

## December, 2006/January, 2007

### A Word from Dorothy A new thing!

In this time of holiday gift-giving, many of us will receive "new" things. Some things we may have wished for--a new this or that. Some things will be complete surprises!

The prophet Isaiah, however, records a God who says and means something very different: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:19)

What could it mean? I'm guessing it had to do with new vision, new expectations, new assumptions. I'm guessing it had to do with God's mercy and justice amidst a situation that was filled with grief and uncertainty. How could things get any worse? What was going to happen to the people? Where was home? Where was there any compassion? Into this dismal picture, God's words seem imaginative and hopeful. What new thing?

As conference minister, I feel that the past four years (yes, four!) have been about seeing some new things. Many things that I see have been here for a long time. There are strong congregations, creative pastors, and hardworking members. There is camp, the resource library, annual conference sessions. However, there are new things: nearly 10 congregations that speak primarily Spanish! two area conference youth ministers--one in Texas, one in Kansas! new buildings or additions at Grace Hill, Southern Hills, Shalom, Rainbow in Kansas, at Herold and Bethel in Oklahoma, at Monte Horeb in Texas.

And we are seeing new things as we imagine Vision 2012--a prayer and funding campaign to strengthen ministries that bind us together in Christ and share the Good News with others. I see ordinary folks committing themselves to their local congregations and to the area conference through generous gifts. I hold "letters of intent", commitments by WDC members to pray for and give to Vision 2012. I sense something new!

Shalom!

*-Dorothy Nickel Friesen*

*Western District Conference empowers its Anabaptist/Mennonite congregations to:*

- *Witness and invite others to faith in Jesus Christ,*
- *Dwell in just and loving relationships,*
- *Connect to God's mission in the world.*

### Testimony of prayer

My life is full of testimonies, and in it I have seen God's mercy. Through prayer I have learned to wait on God and for God's timing (which hasn't been easy for me). Ecclesiastes 3: 1-2 tells us: "Everything has its season, and everything desired under heaven has its time."

My oldest daughter, who has been married for ten years, had been trying to start a family for about four years without result. It was a depressing time for her and for our family. I had begun to pray for this baby a long time ago. My mother and friends from church who knew us had also been praying. In my heart I felt that this baby would indeed come and I never lost hope.

Last year, two days after having celebrated my birthday, my daughter called me with the news that she was expecting a baby, and six months before this, a friend from church who was praying for this had told me that she dreamed that my daughter was pregnant. Halleluiah! God lives! He never fails us and He knows the season and the hour. Amen.

On December 5, 2005, Catia Sofia, the best Christmas gift our family could have received, was born.  
*-Sandra Güete, Vision 2012 Prayer Partner*

*Please include announcements  
from this Memo in your bulletins and newsletters.*

### WDC prayer reminders

**Dec. 3** - Pray for conference ministers (Dorothy Nickel Friesen); associate conference ministers (Lee Lever, Dave Gerbrandt and Marco Güete) as they lead WDC.  
**Dec. 10** - Pray for the WDC Executive Committee (Jay Goering, moderator; Brenda Glanzer Lilliston, moderator-elect, and Marlene Faul, secretary, and Dorothy Nickel Friesen, conference minister) as they

provide for the “orderly and timely conduct of WDC agenda”.

**Dec. 17** - Pray for David Stevens as he is installed today as lead pastor of Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS.

**Dec. 24** - Pray for open hearts to receive the gift of Jesus, the Light of the world.

**Dec. 31** - As the year ends, remember God’s gracious care for your congregation.

**Jan. 7** - Pray for the Leadership Commission as it interviews candidates for credentialing as pastors in WDC. Pray that God will continue to gift women and men for leadership and that congregations will nurture new leaders.

**Jan. 14** - Pray for our Junior High youth as they gather for the "Know Jesus" event sponsored by WDC and South Central Conference on the Hesston College campus Jan. 20-21.

**Jan. 21** - Pray for pastors attending the AMBS Pastors' Week (Elkhart) and EMS Leadership Week (Harrisonburg) that they will be refreshed and renewed.

**Jan. 28** - Pray for this final Sunday in the WDC fiscal year--that the financial gifts of congregations and individuals will demonstrate our unity in Jesus Christ and our connecting to God's mission in the world.

