

Memo

May 2008

**A Word from Dorothy
Middle of the sandwich**

The changing role of the conference is the hot topic of the day. How does the conference (WDC) respond to congregations? How does WDC respond to the denomination (MC USA)? Being in the middle of these two (powerful) forces can put the squeeze on staff time, finances and priorities.

So how is WDC coping with these pressures?
1) WDC will continue to resource congregations. We are dedicated to caring for and challenging all of our congregations to faithful living. 2) WDC will remain a player in the MC USA denomination through its Constituency Leaders Council participation and other denominational venues.

However, WDC will not be able to be all to all! We have limited staff time and, after July 1, we will reduce associate conference ministry staff by .5 FTE. (Lee Lever becomes full-time for MC USA denominational ministry July 1.) Which voices should we listen to? Which congregations will get attention?

In a recent article, "Moving from assessment to action—Strategies for congregational partnerships with regional denominational structures" in Alban Institute's CONGREGATIONS magazine (Spring, 2008), author John Janka says an assessment tool, not based on size of congregation but on "categories of congregational circumstance" is the way middle judicatories will partner with congregations. Here are the five categories:

- 1) High performance congregation—exhibit innovation and creativity;
- 2) aspiring and ready – potential to expand ministry outreach;
- 3) potential in need of a dream—unaware of potential and resistant to change;
- 4) limited and maintaining—long-term pattern of decline;
- 5) establish a new faith community—church planting.

This strategy of assessment is part of WDC's efforts at visioning and strategic planning. We are ready to assist congregations in this analysis and together find resourcing for the next decade.

Which congregational type is your church? Be ready to discover God's direction for your faith community.

--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.*

United in prayers

In Iglesia Cristiana Menonita Mi Redentor church in Dallas, TX, we experienced a good example of praying and acting in one common purpose as described in Romans 12:12: "Let your hope keep you joyful, be patient in your trouble, and pray at all times."

We prayed for a bigger space where the congregation had room to grow. In July 2007, we asked the property owner to let us use a spare building that had been empty for five years.

There were a lot of city permits to get and a big remodeling job to be done. The budget was \$26,000 to cover the entire project. The persevering prayers and hard work of 15 people accomplished the task in three months with a budget of \$6,000. That's what I call "faith in action".

--Sandra Montes-Martinez, 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

May 4 - Pray for the WDC Gifts Discernment Committee as it finalizes the nominations for the leadership ballot that delegates will affirm during the annual conference.

May 11 - Pray for the WDC Executive Board as they meet May 16 to discern priorities of WDC, a 2009 budget proposal, and celebrate Vision 2012 accomplishments.

May 18 - Pray for the new church plant in Newton: Iglesia Menonita Casa Betania (House of Bethany Mennonite Church) which worships every Sunday a.m.

and has a Bible study on Thursday evenings. Pray for a part-time pastor to answer the call to serve this new church.

May 25 - Pray for the high school, college and seminary graduates from your congregation that God will reveal new directions for their lives.

Pastoral openings

(Congregational Information Forms completed & available):

Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS -

associate pastor for youth pastor (half-time)

Houston (TX) 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

Eric Buller has been called as the pastor of Inman Mennonite Church (KS) as of August 1. He will conclude 11 years of pastoring at First Mennonite Church, Ransom, KS.

LaVonda Claassen, member of the WDC Low German Mennonites from Mexico Support Committee Task Force, died on April 17.

Our sympathy to **Jay Goering**, WDC Moderator, in the loss of his father J. Hobart Goering on April 16.

Harold Jackson, Camp Mennoscah supporter, passed away on April 2.

The formation of a new organization, **Texas Mennonite Convention** (formerly called Mid-Texas Convention), was approved by the delegate body at their annual retreat in San Antonio, TX on April 26. The Coordinating Team officers are: Jose Vazquez, moderator; Garland Robertson, secretary; and Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz, treasurer. The major purpose of the organization is fellowship, worship, promotion of activities, and encouragement and support of the Texas churches.

Ruth (pastor at New Creation Mennonite Church, Newton, KS) and **Marv Penner** (WDC volunteer development director), grieves the loss of sister-in-law, Lydia Pearl Eby, who died March 30 in Harrisonburg, VA.

Zion Mennonite Church, Elbing, KS, will celebrate their 125th anniversary on June 8 with worship at 10:30 a.m., lunch at noon, and program at 2:00 p.m. Speakers will be Reverends Bruce Bradshaw, Dorothy Nickel Friesen, and Willis Busenitz.

