

December 2007/January 2008

A Word from Dorothy

The horror and neglect of the obvious

One of my favorite "old" books is THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS by C.S. Lewis, first published in 1942. In it is this encouragement from the senior devil to his apprentice devil: "...Keep his mind off the most elementary duties by directing it to the most advanced and spiritual ones. Aggravate the most useful human characteristic, the horror and neglect of the obvious...." (pp 20-21)

During the seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, we prepare, we celebrate, we share. We are a people who wait, who receive, who hope. This important Christian season is also an important spiritual discipline.

Yet, during this season, we sometimes neglect the obvious. We scurry around, rushed and bedraggled. We are pummeled by advertisements about objects and things that would make us happy--or so they say. We are harassed by ever more activities, ever more foods, ever more events. So I wonder, what is the point? What season is this anyway?

The devil's advice comes screaming at us-- "neglect the obvious". How do we, as Christians, neglect the obvious? We neglect the children among us who are lonely, have special needs, or are caught with chronic illness. We neglect the youth among us who are either very talented or very marginalized. We neglect the neighbor who just lost a spouse or our fellow church member whose diagnosis of cancer is a startling change of life. We neglect the homeless who walk our streets. We neglect the senior adult who has no visitors. We neglect our own congregations who ask for leaders and volunteers. We neglect ourselves and our spiritual disciplines.

And so I thought our seasonal prayer might go like this:

*God of miracles and of new life,
we pray for the gift of vision.
Help us to see your world with compassion and love,
not hate and competition.
Inspire us to seek justice and love mercy.
Open our eyes to the obvious.*

Take away our neglectful natures.

*Give us patience in our waiting for your Son to bring
life to all. Amen.*

---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.*

Joy in giving and receiving

After a recent Vision 2012 Steering Committee for WDC, I was full of joy about all the things I had seen and heard. With Mary in the Christ-event, I "pondered them in my heart."

- Congregations provide exciting WDC informational and worship events
- Children receive the WDC "Children's Activity Book" in creative worship services
- Churches and individuals are giving liberally and energetically to Vision 2012
- A good crowd witnessed a house ground breaking at Camp Mennoscah
- Revitalization of the Sister Congregation initiative
- An upcoming January youth ministry tour with "The Upside Down King" production
- An extraordinarily extensive and exciting WDC website: www.mennowdc.org
- Staff energized by the movement of God's Spirit in congregations throughout the district

We receive much through WDC. Let us ponder what more we have to give—prayerfully, monetarily, and spiritually—especially in this Advent Season.

--Rosella Wiens Regier, coordinator for Vision 2012 Prayer Partners

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**Please include announcements from this Memo
in your bulletins and newsletters. You are
encouraged to copy and distribute
the entire Memo in your churches.**

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WDC Prayer Reminders

Dec. 2 - Give thanks for the completion of the remodeled WDC Resource Library being dedicated today.

Dec. 9 - Pray for the Search Committee (Valerie Klaassen, Ann Doerksen, Delon Martens and Dorothy Nickel Friesen) as they find a new Director for Camp Mennoscah.

Dec. 16 - Pray for the Executive Committee (Jay Goering, Brenda Glanzer Lilliston, Marlene Faul) as they plan for a January retreat of the WDC Executive Board.

Dec. 23 - Pray for all congregations in WDC to experience the birth of Christ as a joyous spiritual gift.

Dec. 30 - Pray that each WDC congregation would share their resources with their neighbors locally and globally.

Jan. 6 - Pray for Blanca Vargas, pastor at Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Vida, San Antonio, TX, as she is ordained today. Pray that immigrants and refugees who begin this new year in our area conference would be welcomed and treated with compassion.

Jan. 13 - Pray for the Leadership Commission as they interview pastoral candidates for credentialing on Friday and Saturday (18-19). Thank God for raising new leaders for the Mennonite Church.

Jan. 20 - Pray for the Vision 2012 prayer and funding campaign as it reaches the midway point of the three year effort. Praise God for generous donors and faithful pray-ers.

Jan. 27 - Give thanks for Joyce Pankratz and her leadership at Camp Mennoscah. She completes her service to WDC this week.

Pastoral openings

(Congregational Information Forms completed & available):

Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS - associate pastor for youth pastor (half-time)

Houston (TX) Mennonite Church - pastor (full-time) (pending CIF)

Inman (KS) Mennonite Church - pastor (pending CIF)

Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX - pastor (pending CIF)

Transitions

Marco Guete, WDC Associate Conference Minister, will be on the last portion of his sabbatical during the month of December.

Willmar T. Harder (pastor, Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church, Inman, KS) and wife **Hannah Neufeld** (music director) announce the birth of their 3rd child, Reuben, on November 17.

Lawrence and Betty Hart, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on October 4. Lawrence is the pastor at Koinonia Mennonite Church in Clinton, OK.

Marvin Penner will begin as (volunteer) WDC Development Director on January 1, 2008. He recently retired from Mennonite Mutual Aid and is a member of New Creation Fellowship Church, Newton, KS.

