



# Scattered Seeds

February  
2017

## New prayer practices introduced in worship

by Amanda Beachy

*pastor, Washington Mennonite Church, Washington, Iowa*

*Editor's note: This story illustrates a congregation embracing prayer in a new way--an expression of our Covenant of Spiritual Practices. We've printed several of the prayer practices that Washington Mennonite learned on the pages that follow. Find all their prayer practices as individual downloadable documents at [www.anabaptistfaithformation.org/prayer-practices](http://www.anabaptistfaithformation.org/prayer-practices).*

"...while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and serving the word."

— Acts 6:4



It has become a tradition at Washington Mennonite that we'll do something "different" during the summer months. Summer of 2016, our "different" was trying out a new prayer practice each week during worship with the encouragement to continue to "practice" it throughout the week.

This idea was born when our worship committee read the results of a recent congregational survey and was surprised to learn that times of silence were among the most-appreciated and under-utilized worship elements at Washington Mennonite. That, combined with a desire to expand the spiritual resources that are available to members of our congregation, led us to the "different" (for us) practice of sitting in 5-20 minutes of silence during each week of our summer worship series.

We spend so little time in silence in our daily lives—there is almost always a family member, a co-worker, or a television or a radio that keeps us from having to (or getting to) be by ourselves in quiet. Sometimes we avoid real silence because we're scared to spend time with ourselves (or with God), and other times, in our busy lives, silence can seem like a waste. We often end up viewing silence as something that needs to be filled. Silence in worship can feel awkward and long both to the person up front "keeping" the silence and

to those in the pews experiencing it. Learning new prayers helped to guide our times of silence, to mitigate some of the awkwardness of silence, and they provided us new avenues to explore our relationships with God and ourselves. Each Sunday brought something. One day we molded clay as we prayed; another, we practiced blessing our families, friends, neighbors, and enemies. One week, a finger-labyrinth was printed in the bulletin and the next we used the Lord's Prayer to guide our praying. We soaked in God's love, we prayed with each breath--in and out, we experienced praying the hours. By the end of our 12 weeks of summer, we had built up quite a collection of new prayer resources and had spent many minutes in guided, prayerful silence.

I suspect that when September rolled around, many of us--myself included--were ready to move back into the regularly scheduled programming of the church year, but I'm thankful for a congregation that is willing to put up with and even embrace something new each summer. I'm also grateful for the experience of learning new ways of communicating with God and for this summer's gift of silence.

**"We soaked in God's love, we prayed with each breath - in and out, we experienced praying the hours."**

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# Prayer practices for you to try

## Praying the Psalms

Psalms has been called the prayer book of the Bible in both Jewish and Christian traditions. Because the Psalms range so widely in emotional expression, from the heights of adoration and praise to the depths of vengeful curses against the enemy, they have special relevance to our prayer lives. They teach us to bring everything to God.

No matter what we are feeling—distress, trust, anger or delight, we find the words of the psalms accompany us into God's presence. . . in the Psalms we find words to express every conceivable human condition and feeling. These prayers give us words to glorify, confess, hope, ask, and even curse. In doing so, they give us permission to share our whole being with God.

Some Psalms to pray if you are feeling:

**Anxious/afraid:** Psalm 70.

**Envious:** Psalm 73

**Despairing:** Psalm 77

**Sick and Tired:** Psalm 6

**Grateful:** Psalm 9

**Contented:** Psalm 23

**Wrongly accused:** Psalm 17

**Awed by God:** Psalm 29

### Suggestions:

1. Try to understand a Psalm before praying it.
2. Linger over a Psalm: Is there any particular verse that is especially relevant to your life right now? Chew on it. Read it over and over, with a different emphasis on each word. Why is this word chosen or important here? What difference would this make in my life if I believed this with all my heart? If I applied this to my life? Pray for yourself and others from it.
3. Use the Psalms to praise God

**Try it out:** Try out the above suggestions. Don't rush. Don't worry about doing this perfectly, just start! Be alert to what differences might be happening in your relationship with God and your life as a result.

*Redeemer Presbyterian Church: [www.redeemer.com/learn/resources\\_by\\_topic/prayer/prayer\\_and\\_fasting/praying\\_the\\_psalms/](http://www.redeemer.com/learn/resources_by_topic/prayer/prayer_and_fasting/praying_the_psalms/)*

*Living Prayer Center: [prayer-center.upperroom.org/resources/resources-articles/50](http://prayer-center.upperroom.org/resources/resources-articles/50)*

## Breath prayers

Breath prayers are a way to become more aware of God's presence. The Holy Spirit is as near as the air we breathe. A common way to practice breath prayer is silently repeating a single-line prayer with each breath.

