



# Memo

## March 2008

### A Word from Dorothy "Is that you, Mr. Bluejay?"

I was waking up slowly with a hot cup of (fair-trade) coffee and a home-made muffin at the retreat center. I sat in a small room with a view to a forested backyard, a CD quietly playing, and my mind still slightly muddled from an 11-hour sleep punctuated with coughing--the cold bug got me! The landscape looked all gray and wintry as the morning light was muted from low hanging clouds. Nothing moved. I felt alone and silent and it was good.

But as I took a sip, a movement caught my eye. There, high up in a tree was the only color of the morning, a bluejay staring down on me. It did not move. It did not flinch. It simply looked at me and did not move. I noted the morning visitor, tipped my coffee cup in his direction, and sat back with my eyes closed. It felt so good to be warm, safe and quiet.

I moved about, getting ready for my preaching assignment, re-packing my suitcase and returned to my chair with a view--only to note that Mr. Bluejay was once again perched, conveniently, in eyesight. "Good morning", I uttered to my new friend--too distant to touch, too foreign to embrace. "I'm glad you watched over me."

In this season of Lent, the constancy of the bluejay became a metaphor for God's presence on that road trip for me. The bird belongs in nature just as God's Spirit belongs in my world. The bird was the familiar, the colorful, the living thing that stood out among nature's other living things like trees, ground and air. In this Nebraska retreat place\*, I realized how I was forever watched over, forever held, forever in sight.

May you be watched over as new life springs up all around you.

--Dorothy Nickel Friesen, conference minister

\*Bottle Creek Retreat, Bed and Breakfast for Spiritual Retreat; [www.bottlecreekretreat.com](http://www.bottlecreekretreat.com)

*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.*

### United Prayer

"Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. Matthew 18:19. I think it is important that each church is praying in unison for specific needs in their church.

At Grace Mennonite Church, Enid, OK, I have asked our church to pray for five things in our church. 1. Pray that we love the Lord our God with our whole heart, mind, and soul and love our neighbor as ourselves. 2. Pray that our church is unified. 3. Pray that God will supply all our needs spiritually, financially, and physically. 4. Pray that God would send us a new person each week. 5. Pray that we would have a heart for mission.

I would challenge each church to put together their own list of prayers for the needs of their church.

---Verlin Koehn, Enid, Oklahoma

\* \* \* \* \*  
***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

**March 2** - Pray for Marlene Bogard as she leads training sessions for pastors in the prevention of clergy misconduct the next two weeks. Also pray for the Oklahoma Executive Committee and pastors/spouses as they meet this week.

**March 9** - Pray for Melissa Roth as she is installed and credentialed as interim pastor for Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX.

**March 16** - Pray for Western District Conference--that it will be a ministry for congregational peacemaking and spiritual growth.

**March 23** - Give thanks for the Good News. Jesus Christ is risen today!

**March 30** - Pray for Val Krehbiel as he concludes his ministry as pastor of Salina Mennonite Church. Pray for Norman Berry and James Branum, as they are installed at Joy Mennonite Church in Oklahoma City, OK

### **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

### **Transitions**

**Torrey Ball**, maintenance coordinator, and **Olivia Bartel**, director of Camp Mennoscah, will be attending the Mennonite Camping Association national conference March 17-20 at Spruce Lake Retreat in Canadensis, Pennsylvania.

**Neal Denno**, member of the WDC Tournament Task Force, died February 23 in North Newton, KS.

**June Thomsen** will be interim pastor at Salina Mennonite Church beginning April 1.

**Natan Navarrete** resigned in December 2007 as church planter of Comunidad de Fe in Dallas, TX.

### **Financial update**

The 2007 WDC fiscal year ended on January 31, 2008. Undesignated contributions were up by 9% over last year. However even with this increase, expenses were \$25,000 more than income. We will make up this deficit with funds from our Bequest Fund and retained earnings. Our Vision 2012 campaign is close to 2/3 complete with a campaign total of \$946,697.

