



Memo

February 2008

A Word from Dorothy Straight lines--curved lines

I worshiped with First Mennonite Church, McPherson, KS and was there for the first Sunday when the pews were at an angle facing the front (instead of the usual horizontal straight lines facing front). People were amused at themselves. "Where's my pew?" one person queried. Another said, "How could such a small thing change us so much?"

Bethel College Mennonite Church (North Newton, KS) has removed an entire section of pews beneath their under-the-balcony back section in order to make space for a conversation area and then added a fellowship time between worship and Sunday School. People are enjoying increased time to meet neighbors, friends, and visitors. How could such a removal actually add to the worship environment?

First Mennonite Church, Beatrice, NE has a "pruning committee"--a group of folks who are paying attention to what they can give up in order to be a better congregation. Do we need all of these committees? Do we need as many people on a particular committee? They have also purchased round tables for their fellowship hall and moved their business meetings to that area--away from the pews of the sanctuary. Conversation is freer; more people are participating.

Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS has remodeled their sanctuary stage area so there is more access to the raised platform. The children sit on the steps for their story time; the musicians can stand at different levels; the open steps invite people to come from all directions to be seen and heard.

What can we learn from each other about use of space? It seems that straight lines (used as a metaphor) can lead us to structures that actually form barriers to fellowship and conversation. It seems that curved lines (used as a metaphor) increase the quality of our relationships and include more people. Open spaces are inviting; steps, railings, small spaces between pews are restrictive.

I invite us as a church to use our spaces to be welcoming and inclusive. I invite us to look for simple ways to form curved lines of communication and

witness. I invite us to let the Holy Spirit reform our inner and outer spaces for witness and outreach.

---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.

Pray, Don't Worry

In our Sunday school class at Grace Mennonite Church, Enid, OK, we looked at an article entitled "Worry is a Prayer to the Wrong God." Worry saps us from the strength that God wants to give us for each day. It keeps us from becoming all that God has in store for us. Paul writes in Philippians 4:6, "Don't worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need." Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." It is much more refreshing and uplifting to pray to our God who can bring answers that heal and bring peace and rest.

--Verlin Koehn, Enid, OK, Vision 2012 prayer partner

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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

Feb. 3 - Pray for Buhler Mennonite Church, KS, as it begins a process of visioning today. Also pray for young adults in our congregations who long to be shaped in their faith, their identities and their relationships.

Feb. 10 - Pray for the Newton/Hesston communities as a Spanish-speaking Mennonite Church gathers for worship today. Also pray for Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX, and its interim pastor Melissa Roth in this time of pastoral transition that the Holy Spirit gives a fresh vision and renews the spiritual strength of the congregation.

Feb. 17 - Pray for Esther Vazquez, pastor of House of Healing, Dallas, TX as she is ordained to the Christian ministry today. Pray for Rainbow Mennonite Church, Kansas City, KS as it celebrates its 50th anniversary this weekend.

Feb. 24 - Pray for Rachel Epp Miller, pastor of San Antonio Mennonite Church, TX, as she is ordained for pastoral ministry 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

New Creation Fellowship, Newton, KS - pastor (3/4 time)

Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX - pastor

Trinity Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, KS - pastor (pending CIF)

Transitions

Olivia Bartel has been appointed as Camp Mennoscah Director, effective February 1. Pray for Olivia as she begins this new work. **Joyce Pankratz**, Director since 2005, concluded her service there on January 31.

Dewayn Issac has announced his retirement for summer 2008 from Eden Mennonite Church, Inola, OK.

Val Krehbiel has resigned as pastor at Salina (KS) Mennonite Church effective March 31.

Marvin Penner, began January 1 as volunteer Development Director for WDC.

Esther Vazquez will be ordained at House of Healing Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX on February 17.

Roy Walls, Jr., former pastor of Peace Mennonite Church, Aurora, CO, died on January 5.

James H. Waltner, Goshen, IN, longtime Mennonite pastor, died December 18, 2007.

Financial update

As of January 15, WDC has received \$383,946 (81%) towards its 2007 congregational goal for their annual budget. The Vision 2012 capital campaign's total is \$938,922 (3-year goal of \$1,500,000).

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.

Conference Resource Library reminder

The Conference Resource Library is now open until **8:00 p.m. on Thursdays**. Come to be resourced, meet some friends or just read!

Check It Out

New resources for youth ministry - please route this edition of "Check it Out" to all your youth sponsors, teachers, and mentors. You can find this and all recent issues of Check It Out on our web site. Included are titles such as *10 Excellent Reasons Not to Join the Military*, *Doing Girlfriend Theology: God-talk with young women* and *Ready-to-go Retreats and Lock-ins*. You will find over 100 (I kid you not) "hits" when you search "youth ministry" or "youth--discussion" at www.mennowdc.org/Library.html. Call or email to request any of these fine resources: 316-283-6300; crlib@mennowdc.org.

--Marlene Bogard, Resource Library Director

Snow Camps

It's time again for a winter retreat in the Colorado Rockies, which includes worship, singing and free time snow activities. **Jr. High Snow Camp (February 8-10)** is back for its third year along with both **Sr. High Snow Camps (February 15-17 and March 14-16)**. Brochures and registration information are available at your church or online: www.rmmc.org.

