

October 2007

A Word from Dorothy Reflections at Year 25

It was the fall of 1982 when I re-entered seminary (this time St. Paul School of Theology) and began as pastoral intern on the staff at Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City--a decision that changed my vocational direction from high school English teacher to pastor. Now, in the fall of 2007, I realize what the past 25 years have meant:

1) Transitions. I am amazed that in these 25 years, we have moved our family four times. Each time, the move was prompted by the call of the church--a congregation, a seminary, another congregation, and then an area conference--for me to serve in a leadership role. How are pastors--and their families--ready to move? ready to re-locate? ready to start over? These are not easy decisions and often are marked with anguish and loss. However, there are the new communities of faith that prove to be welcoming and fulfilling.

2) Perspective. We have lived in large city, small city, small town. We have had neighbors who were incredibly poor; others selfishly smug. We have gotten involved in city politics, social justice causes as well as heard countless stories of personal joy and sorrow. We traveled to India for a World Conference. I traveled to Brazil and Bolivia on a sabbatical. Everywhere, the search for God's presence and truth was real and sustaining.

3) Knowledge. The seminary training from the early '70's (AMBS) and then the early '80's has now been supplemented with a library full of books about "boundaries", "holy conversations", "discernment", "spirituality", "systemic change", "spiritual guidance", in addition to a growing *Believers Church Bible Commentary Series* (a must for all pastors), lots of worship and preaching books, and magazines from Alban Institute, *Christian Century*, *Sojourners* (all the way back to the '70's), and file cabinets full of sermons preached and workshops outlined. It has been a wonderful combination of teaching and preaching, listening and caring, planning and, well, procrastination too.

4) Relationships. I have learned to know hundreds of gifted women and men all across the church who are invested in the Good News. Each one is sharing their talents as best they can. I love the phone calls from California with the phrase, "Got a minute, Dorothy?" and the letters from someone who just listened to a sermon I preached at MC USA Assembly in Atlanta in 2003 on their car tape player. I, in turn, have been shaped by old and young, Christian and non-believer, happy and sad, ordinary and famous in this vocation called pastoring.

What are your reflections on leadership? How have you been shaped by God in the past 25 years? What changed you? How did the church change? What will be the future for you?

Thanks be to God for the gift of leadership.
---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.***

Bifocals, Do I Need Them?

"Now where did I put my glasses?" It doesn't seem that long ago that I snickered a bit when those "old people" uttered those same words. I've been using an over-the-counter pair for a couple of years and now I've become pretty dependent on them to do most reading. At my last vision exam, my doctor suggested I may want to try bifocals. My response was, "My vision is just fine for distances. Why would I need bifocals?" His response was, "Well, when you get tired of trying to remember where you put your glasses and want a pair that you just wear all the time, you may appreciate the bifocals."

Prayer, for some, can be like a pair of glasses. Do you seek God through prayer when life becomes fuzzy and out of focus or do you "humble" yourself, pray and seek his face in all times and in all circumstances? Perhaps the doctor's advice can be applied to each of us spiritually. God desires to live in

close relationship with each of us and that begins with prayer.

Vision 2012 is built upon prayer. May God continue to reveal himself to us as we seek to live in relationship with him.

I am indeed thankful for my glasses and even more thankful that God is with me all the time!

--Debbie Thimm, Vision 2012 prayer partner

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

WDC prayer reminders

Oct. 7 - Pray that World Communion observance will bind us together as a global community under the Lordship of Christ. Pray for a neighboring congregation.

Oct. 14 - Pray for Jay Goering, Hugo Saucedo, and Dorothy Nickel Friesen as they represent WDC at the Constituency Leaders Council of MC USA in Colorado Springs October 14-17.

Oct. 21 - Pray for the WDC Leadership Commission as it interviews seven candidates for pastoral credentials in Dallas, Texas this weekend.

Oct. 28 - Pray for Sara Dick, associate pastor of Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, as she is ordained today.

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)

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

Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX - pastor

(pending CIF)

Transitions

Joy Mennonite Church, Oklahoma City, OK, had an appreciation picnic on September 15 for **Moses and Sadie Mast**, their pastoral couple for the past 15 years. Moses is retiring from the leadership of the congregation, but will continue to work with the Peace and Justice initiatives in the OKC area.

Matt Simon has been called as full-time joint Associate/Youth pastor at Buhler (KS) Mennonite Church and Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church, Inman, KS.

Lin Sylvester, pastor of the Deer Creek (OK) Mennonite Church, has resigned to become pastor at the Mennonite Church in Trenton, OH. A farewell dinner will be held Oct. 21 at the church.