### **Check It Out**

#### **New Resources for Nurturing Faith in Kids**

The March 2008 edition of Check It Out from the Conference Resource Library features new books to enhance a variety of Christian education opportunities in the congregation. From books on "Tweens" to designing creative learning environments, we have some wonderful books that will enrich the spiritual nurture of your children. See the listing at [www.mennowdc.org/library.html](http://www.mennowdc.org/library.html). Contact us to get your hands on the books you want: 316-283-6300 / [crlib@mennowdc.org](mailto:crlib@mennowdc.org).

--*Marlene Bogard, Resource Library Director*

#### **Women's Spring Sunset Supper**

Have you ever "swept" the air inside your house with a wet gunny sack? Have you experienced a temperature drop of 74 degrees in 18 hours? Find out about these things and more from accounts of women who lived during the 1930's "Days of the Dust Bowl". Come on **March 13**, 6 p.m. to Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS for a delicious meal, entertainment, fellowship, and

inspiration. Cost: \$5, reservations required - contact Isabelle Blough at 620-327-4110. Sponsored by SCC and WDC women's organizations.

### **Pick up your cross**

On **March 22** - 8 a.m., Matthew Simon, Associate/Youth Pastor at Buhler (KS) and Hoffnungsau (Inman, KS) churches, will carry a 10' cross from Hoffnungsau Church 8 miles to Buhler Church. Seven stops are scheduled to reflect on the seven last sayings of Christ on the cross. A short reflection service will at Buhler Church at approximately 11:45. The youth from those churches are collecting donations for World Vision: Acting on AIDS. If you would like to make the journey and/or the service following, please contact Matthew Simon at 620-727-5168.

### **High school youth mission event**

"**Out of the Pew**" is a multi-day mission event **March 29-30**, on the Bethel College campus, for senior high youth to explore missions and connect with mission/service opportunities.

Saturday (Service day) - youth groups will team up and participate in mission/service opportunities in the Central Kansas area. Sunday - worship, explore the call to missions through interactive mission adventure, seminars and other young adults sharing their mission stories. Cost: \$30 (includes t-shirt!); registration deadline: March 20.

Planned by First Mennonite Church, Newton, KS, in partnership with Western District/South Central Youth Committee, Mennonite Mission Network and Bethel College. For information call: 316-283-0273.

### **Pastor Spouse Retreat**

Attn: WDC and SCC pastors! Plan to attend the Pastor Spouse Retreat **April 4 (7 p.m.) - 6 (11 a.m.)** at Roman Nose Resort in Watonga, OK. "The Stories of our Life" is the theme, with John Sharp giving input. Register by **March 1**. Cost (registration fee, meals, lodging) per couple: \$262; per single: \$131. See info at: [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org). Contact WDC: 316-283-6300; [wdc@mennowdc.org](mailto:wdc@mennowdc.org)

### **Interim pastors' lunch**

An Interim Pastors' lunch meeting is scheduled for **April 17**, 11-1:30 p.m. at the WDC offices, KS. We will be discussing basic issues of interim ministry – models or images of the interim pastor, memo of understanding, resources, etc. If you are currently an interim pastor or interested in the possibility of interim ministry, you are invited to this meeting. Lunch will be provided.

### **Next "Pastors' Day Apart" is May 1 --and just for pastors!**

"Vision and Strategic Planning" is the theme for the next PDA to be held on Thursday, May 1 at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston. The schedule is planned in two parts: Pastors meet from 1:00 - 5:30 p.m. with

resource leaders from WDC; light supper served; then the evening session from 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. is designed for pastors to bring the "Vision team", or Council, or Future committee, or structure group, or whatever group is designated by the congregation to lead in planning. There will be three case studies of congregations who have completed or are in the process of visioning--plus a report on how Vision 2012 has aided in congregational planning. More information later. Put the date, place on your calendar and invite your congregational "team" to attend this session. Registration fee per congregation is \$25; pastor's fee is \$25 (includes meal, materials). Brochure available in April.

