

December 2008/January 2009

A Word from Dorothy - The dance of change

At the end of one year and the beginning of another, it's important to look back--and then forward. It's a kind of dance. As a conference minister, I can remember this past year and celebrate many things: ordinations and other calls to leadership; the election of strong leaders to our Executive Board and commissions; the emergence of the Health and Wellness Task Force; the WDC staff and their seemingly endless creativity and dedication to the ministry of WDC; Vision 2012 reaching the \$1 million commitment level; inspiring sermons and wonderful music at our annual conference sessions; safe travel; a cross-cultural youth camp in Clinton, OK; increased usage of the Resource Library; new church plants; congregational giving to WDC went up; the successful recruitment of new staff positions, etc. The list seems long and I'm sure I'm forgetting some things--especially all of the stimulating conversations, the insightful sermons I have heard; the beautiful worship centers designed to heighten our worship of God. There are small things--an email saying "thank you", a chocolate candy bar on my desk from a friend, prayers answered. It is good to take stock, to make an inventory of the year's blessings. I am overwhelmed with goodness.

There are things that were challenges--like budgets, unfilled pastoral vacancies, struggles in relationships, health crises, deaths of parents, personal moments of doubt and despair, tears of loss as colleagues left our staff, weariness at the endless tall stacks of papers on my desk, anger at discrimination and hasty judgments about pastoral candidates, and dysfunctional church committee's leaders. Prayer seems the best option for meeting those challenges.

The new year? It's not a blank slate because it already is propelled by the past. However, we write a new chapter as an area conference in 2009. We have strengths to meet the challenges that are before us. We have a new political climate (with some old thorny problems) which give some possibilities for faith communities to speak out for those unable to speak for themselves. Let us embrace this new year by celebrating and remembering the past year--and welcoming new visions that God will grant us. May we keep our eyes open--and may we keep on dancing!

--Dorothy Nickel Friesen, conference minister

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 Peace of Christ

Each year, my women's group celebrates ThanksLiving. Spelled with an "L." We enjoy a meal and talk about God's grace the past year, our present journeys with God, and new awarenesses of good things in our lives.

This year, I rejoice about many things: Our son's restored health following by-pass surgery at age 43. Our grandson who said to his dad--what he hears at church: "May the peace of Christ be with you." The community of friends and family who supported, cared, and prayed. Local congregations all over our Western District who also provide prayerful care to their members and friends. And, Vision 2012 that assists congregations with needed support.

"Rejoice in the Lord... let your requests be made known to God... and the peace of God will guard our hearts." (Phil 4:4-7, selected) ThanksLiving indeed!
--Rosella Wiens Regier, chair of Prayer Partners for Vision 2012

* * * * *

***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

- Dec. 7** - Pray for Gail Graber, Associate Pastor of Visitation at Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS, as she is ordained today for Christian ministry.
- Dec. 14** - Pray for the ministry for Marshall Anderson, Associate Pastor at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, KS, as he is ordained today.
- Dec. 21** - Pray for your congregation as it prepares to welcome the Prince of Peace in new ways.
- Dec. 28** - What ways do you remember as showing the "face of God" in your congregation this past year? Give thanks!

Jan. 4 - Give thanks for the 23 years of ministry of James Voth as pastor at Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, KS, as he completes ministry there today.

Jan. 11 - Pray for the Staff Relations Committee of WDC--the committee charged with the responsibility to oversee all staff contracts and personnel policies. Current members are Delon Martens, Donna Becker, James Regier, Rod Franz. Also pray for Melissa Roth, Nita Wilson, Marco Güete and Gilberto Flores, that the Holy Spirit guides them in their ministry transitions.

Jan. 18 - Pray for all Junior High youth who are learning about faith this weekend at the "Know Jesus" event hosted by Hesston College and sponsored by WDC Youth Committee.

Jan. 25 - Give thanks for the eight years of ministry that Marco Guete has given to WDC church planting and congregational leadership--particularly in Texas. We say a fond farewell and Godspeed as he becomes a Conference Minister for Southeast Mennonite Conference (offices near Tampa, Florida).