### Pastoral openings

*(Congregational Information Forms completed & available):*

**Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS** (one-half time associate pastor)

**Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS** (three-fourths time) interim associate pastor (March 15-August 15)

**Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS** (full-time) associate pastor beginning August 15  
**Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS** (full-time) associate pastor beginning summer 2007

**Fort Worth, TX** (one-fourth time church planter)

### Transitions

**Jose Elizalde**, pastor of Houston (TX) Mennonite Church, spent the month of October on sabbatical/study leave. The church was awarded a sabbatical/interim grant for pastoral services during this time. *(Churches with a membership of 50 or less /attendance of 100 or less can apply to WDC for this grant.)*

**Dean Kroeker** (Chouteau, OK), WDC representative to the Bethel College Board of Directors, passed away on November 9. A funeral was held on November 11 at Eden Mennonite Church in Inola, OK.

**Todd Lehman**, youth pastor at First Mennonite and Trinity Mennonite churches, Hillsboro, KS, has set a goal to run in 13 marathons in 13 months, to bring awareness and raise funds for Offender/Victim Ministries, Inc. Check out the “Marathon Challenge”

link on the First Mennonite Church website:

[www.fmchillsboro.ks.us.mennonite.net](http://www.fmchillsboro.ks.us.mennonite.net).

**Florence Schloneger**, co-pastor at First Mennonite Church, Beatrice, NE, will retire on February 15. Her plans are to begin retreat and spiritual direction ministry at Bottle Creek Retreat ([www.bottlecreekretreat.com](http://www.bottlecreekretreat.com)).

**Weldon Schloneger** was called for another three-year term, at full-time, by First Mennonite Church, Beatrice, NE.

**Jerry Truex** was called for a three-year term by Mennonite Church of the Servant, Wichita, KS

**Jeff Wintermote**, pastor of Turpin (OK) Mennonite Church, returned home on November 6 after six weeks of hospitalization and rehabilitation from West Nile, Guillain-Barré Syndrome, and pneumonia. He continues out-patient rehabilitation and is making good progress. We give thanks to God for his healing. Cards may be sent to: Rt. 2 Box 21, Turpin OK 73950

### Check It Out

In this month's issue of Check It Out from the Resource Library... we feature “**Finding the Third Way: resources on abuse, violence, peace and justice.**” Does it seem a bit strange to offer these new titles as we celebrate the season of Jesus' birth? Perhaps, but the brokenness of this world needs the good news that Christ provides. And it is my prayer that as you use these resources, you and your congregation will continue to be an authentic Christian witness to your neighborhood, community and world.

*-Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian Nurture and Resource Library Director*

### Office closed

The WDC office will be closed **December 25 through January 1** in observance of the Christmas and New Year holidays.

### IRA donations get the green light

Congress okayed **direct contributions from IRAs to charity**. On August 17, 2006, the President signed the Pension Protection Act of 2006 (PPA 2006). Section 1201 of that bill permits current gifts of IRA charitable rollovers. This year, 2006, and next year, 2007, owners of IRAs who are at least 70½ can donate in any amount up to \$100,000 a year from retirement accounts, and the gifts count toward the owners required minimum distribution (RMD). In order to take advantage of this opportunity in 2006, gifts must be made by **December 31, 2006**.

You must contact the IRA custodian to direct transfers to qualified public charities. We invite you to choose the Western District Conference (WDC) designating Vision 2012. The transfer must move directly from the IRA administrator to the charity,

without passing to you first. You do not get a deduction. You do get a tax break because the money is not included in your taxable income, as it would be, if you withdrew funds for yourself.

Consult your IRA administrator and the charity about the necessary documentation. WDC will need to know who donated the money, and then it will provide the proper receipts for your tax records. Thank you for your interest in the mission of the Western District Conference Vision 2012.

*-Harold D. Thieszen, Vision 2012 Committee*

### **Know Jesus 2007**

Junior High youth and sponsors are invited to a 24-hour "Know Jesus" event on the campus of Hesston College on **January 20-21, 2007**. Participants will experience dynamic speaking and worship, engage in recreation, and play the exciting "Anabaptist Game". Contact Doug Krehbiel for information: 316-283-6300; [dougk@mennowdc.org](mailto:dougk@mennowdc.org).

### **WDC ski retreat**

The 29<sup>th</sup> annual WDC ski retreat will be held **January 26-30, 2007** at Winter Park, CO. Cost: \$375/adults, \$365/14-18 year olds, \$300/kids under 13; cost includes sleeper bus transportation from North Newton, KS, lodging, ski rental and lift tickets. Registration deadline: January 2. For additional information or to reserve your spot, contact: Ken Regier, 316-283-5155, ext. 275, or email: [kenr@mennonitemission.net](mailto:kenr@mennonitemission.net).