Melissa Roth, St. Louis, MO, will become the interim pastor of Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX, on January 1, 2008.

WDC website

New and updated! Check out the Western District Conference website (www.mennowdc.org) and see photos from the groundbreaking at Camp Mennoscah, a directory of churches, upcoming events, and much, much more.

Financial update

As of November 15, WDC has received \$257,664 (55%) towards its 2007 congregational goal for their annual budget.

The Vision 2012 capital campaign's total is \$842,340 (3-year goal of \$1,500,000).

You are now able to **make contributions online** to WDC via credit/debit card or electronic funds transfer. Information is on the website--or call Phyllis Regier, Business Manager, at 316-283-6300.

Check It Out

Spiritual. . . mentoring, hospitality, reflection, listening, retreating, direction. The Conference Resource Library has a host of new, excellent books on broad topics relating to Christian spirituality and these are featured in the latest edition of Check It Out. Two WDC staff have already read "Potluck: parables of giving, taking and belonging" and give it high marks. "The Year of Living Biblically" follows the journey of A.J. Jacobs as he attempts to follow many of the laws in the Old Testament - quite literally and humorously. And...if you or others are interested in understanding the practice of spiritual direction, there are many new new resources!

Call or email to reserve your choices: 316-283-6300; crlib@mennowdc.org. As always - find this listing on our website: www.mennowdc.org/Library.html

--Marlene Bogard, Resource Library Director

Open house!

Children, youth, adults - come and see! The **Conference Resource Library** (2517 North Main, North Newton, KS) has expanded and redecorated, thanks to the generosity of the WDC Vision 2012 campaign. On **December 2 from 4-6 p.m.**, come for the dedication of new space, refreshments, storytelling and possible frivolous behavior. Everyone welcome!

Office closed

The WDC office and Conference Resource Library will be **closed December 24-January 1** for Christmas and New Year's holidays and staff vacation time.

Newton Spanish-speaking church plant

Of special interest to Newton churches: You are invited to a worship service of an emerging Newton Spanish-speaking Mennonite church on **December 2, 6:30 p.m.** at New Creation Mennonite Fellowship Church, 221 S. Muse, Newton, KS. There will be an opportunity to meet the core group, hear about the vision for this new church, and worship together.

WDC church plant in Missouri

The Leadership Commission recommended and the Executive Board approved the **Mt. Zion Mennonite Church** at Hallsville, MO (outside of Columbia) as a WDC church plant. William and Janet Dellinger are serving as leaders of this group.

Musical to be presented

"The Upside Down King", a musical re-telling of the life and ministry of Jesus, with original script by Carol Duerksen, and music by Doug & Jude Krehbiel, will be presented six times in January 2008. Offerings will be taken for WDC youth ministry.

- January 5, (6:30 p.m.) First Mennonite Church, Beatrice, NE
- January 12, (6:30 p.m.) First Mennonite Church, Hutchinson, KS
- January 13, (6:30 p.m.) Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS
- January 19, (4:00 p.m.) Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX
- January 20, (6:30 p.m.) Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, KS
- January 27, (6:00 p.m.) Grace Mennonite Church, Enid, OK

Bi-vocational retreat

To build and sustain a successful, long-term bi-vocational arrangement, great care needs to be given to boundaries, time management, negotiating agreements and empowering lay leaders. A **Bi-vocational Ministry Training Retreat** will be held **January 18-20, 2008** in Waxahachie, TX. Registration: \$25; lodging/4 meals: \$139; meals only: \$30. (A limited number of scholarships are available on a first-come, first-served basis.) Register by January 1 to: Esther Vazquez: 214-943-4207, emartine@earthlink.net.

Texas youth retreat

A senior high school youth retreat will be held in Waxahachie, TX **March 14-16, 2008** for Texas youth. Contact Hugo Saucedo: hugosaucedo@juno.com; 210-854-2533

Job opportunity

MC USA Executive Leadership seeks a full-time **Web Content Manager** to join its Communications team in its Newton or Elkhart office. At least two year's experience in Web-oriented work is desired along with demonstrated writing and editing skills. Fluency in Spanish is highly desired. For a detailed job description or to submit a resume, cover letter and work samples, contact Executive Leadership Human Resources: HR@MennoniteUSA.org or 1-866-866-2872.

2008 Classes at AMBS-GP in Kansas

Consider these opportunities for continuing education:

- January interterm: *Book of the Twelve: Minor Prophets* (taught by Patricia Shelly); register by December 17
- February - May: *Pauline Theology & Ethics* (taught by Jerry Truex); *Congregational Song: Practices Past and Present* (taught by Cynthia Neufeld Smith); *Theology of the Church* (taught by Lois Barrett); register by January 15.

The classes are available for credit or audit. For details contact AMBS-GP - lbarrett@ams.edu; 316-283-7098.

Jr. and Sr. High snow camps

Inspiration, fun and fellowship at Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp in the Rocky Mountains!