Preventing Clergy Misconduct seminars

A one-day (repeated) seminar is being offered to all Western District and South Central Conference credentialed ministers on **February 21 and March 6** at KIPCOR, 2515 College Ave., North Newton, KS. This training is *required* in order to uphold credentials and accountability. Information and registration available at: www.mennowdc.org, Coming Events. Register by February 13.

AMBS Forum on Mennonite-Lutheran Relations

The Bishops and Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) recently apologized for Lutheran involvement in past persecution of Anabaptists. Mennonite Church USA responded with a letter welcoming the ELCA statement in a spirit of forgiveness. These are significant developments after nearly 500 years of persecution, animosity and isolation from each other. You are invited to a Forum at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (Lambright Center), Elkhart, IN at **12 noon on February 21** entitled: "Unbinding Each Other: New Possibilities in Mennonite-Lutheran Relations" with a presentation by Prof. John D. Roth and Rev. Paul Schreck. Both were involved in a recent three-year Mennonite-ELCA dialogue. Lunch is available for \$5 starting at 11:45 a.m. (Please e-mail chelmuth@ambs.edu if you would like to have lunch.)

Camp Mennoscah events

- **Explore the Night Sky Retreat** will be held **Feb. 29-March 1**. Have you wondered about the phases of the moon, or seen a dwarf star in the middle of a nebula? There will be informal discussions with experts from Kansas Astronomical Observers, and telescopes ranging in size from 8-16 inches. Cost for lodging/meals at the Retreat Center is \$85 per person.
- **Retirees' Retreat** is **April 14-16** with the theme "Caretakers of Creation". Jim and Ann Dunn will lead the Bible study/singing. There will be time for fellowship, fun and relaxation.
- **2008 summer camping schedule** - receive a \$10 discount for registrations with full payments received by May 16.
 - Pre-Junior I - June 1-5
 - First Camp - June 5-7
 - Junior I - June 8-14
 - Pre-Junior II - June 15-19
 - Junior High I - June 22-28
 - Junior II - July 6-12
 - Junior High II - July 13-19
 - Junior III - July 20-26
 - Senior High - July 27-Aug. 1

For more information, see WDC website:

www.mennowdc.org, or contact Camp: 620-297-3290; campmno@mennowdc.org.

East Hill Singers concert

The East Hill Singers, a group of inmates from the Lansing Correctional Facility along with volunteers from the Kansas City area, have been invited to perform at the Kansas Music Educator's Association President's Concert at the Century II Center in Wichita, KS on **February 28** at 8:00 p.m. The concert is free to the public.

Central Kansas native, Elvera Voth, founded Arts in Prison, in 1998 and has been conductor of East Hill Singers ever since. Voth is known nationwide as an outstanding choral conductor, and is in demand as a guest conductor and workshop presenter. She grew up attending the Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, KS and now participates at Rainbow Mennonite Church, Kansas City, KS.

Children's choir festival

A Children's Choir festival will be held on **March 9** in Memorial Hall on the Bethel College campus. Rehearsal begins at 1:30 p.m. and the program will begin at 4:00 p.m. For questions, contact Carol Klingenberg, 620-983-2373; ckling@southwind.net.

Health Advocacy Day

Save the date - **March 12** for Health Advocacy Day at the First Presbyterian Church and State Capital Building in Topeka, KS. The Kansas Faith Alliance for Health Reform, Inc., in cooperation with other advocacy groups, has organized a training event for state health advocacy. Meet with your state Senator/Representative to share your recommendations and seek their support on key health reforms for the state of Kansas. For more information about the day, contact Kansas Action for Children, 785-232-0550 or rsvp@kac.org.

WDC will have van **transportation from North Newton** for this event. Call WDC: 316-283-6300 and send \$15 (Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117) to reserve a seat by March 7. ***We urge WDC people to add their voices to these critical issues.***

Sunset Supper

The annual Mennonite Women's Sunset Supper for WDC and SCC women will be held **March 13** at 6:00 p.m. at Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS. Speaker is Lorraine Anthony on the topic "Costuming from Start to Finish". Register by March 1 through your church women's circle or call: (WDC) Kathryn Penner, 316-283-2099; (SCC) Isabel Blough, 620-327-4110.

Pastor Spouse retreat - save the date

- Date: **April 4-6**
 - Place: Roman Nose Resort, Watonga, OK
 - Cost: \$275 per couple; \$136 per single
- More information to come!*

Women in Conversation 2008

Join author and teacher Carolyn Holderread Heggen for a retreat designed especially for women. Weekend includes workshops, worship, pampering and fellowship! Choice of two locations: **April 11-13**, Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, PA; **April 18-20**, Airport Hilton, Wichita, KS. For more information: 800-839-1021 or visit www.laurelville.org.