Mark Wiens began as full-time Chaplain/Bereavement Counselor for Hospice Care of Reno County on September 7.

Correction

In the September 2007 MEMO, **Nathan Koontz** was mistakenly identified as "Youth Pastor" at Faith Mennonite Church, Newton, KS. His title is "Associate Pastor."

Financial update

As of **September 15**, WDC has received \$197,749 (42%) towards its 2007 annual budget of 472,300. We are entering the last months of the 2007 fiscal year when we historically receive the majority of our contributions. Please remember that CONGREGATIONS provide the largest portion of our income. Without this support WDC would not be able to provide the resources and services that benefit all of our congregations.

The **Vision 2012** capital campaign's total is \$711,127 (3-year goal of \$1,500,000).

Check It Out

Back by Popular Demand....another listing of wonderful **Children's Books** to use in congregations. This month's issue of Check It Out from the Western District Resource Library features dozens of newer titles of children's picture books that are suitable to use in worship, faith formation, parenting or even to begin a committee meeting. Make sure to route this list to worship planners, Christian educators and church librarians. As always, find this issue and many back issues on our website at www.mennowdc.org. Call 316-283-6300 or email crlib@mennowdc.org to request one of these resources.

--Marlene Bogard, Resource Library Director

Mennodata

Pastors/credentialed persons - Remember to keep your Mennodata record up to date. This is your official record with Mennonite Church USA. Go to: www.mennodata.org, and you'll need to know your ID and password (contact Deb Ratzlaff - see below).

The PERSONAL section is your responsibility to keep updated (*includes: Contact information, Person & family, Church relationships, Education, Ministry history, Employment history, Voluntary service, Personal reflections on ministry*).

The CREDENTIAL section is maintained by the area conference office.

Refer questions to Deb Ratzlaff, MC USA: 316-283-5100, debr@mennoniteusa.org.

WDC Executive Board - September 21 highlights

- Welcomed Esther (Martinez) Vazquez, House of Healing, Dallas, TX and Violeta Ajquejay, Tabor Mennonite, Newton, KS to their first board meeting
- Reviewed Tulsa conference sessions
- Discussed a board member self-assessment report
- Decided to focus on Church Member Profile 2006/Conrad Kanagy study for the Reference Council, November 3
- Endorsed Brenda Glanzer Lilliston to continue with healthcare access task force
- Heard reports about a struggling annual budget for WDC (nearly 80% of fiscal year and only about 40% income); celebrated Vision 2012 reaching the \$700,000 mark
- Affirmed the Retreat Commission for moving ahead with building a new director's house using Vision 2012 money
- Decided to have an extended Board meeting in January to focus on mission and vision of WDC

Youth Pastor Retreat

All WDC youth pastors are invited to attend the Youth Pastors Retreat on **October 11** from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at the Yoder (KS) Campus (former Yoder Mennonite Church). Cost: \$15 includes noon meal at Carriage Crossing restaurant. RSVP to Doug Krehbiel by Oct. 4: dougk@mennowdc.org; 316-283-6300.

Camp Mennoscah

The WDC Retreat Commission has informed WDC constituents of the **urgent housing needs** at Camp Mennoscah. Contributions for this project should be earmarked for "Director's Home" through Vision 2012 and sent to WDC, Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117. Retreat Commission members: Arlin Buller, Ann Doerksen, Bruce Janzen (Chair), Valerie Klaassen, Galen Waltner, Kevin Wiens.

The WDC Retreat Commission is looking for an **on-site Building Supervisor/Manager** during the construction of the NEW house for the Camp Mennoscah resident director. This position will manage the daily volunteer labor and will work closely with the builder. Skills needed: People communication skills, supervisor skills, organizational skills, construction knowledge or experience. Call Galen Waltner (member of Retreat Commission & Resident Home Task Force) 620-386-0287 or galenwaltner@hotmail.com for details and to make application for this position. Currently, the house plan is being finalized and the hope is to begin construction yet this fall.

Children's Choir Festival / Directors' Workshop

Church children's choirs are invited to participate in a children's choir festival on **March 9, 2008** in Memorial Hall on the Bethel College campus, North Newton. Guest clinician will be Mark Bartel, director of the Wichita Community Children's Choir and faculty member at Friends University, Wichita, KS. The festival is for treble voices in grades 3-8. There will be a mass rehearsal on March 9, 1:30-3:15 p.m., and the festival performance will be at 4:00 p.m.

