



June  
2014

## In This Issue

- 2 Seeking God's Will Together
- 3 Changing times and seasons
- 4 Child protection training
- 5 Leaders rejuvenate
- 7 Shine!

# Scattered Seeds

Children of the Kingdom Sowing the Word  
—Matthew 13



Photo by Stan Harder

## Seeking God's Will Together

How we discern the Way of Jesus as we engage culture

by Shana Peachey Boshart, Editor



*It can't help but be a time of bonding for the congregation.*

*If the church is an important part of your life, you will want to invest your time participating in this congregational study.*

What great experience are these people talking about? The times their congregation got together to study and practice discernment! Several congregations in Central Plains have been trying out a new study and giving us their feedback on it.

*Seeking God's Will Together* teaches congregations how to practice communal biblical discernment, or put more simply, how to read and interpret the Bible together and apply it to their daily life.

*There is a lot of very good information about discernment and how to work at it. Good opening and closing rituals, with readings, scripture, singing. There are good video presentations followed by an appropriate activity.*

*This study is both a scholarly and practical presentation of sound Anabaptist biblical interpretation principles directed to the lay person who truly desires to participate in biblical discernment.*

Each session begins and ends with a prayerful ritual in which participants "lay down" their own hopes and desires while inviting God to reveal God's will. Each unit includes a time of teaching on video and a time of practice. Depending on the congregation's format, the unit can be split into two sessions, the first with the teaching and the second with the practice.

*continued on page 2*

*"And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best."*

— *Philippians 1:9-10a*



Each unit takes a minimum of 90 minutes, so a congregation can do the study in six 90-minute sessions or twelve 45-minute sessions.

Here are the six units.

**Seeking God's will together: Why do we do it?** David Boshart teaches why we practice discernment. The practice session teaches a method of Bible study.

**By whose authority?** Nick Detweiler-Stoddard teaches about the role of the Bible in our discernment. The practice session offers two more methods of communal Bible study.

**How do we read the Bible?** Shana Peachey Boshart teaches a very thorough method of Bible study using interpretive tools, "...and in the practice session participants are given the opportunity to apply this method to biblical passages."

**Can we agree?** Matt Troyer-Miller and Nathan Ramer teach how the steps Jesus gives us in Matthew 18 apply to the church today. The practice portion teaches speaking and listening skills that equip us to carry out Jesus' instructions.

**When we don't agree.** David B. Miller of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary teaches from Romans 14 and 15, and Elizabeth Troyer-Miller teaches about congregational dynamics regarding conflict. The practice session combines reflection on your own congregation's history with further study of Romans 14 and 15.

**"The study was helpful in providing guidelines for Bible study for both group discussions and for individual research."**

**Inviting the Spirit to lead us.** The final session is given over to practicing your new skills on a topic for discernment chosen by your congregation. The topic should be chosen carefully so that the congregation can practice on a topic that matters but isn't divisive.

Congregations that have used the study have been enthusiastic about its effect on the congregation. Vicki Biggerstaff facilitated the study at Sermon on the Mount Mennonite Church (SMMC) in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

"This was a very helpful study, and I am glad we were able to do it. I think it will be a reference point for us for a long time to come," she said.

SMMC Pastor Christopher Montgomery wrote, "The congregation is preparing to enter a season of vision discernment and strategic planning later this year, so this study is functioning as a good launching point for us."

At Annual Meeting June 19-22, participants will receive an introduction and orientation to the study and will even be given opportunity to do a session or two. Come to Annual Meeting and try it out! The study will be available June 20 on our web site at [www.centralplainsmc.org](http://www.centralplainsmc.org).

## About the study writers

*Seeking God's Will Together* was written by a team of Central Plains pastors led by Shana Peachey Boshart. The team developed the study through weekly web conferences over five months.

The writers are Amanda Beachy of Washington, Iowa; Nick Detweiler-Stoddard of Freeman, South Dakota; Nathan Ramer of Wellman, Iowa; and Matt Troyer-Miller of Wood River, Nebraska.