**Personal Breath Prayers:** As you inhale, address God with something like, "Jesus, Son of God." Then as you exhale, express a request to God such as, "be merciful to me, a sinner." Other examples are, "(in)Creator God/(out)allow me to see your beauty around me," "(in)Holy Spirit/(out)let me feel your joy," "(in)O Lord/(out)show me your way," or "(in)Holy one/(out)heal me." Or you could try praying just the name of God, "(in)Yah/(out)weh," God is with us in each breath.

**Confessional Breath Prayers:** As you exhale, breathe out personal failings or worries, and when you inhale, breathe in the assurance of God's love. For example: "(out)Breathe out worry/(in)breathe in stillness" or "(out)Take my anxiety/(in)grant me peace."

**Breath Prayers for the World:** As you inhale, breathe in the sins of the world, and breathe out corrections—You are the hands and feet of God in the world, working, with each breath, to right wrongs and bring love and justice. Examples: "(In)Injustice and suffering/(out)be now a beloved community." "(In)Fear and anxiety/(out)become love and peace." "(In)War and violence/(out)be no more." "(In)when relationships break/(out)draw us together again."

Repeat the prayer with each breath for several minutes. Listen for God. Take time for silence to practice breath prayers, but also try them as you go about the everyday work of life. Use your breathing/breath prayers to focus on God as you drive tractor, commute, walk the dog, garden, cut vegetables, or take a jog, etc.

*United Methodist Church Website: [www.umc.org/what-we-believe/re-energize-your-prayer-life-with-a-new-practice](http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/re-energize-your-prayer-life-with-a-new-practice)*

*Hacking Christianity: [hackingchristianity.net/2014/06/breath-prayer-for-social-justice.html](http://hackingchristianity.net/2014/06/breath-prayer-for-social-justice.html)*

## Praying with clay or markers

Note: Artistic ability is of NO concern as you pray with markers or clay—*the process* is the point!

### Praying with markers

Reasons to pray in color:

1. You want to pray but words escape you.
2. Sitting still and staying focused on prayer are a challenge.
3. Your body wants to be part of your prayer.
4. You want to just hang out with God but don't know how.
5. Listening to God feels like an impossible task.
6. Your mind wanders and your body complains.
7. You want a visual, concrete way to pray.
8. You need a new way to pray!

How to “pray in color”:

1. Write your name for God on a piece of paper. Draw a shape around it or just start to doodle.
2. Add marks and shapes. Focus on the name you chose. Ask God to be part of your prayer time with or without words. If words come, pray them; if not, enjoy the silence.
3. To pray for a person, write their name on the page. Draw around it. Add color, if you want. Keep praying as you release the person into God's care.
4. Add other people to your drawing. Think of each stroke of your pen as a prayer for them. Take a breath or say “Amen” between each person.

Praying in Color: [prayingincolor.com/examples](http://prayingincolor.com/examples)

### Praying with clay

Reflecting on the biblical image of clay from the book of Jeremiah, picture yourself as clay in the hands of the Lord, who created you and shapes you into God's own image.

As you work with the clay, ask God, “What are you forming in me?”

As you pray, listen and look for God's quiet word to you. Some common experiences with this exercise are:

- God will give you an image, and you will try to form it in the clay.
- God will “speak to you” in the very process of working with the clay, showing you truths about yourself and/or about God's nature, and your relationship.
- As you work with the clay, you may “see” something emerging that you hadn't expected.
- You may go through a series of forms and shapes, having a dialog with God about each one.

OR

Try any of these exercises to pray with clay:

1. Mold clay (play dough) into shapes of things in creation that you are thankful for. Give thanks as your fingers work.
2. Mold the clay into something that represents you. As you shape the clay, ask God to shape you.
3. Mold the clay into something that represents your spiritual journey. Talk to God about your journey as you mold.
4. Play with the clay as you talk to God.

## Fasting

**The focus of fasting should not be on the lack of food.** Christian fasting is accompanied by a special focus on prayer during the fast, often substituting the time you'd spend eating with prayer.