AMBS-Great Plains

Summer classes offered in North Newton - "**Ethics for Ministry**" taught by Keith Harder and Duane Friesen; "**Biblical Perspective on Atonement**" taught by Patricia Shelly. Summer rates per credit hour: for credit \$390; for audit \$65; for audit by AMBS graduate \$40; technology fee \$5. Contact Lois Barrett, Director, 316-283-7098, lbarrett@ambs.edu or register online: <http://www.ambs.edu>.

Prepare to be shocked

Millions have already taken this amazing test. What's your Real Age? www.RealAge.com Use this resource to encourage your church to begin the journey to healthier living.
-Health & Wellness Taskforce

AMBS-Elkhart

Upcoming opportunities:

- **Seminary Sampler:** March 7 - Spring open house for people considering seminary study. A great time for a visit!
- **Beginning Hebrew:** online course - For someone who wants to start seminary studies, but isn't ready to relocate.
- **!Explore:** A Theological Program for High School Youth invites applications for both summer 2008 and summer 2009. Youth work with pastors in their home communities for five weeks, then spend three weeks in the !Explore group experience. In the summer 2009, !Explore will take ten youth and their pastors to Mennonite World Conference.
- **Biblical Views on Food and Farming:** topic of this year's Theological Lectureship with Dr. Ellen Davis, professor at Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC, February 28-29.

Go to: www.ams.edu for information on these and other opportunities.

Eastern Mennonite University

Visit Eastern Mennonite University and talk with a professor, feel our warm and diverse community, learn about cross-cultural study options, discover how we nurture passionate Christian faith, and learn how you can become prepared for grad school or the vocation of your choice. Plan a campus visit **March 15 or April 4** (for seniors who have been admitted). Call 800-368-2665 to set up a visit. Register online at: www.emu.edu/admissions/campusvisit.

Network of Biblical Storytellers

“Who Are You? Face to Face with the Mystery” is the theme of the 21st annual festival gathering of the Network of Biblical Storytellers on **August 6-9** at Simsonwood Retreat Center, Atlanta, GA. Early bird discount by May 14. See: www.nobs.org

Western District Conference Coming Events

Feb. 1-5 - WDC Ski Retreat, Copper Mountain Resort, CO
Feb. 4 - Staff Birthday - Pat Schmidt
Feb. 8-9 - Mother/Daughter Library Sleepover, WDC Conference Resource Library
Feb. 8-10 - Junior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, CO
Feb. 15-17 - Senior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, CO
Feb. 21 & Mar. 6 - Preventing Clergy Misconduct seminar, North Newton, KS
Feb. 29-Mar. 1 - Explore the Night Sky Retreat, Camp Mennoscah
March 9 - Children's Choir Festival, Bethel College Memorial Hall, North Newton, KS
March 13 - Women's Sunset Supper, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS

March 14-16 - Senior High Snow Camp, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, CO
March 31-April 6 - WDC Basketball Tournament, Bethel College, North Newton, KS
April 4-5 - WDC Volleyball Tournament, Hesston College, KS
April 4-6 - Pastor Spouse Retreat, Roman Nose Resort, Watonga, OK
May 1 - Pastors' Day Apart
June 27-28 - WDC/SCC Annual Conference, Hesston College, Hesston, KS

Conference Ministers' schedules

Feb. 1 - Luz del Evangelio (MG)
Feb. 2 - Resource Commission (MB); GI Rights Workshop, Manhattan (LL)
Feb. 3 - Buhler (KS) Mennonite Church (DNF); Casa de Dios and Rey de Gloria, TX (MG); Rainbow Mennonite Church, Kansas City, KS (LL)
Feb. 5 - First Mennonite, Moundridge, KS (DNF); I-70 Pastor's meeting (LL)
Feb. 8 - Program Committee for WDC/SCC conference (DNF)
Feb. 8-9 - Mom's & Daughter's Library Sleepover (MB)
Feb. 9-10 - Hispanic Church Planting for Newton (KS) meetings (DNF, MG)
Feb. 11-13 - AMBS Colloquy, South Bend, IN (DNF, MG)
Feb. 13 and 20 - Marriage Enrichment workshop, First Mennonite Church, Hutchinson, KS (MB)
Feb. 15 - Women pastors' breakfast (DNF)
Feb. 16 - UCIM meeting, Alice, TX (MG)
Feb. 16-17 - Houston (TX) Mennonite Church (LL)
Feb. 17 - Rainbow Mennonite Church 50th celebration, Kansas City, KS (DNF); Monte Horeb and House of Healing, Dallas, TX (MG)
Feb. 18 - Staff Relations Committee (DNF)
Feb. 19 - WDC staff meeting
Feb. 20 - Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS (DNF)
Feb. 21 - Great Plains Seminary Board meeting (DNF); Prevention of Clergy Misconduct seminar (MB, LL)
Feb. 22-23 - First Mennonite, Beatrice, NE (DNF); Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita, KS(LL)
Feb. 24 - San Antonio Mennonite and Comunidad de Vida, TX (MG)
Feb. 26 - Gifts Discernment meeting (DNF)
Feb. 27 - Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS (DNF)
Feb. 29 - March 1 - Spiritual Guidance Seminar (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, 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; Website: www.mennowdc.org