"It was exciting being a part of this team," said Nathan Ramer, "because even though the task was daunting, the issues that the team were asked to engage are such a central need of the church right now and I wanted to be a part of addressing that."

## When you do the study

We recommend these books for every Central Plains congregation. Add them to your church library for the benefit of the study facilitator and for those who want to dig deeper into the topics introduced in the study.

*Discerning God's Will Together* by Ervin Stutzman

*Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition* by Stuart Murray

*How to Understand the Bible* by David Ewert

*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*

*The Art of Teaching the Bible* by Christine Eaton Blair

*The Journey Toward Reconciliation* by John Paul Lederach

*Cool Tools for Hot Topics: Group Tools to Facilitate Meetings When Things Are Hot* by Ron Kraybill and Evelyn Wright

# In changing times and seasons

## Discernment and the vocation of the church

by David Boshart, Executive Conference Minister



God changes times and seasons,  
deposes kings and sets up kings;  
God gives wisdom to the wise  
and knowledge to those who have  
understanding. (Daniel 2:21)

We live in complex times. In the face of rapid societal change, the church is challenged to witness in the world with increasing clarity and nuance. It is not easy to find “the narrow way” in the barrage of socio-political claims for the right way to think about things. In Mennonite Church USA’s *Purposeful Plan*, Executive Director Ervin Stutzman, writes, “We are more assimilated in the broader culture than before, and the increased identification of Mennonites with political parties threatens to polarize members around controversial issues.” As Mennonite Church USA strains to be a faithful church in a time of seismic change, it is urgent that we strengthen our skills for biblical discernment on critical matters of faith and life.

The latest edition of the *Purposeful Plan* says that beginning in 2015, Mennonite Church USA will “develop resources for biblical/communal discernment to be used in congregations, area conferences, and other settings where believers seek to discern God’s will regarding important matters as a church.” In this issue of *Scattered Seeds* and at Annual Meeting this summer we are delighted to introduce you to an excellent resource for biblical/communal discernment that was developed right here in Central Plains Mennonite Conference!

Last summer, we posed the following question to your

delegates: “What do you believe are the most pressing matters of faith and life where the church needs to do spiritual/biblical discernment in order to have an effective witness in the world?” The responses from table groups revealed several insights:

- We do not have much experience in discerning matters of faith and life together as we witness to God’s mission in the world.
- We need to sharpen our vision of the church as an alternative society that addresses matters of faith and life from an agreed-upon Anabaptist perspective.
- It is becoming harder for us to distinguish between the formation that originates in the life of the faith community and the formation that originates from society, political discourse, and fear.
- We struggle to find models of discernment that enhance unity rather than division when we face controversial issues.

This feedback led us to a framing question: *How does the faithful church discern the way of Jesus as we engage the culture in which we find ourselves?* The Conference Board commissioned a team to develop a resource to strengthen our ability to answer this question. Conference Minister for Christian Formation, Shana Peachey Boshart, led the group of four of our younger pastors to produce an excellent resource: *Seeking God’s Will Together*. The study is available on our website and is free to our congregations. It is designed for six 90-minute sessions but it can also be adapted for 12-13 shorter sessions.

This study addresses why the church practices discernment, teaches specific practices of discernment, and gives congregations opportunities to practice what they have learned. After completing the study, congregations and our conference as a whole will be well-positioned to carry out faithful biblical discernment in ways that will foster unity even when members disagree. Upon completing a test version of the study one participant said, “This process can help us study and discuss some of the more ‘hot-button’ issues that we intentionally avoid.”

I am very proud of the work of the team that created this study and I highly commend it for use in all Central Plains congregations!



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.  
Thanks to Peg Burke, Mary Lou Farmer and Verna Zook for proofreading.  
E-mail: scatteredseeds@centralplainsmc.org. Telephone: 319-936-5905.  
For the August issue, please send stories, news and photos by **June 30, 2014** to the address above.  
Please send subscription requests and changes of addresses to office@centralplainsmc.org.