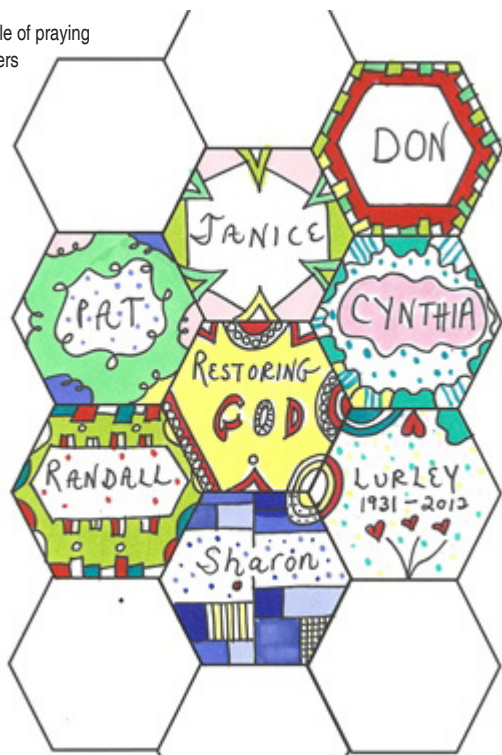
**Fasting provides a real-life illustration of dependency.** Fasting reveals a physical reliance on food that points to the ultimate dependency—the fact that you're dependent on God for things far more important than food. Fasting fosters concentration on God and God's will. A hungry stomach makes you more aware and alert to what God is trying to say to you.

**Fasting offers a way to impose self-control in your life.** It gives you a “splash in the face” to awaken you to the need for the personal strength of will that you need to grow spiritually.

**Fasting isn't always about food!** Everyone can give up something in order to focus on God (TV, internet, coffee drinks, shopping, etc.).

[www.redeemer.com/learn/resources\\_by\\_topic/prayer/prayer\\_and\\_fasting/fasting](http://www.redeemer.com/learn/resources_by_topic/prayer/prayer_and_fasting/fasting)

An example of praying with markers





# Ice cream tradition spans five decades & fosters spirit of giving

by Carol J. Eisenbeis

*Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota*

Janver Stucky remembers sleeping in a canvas tent in the middle of the Turner County Fairgrounds. It turns out that Stucky was among those who paved the way for a Mennonite tradition that's managed to span five decades. The year was 1971 and among the contents of that canvas tent was a small ice cream freezer. Today, the tent's gone, the small freezer's been replaced by two much larger models, and a trip to South Dakota's oldest county fair isn't complete without enjoying some "Mennonite" ice cream made and sold by the Youth Fellowship of Freeman's Salem Mennonite Church.

Dennis Lehmann, a member of Sermon on the Mount Fellowship in Sioux Falls, was part of Salem Mennonite's Youth Fellowship when the long-standing tradition began. He recalls helping to guard that ice cream freezer during the nighttime hours. He also recalls that his uncle, Albert Lehmann, a long-time member of the fair's board of directors, found the canvas tent to be a bit of an embarrassment. Consequently, the elder Lehmann donated some four-by-four planks that were used to temporarily transform the tent into a more respectable-looking structure for selling ice cream.

Stucky, now a Salem Mennonite Youth sponsor, and Lehmann both credit Norris Kramer for suggesting the attempt at making and selling homemade ice cream. It's an idea that originated in the Nebraska community of Kramer's then-girlfriend, Bonnie, who later became his wife.

In those early years, Stucky says the youth organization made about ten one-gallon batches of ice cream daily. That amount has since grown to a total of 75-80 four-gallon batches of ice cream generated each day of the four-day event.

While time spent making and selling ice cream can be a bonding experience for those working together, Stephen Waltner and Jesse Balzer, current members of the youth organization, attest to the fact that making ice cream is "hard work." Shifts are long and can include continuous stints of pounding ice. The evenings are busiest. And, if the workers during the morning shift haven't prepared enough batches of ice cream, some harried times are in store for those working later in the day. Both Waltner and Balzer were quick to mention the times they've scrambled to keep up with demand as ice cream was sold as soon as it was made.

Wendy Miller and her husband, Brian, remember working in the ice cream stand as high schoolers. Today, they serve as youth sponsors and work alongside their two sons who are in grades eight and nine, respectively. When

contemplating the changes that have taken place since she was younger, Miller notes that things have become much more streamlined. And, gone are the days of using real eggs in the recipe and hanging flystrips where the ice cream is made.

Youth sponsor Brad Carlson can easily identify customers who are new to the fair. Those are the folks who approach the counter and start asking about flavors. The return customers know that flavors and toppings are not needed to improve the taste of the vanilla ice cream served by the Salem Mennonite Youth.