Check It Out

"Best" New Youth Ministry Resources List

In this month's edition of Check It Out from the Western District Resource Library, you will discover some of the hot new resources in youth ministry. New DVD's on identity, leadership, friendship and parents could be used for mid-week youth group. Imaginative Prayer for Youth Ministry introduces 50 prayer exercises to allow God to speak through the five senses. A book on "Deep Justice" helps kids understand how serving others may help right some wrongs in this world. This listing is available at www.mennowdc.org/Library.html. For hundreds more youth ministry resources - search our on-line catalog! Contact Marlene Bogard at 316-283-6300, crlib@mennowdc.org or to reserve any of our 12,000 resources.

Annual Conference

When is it? June 27, 7:00 p.m. through June 28, 9:00 p.m.

For who? Western District Conference and South Central Conference church members. (WDC churches may send one delegate for every 30 members or fraction thereof.)

Where will it be? Hesston Mennonite Church and Hesston College, Hesston, KS

What's happening? Worship, music, delegate session, workshops, fellowship, prayer, communion, children's activities (0 - 5th grade) and youth programming (6-8th grade)

Who are the preachers? Clarence Rempel, Pastor, First Mennonite Church, Newton; Michelle Armster, MCC Director of Justice and Peacebuilding

What is the theme? Bold Witness: Pray with Courage, Share as One, Acts 4: 31-35

Brochures available very soon in churches or go to: www.mennowdc.org

Youth service/learning event

Walk a Mile, a youth service and learning event, is coming to Clinton, Oklahoma **June 14-17**. This three-day immersion in Southern Cheyenne Christian culture will include touring the **Trail of Tears** with Mennonite pastor and Cheyenne Peace Chief, Lawrence Hart; working with the **Return to the Earth** project (return of Native remains for proper burial); experiencing the **Cheyenne Cultural Center**; as well as recreating, interacting and having fun! This event is open to 25 high school youth. We have slots for approximately nine youth from Kansas & Nebraska, eight from Oklahoma, and eight from Texas. Of course this setup will be flexible. We are hoping to get youth from many different churches across the conference.

Registration deadline is June 3. Fee: \$25 (does not include travel.) To register contact Nancy Funk at WDC: 316-283-6300 or wdc@mennowdc.org.

Reference Council

WDC Reference Council will meet on **June 27, 1:30-4:00 p.m.**, just prior to the opening session of annual conference in Hesston, KS. This group is comprised of the Executive Board, all members of all commissions and task forces, pastors, and WDC persons serving on MC USA committees, boards and agencies. Plan to attend this important meeting.



Camp Mennoscah wish list

Thank you very much to everyone who has donated time and resources to Camp Mennoscah!

We covet your prayers for a safe and exciting summer of camp, and look forward to seeing many of you. Your prayers are essential to the ongoing success of camp, but as you see below, we have continuing material needs to help us keep the camp running smoothly. For further information, please contact camp at 620-297-3290 or e-mail at campmno@mennowdc.org.

Monetary donations for the following items would be appreciated:

- Scholarship Funds (any amount)
- Road maintenance (1 load of crushed asphalt for driveway) \$500
- Commercial vacuums (2 @ \$350 each) \$700
- Toilet plungers (5 @ \$5 each) \$25
- External hard drive (1TB) \$400

The following items could be either donated or a monetary gift for purchase:

- Large, sturdy laundry baskets (2 @ \$10-\$15 each) \$25
- 18-24 gallon plastic containers with lids to store tee shirts, mattress covers, etc. (10-20 @ \$10 each) \$100-\$200
- 3 or 4 drawer file cabinet for new Maintenance Office \$175
- Fans (15-20) (oscillating, box or turbo, new or gently used) \$500
- Swimming pool toys (goggles, diving sticks, balls) \$10-\$20
- Wide-wheel wagon (for hauling coolers, supplies) \$100-\$200
- 5 gallon Gott coolers (2)
- Paint brushes and rollers
- Web designer and/or webmaster volunteer (desperately needed and priceless)

Conference Resource Library

New hours: Beginning Thursday, **May 8**, the Resource Library will be open till **6 p.m. every Thursday evening**. With over 12,000 items for check-out (books, curriculum, DVDs and videos, periodicals, etc.), it is a great place to get resourced. You can see its catalog online: www.mennowdc.org/Library.html.