### **Choral festival**

The WDC Music & Worship Task Force will sponsor a Choral/Hymn Festival at 3: 30 p.m. **February 4, 2007**, at Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS. R. Paul Crabb, director of choral activities at the University of Missouri-Columbia, will be the guest conductor. With "peace" as its theme, the festival program will include five anthems sung by combined area churches and hymns sung by the choirs and congregation. The festival continues a long tradition of such programs extending back to origins in the 1930s. For information, contact Berneil Rupp Mueller: 316-283-1663; [tabco@cox.net](mailto:tabco@cox.net). Other members of the Music & Worship Task Force are Roseann Penner Kaufman, Carol Klingenberg, and Ken Rodgers.

### **Damascus Road**

A Damascus Road anti-racism analysis training (basic) will be held on **February 8-10, 2007** at Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, KS. The purpose of the training is to lay the groundwork for the long-term work of dismantling racism in congregations, conferences, organizations, institutions and other community entities. For more information, contact

Marcia Stoesz, 316-213-2007 or 316-283-8706; [mlrstoesz@yahoo.com](mailto:mlrstoesz@yahoo.com) WDC is a co-sponsor. Are there 10 people who want to devote their skills to this important agenda? Contact Dorothy Nickel Friesen 316-283-6300.

### **Kansas Ecumenical Ministries**

**February 13, 2007** - Legislative Event for Advocacy in Faith (LEAF) at First UMC, 6<sup>th</sup> & Topeka Blvd., Topeka, KS. Workshops on immigration, minimum wage, hunger, religion in public schools, TABOR, death penalty, farm bill, homelessness, globalization. Tuesday morning keynote worship and address on immigration. Registration forms at WDC. \$18 by Jan. 19, \$23 later. Contact [yesudduth@hotmail.com](mailto:yesudduth@hotmail.com) or visit [www.kansaseast.org/](http://www.kansaseast.org/).

### **Senior High Snow Camps**

Two Senior High snow camps are being planned: **February 16-18 and March 16-18** at Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp (RMMC), Divide, CO. Speaker will be Dustin Gaylon, an inspiring young speaker, coach and communicator, with a passion for sharing the message of Jesus Christ. Cost is \$80; register by January 31. For more information or to register, contact Corbin Graber at RMMC: 719-687-9506, [info@rmmccamp.org](mailto:info@rmmccamp.org). (Sponsored by Western District Conference, South Central Conference, and Mountain States Conference.)

### **Stewardship University**

Sponsored by Mennonite Mutual Aid, Stewardship University will be held **February 17, 2007** at Hesston College. Courses are offered in categories such as: Bible study, Finances, Generosity, Wellness, Family, Congregational life, Business, Environment, Time, and Talents. Stewardship University will help you take charge of and manage all the gifts God has given you: your family, your spirituality, your finances, and your health. Courses are taught by experts in the fields of business, finance, estate planning, time and talent management, environmental and home issues, health, and the gospel. For information, contact MMA at **(800) 348-7468, ext. 269**, or [education@mma-online.org](mailto:education@mma-online.org).

### **Save the date**

Attn: Pastors and spouses of WDC (and South Central Conference) churches: Save **April 20-22, 2007** for the **Pastor Spouse Retreat** at the Roman Nose Resort, Wagonta, OK. More information to come in the new year.

### Seminary offerings

#### AMBS-Great Plains Extension: Interterm:

*Issues in Youth Ministry: Adolescence, Formation and Culture* (Andy Brubacher Kaethler); Spring: *Introduction to Bible Study Tools* (Jerry Truex), *Anabaptist History and Theology* (Lois Barrett), *Contemporary Theology* (Duane Friesen). See: [www.ambs.edu/php/GreatPlains/gp\\_courses.php](http://www.ambs.edu/php/GreatPlains/gp_courses.php)

**Eastern Mennonite Seminary** distance learning courses for Spring 2007: *Anabaptism Today* (Mark Thiessen Nation), *Pastoral Care* (Lonnie Yoder); Summer 2007: *Ethics and Non-Violence* (N. Gerald Shenk). See: [www.emu.edu/seminary/distancelearning/](http://www.emu.edu/seminary/distancelearning/)

### Youth Census

Mennonite Education Agency encourages you to participate in their Youth Census. If you have not received the forms or wish to receive them electronically, contact MEA toll free at 866-866-2872 or [YouthCensus@MennoniteEducation.org](mailto:YouthCensus@MennoniteEducation.org). The information your congregation provides strengthens the church for the future by keeping youth and young adults of all ages in touch with the various ministries of our church and our schools.

