

# Memo

October, 2006

## A Word from Dorothy: Why argue?

The Alban Institute publishes the quarterly CONGREGATIONS which I appreciate and count on for good, comprehensive and challenging material about the state of the congregation and of ministry. The summer 2006 issue has “The Good Fight: Transforming Congregational Conflict” as its focus.

Ah, conflict. Mennonites know it well. And, Western District Conference knows it well also. But what do we argue about? On page 14, there is a short summary of major studies in recent years about congregational conflict.

1. Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford Seminary, found that congregational change “does not come without the emotional cost of conflict.” “Congregations report an increase in conflict as their resources become more limited”....

2. A 2001 Pulpit and Pew Clergy Survey of 682 Episcopal rectors/pastors showed that approximately 70 percent of their congregations had experienced at least minor conflict in the previous two years. Sources of conflict: new building or renovation projects, finances, changes in worship or music styles and clergy leadership style. The foremost source of **major** conflict was clergy leadership style with changes in worship style a close second.

3. A *Christianity Today* study in 2004 found that 95 percent of pastors surveyed had experienced congregational conflict—and nearly all pastors who had experienced congregation conflict said they had seen positive results from it! “...conflict itself is not the problem so much as how the affected parties deal with it.”

Leaders must engage conflict thoughtfully. Need help? Get some training through places like Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (KIPCOR, 316-284-5217) right here in North Newton. Or the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center ([www.LMPeaceCenter.org](http://www.LMPeaceCenter.org)). And did you know that the new President of Bethel College, Barry Bartel, has a wonderful group dynamics workbook about conflict—now available in Spanish? (Contact Herald Press for information.)

Pastors and leaders must understand conflict, learn management skills, and apply helpful strategies. In the name of Christ, bring hope through conflict.

-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.*

## The Miracle of Answered Prayer

I want to tell a story about how God answered my prayers. I am the oldest of five siblings in my family, and I've always felt responsible for the care of my mother. My parents, who lived in Colombia, separated after I was married and living in New York City. My mother lived under constant abuse and threats from my father and her economic situation was depressing. My husband and I agreed to bring my mother to live with us. After she had completed all of the requirements asked for by the American embassy, her visa was denied twice. In my prayers I would ask with much faith for God to open doors, but I only saw a dark unending tunnel. After a conversation with my husband's sister, who at the time was a consulate for Honduras, I felt very optimistic because she promised to help us. I believed in a God that could do anything. I traveled to Colombia and from there left with my mother for Honduras. From the airport we went to the American Embassy and an hour later my mother left with a visa for one year. Today, she's an American citizen and what's more, came to know the Lord in a Mennonite church. Hallelujah! God answered my prayer. My mother had said goodbye to her entire family and all of her friends saying she was going to the United States without a visa. How embarrassing it would have been for us if the visa had been denied again. God didn't allow this to happen. Jesus says in Mark 9:23, “All things are possible if you believe.”

--Sandra Güete, Vision 2012 Prayer Partner

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

### **WDC Prayer Reminders**

**Oct. 1** - Pray for the members who have joined your congregation in the past year. Pray that the witness of the congregation will continue to bring more healing and hope to individuals and communities.

**Oct. 8** - Pray for the witness of Bethel College as it inaugurates President Barry Bartel today. Pray for students, faculty, and staff.

**Oct. 15** - Pray for Jay Goering, Jose Elizalde, and Dorothy Nickel Friesen as they represent WDC at the MC USA Constituency Leaders Council meeting in South Bend, IN today.

**Oct. 22** - Pray for the second part of the "Cultivating a Missional Identity" training in San Antonio, that God will bless the Mennonite Mission Network resource staff and participants.

**Oct. 29** - Pray for the church plant in Garland-Rockwell, TX and the planters, Felix and Ofelia Marquez, that the Holy Spirit will give the ability, wisdom and power to this group of about 15 to develop the new ministry. This church plant effort started in September 2006.

### **Pastoral Openings**

*(Congregational Information Forms completed & available):*

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

### **Transitions**

**Nathan Koontz** began as Interim Youth Pastor (1/2 time) for Faith Mennonite Church, Newton, KS on September 18.

**Harriet Rutschman**, from North Newton, KS, retired Mennonite Mission worker and teacher, died September 7 after a long illness with multiple system atrophy.

### **Website Construction**

A new WDC website ([www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org)) is under construction - watch for a new and improved site soon!

### **Bethel College Fall Festival**

The 36<sup>th</sup> annual Bethel College Fall Festival will be held **October 5-8**. New events include a children's choir festival; volleyball reunion; concerts by the Tropical Shores Steel Drum Band, Haven, KS, and Full Circle, women's a cappella vocal group. It culminates with the inauguration of Barry C. Bartel as Bethel's 13<sup>th</sup> president, Sunday, October 8 at 10 a.m. worship, 2:30 p.m. ceremony, at Memorial Hall. "Meet the President" reception is Saturday, 1:30-3:00 p.m. in the basement of the Administration building. To see the festival schedule, visit [www.bethelks.edu/alumni/fallfest/](http://www.bethelks.edu/alumni/fallfest/) or call 1-800-522-1887, ext 251.