The WDC Music & Worship Task Force will hold a **workshop for children's choir directors on October 13**, 9:30-11:30 a.m. at the Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS. Registration begins at 9:00. Mark Bartel will focus on the festival selections plus general topics related to children's choirs. You need not be committed to the festival to attend. Register by October 6; registration fee \$10.

For more information, contact Carol Klingenberg, 620-983-2373, ckling@southwind.net.

Sister Helen Prejean will speak on the death penalty **October 24**, 7 p.m. at Wichita (KS) State University's Wilner Auditorium. Her talk is free and open to the public. There will be questions & answers and a book signing. She is well known for her work with death row inmates in Louisiana. She has written *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States* and also *Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions*. For further information, contact Michael Birzer, 316-978-6525.

Reference Council

The next WDC Reference Council will be **November 3, 8:30 a.m. - noon** (including lunch) at First Mennonite Church, Halstead, KS. Topic: "Mennonite Identity" based on Church Member Profile 2006. All members of all boards, commissions, committees, and task forces, as well as WDC staff, delegates to MC USA assemblies, and WDC persons elected and appointed to institutional relationships are invited. And pastors - you're invited too! Put this date on your calendars and plan to attend!

Variety show

Good music, comedy, ventriloquism, story telling, and amazing feats are just a few of the highlights at the annual variety show sponsored by Mennonite Men of the Plains. The show is on **November 11, 7 p.m.** at Hesston (KS) Mennonite Church. Come for the show and all the zwiebach and jelly you can eat! An offering will be taken; all proceeds go to scholarships for seminary and ministry inquiry students. Call Brent Voran 316-284-2657 for more information.

Church Vocations Banquet

Pastors - do you notice someone (high school, college, young adults, middle-aged person) who seems interested in pastoral ministry or has the gifts and talents to serve the Mennonite Church? Be our guest (bring up to 3 people) at the Church Vocations Banquet on **November 13, 6:30 p.m.** at the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution conference room, Bethel College, North Newton, KS. Hear people in ministry (Dale Schrag, Bethel College Director of church relations, and Sara Dick, Shalom Mennonite Church Associate Pastor, Newton, KS) reflect on their work and God's movement in their lives. Cost is free, but limited to the first 50 persons to RSVP. Contact: Nancy Funk by November 6, 316-283-6300; wdc@mennowdc.org.

Looking ahead to interterm

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary - Great Plains Extension, North Newton, KS will offer **Book of the Twelve: Minor Prophets** during **January 8-24, 2008**. Professor Patricia Shelly. Meeting times: Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings. May be taken for credit or audit. Contact: Norma Johnson, acting director: 316-283-7098; lbarrett@ambs.edu.

Oklahoma pastor-spouse meeting

The next Oklahoma pastor-spouse meeting is scheduled for **December 3**. The group met on Sept. 10 at the Eden Mennonite Church, Inola, OK for a discussion on growing the small church in Oklahoma, and a time of sharing.

Health Care Summit Packet Available

The Health Care Summit at Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church, Inman, KS on September 15 was attended by over 120 people who were educated, invited to network, and share their concerns about many aspects of Health Care Access in our communities and congregations. Two complete packets of information from this resourcing day are available for check out from the Resource Library. The packets include the main presentations (on DVD or VHS), resource lists, reader's theatre, information on medical debts, planning a health fair and more. If you want to jumpstart conversation in your congregation, take advantage of this resourcing packet by reserving a copy through the WDC Resource Library: 316-283-6300 or crlib@mennowdc.org.

WDC recently sent **Greensburg Mennonite Church** offering monies of \$3,054 that were given at the Annual Conference in July. They write: *"Thank you for your contribution to Greensburg Mennonite Church to help us as we recover...Surviving an EF-5 tornado has been a life-changing experience, yet God's hand of protection certainly covered us! ... On September 2, GMC approved the architect's plan for our new facility. Building has begun on a new parsonage as well. ... We continue to meet each week at the Mullinville Auditorium for worship... our*

times of worship and fellowship are rich. ...Your contribution will help with the costs of rebuilding. Thank you so much. -Jeffrey D. Blackburn, Pastor

Western District Conference Coming Events

Oct. 4 - Pastors' Day Apart: "Pastors and Money", Faith Mennonite Church, Newton, KS,
Oct. 11 - Youth Pastors' Retreat, Yoder Campus, Yoder, KS
Oct. 12-14 - Mennofolk on the Prairie Retreat, Camp Mennooscah
Oct. 19-21 - Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series, Hesston College, KS
Nov. 3 - Reference Council, First Mennonite Church, Halstead, KS
Dec. 24, 2007-Jan. 1, 2008 - WDC office closed
Feb. 8-10, 2008 - Junior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp
Feb. 15-17, 2008 - Senior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp
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
June 27-28, 2008 - WDC/SCC Annual Conference, Hesston College, Hesston, KS