Pastoral openings

(Congregational Information Forms completed & available):

Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS - lead pastor (full-time, summer 2009)

Eden Mennonite Church, Inola, OK - pastor (full-time, immediate)

First Mennonite Church, Ransom, KS - pastor (2/3 time, January 2009)

Goessel (KS) Mennonite Church - youth pastor (1/2 time, immediate)

Manhattan (KS) Mennonite Church - study-leave supply pastor (full-time for one year - August 2009 - August 2010)

Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX - pastor (full-time, immediate)

Salina (KS) Mennonite Church - pastor (1/2 - 3/4 time, open January 1, 2009)

Turpin (OK) Mennonite Church - pastor (full-time, summer 2009)

Western District Conference office - associate conference minister (1/2 time, open February 1, 2009)

Transitions

Congratulations to **Marshall Anderson**, Associate Pastor at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, KS, and his wife Lindsay, on the birth of a daughter, Kaiya Belle, who joined brother Kaden on August 28.

Eric Massanari, pastor of Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, KS, received notice that he will be awarded a grant from the Louisville Institute to fund a three-month sabbatical in the summer of 2009.

Melissa Roth, Interim Pastor at Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX, will become the pastor at Mountain Community Mennonite Church, Palmer Lake, CO in January 2009.

Debbie Schmidt, pastor at First Mennonite Church, Hutchinson, KS since 1996, has resigned effective June 2009.

Matthew Simon and his wife Jami, became parents to Rebekkah Dawn on October 26. Matt is the Associate/Youth Pastor at Buhler and Hoffnungsau (Inman) Mennonite churches in Kansas.

Marvin Zehr will become Interim Pastor at Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, KS as of January 1, 2009.

Job opening at WDC

Associate Conference Minister for Kansas / Nebraska, 1/2 time; beginning February 1, 2009; two-year position with possible extension; office in North Newton; accountable to Conference Minister Dorothy Nickel Friesen. Submit letter of application with completed MLI to WDC (Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117 or wdc@mennowdc.org) by December 5, 2008. Position is open until filled.

The Parish Paper

Visit www.mennowdc.org/Publications.html to view the December 2008 issue of **The Parish Paper**, entitled *Does Your Window Limit Your View?* and the January 2009 issue entitled *How to Identify our Church's Unstated Assumptions*.

News from Oklahoma

- The **Oklahoma Pastor / Spouse quarterly meeting** will gather in Enid at the Grace Mennonite Church on **December 1**, where Pastor Dennis Treat will host the meeting.
- The Herold Mennonite Church (Cordell) extended the call of **Pastor Eugene Thieszen** for a second three-year term at their church business meeting on November 16.
- **Eden Mennonite Church (Inola)** continues in their pastoral search process.

Table Talk Lunch on Children and Communion

Area pastors are invited to have lunch together on **December 4, 12:00** at New Creation Mennonite Fellowship, 221 S. Muse, Newton, KS. This special "Table-Talk" will feature Elsie Rempel, Director of Christian Education and Nurture, Mennonite Church Canada. Elsie recently completed a D.Min with a thesis on "Children and Communion in Mennonite Congregations" and is willing to share insights, ideas and answer questions. Bring your own lunch; drinks provided.

Elsie says: "*Mennonites have long agreed that children have a special status with Jesus and the church. We have sought appropriate ways of blessing them, nurturing their faith, and helping them form an identity as part of the family of God. In addition, Mennonites have long agreed that Communion includes a renewal of our baptismal covenant, and have shifted to celebrating it mainly in the presence of unbaptized children, youth and adults. Communion is a formative ritual that shapes our identity as part of the family of God. This creates a special dilemma for us. How can the Mennonite church extend*

Jesus' hospitality and blessing to unbaptized children, youth and adults during Communion without watering down focus on renewing our baptismal covenants? Come and help us discern the way forward."

Questions? Contact Marlene Bogard - 316-283-6300; mbogard@mennowdc.org.

Grapevine features praying in many ways - everyone is welcome

Grapevine, an informal network of anyone interested in Christian Nurture and Education, will meet **December 4, 7:00 p.m.** at the Bethel College Mennonite Church Fellowship Hall, North Newton, KS.

Special guests will be Elsie Rempel, Director of Christian Education and Nurture for Mennonite Church Canada and Arlyn Friesen Epp, Manager of Mennonite Church Canada Resource Center. (Both of these fun and creative folks live and work out of Winnipeg, Manitoba and are good friends of Marlene Bogard.) Elsie and Arlyn will provide input on Praying in Many Ways and we will explore various ways of using different learning preferences (music, drumming, walking, art) as we pray.