### **Seminar: "What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty"**

This seminar presents information and issues to increase knowledge and awareness of the culture of poverty, and ways that churches may minister to individuals from poverty. Based on the book "What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty" by Bill Ehlig and Ruby K. Payne, this seminar is designed for all members of the faith community, ministers, and church staff members.

This full day seminar (\$25) will be held at Chisholm Middle School, Newton, KS, on **October 9**, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., followed by a free community presentation from 7:00-8:30 p.m. (No cost or registration required for the evening session.) Registrations are due September 25, and limited scholarships are available.

Sponsored by: Harvey County Asset Building Coalition and underwritten by a grant from the Schowalter Foundation. For more information, call Peace Connections: 316-284-0000 or email: [info@peaceconnections.org](mailto:info@peaceconnections.org).

### **Caregivers Retreat**

Is your relationship with your aging parents changing, uncovering new social and spiritual challenges? Rocky Mountain Mennonite Conference is offering a weekend retreat **Oct. 11-13** "Caring for Aging Parents" that will offer guidance and time to reflect on this challenging topic.

For more information and registration, see [www.rmmc.org](http://www.rmmc.org) or call 719-687-9506.

### **Reference Council**

*Attention:* All persons serving on a WDC Commission, Committee or Task Force, partnership organization or MC USA agency, etc., please reserve Saturday, **October 21** to attend the WDC Reference Council at **Grace Hill Mennonite Church, rural Whitewater, KS**. Everyone will meet together in the morning, followed by lunch. In the afternoon, individual groups are encouraged to meet. **RSVP** to WDC to register your attendance: 316-283-6300 or [wdc@mennowdc.org](mailto:wdc@mennowdc.org).

### **Ministers' Seminar Series**

Friends University presents "**The Crucifixion of Ministry**" at their Seminar Series on **October 24**. Clergy, church staff, interested laypersons, chaplains, students preparing in ministry, human services or counseling are encouraged to attend. Dr. Andrew Purves is the speaker. For information, contact: Friends University Dept. of Religion and Philosophy, 316-295-5871, [dexterb@friends.edu](mailto:dexterb@friends.edu).

### **Pastors' Day Apart**

Plan to attend **Preaching--and Jazz** with Eugene Lowry, Emeritus Professor of Homiletics, St. Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, MO at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, KS on **November 7**. Multiple events will be held but this day is especially for those who preach regularly--or only occasionally. Brochures will be emailed to churches and available soon on-line at: [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org).

Sorry: note that speakers Walter and June Wink, scheduled for the Pastors' Day Apart workshop on **February 24, 2007**, will be unable to attend and have cancelled. Alternative plans are being made. More details later.

### **2007 Pastor Spouse Retreat**

Set aside **April 20-22, 2007** (Friday evening through Sunday morning) for the **Pastor Spouse Retreat** to be held at Roman Nose Resort in Watonga, OK. This will be a joint retreat with South Central Conference. Cost per person: \$10 registration, \$50 meal package; \$60 per room per night.

### **Check It Out**

See this month's edition of Check It Out from the Western District Resource Library for a listing called **"Simply Christian: new books on faith."** Topics include "stunted Christianity," the practice of Christian friendship, Jesus and non-violence, rural spirituality and the Beatitudes. This was sent to your church office via email. Soon our new website will be up and running and you may also view it there. To borrow resources: 316-283-6300 or [crlib@mennowdc.org](mailto:crlib@mennowdc.org).

### **Service/Work projects for WDC congregations**

The **Cheyenne Cultural Center, Clinton, OK** has a new building ready for siding before winter. The 30'X60' shell was erected by Amish and a steel roof is on. (This will house the "Return to the Earth" project through Mennonite Central Committee.) A Saturday project, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. with lunch and presentation by Lawrence Hart provided; five people who can hammer; a crew leader with some building skills. Later projects include installing interior walls for bathroom, storage room and an office; insulation; drywall; sanding and painting. Funding to purchase siding is also needed. Contact: Lawrence Hart at [ccctr@itlnet.net](mailto:ccctr@itlnet.net); 580-323-6624 (o) or 580-323-5320 (h).

### **Peace Mennonite Church, Aurora, CO**

(former WDC congregation; now a member of the new Mountain States Mennonite Conference) is expanding its sanctuary and finishing its basement. Volunteer labor with building/construction skills is needed beginning November 15 and continuing until March 2007

Contact Leonard Wiebe at 316-283-4711 for information. Details at: [www.peacemennonite.com](http://www.peacemennonite.com).