Initially, sales of ice cream proved to be the perfect way to raise money to make it possible for youth to attend conventions and participate in service trips. Today, with the number of youth diminishing, expenses are less. The workload during fair week, however, remains significant. For that reason, other members of the congregation willingly offer their time to help out.

Fewer youth, however, means that less money is needed to fund conventions and service trips. The youth of Salem Mennonite have fun planning their giving. While tithing their money has always been an emphasis, their benevolence has grown to much more than a simple 10 percent. Their giving equates to thousands of dollars gifted to charities - and also to Salem Mennonite's general fund - annually.

If you're headed to the Turner County Fair in the future, you'll want to look for some of that "Mennonite" ice cream. Just don't look for it in a canvas tent. Instead, you'll find it housed in a large, solid structure as part of the food court.

"When you think about it," says Stucky, "it's amazing how it's evolved."



Brian and Wendy Miller



## Appreciation for the Bible Study Webinars with Meghan Good

by Shana Peachey Boshart  
Conference Minister for Faith Formation

Last fall, we offered three webinars to equip our members to read, study and interpret the Bible. Our presenter, Meghan Good, was excellent, and many expressed appreciation for her teaching. The webinars were recorded and are still available at no charge. Here are some things participants had to say:

*"Meghan was an excellent teacher - very engaging and easy to understand."*

*"The webinars gave people a good foundation for Bible study. Meghan was very easy to understand and well-prepared. I think they were very important to keep us focused on an Anabaptist interpretation of the Bible."*

*"Covered lots of ground."*

*"The last few moments of this last seminar were powerful, as she attested to the work and power of the Holy Spirit. Spot on."*

*"We liked the key questions to ask when reading a text, ways of understanding difficult texts, and the deep and wide overview of where the Bible came from and why it matters."*

*"Meghan did a great job of presenting complex ideas in ways that many could understand. A common comment was, 'she really knows her stuff!' She was well-organized and covered a lot in a short amount of time. "*

*"I felt that addressing how the Bible was put together was especially helpful for our participants."*

*"Thank you for offering this excellent series!"*

### Did you miss the Bible Study Webinars?

Watch them any time at [www.centralplainsmc.org/bible-study-webinars!](http://www.centralplainsmc.org/bible-study-webinars!)

Use these webinar recordings in your congregation to equip both teachers and students. Our covenant says, "We will prayerfully study the Bible together weekly in our congregations ... guided by qualified teachers [to increase] our competence in reading, interpreting, and applying the scriptures in an Anabaptist perspective to our everyday lives and to the critical issues of faith we face in the world."

### Bible Study Webinars:

#### Session I Between Joints and Marrow:

An Introduction to the Art of Biblical Interpretation

#### Session II A Two-Edged Sword:

Reading the Bible Like An Anabaptist

#### Session III Living and Active:

Where the Bible Came From and Why It Matters





## Transitions

**Grant Nebel** retired as pastor at Washington Mennonite Church in Washington, IA effective October 30, 2016.

**Jose & Paula Martinez** were commissioned as associate pastors on the pastoral team December 18, 2016 at Iglesia Cristiana El Balsamo in Muscatine, IA.

**Firman Gingerich** was installed as transitional pastor January 1, 2017 at West Union Mennonite Church in Parnell, IA.

## Leaders Credentialed

**David Schooley** was ordained September 18, 2016 at Eicher Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Wayland, IA.

**Jack Norris** was ordained September 25, 2016 at Julesburg Mennonite Church in Julesburg, CO.

February 28, March 7 and March 14

## Tuesdays with Dave: Webinars and videos on being a church of grace, joy and peace

*by David Boshart*  
*Executive Conference Minister*



The Outreach and Service Committee is sponsoring a second Tuesdays with Dave webinar series called “Witness to a Better Place.” This series will focus on **how the life and message of our churches can be infused with grace, joy and peace in a world seeking hope**. This year, three 20- to 30-minute teaching videos with discussion questions will be made available in advance of each Tuesday’s gathering. The videos will be available for download from the Central Plains website by February 10. Watch your church bulletins for information on how to join the webinars.

Videos and questions for conversation can be easily used in church groups that are already meeting (Sunday School, Bible study, and small groups). Anyone interested in gathering with and learning from other congregations will meet online for one hour on three Tuesday nights (February 28, March 7 and March 14) for a conversation on the questions for discussion from each video. Topics for these sessions include:

### **Witness to a Better Place**

#### **Session 1: Witness in Exile: Longing for a better place** (February 28)

How can the life and message of the church address people’s longing for a better place? How can the church become a place where questions and doubts are welcomed and people are released to engage their neighbors in a ministry of hope?