If you are a teacher, leader, pastor or parent, this is an awesome opportunity to fellowship, learn and grab some ideas to use with your children, youth or adults. Questions? Contact Marlene Bogard, at 316-283-6300 or mbogard@mennowdc.org.

WDC office

The WDC office will be closed **December 24 through January 1, 2009**, for Christmas and New Year's holidays and staff vacation time.

Expand your knowledge of the Book of Isaiah during January Interterm!

Ben Ollenburger, PhD, professor of biblical theology at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, is coming to Kansas to teach Isaiah **January 6-22, 2009**. Classes will be held Tuesday and Thursdays evenings, 6:45 to 9:30 p.m., and Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at 2500 Place, North Newton. 3 credit hours. Credit or audit. Special audit rate for AMBS graduates. For more information, contact Lois Barrett, Director, AMBS--Great Plains, PO Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117; phone: 316-283-7098; email: lbarrett@ambs.edu.

Spring classes, starting in February, include: Gospel of Matthew; Foundations of Worship and Preaching; Social and Cultural Contexts of the Missional Congregation.

Eastern Mennonite Seminary distance learning courses

Spring 2009 begin January 6:

- Anabaptism Today: Yoder and Hauerwas
- Mennonite Faith and Polity
- The Church in Mission

Summer courses 2009

- Prayer in the Christian Tradition

- The Christian Movement in the Mediterranean
Check website for course descriptions, faculty information, and fees - <http://www.emu.edu/seminary/distancelearning/index.html>.
Registration deadline is December 22.

Agri-Urban

Attn: all Agri-Urban participants - you are invited to the annual meeting and banquet on **January 17, 2009, 6 p.m.** at Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS. Let your church representative know if you plan to attend.

Farewell

All are invited to attend an open house on **January 25, 2009, 4-6 p.m.** at the WDC office in honor of **Marco Güete** as he concludes his service with Western District Conference as Associate Conference Minister. Marco has served in this role since 2000, and will become the Conference Minister for Southeast Mennonite Conference.

Camp Mennoscah 2009

Get ready for a new year of camping fun and jaw-dropping excitement! We're working hard on our summer youth camps and retreats for 2009 and planning for a rollicking good time. Camp catalogs will be available in February. Send us your prayers and get those volunteers ready. We'll have spaces for cooks, kitchen assistants, nurses, counselors, and summer staff. Summer will be here before you know it!

TENTATIVE youth camp schedule:

- Junior High I--May 31-June 6
- Junior I--June 7-13
- PreJunior I--June 14-18
- First Camp--June 18-20
- Junior II--June 21-27
- **June 28-July 4--NO CAMP during MC USA Convention in Columbus, OH**
- Pre-Junior II--July 5-9
- Junior High II--July 12-18
- Junior III--July 19-25
- Senior High--July 26-31

(Directors will be confirmed shortly.)

Camp Mennoscah is the place to be! Our camping schedule is almost full, but we still have a few weekends available for wonderful and flexible folks looking for a place for a retreat or family gathering. Contact Camp Mennoscah at 620-297-3290 or campmno@mennowdc.org for availability.

D.Min in Pastoral Leadership in Care and Counseling

The Counseling and Mediation Center (CMC), Wichita, KS and Phillips Theological Seminary (PTS), Tulsa, OK, are inviting applicants for a greater Kansas City cohort in the PTS D.Min program in **Pastoral Leadership in Care and Counseling**. Students admitted to this study opportunity will begin coursework in the summer of 2009.

Most of the specialized pastoral care and counseling courses will be offered over a two-year period in the Kansas City area; all other coursework will be offered on the PTS campus in Tulsa during early June and January “fortnights” of D.Min study.

This program is for persons with an M.Div. and have been engaged in ministry for at least three years after completing the degree to develop further in the area of pastoral care and counseling. Students will be expected to reflect critically on significant issues in pastoral leadership within their own contexts and to engage current scholarship in biblical, historical, and theological studies.

For information, contact Linda Ford, Director of Recruitment at PTS, 918-610-8303 or see www.ptstulsa.edu. Application deadline is March 15, 2009. For more information on the curriculum, see www.ptstulsa.edu/Academics.