### **Ministry to Young Children**

**Mennonite Early Childhood Network** has been in existence since Charlotte, 2005. (See website: [www.mennoniteeducation.org/early](http://www.mennoniteeducation.org/early).) They would like to be in contact with churches that offer through-the-week programs for children from birth through kindergarten (nursery school, preschool, child care, Co-ops, Head Start, kindergarten, MOPS, Mothers/Parents Day Out, etc.). A meeting is planned the afternoon of July 4 at the church assembly in San Jose for pastors, parents, early childhood educator or anyone with interest in young children. If your church has interest in this, contact: Kathryn Aschliman, Coordinator, Mennonite Early Childhood Network: Birth through Kindergarten, [kathrynaa@goshen.edu](mailto:kathrynaa@goshen.edu).

### **The Tax Dilemma**

Donald D. Kaufman has newly released his book **The Tax Dilemma - Praying for Peace, Paying for War**, written 30 years ago. This enhanced edition is strengthened by the addition of insights from 42 writers. The author explores the moral implications for persons conscientiously opposed to paying for war. Recognizing that the U.S. Government now has a Federal budget where military priorities trump all needs, this reprint of *The Tax Dilemma* could not be more timely. All royalties for this book are being donated to the Peace Tax Foundation. For information, see Wipf & Stock Publishers website: [www.wipfandstock.com](http://www.wipfandstock.com).

### **Mennonite Voluntary Service Assignments**

**Amelia Brandt** from First Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, KS, began a one-year term of service on August 14 in Bethesda, MD, as an education aide with Community of Hope. A 2006 graduate of Bethel College, she is the daughter of Debra and Michael Brandt.

**Karen French**, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS, began a one-year term of service September 5 in Bradford, England as a youth worker with Great Horton Methodist Church. She is a 2006 graduate of Bethel College.

For more information about MVS, go to: <http://www.mennonitemission.net/Work/Service/MVS/>

### **Job opening**

**Schowalter Villa**, Hesston, KS, a Continuing Care Retirement Community, seeks a full-time chaplain. Candidate will develop relationships with residents and staff and lovingly tend to the community's spiritual formation. Position open until filled. Prefer early December start date. For more information contact Lillian Claassen at [lillianc@schowalter-villa.org](mailto:lillianc@schowalter-villa.org) or call 620-327-3400.

## Western District Conference Coming Events

Oct. 21 - WDC Reference Council, Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, KS  
Nov. 3-5 - Counter Recruitment Conference, San Antonio, TX  
Nov. 4 - Workshop: Exercising spiritual gifts in your congregation, Hope Mennonite Church, Wichita, KS  
Nov. 5 - Youth Sponsor Appreciation Banquet, (Location TBA)  
Nov. 7 - Pastors' Day Apart, Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, KS  
Jan. 13, 2007 - Agri-Urban banquet, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS  
Jan. 20-21, 2007 - Know Jesus, Hesston College, Hesston, KS  
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, Hesston, KS  
Feb. 24, 2007 - Pastors' Day Apart, Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS  
Mar. 16-18, 2007 - Senior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp  
July 27-29, 2007 - Western District Conference and South Central Conference joint annual conference (Location in Oklahoma to be announced)

## Conference Ministers' Schedules

Oct. 1 - Mentoring presentation at Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS (MB)  
Oct. 2 - Vision 2012 training, Newton, KS (MG)  
Oct. 3 - MPN Resource Selection Committee (MB)  
Oct. 4 - Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS; Vision 2012 presentation (DNF)  
Oct. 5-7 - Hispanic Mennonite Church Commission of Education board meeting, Goshen, IN (MG)  
Oct. 8 - Inauguration of Bethel College president (DNF)  
Oct. 9 - Bridges out of Poverty seminar, Newton (DNF, MB)  
Oct. 10 - Low German Mennonite support group (DNF); Learning and Leadership Institute board meeting, Dallas, TX (MG)  
Oct. 12-15 - Constituency Leaders Council, South Bend, IN (DNF)  
Oct. 17 - Women's Circle, Bethel College Mennonite Church (DNF)  
Oct. 18 - Safe Sanctuaries training, Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, KS (MB); Oklahoma Executive meeting, Joy Mennonite Church, OK (DG)  
Oct. 20 - Women pastors' breakfast; WDC Ex. Comm. and Ex. Board (DNF)

Oct. 21 - WDC Reference Council, Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, KS  
Oct. 23 - Health care access consultation, Newton, KS (DNF)  
Oct. 24 - Vision 2012 Steering Committee (DNF)  
Oct. 25 - Safe Sanctuaries training, Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, KS (MB)  
Oct. 27-28 - AMBS Seminario Anabautista class, Dallas, TX (MG)  
Oct. 27-29 Mentoring workshop at Hesston College, Hesston, KS (MB)  
Oct 31 - WDC staff meeting  
(*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, [dorothyntf@mennowdc.org](mailto:dorothyntf@mennowdc.org).*

**Western District Conference MEMO**  
**PO Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117**  
**316-283-6300, FAX 316-283-0620**  
**E-mail: [wdc@mennowdc.org](mailto:wdc@mennowdc.org)**  
**Website: [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org)**