For the first quarter of 2008, usage of the library was up 25% over last year. It is also the highest first quarter in over five years. *Come check us out at 2517 North Main in North Newton!*

Announcing GRAPEVINE: a network of Christian Educators

The **Grapevine Resource Group** is a way for those concerned about congregational Christian education to share, network and learn from each other. Anyone is welcome: Sunday school teachers, superintendents, parents, pastors, Christian education committees and Wednesday night coordinators. The next meeting will be Thursday **May 22** at 7 p.m. at the WDC office. We will explore three different possibilities for Mid-week children's curriculum programming. Come to listen, learn and share. Marlene Bogard is planner/facilitator; for information, contact her at: 316-283-6300; mbogard@mennowdc.org.

Mennonite Church USA 2009 directory

The new Mennonite Church USA directory is coming out this fall. Pastors - please update your information so it's current in the directory. Go to: www.mennodata.org, enter your ID and password, click on the "Edit Your Personal Information" link and update your information. This information is also "live" with the online directory, which you can find at <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/> and click on the Online Directory button. If you can't locate your ID and password, email Deb Ratzlaff at debr@mennoniteusa.org and she will send you the information.

People's Summit for Faithful Living

The People's Summit for Faithful Living will be **July 8-10** at the Canadian Mennonite University campus in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This will be a joint gathering between Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA. Under the theme "At the Crossroads: Promise and Peril," participants will focus on the urgent task of being a faithful community of God amidst the many challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Information on registration and costs are available at: www.summit.MennoniteUSA.org.

Freedom of Conscience

The National Assembly to Honor Freedom of Conscience will meet in Austin, TX, **October 3-5**. Keynote speaker will be Dr. Walter Wink, renowned author, activist, theologian, and professor emeritus of Auburn Theological Seminary, New York City, NY. "Position Statements" are being collected on active resistance to injustice and violence. Send submissions before the end of August to: Freedom of Conscience Position Statement, Jared Diener, 5115 Creekline Dr., Austin TX 78745. Further information will soon be at: www.mennochurch.org.

Western District Conference coming events

May 1 - Pastors' Day Apart, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, KS
May 30-June 1 - Discipleship Now (youth event), Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Hydro, OK
June 14-17 - Walk a Mile youth service learning event, Clinton, OK
June 27 (1:30-4:00) - Reference Council, Hesston Mennonite Church, KS
June 27-28 - WDC/SCC Annual Conference, Hesston College, Hesston, KS
Sept. 6-7 - Mennonite Women Retreat, Camp Mennoscah
Sept. 13 - Jumpstart, (location TBA)
Sept. 14-18 - Work & Play Retreat, Camp Mennoscah
Oct. 10-12 - Mennofolk on the Prairie Retreat, Camp Mennoscah
Oct. 11 - Visual Arts & Worship Resourcing Day, Location TBA
October 25 - Reference Council, First Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, KS

Conference Ministers' schedules

May 1 - Pastors' Day Apart, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, KS (LL, MB)
May 1-2 - Vacation (MG)
May 2 - Staff birthday - Dorothy Nickel Friesen
May 3 - Resource Commission (MB)
May 4, 11, 25 - Trinity Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, KS (MB)
May 5 - Kansas Ecumenical Board, Wichita, KS (LL)
May 7-8 - Iglesia Nueva Jerusalem - Houston, TX (MG)
May 8 - Youth ministry resourcing on curriculum (MB)
May 9 - Staff birthday - Olivia Bartel
May 10 - Camp Mennoscah counselor training (MB)
May 12 - Staff Relations Committee (DNF)
May 14-19 - Vacation (LL)
May 15 - Low German Support Committee (DNF)
May 16 - Women pastors' breakfast (DNF); Exec Committee; Exec Board (DNF, MG); D.Min. graduation (LL)

May 16-18 - Leading Family and Marriage Enrichment weekend, Pasadena, CA (MB)
May 17 - Leadership Commission (DNF, MG)
May 18 - First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge, KS (DNF); Casa Betania, Newton, KS (MG)
May 20 - Vision 2012 steering committee (DNF); Western Kansas pastors, Dodge City, KS (LL)
May 22 - Grapevine meeting, WDC office (MB)
May 23 - Casa de Dios, Garland, TX (MG)
May 24 - Bethel College alumni/ae banquet (DNF); House of Healing, Dallas, TX (MG)
May 24-25 Houston Mennonite Church, TX (LL)
May 27 - MCUSA Resource Selection Meeting (MB)
May 28 - MMA rep meeting, Dallas, TX (MG)
May 30 - Camp Mennoscah staff training (MB)
May 31 - Healthcare focus group, Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka, KS (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.

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