**Two new courses at AMBS–Great Plains “Ethics for Ministry” and “Biblical Perspectives on the Atonement”** are two new courses at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary–Great Plains Extension this summer. These are courses you may not have had in seminary and will want to make part of your continuing education. And if you are an AMBS graduate, you can audit the course at a special tuition rate. You may also want to invite other church leaders in the congregation to take one or both of these courses.

“Ethics for Ministry,” taught by Keith Harder, D.Min., and Duane Friesen, Th.D., will be offered June 10-26 at 2500 Place, North Newton, Kansas. Class times on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturdays 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The course will examine how the pastor’s moral character is formed, how pastoral leadership can extend the formation of character in church members, and how pastors can best navigate ethical problems and moral temptations.

“Biblical Perspectives on the Atonement” will be taught by Patricia Shelly, Ph.D., July 1-31, also at 2500 Place. Class times are Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturdays 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. This class will look at how Paul, the Gospel writers, and later writers interpreted the cross. Students will also read several modern writers on the subject as they formulate their own understandings of the atonement for faith and ministry.

Both classes are offered for two credit hours, with a third credit hour available upon request. Tuition is \$390 per credit hour; \$65 per hour for regular audit; \$40 per hour for audit by AMBS graduates. Please register by May 13, 2008. Contact Lois Barrett, Director, AMBS–Great Plains, PO Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117; phone: 316-283-7098; email: [lbarrett@ambs.edu](mailto:lbarrett@ambs.edu). Or see [www.ambs.edu/GreatPlains](http://www.ambs.edu/GreatPlains).

#### Western District Conference Coming Events

March 5 - Staff birthday - Marvin Penner (volunteer)  
 March 9 - Children’s Choir Festival, Bethel College Memorial Hall, North Newton, KS  
 March 12 - Staff birthday - Marco Guete  
 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 - Staff birthday - Bill Zuercher (volunteer)  
 March 31-April 6 - WDC Basketball Tournament, Bethel College, North Newton, KS  
 April 4-5 - WDC Volleyball Tournament, Hesston College  
 April 4-6 - Pastor Spouse Retreat, Roman Nose Resort, Watonga, OK  
 April 11 - Interim Pastors’ lunch, WDC office, North Newton, KS  
 May 1 - Pastors’ Day Apart  
 June 27-28 - WDC/SCC Annual Conference, Hesston College, Hesston, KS

#### Conference Ministers’ schedules

March 2 - Buhler (KS) Mennonite Church (DNF)  
 March 3 - Vision 2012 congregational promoter training, WDC office (DNF)  
 March 4 - MC USA leaders' breakfast; Vision 2012 congregational promoter training, Moundridge, KS (DNF)  
 March 6 - Vision 2012 congregational promoter training, WDC office (DNF); Clergy Misconduct Prevention training (MB)  
 March 7 - Annual conference committee(DNF, MG); Executive Committee; Leadership Commission (DNF)  
 March 7-8 - MMN Urban Initiative, Dallas, TX (MG)  
 March 8 - Leadership Commission (DNF)  
 March 9 - Choir Festival, Bethel College (DNF); Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX (MG)  
 March 10-12 - MC USA Healthcare access consultation, Middlebury, IN (MG)  
 March 11 - Stewardship Commission (DNF); Clergy Misconduct Prevention training (MB)  
 March 12 - Faith day, healthcare access, Topeka, KS (DNF); Tabor Mennonite Church children in library (MB)  
 March 13 - Vision 2012 congregational promoter training, Hutchinson, KS (DNF); Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX (MG)  
 March 14 - Women pastors' lunch, McPherson, KS (DNF)  
 March 14-16 - Hispanic church plant board meeting, Newton, KS (MG)  
 March 15 - Vision 2012 congregational promoter training, Topeka, KS (DNF)  
 March 25 - Vision 2012 committee (DNF); Casa de Dios Church, Garland, TX (MG)  
 March 28 - Executive Committee and Board (DNF)  
 March 28-30 - Resource Advocacy Training, Baltimore, MD (MB)  
 March 30-31 - Constituency Leaders Council, Laurelville, PA (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: Dorothy Nickel Friesen, [dorothyf@mennowdc.org](mailto:dorothyf@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)**