Graphic Design by Erin Ramer.  
Printed by Kalona Graphics in USA

www.centralplainsmc.org



# Dove's Nest training equips churches to protect children

## Leaders hope to have similar events in other Central Plains churches

by Jon Stanton, Dove's Nest Program Coordinator

More than sixty attendees from fifteen Central Plains Conference churches and other Mennonite congregations took part in a "Protecting our Children" training weekend in southeastern Iowa recently. The largest event took place at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa, on Saturday, March 22. Dove's Nest staff worked with members of the West Union Church and Shana Peachey Boshart to develop a seminar that focused on building awareness of abuse and neglect and how to develop policies to keep children and youth safe. Jeanette Harder, Dove's Nest Board President, also led a panel discussion with local experts from law enforcement, healthcare, and counseling services. Participants had an opportunity to learn more about the *Circle of Grace* safe environment curriculum, available at no cost to all Mennonite Church USA congregations.

On Sunday morning, Jeanette Harder and Dove's Nest Program Coordinator Jon Stanton participated in the West Union congregation's worship service. In addition to giving the morning sermon, they read a story to the children, led a discussion during adult Sunday School about Practical Tips for Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect, and discussed *Circle of Grace* with West Union's youth group.

Sugar Creek Mennonite Church at Wayland, Iowa, hosted a training event specific to *Circle of Grace* on Monday evening. About five congregations participated. Jeanette Harder also had an opportunity to speak with camp administrators who were gathered for the annual Mennonite Camping Association convention at nearby Crooked Creek Christian Camp.

"Central Plains Conference Christian Formation Committee was pleased to co-sponsor this training weekend," said Shana Peachey Boshart. "Our goal is to create similar events in the other clusters of churches throughout the conference. Mennonite Church USA has prioritized child and youth protection with the passage of the *Protecting and Nurturing our Children and Youth* resolution at the 2013 Convention. We are partnering with Dove's Nest to do our part to make sure Central Plains congregations are empowered and equipped to keep children and youth safe."

To arrange a Dove's Nest training in your area, contact Jon Stanton or Shana Peachey Boshart. Contact Jon at 402-577-0866 or [jon@dovesnest.net](mailto:jon@dovesnest.net). Contact Shana at 319-936-5905 or [shanaboshart@centralplainsmc.org](mailto:shanaboshart@centralplainsmc.org).



Clockwise from top left: Participants practice the Circle of Grace meditation; Jon Stanton and Shana Peachey Boshart check in before the workshop; Jeanette Harder (right) moderates a panel discussion of professionals from the local community.

# Retreat rejuvenates leaders with “Sacred Pauses”

by Fjaere Harder Nussbaum

Shalom Mennonite Church, Eau Claire, Wisconsin



Once I get done with my errands. Once I clean out my inbox and voicemails. Once I get the kids out the door to school or to bed. Once I finish the sermon and bulletin. These are some of the thoughts that keep us running on our ever-revolving hamster wheel. At the Annual Leadership Retreat this year, we were led by April Yamasaki, author of *Sacred Pauses*, to meditate on how we might create more pauses in

our lives for spiritual refreshment.

Yamasaki gave us an introduction to several of the 18 “sacred pauses” she has found to be effective for finding daily communion with God. These “time-outs” with God--such as journaling or using a visual reminder to pause and pray--provide mini-sabbaticals, so we don’t arrive at our weekends, summers, or real sabbaticals as dried up husks of what we were created to be.

We could all agree on the merits of adding these brief, frequent communions with God to our lives...and my temptation was to focus on that. But then April presented the idea of a “don’t do” list. The idea is not to add one more good thing to our already full lives, but to consider what we might not do, what we might surrender, so that we may create more space in our days for God.

I rather preferred the idea that these pauses might make me more productive and efficient, providing me with renewed energy to finish my “to-do” list...but quicker! This may be the case at times, but I was even more struck by the challenge from another retreat participant: “What if extra time with God does mean we get less done than we had planned today? What if in this pause, I realize God’s will for me is different than what my will was for the day? Am I willing to place God in such a place of importance in my life that I am willing to change the course of my day for sacred pauses, and then allow the sacred pauses to change the course of my day and life?”