### AMBS employment opportunities

AMBS is seeking applications and nominations for two administrative positions: dean (begin Jan. 1, 2007) and director of admissions (begin July 1, 2007). For more information, see: [www.ambs.edu/employment](http://www.ambs.edu/employment).

### Vacation Bible School Troupe

WDC received a Schowalter Foundation Grant to provide a traveling Vacation Bible School Troupe for the **summer of 2007**. Churches can apply to have a college-age group of five young adults lead children in a 4-5 day schedule of Bible teaching, worship and hands-on learning using the brand new Faith and Life Press curriculum: *Be Bold, God is With You*. Sneak a preview at [www.mph.org/vbs/](http://www.mph.org/vbs/).

Norma Johnson, a seasoned Christian educator and pastor, will provide training and oversight to the troupe. Priority will be given to WDC small rural and small urban churches who: express a desire to reach out in their neighborhood and community, articulate a plan to connect and cooperate with other churches in the area, and demonstrate need for additional Christian education leadership. In addition, church applicants will need to provide meals and lodging for the VBS troupe, local publicity, designate a local coordinator/director, and provide additional supplies. Information was sent to congregations in November. Call/email Marlene Bogard: 316-283-6300; [mbogard@mennowdc.org](mailto:mbogard@mennowdc.org).

### Western District Conference coming events

Dec. 1-3 - Discipleship Now, Lorraine Center, Wichita, KS  
Dec. 25 - January 1 - WDC office closed  
Jan. 13, **2007** - Agri-Urban banquet, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS  
Jan. 20-21, **2007** - Know Jesus, Hesston College, KS  
Jan. 26-30, **2007** - WDC Ski Retreat, Winter Park, CO  
Feb. 4, **2007** - Choral Festival, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS  
Feb. 8-10, **2007** - Damascus Road anti-racism training, Bethel College, North Newton, KS  
Feb. 16-18, **2007** - Senior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp  
Feb. 17, **2007** - MMA Stewardship University, Hesston College, KS  
Mar. 16-18, **2007** - Senior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp  
April 20-22, **2007** - Pastor Spouse Retreat, Roman Nose Resort, Watonga, OK  
July 27-29, **2007** - Western District Conference and South Central Conference joint annual conference (Oklahoma)  
Oct. 19-21, **2007** - Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series 2007, Hesston College, KS

### Conference Ministers' schedules

Dec. 1-3 - Conference Ministers' meeting, Pittsburgh, PA (DNF, MG)  
Dec. 2 - Resource Commission (MB)  
Dec. 3-Jan 1 - Sabbatical (MB)  
Dec. 5 - WDC staff meeting  
Dec. 9 - WDC Executive Board (DNF, LL)  
Dec. 10 - Turpin (OK)Mennonite Church, and Calvary Mennonite Church, Liberal, KS (DNF)  
Dec. 12 - Western KS pastors, Dodge City, KS (LL)  
Dec. 15 - Women pastors' luncheon (DNF)  
Dec. 15-16 - Missional leadership team meeting, Kansas City (MG)  
Dec. 17 - David Steven's installation, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS (DNF)  
Dec. 18-Jan. 1 - Vacation (DNF)  
Dec. 19 - First Mennonite Church, Newton, KS (MB)  
Dec. 19-29 - Vacation (MG)  
Jan. 9 - Stewardship Commission (DNF); KS Ecumenical Ministries, Topeka, KS (LL)  
Jan. 11 - WDC consultants (LL)  
Jan. 12-13 - WDC Leadership Commission (DNF, LL)  
Jan. 13 - Agri-Urban banquet (DNF)  
Jan. 16 - WDC staff meeting  
Jan. 22 - Executive Committee (DNF); KS Ecumenical Board, Emporia, KS (LL)  
Jan. 22-25 - Pastors' Week, AMBS, Elkhart, IN (MG) (*Marlene Bogard-MB; Dorothy Nickel Friesen-DNF; Dave Gerbrandt--DG; Marco Güete-MG; Doug Krehbiel-DK; Lee Lever-LL; Hugo Saucedo-HS*)

*The MEMO is published monthly for WDC pastors and committee members. Submit articles and correspondence to: Dorothy Nickel Friesen, [dorothyinf@mennowdc.org](mailto:dorothyinf@mennowdc.org).*

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