the theme verse for Dove's Nest's first annual “Protecting Our Children and Youth Conference and Worship Gathering.” The event took place November 7-9 in Omaha, Nebraska. Attendees heard from keynote speaker, Deondra Brown, cofounder of The Foundation for Survivors of Abuse, who shared her courageous story of surviving and thriving after being sexually abused by her father. Brown shared how spiritual leaders in her local faith community walked with her through the difficult early days after confronting her father and continued to support her as she found her way on the path to healing. She also discussed legislative efforts to eliminate statute of limitation laws so that abuse survivors have the option to seek prosecution on their own timeline if they so choose.

Seven breakout sessions equipped pastors and faith communities to prevent child abuse and keep children safe. Additional sessions offered training on the Circle of Grace safe environment curriculum (available at no cost to Mennonite Church USA congregations), procedures to help a faith community be accountable to its child and youth protection policies, and a discussion of ways in which the peace position may increase vulnerability to abuse. The conference also included times of networking and worship.

Dove's Nest began within Mennonite Church USA and now has a national board comprised of Mennonites and members of other denominations. Two staff lead the organi-

zation's day-to-day work. More than 500 Mennonite Church USA congregations or affiliated organizations have received a free copy of the Circle of Grace safe environment curriculum and more than 100 congregations have participated in a Dove's Nest training event. “We've been extremely busy,” says Executive Director Jon Stanton. “But it's exciting and fulfilling to realize the impact we are having and the new places we are now reaching. We have sent several copies of Circle of Grace to Spanish-speaking churches both in the U.S. and overseas and have conducted training in Spanish as well.”

Since the “Protecting and Nurturing our Children and Youth” Resolution was approved by delegates at the 2013 Convention, Dove's Nest has continued to work with Mennonite Church USA leaders to help congregations implement its recommendations. Nancy Kauffmann, denominational minister and member of the Dove's Nest's board commented, “I've been with Dove's Nest since the beginning and I am very pleased at the progress we've made, especially in the time since passage of the Resolution.”

Dove's Nest hopes to make the conference an annual occurrence, possibly moving to different locations each year to broaden geographic representation. For more information about Dove's Nest or to request training for your congregation, visit www.DovesNest.net.



David Boshart nominated moderator-elect for Mennonite Church USA



Executive Conference Minister David Boshart will be on the ballot for the position of moderator-elect at the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly in Kansas City next July. If elected, his term would begin at Kansas City. He would serve two years as moderator-elect, followed by two years as moderator of Mennonite Church USA. This is a volunteer position which David would do along with his work in our conference. The Constituency Leaders Council gave widespread support to

David's nomination at their October meeting.

Central Plains moderator Nathan Luitjens says, "As the Central Plains executive committee processed David's request for feedback, there were two things that stood out in our discernment. First, there was strong affirmation that Dave's gifts make him uniquely suited for the role of moderator of MC USA. Second, we were also unanimous that this was a gift that we as Central Plains could offer to the broader Mennonite Church at this time."

"David's experience in leading the church at the local level, the area conference level and the national level make him uniquely positioned for this role," said Terry Shue, Mennonite Church USA director for leadership development and the staff member assigned to work with the Leadership Discernment Committee. "Anyone who has served on a board with David becomes aware of his ability to listen to those around him and to lead with clarity and courage. His pastoral heart and his keen mind have served the church well through some very important stages, and I believe that these experiences will continue to be used by God in very positive ways."

To read the full article from Mennonite Church USA, visit www.mennoniteusa.org/david-boshart-named-as-nominee-for-moderator-elect.

Transitions

Pornchai Thosaengsiri (Seng) was installed September 21 as pastor of Hmong Mennonite Church of St. Paul, Minnesota.

Dave Schooley was licensed toward ordination at Eicher Emmanuel Mennonite Church in rural Wayland, Iowa, September 28.

Jack Norris was installed October 19 as pastor of Julesburg Mennonite Church, Julesburg, Colorado.

Nicholas Detweiler-Stoddard was ordained November 9 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota.

Scott Johnson, Olds, Iowa, has accepted the call as interim pastor from Bethel Mennonite Church, Wayland, Iowa. Scott and his wife, Nikki, have 3 children: Mallery, Alec, and Lucy. Scott is currently working on his master's degree in Biblical Studies/Apologetics. He and his wife are local business owners.