Between the four worship sessions, each led by different churches, and four retreat sessions led by April, there was always a chunk of free time that I reveled in. My spirit was rejuvenated during those mini-sabbaticals by great conversations, naps, or private walks around the beautiful, secluded monastery. I had felt slightly remiss to spend my weekend driving eight hours to Nebraska, but soon felt like I was in the tropics when I saw all of the green grass and blooming magnolia trees!

By Sunday noon, I was refreshed with rest, heartened by kindred spirits in similar life journeys, and a nearness to God in spirit. I left the retreat with two challenges--one a reminder and the next a momentous surrender: to add to my daily life more pauses for encountering God...and to be willing to loosen my grip on self-willed productivity, so that God might be able to place in my open hands more of the Christian experience I was always intended to have.





## Are you starving for God's Word? Come and be filled at Central Plains Annual Meeting June 19-22 in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa



Our speaker, Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, will speak on the theme Joyfully Following Jesus: Formed by God's Word. She will share how pastors and congregations learn together and become formed by the Bible. What can leaders do to make the Bible come alive for people?

In our worship, we'll feast on texts from Nehemiah, Psalms, Ephesians and Hebrews, inviting the Word to shape us according to God's will.

In addition, there will be delegate sessions and workshops. There will be activities for youth; young adults are encouraged to attend. Children's activities will be provided Friday and Saturday during delegate sessions and workshops.

Come learn about the new study on communal biblical discernment, meet brothers and sisters you didn't know you had, and learn how Central Plains is witnessing to God's reign through leadership, discipleship and fellowship.

Find registration information in your church office and at [www.centralplainsmc.org](http://www.centralplainsmc.org).

### Contact information

#### Moderators:

Nathan Luitjens: 319-256-6061  
[moderator@centralplainsmc.org](mailto:moderator@centralplainsmc.org)

Margie Caraballo: 309-786-1748  
[assistantmoderator@centralplainsmc.org](mailto:assistantmoderator@centralplainsmc.org)

#### Office:

P.O. Box 101, Freeman, SD 57029

Monica Clem, Office Manager: 605-925-4463  
[office@centralplainsmc.org](mailto:office@centralplainsmc.org)

#### Hispanic Ministries Coordinator:

Ramiro Hernandez 319-621-3725  
[rmherns@yahoo.com](mailto:rmherns@yahoo.com)

#### Conference Ministers:

P.O. Box 352, Kalona, IA 52247

David Boshart: 319-936-5904  
[davidboshart@centralplainsmc.org](mailto:davidboshart@centralplainsmc.org)

Tim Detweiler: 319-458-0224  
[timdetweiler@centralplainsmc.org](mailto:timdetweiler@centralplainsmc.org)

Shana Peachey Boshart: 319-936-5905  
[shanaboshart@centralplainsmc.org](mailto:shanaboshart@centralplainsmc.org)

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.

A Central Plains Mennonite Conference youth retreat

## AGENTS OF THE KINGDOM YOUTH ESCAPE 2014

[www.centralplainsmc.org/youth-escape-2014](http://www.centralplainsmc.org/youth-escape-2014)



### AUGUST 1-3, 2014

Hidden Acres Christian Center in Dayton, Iowa



**Speaker**  
**Glen Guyton**



**Music by**  
**Jeremy Kempf**

# Biblical, essential, updated, colorful, Anabaptist, media-savvy, peace orientation, spiritual practices

Those are the basics of the new *Shine* faith formation curriculum for preschool through grade eight that our very own MennoMedia is releasing for use in fall 2014. I am excited and grateful for the wisdom and care the curriculum developers have lavished on this new tool for faith development. And here is why:

**Biblical.** Three texts have inspired *Shine*:

God's light shines amidst the darkness in our world.