Attention: MC USA congregations

Church Extension Services offers first mortgage loans at rates as low as 6% fully amortized over a 20-year term for the purchase, remodel or construction of worship facilities. While their primary ministry is for congregations that normally have difficulty qualifying for a loan, they serve all congregations and invite those requests as well.

To review loan guidelines, see: www.churchextensionservices.org or call 1-866-866-2872.

KIPCOR offers course

Bethel College’s Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (KIPCOR) offers “**Managing Differences within Faith Communities**”, a course to examine how to transform conflict into spiritual and community renewal on **February 24-25, 2009**. Cost: \$325 (\$300 if received by February 3). Academic credit is available. Contact: kipcor@bethelks.edu or 316-284-5217.

Corrections to WDC Fall 2008 Directory

- p. 24 - Jerry Truex (under Mennonite Church of the Servant) new address - 2628 N. Stoney Point, Wichita KS 67204, delete phone: 316-263-4673
- p. 26 - Jeff Wintermote (under Trinity Mennonite Church) - new email: jeffmote@yahoo.com
- p. 28 - Peter Emery (under Turpin Mennonite Church) - new email: tmcpastor@ptsi.net
- p. 29 - House of Healing Mennonite Church - add Jose Vazquez as Church Planter/Pastor
- p. 30 - Jaime Cazares (under Iglesia Menonita Casa Betania) - new address: 321 W. 6th, Newton KS 67114

Western District Conference coming events

Dec. 1 - Oklahoma Pastor/Spouse quarterly meeting - Grace Mennonite Church, Enid, OK
Dec. 30 - Staff birthday - Phyllis Regier
Dec. 24-Jan. 1, 2009 - WDC offices closed
Jan. 17, 2009 (6 p.m.) - Agri Urban Banquet, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS

Jan. 17-18, 2009 - Know Jesus, Hesston College, KS
Jan. 25, 2009 (4-6 p.m.) - Farewell open house for Marco Güete, WDC Office
June 30-July 5, 2009 - MC USA Convention 2009, Columbus, OH
Aug. 7-8, 2009 - WDC Annual Conference, Bethel College and Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS
Sept. 18-20, 2009 - “And You Welcomed Me: a Consultation of the People of God on Immigration”, Dallas, TX (sponsored by MMN, hosted by WDC)

Conference Ministers’ schedules

Dec. 2-6 Conference Minister’s meeting – Excelsior Springs, MO (DNF, MG)
Dec. 4, 12 pm - Table Talk, New Creation Fellowship, Newton, KS; 7 pm - Grapevine, Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS (MB)
Dec. 5-7 - Discipleship Now, Hydro, OK (NW)
Dec. 7 - First Mennonite, Hutchinson, KS am; Ordain Gail Graber, Eden Mennonite, Moundridge, KS, 3 pm (DNF)
Dec. 9 -WDC Staff meeting
Dec. 13 - Dallas area youth (NW); WDC Exec Committee (DNF)
Dec. 14 – House of Healing Church, Dallas, TX (MG); Ordain Marshall Anderson, Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, KS, 7:30 pm (DNF)
Dec. 15 - Retreat day (DNF)
Dec. 19 - Comp day (MG); Prairie View Board am; Women pastors' luncheon (DNF)
Dec. 19 - Jan. 2 - Vacation (DNF)
Dec. 20 - Christmas gathering of Dallas pastors (NW)
Jan. 2-20 - Vacation (MG)
Jan. 4 - Farewell for Jim Voth, Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, KS (DNF)
Jan 7 - Staff Relations Committee (DNF)
Jan. 10 - Texas youth leaders workshop (NW)
Jan. 12 - MCUSA leaders' breakfast (DNF)
Jan. 17 - Dallas area youth (NW)
Jan. 23 - Leadership Commission (DNF)
Jan. 25 -Marco Güete open house, WDC office
Jan. 26 - Kansas Ecumenical Ministries board meeting, Wichita; Buhler Mennonite Church Council, pm (DNF)
Jan. 27 - Low German Mennonite task force (DNF)
(Marlene Bogard–MB; Dorothy Nickel Friesen–DNF; Dave Gerbrandt--DG; Marco Güete–MG; Doug Krehbiel-DK; NW--Nita Wilson)

The MEMO is published monthly for WDC pastors and committee members. Submit articles and correspondence to:

*Dorothy Nickel Friesen, dorothyfnf@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*