Beth-El Mennonite Church, Milford, Nebraska, has withdrawn its membership in Central Plains Mennonite Conference, effective August 29.

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.

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Bluegrass concert hosted by Wood River

On September 13, Wood River Mennonite Church of Wood River, Nebraska, hosted a folk/bluegrass concert in Doyle and Chelle Jantzi's barn. The performers were Pastor Brett Klingenberg of First Mennonite Church in Beatrice and Pastor Dave Miller of Bellwood Mennonite Church in Milford. It was like a "block party" event with us inviting our neighbors around the church and members inviting friends. A meal was served prior to the concert. It was an enjoyable evening and a great time of fellowship with new and old friends in a rustic setting. — *Darlene Roth, Wood River Mennonite Church*



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Seeking Understanding in Israel/Palestine: A Fact-Finding Trip

Have you wished you understood better what is happening today in the land of the Bible? We extend a warm invitation to join this cross-cultural encounter to view the holy sites and to visit with people passionately involved in the effort of peacemaking today. We will meet with Palestinian and Israeli peace and human rights groups, see first-hand the reality of Palestinian life under occupation, and consider what is needed for a just peace. Visit Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, and more. Leaders: Joy Lapp, on the Steering Committee of Mennonite Palestine Israel Network (MennoPIN), and Rev. Arnie Voigt. Saturday, May 30, 2015 - Saturday, June 13, 2015. <http://fosna.org/conference-trip/seeking-understanding-israelpalestine>, 319-219-9171, lappj@earthlink.net.

Volunteers needed at International Guest House

The International Guest House needs hosts beginning July 2015 for a one year term. This ministry of Christian hospitality is operated by Allegheny Mennonite Conference to provide a "home away from home" for D.C. visitors. Other volunteers (one month or longer) are also needed. Volunteers receive room and board; full year volunteers receive stipend and health insurance. Responsibilities: welcoming guests, serving breakfast & tea, baking, cleaning, laundry, maintenance. Enjoy sightseeing during free time. Contact: International Guest House igh-dc@juno.com (202)726-5808. <http://igh-dc.com>.

— *Orv & Clet Gingerich, IGH Hosts*

Western District Conference Library

Shine Resources! Imagine a children's picture book library with resources specifically selected to support Christian Faith Formation in both the home and the congregation. Imagine 3,000 of them. Imagine them being available to you, your church, your family with just a few clicks, an email or a phone call. It can happen! Visit YOUR Resource Library at www.mennowdc.org. Search for topics that connect to Shine lessons. Call or email Library director Marlene Bogard at 316-283-6300 / crlib@mennowdc.org. A shipment can be delivered to you within a week. We are here to serve you! 316-283-6300 / crlib@mennowdc.org.

— *Marlene Bogard, for Western District Resource Library.*

Central Plains Mennonite Conference
P.O. Box 101
Freeman, SD 57029

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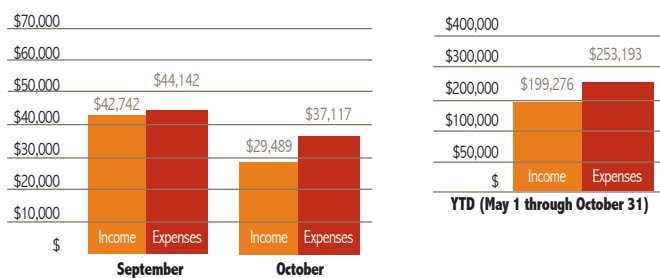
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Growing in
holistic witness
to God's
reconciling mission
in the world through
fellowship,
discipleship
and leadership

The Central Plains budget continued to slide negatively in September and October, increasing the overall deficit for the fiscal year. As you can see from the graphs, income for both months came in at \$72,230.46, while expenses came in at \$81,259.35. As a result, the budget deficit has been increased to \$53,916.43 for the fiscal year. We are thankful for your continued support of conference, where we continue to see God at work in many different ways.

—Stewardship Task Group

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Income vs. Expenses



UPCOMING EVENTS

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

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

Mennonite Church USA Convention and Delegate Assembly will be held June 30 to July 5, 2015, in Kansas City.

Mennonite World Conference Assembly Gathered

will be held July 21-26, 2015, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Youth Escape, the biennial retreat for Central Plains youth, will take place July 15-17, 2016, in central Iowa.

An area conference of



Mennonite
Church
USA