#### **Session 2: The Substance of Witness: Being the better place** (March 7)

What are the spiritual formation practices that can help transform our reflexes for a hope-filled and faithful witness? How can we be the better place that God inaugurated in Jesus, a place infused with grace, joy and peace?

#### **Session 3: The Heart of Witness: Becoming communities of grace, joy and peace** (March 14)

How can we move the condition of the heart of our community from anxiety, moral indignation, and judgment to a common life that is marked by grace, joy, and peace? This session will offer specific recommendations for how churches can nurture attitudes of grace, joy and peace, displaying ‘the better place’ God has inaugurated in the world through Jesus.

## Annual Leaders Retreat to focus on prayer, fasting and generosity

The Annual Leader's Retreat is planned each year by the Pastoral Leadership Committee for all pastors, chaplains and their spouses. This year's Annual Leader's Retreat is scheduled for March 19 - 21, 2017 at the St. Benedict Retreat Center in Schuyler, NE. This year's theme will focus on the second spiritual practice in the Covenant of Spiritual Practices for Central Plains Mennonite Conference: ***We will practice prayer, fasting and generous giving to separate ourselves from the influence of the principalities and powers of this age and to make us available to fully participate in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.***

Through worship, dialogue and practice we will explore how the spiritual practices of worship, prayer, fasting and generous giving help us to practice and to live God's story in our day. How might these practices help us to separate ourselves from the powerful influences of nationalism, consumerism and individualism that are so prevalent in the times we live? How do the spiritual practices of prayer, fasting and generous giving re-form us to participate in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; to bear witness to God's story of shalom to the world, and to live out God's story in the world? How have you witnessed worship and the spiritual practices as means for practicing and living an alternative to the principalities and powers of this age?

The Annual Leader's Retreat is a place for pastors, chaplains and spouses to come together for renewal, resourcing and for building relationships with peers. You can find more information and registration material on our Central Plains Conference website at <http://www.centralplainsmc.org/annual-leaders-retreat.html>. I hope to see you in Schuyler!

—Tim Detweiler, Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership

## In Memory of David Breckbill



David Breckbill died on November 19, 2016 in Lincoln, NE after living with pancreatic cancer for over a year. At the time of his death, David served on the Central Plains Conference Pastoral Leadership Committee (PLC). I am deeply grateful for the contribution David made during the four years he served on PLC. PLC was blessed by David's gift and love of music which he often shared at our Annual Leader's Retreat; for his compassionate heart, love for the church, theological mind, listening ear and for his ability to ask good questions. I am deeply grateful for David's friendship, his dedicated commitment and for his faithful service on the Pastoral Leadership Committee.

—Tim Detweiler, Conference Minister for Ministerial Leadership

# Scattered Seeds

Scattered Seeds January 2017

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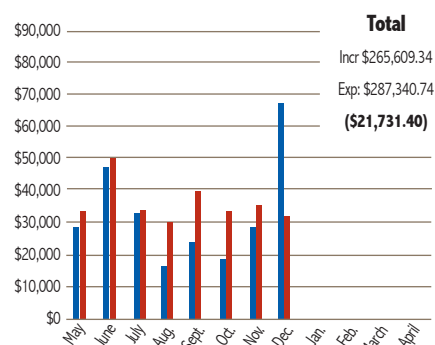
The Central Plains budget reversed a 7-month downward trend in December to slice through a large deficit. While there is still work to do, we give many thanks for the generous support we have experienced in 2016. Income through December came in at \$265,609.34. Expenses were in line with expectations at \$287,340.74. As a result, an overall deficit for the fiscal year moves to \$21,731.40. We are thankful for the continued support of our conference and continue to see God's work in many different ways.

— *Stewardship Task Group*

### Central Plains Mennonite Conference

Income (blue) vs. Expenses (red)

Fiscal Year 2016/2017



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesdays with Dave webinars** will be February 28, March 7 and March 14, 2017.

**Annual Leaders Retreat** will take place March 19-21, 2017 in Schuyler, Nebraska.

**Central Plains Annual Meeting 2017** will take place June 15-18, 2017, in South Dakota.

**Mennonite Church USA Convention & Delegate Assembly** will take place July 4-8, 2017 in Orlando, Florida.



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