Conference Ministers' schedules

Oct. 1 - Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS (MB); WDC/SCC 2008 Planning (DNF)
Oct. 2 - Staff meeting (all); Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita, KS (LL)
Oct. 3 - First Mennonite Church, Hutchinson, KS (MB)
Oct. 4 - Pastor's Day Apart, Newton, KS (DNF, MB, LL, DK)
Oct. 5 - Kansas Health Foundation, Emporia, KS (DNF)
Oct. 6-7 - Mt. Zion Mennonite Church, Columbia, MO (LL)
Oct. 7 - Rainbow Mennonite Church, Kansas City, KS (DNF)
Oct. 9 - Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, KS (DNF)
Oct. 11 - Youth Pastor Retreat, Yoder, KS (DK)
Oct. 14 - Lorraine Ave Mennonite Church, Wichita, KS (MB); Peace Mennonite Church, Lawrence, KS (LL)
Oct. 14-17 - Constituency Leaders Council, Colorado Springs, CO (DNF)
Oct. 16 - Western KS pastors meeting, Dodge City, KS (LL)
Oct. 17 - Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, KS (MB)
Oct. 19-21 - Leadership Commission, Dallas, TX (DNF)
Oct. 20 - First Mennonite Church, Newton, KS (MB)
Oct. 26-28 - Houston (TX) Mennonite Church (LL)
Oct. 28 - Sara Dick ordination, Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, KS (DNF)
Oct. 29-31 - AMBS colloquy, Donaldson, IN (DNF)
Oct. 31 - Faith and Life Resource Selection Meeting (MB) (*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,

dorothyvf@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; Website: www.mennowdc.org

2008 COMB Insurance Renewal - Update

Renewals for the participation in the Covenant Mutual Benefit Plan (COMB) beginning January 1, 2008 will be sent out the first week in October with renewal information due back to MMA *by November 9*. Ten area conferences in Mennonite Church USA participate in COMB. This represents 172 congregations with 667 total lives. Factors that play into the setting of premium rates are: 1) demographics (geography and age); 2) trends in the health care industry (14.5% last year); 3) demographics within your congregation; and 4) claim experience of our COMB group over the last year. The COMB group experience this past year has been slightly better than that of the industry. They are pleased that they have been able to *again keep renewal premium increases within single digits*.

Significant savings to the health plan has been made due to COMB's association with Highmark, an affiliate of Blue Cross Blue Shield, as the primary Preferred Provider Organization. One of the areas COMB participants benefit from the association with Highmark is in preventive care. All preventive services for children, birth through age eighteen, are covered at 100% based on the age and appropriateness listed under their schedule. All listed charges, including mammograms and pap tests, are covered at 100%, according to the age and frequency criteria listed on their benefit schedule.

COMB was also able to keep the cost for dental and vision coverage at the same rate as last year. The rates for life and disability insurance are set in May; however, no significant change in that rate is anticipated as it has remained relatively stable in recent years.

Participation in COMB is another expression of mutual aid within the church and among conferences. Pastors and other employees who participate are guaranteed coverage regardless of their health condition. This is especially important for pastors and congregations who are in transition. There are a number of pastors who, because of preexisting conditions, are able to have coverage through this plan who would not be able to be covered through traditional plans. While providing such guarantees increases risk and, consequently cost, this is certainly an important part of mutual aid within the church. COMB recognizes that some participants who are quite healthy could get health insurance from other sources at a somewhat lower rate, but this alternative would not support the value of mutual aid throughout the church.

The delegates at San Jose in July gave strong approval to a proposal asking Executive Leadership to develop a plan aimed at providing access to health coverage for all eligible pastors and church workers in Mennonite Church USA. As envisioned this plan would include all area conferences and several of the agencies within Mennonite Church USA, including Executive Board, Mission Network and Mennonite Mutual Aid. Keith Harder, currently director of Congregational and Ministerial Leadership, has been asked to devote 60% of his time to the development and implementation of this plan. Anticipation is that this plan will be developed and promoted to conferences and congregations within the next year.

The COMB program brings congregations and conferences together to provide benefits to pastors and other church staff and MC USA congregations participating together offer rewards that cannot be obtained through any other arrangement.

(Phyllis Regier, WDC Business Manager, serves as Western District Conference's representative on the COMB Management Team which sets policy and rates. MMA counselors assist with implementation of the COMB program.)