*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*

We are a reflection of God's light, called to shine that light at home and beyond.

*You are the light of the world. A city built upon a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. —Matthew 5:14–16*

The light of Christ transforms us and gives us wisdom to do God's will. We cooperate with God to bring healing and hope to our world.

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. —Romans 12:2*

**Essential.** Every congregation cares about teaching children how to have a relationship with God and God's people. *Shine* is the essential tool for teaching children at church.

**Anabaptist.** The writers of *Shine* are people like you and me who are committed and trained in Christian education and fully Anabaptist. Want more Mennonite Christians? Quality curriculum is the first step.

**Media-savvy.** The Media Connections sections suggest web-links.

**Peace-Notes.** A paragraph devoted to connecting peace theology in every lesson. Just what we need to help us articulate what we believe about Jesus' Way of Peace!

**Spiritual Practices.** This is especially exciting! Imagine children learning various specific ways to pray to God and reflect on God's purposes. Faith formation at its best!

We hope you will embrace *Shine*. It's about the faith formation of the children in your congregation.

Visit the *Shine* web site for all kinds of great information: [shinecurriculum.com](http://shinecurriculum.com)

*Shana Peachey Boshart and the Christian Formation Committee will be offering training for Shine teachers. Call Shana to arrange your training: 319-936-5905.*

## Enrich your summer Sunday School with Shalom Readers

by Ellen Miller,  
Shalom Readers Regional Coordinator

Polly Waltner and Elizabeth Janssen have found a creative way to use the Shalom Readers program at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church in rural Freeman, South Dakota. The superintendent and assistant are coordinating the curriculum for the junior department where children from K-8 meet together during the summer months.

Teachers are teaming up for one or two Sundays, selecting a Shalom Readers book to feature, and planning activities around the story. The list of books found on the Central Plains website contains over 300 titles which focus on following Jesus' way of peace. Many of the books are available at church libraries, public libraries or can be checked out from the Central Plains office at Freeman.

At the end of the summer, the children should have read seven books and shared two projects, which makes them eligible for a free book!

How is your congregation using the Shalom Readers materials? Send ideas to regional coordinators Ellen Miller, [ellenkmiller@gmail.com](mailto:ellenkmiller@gmail.com) or Joan Friesen, [jfriesen@mainstaycomm.net](mailto:jfriesen@mainstaycomm.net).

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

change service requested

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Freeman, S.D.  
Permit No. 12

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

Central Plains ends the fiscal year in the black! Praise be to God and thanks to Central Plains conference congregations and individual supporters for our positive ending to the fiscal year! Income for the month of April came in at \$39,363.31. Expenses for the month came in at \$37,062.21, creating a surplus of \$2,201.10. As a result, we end the fiscal year with a small surplus of \$964.33. Again, we are very thankful for your continued support of conference, where we see God at work in many different ways.

—Stewardship Task Group

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Central Plains Annual Meeting** will take place June 19-22, 2014 at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

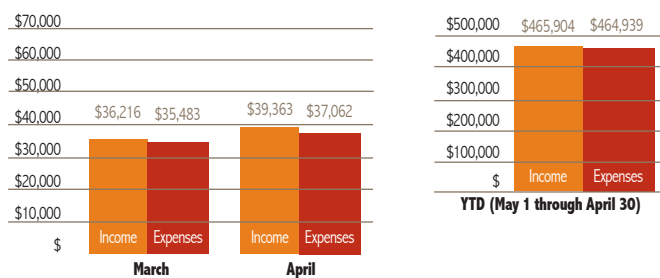
**Youth Escape 2014** will take place the weekend of August 1-3, 2014, in central Iowa.

**Conference Board** meets August 22-23, 2014, in Freeman, South Dakota.

**Mennonite Mission Network Board** meets in Iowa October 10-13, 2014.

**Conference Board and Committees** meet at  
Crooked Creek Christian Camp November 14-15, 2014.

### Central Plains Mennonite Conference Income vs. Expenses



An area conference of



Mennonite  
Church  
USA