- **Jr. High Snow Camp - February 8-10, 2008;** speaker Dustin Gallion; theme "Beacon of Hope - A Little Light"
- **Sr. High Snow Camp I - February 15-17, 2008**
- **Sr. High Snow Camp II - March 14-16, 2008;** speaker Rachel Swartzendruber; theme "How Are you wired?"

More information coming to the website soon: <http://www.mennowdc.org/YouthEvents.html>

Healthcare

On September 15, Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church, Inman, KS, and WDC sponsored "Healthcare Summit: Finding Our Voice." Over 100 people attended from many walks of life and professions. Those who attended discussed and were informed about the condition of healthcare in the state of Kansas. There was overwhelming affirmation for continuing this dialogue. As a way to facilitate the discussion further, a WDC taskforce was formed. On November 10, nine people

met and discussed further how we, as a community of faith, could address healthcare and wellness issues. The taskforce is also looking at resources that will be beneficial, especially in the area of advocacy. More information will follow.

--Brenda Glanzer Lilliston

Mediation

Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders will be presented **March 31 - April 4, 2008** at Collegiate Presbyterian Church, Ames, Iowa. The institute is designed to equip church leaders with the skills necessary to deal effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict. It also includes a component on congregational intervention and consultation, placed within the context of family systems theory. For registration information, call Lombard Mennonite Peace Center at 630-627-0507 or visit the website - www.LMPeaceCenter.org.

Daring to Let our Spirits Soar

The 2008 **Women in Conversation** program will feature keynote speaker Carolyn Holderread Heggen, international speaker on gender issues, peacemaking and healing. The program is an opportunity to focus on your spiritual journey - body, mind, soul and spirit - without the distractions of daily tasks. Just God, yourself and companions on the journey. Women of all ages and walks of life are invited for a time of conversation, worship, laughter, prayer and renewal. **April 11-13, 2008: Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, PA. April 18-20, 2008: Airport Hilton, Wichita, KS.** For more information: www.laurelville.org/program/WIC.html or call 1-800-839-1021. This program is co-sponsored by Mennonite Women USA and Laurelville Mennonite Church Center.

Western District Conference Coming Events

Dec. 2, 4:00-6:00 p.m. - Open House, WDC Conference Resource Library
Dec. 24-Jan. 1, 2008 - WDC office closed
Dec. 30 - Staff birthday - Phyllis Regier
Jan. 5, 2008 - Upside Down King musical, First Mennonite Church, Beatrice, NE
Jan. 12, 2008 - Upside Down King musical, First Mennonite Church, Hutchinson, KS
Jan. 13, 2008 - Upside Down King musical, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS
Jan. 16, 2008 - Staff birthday - Hugo Saucedo
Jan. 19, 2008 - Upside Down King musical, Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX
Jan. 20, 2008 - Upside Down King musical, Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, KS

Jan. 24, 2008 - Staff birthday - Lee Lever
Jan. 27, 2008 - Upside Down King musical, Grace Mennonite Church, Enid, OK
Feb. 1-5, 2008 - WDC Ski Retreat, Copper Mountain Resort, CO
Feb. 8-10, 2008 - Junior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, CO
Feb. 15-17, 2008 - Senior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, CO
March 9, 2008 - Children's Choir Festival, Bethel College Memorial Hall, North Newton, KS
March 14-16, 2008 - Senior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, CO
April 4-6, 2008 - Pastor Spouse Retreat, Roman Nose Resort, Watonga, OK
May 1, 2008 - Pastors' Day Apart
June 27-28, 2008 - WDC/SCC Annual Conference, Hesston College, Hesston, KS

Conference Ministers' schedules

December 1 - return from Oregon from conference ministers' meetings (DNF)
Dec 2 - Open House, Resource Library (DNF, MB)
Dec. 3 - WDC/South Central joint Executive /Administrative Committee; Camp Mennoscah search committee (DNF)
Dec. 4 - MC USA leaders' breakfast (DNF)
Dec. 5 - Faith Mennonite Church, Newton, KS (DNF)
Dec. 7 - WDC staff Christmas dinner
Dec. 8 - Camp Mennoscah search committee (DNF)
Dec. 10 - Kansas Christian Leaders' Forum (DNF)
Dec. 12 - WDC building Christmas luncheon
Dec. 13 - WDC Executive Committee (DNF)
Dec. 17 - 20 - vacation (DNF)
Dec. 21 - Prairie View Board meeting; Women pastors' Christmas lunch (DNF)
Dec. 24 - Jan 2 - vacation/holidays (DNF)
Jan 4 - Kansas Interfaith Health Alliance (DNF)
Jan 10 - Low German Mennonite committee (DNF)
Jan 15 - WDC Staff meeting
Jan. 16 - Moundridge pastors' meeting; Staff Relations Committee; Stewardship Commission (DNF)
Jan 18-19 - Leadership Commission (DNF)
Jan. 22 - Vision 2012 Steering Committee (DNF)
Jan. 25 - WDC Executive Committee (DNF)
Jan. 26 - WDC Executive Board retreat (DNF)
Jan 28-31 - AMBS Pastors' Week - Elkhart (DNF)
(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:

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