

Memo

November 2009

A Word from Dorothy

Exodus 3: The call and the fire

I've never been entirely clear how to describe "the call" to ministry in the church. I certainly never saw a burning bush! I never heard a voice, saw a star falling, or was told by anyone to become a preacher. However, I was raised by a loving family, encouraged in school, and given lots of leadership opportunities from youth on. I was always a Christian—but I was born a girl, not a boy. I was always a Mennonite.

I always knew I would be a teacher. I never thought I was going to be a pastor, a seminary administrator, a conference minister.

Maybe my life is one of staying close to the fire—being intrigued by the challenges of faith. Like Moses, I have stopped cold in my tracks by overwhelming challenges. I was aware of racism in high school when an African American pastor from Chicago came to my church's youth retreat and we sat in a retreat center while it rained all weekend. I thought of it as a kind of Pentecost experience because I felt convicted, if not convicted, that we needed to hire a Black associate pastor at my home church, Bethel Mennonite in Mt. Lake, Minnesota. The church deacons did not think it was a good idea. I remember stomping around at home while my quiet parents listened to my ranting about the leaders of the church being close-minded and just plain old! I was close to the fire.

Maybe I was close to the fire in college when I protested the war in Vietnam, married a pacifist, and moved to the city. I smelled the smoke of war and I stayed close to the fire of protest.

Maybe I was close to the fire in seminary—the first time—when my professor adviser told me to go back to teaching English because there simply wasn't a place for me in the Mennonite Church.

Maybe I was close to the fire in the city, raising two small children, living on very little money and teaching dropouts how to read.

Maybe I was close to the fire when our Mennonite congregation asked me to think about quitting teaching and going to seminary—again—and working for the church.

The call, it seems is about smoke and fire—about staying close to the Spirit's incredible tug and then just going for it. I have argued with God and I have laughed at God. I have asked questions and I have wept tears of anguish and discouragement. I have been told to my face that I am not a Christian. I have tried to forget the love I have for the church of Jesus Christ.

But the fire keeps burning and I just keep on staying close. The burning bush, I think, is a wonderful metaphor for stopping in our tracks and then going into life starting a whole bunch of new fires.

Come to think of it, I think I smell smoke again in my life. I wonder where the fire is this time!

--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.*

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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

Nov. 1 - Pray for First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge (KS) as they dedicate their remodeled sanctuary today.

Nov. 8 - Pray for the youngest children in your congregation and those who care for them: parents, grandparents, nursery attendants, Sunday School teachers.

Nov. 15 - Pray for Houston (TX) Mennonite Church as they host the annual MCC sale this weekend.

Nov. 22 - Pray for the WDC conference minister search committee as they begin their ministry of calling a new leader for our area conference.

Nov. 29 - Give thanks for the courageous witnesses in your congregation who advocate for the poor, the disenfranchised, the lonely, the sick and the dying. Name and thank God for at least one person who modeled Christian living for you.

Pastoral openings

(Congregational Information Forms completed & available):

Beatrice (NE) Mennonite Church - interim pastor (part-time, March 1, 2010)

Hope Mennonite Church, Wichita, KS - pastor (full-time, March 1, 2010)

Turpin (OK) Mennonite Church - pastor (full-time, January 1, 2010)

Transitions

Bruce Bradshaw, pastor of Zion Mennonite Church, Elbing, KS, mourns the loss of his mother, Isabelle Bradshaw on September 25 in Taunton, Massachusetts.

Kathy Neufeld Dunn, pastor of First Mennonite Church, McPherson, KS, has been awarded a Lilly Grant - Pastoral Renewal Grant. Congratulations!

Gilberto Flores, WDC Associate Conference Minister, with much joy, announces the birth of grandson Mateo Sebastian Flores Schmidt to his son and daughter-in-law, Chino & Allison, on October 2.

Dorothy Nickel Friesen, WDC Conference Minister, has announced her retirement by July 31, 2010. An application process will be announced soon. Please be in prayer for WDC leadership, for Dorothy, for the search committee and for the call of God to candidates to serve in this position.

Loris Habegger, retired pastor, died September 30 in Wichita, KS. WDC churches he served were Zion, Elbing, KS; Eden, Moundridge, KS; and First, Halstead, KS; in addition to churches in the Central Plains and Central District conferences.

Check It Out!

Children's Books for Telling in Church

This new listing from the Western District Resource Library features a list of two dozen beautifully written and illustrated children's books that could be used for children's time during worship, for Sunday School, or for home use. Themes include friendship, kindness, outreach, generosity, praise, creation and more. Find it on our website at:

www.mennowdc.org/2009-11-CIO.pdf

Route this list to your teachers, parents, worship planners and church librarians. Call or email to reserve one of these treasures for your use.

crlib@mennowdc.org / 316-283-6300.

--Marlene Harder Bogard, Resource Library Director

WDC website

New! Help us improve the WDC website. We want to hear your ideas. Go to our home page: www.mennowdc.org and click on Survey Link.

The Parish Paper

Visit www.mennowdc.org/Publications.html to view the November issue of **The Parish Paper**, entitled "Seven Roads to a Multicultural Church."

Conference Minister search

The WDC Executive Committee has named the search committee for the next Conference Minister of WDC: Tom Harder, chairperson, co-pastor of Lorraine Ave., Wichita; Brenda Glanzer Lilliston, moderator of WDC, Hope, Wichita; Verlin Koehn, WDC Executive Board; Grace, Enid, OK; Sara Dick, associate pastor, Shalom, Newton; Hugo Saucedo, Director of Mennonite Voluntary Service, San Antonio, TX; James Regier, member of Staff Relations Committee, Grace Hill, Whitewater, KS.

Pray for them as they begin their ministry of searching and pray for candidates to hear God's call to serve the WDC.

Camp Mennoscah

It was a calm and peaceful October, though a bit wetter and a bit colder than we expected. We've been busy planning for 2010 and for many years in the future. We'd love to have your help in the decision-making process. The Retreat Commission has created a **questionnaire** for you to share some of your thoughts and memories about camp, some of your dreams and wishes. You can find an online version of the strategic planning questionnaire on the Camp Mennoscah webpage at www.mennowdc.org/Camp.html or you can contact Camp Mennoscah for a copy. We can be reached at campmno@mennowdc.org or 620-297-3290. We can't wait to hear from you!

Night at the Conference Resource Library!

For: small groups, women's groups, Sunday School classes, children's groups, large families and small churches. Limit: 25-30 people.

What: your choice of informal activities, customized for your group. Choose from: storytelling, DVD clips, browsing, book-talks, scavenger hunt, creative prayer activities and more. Marlene Bogard, Resource Library Director will be present as guide. Hot and cold drinks provided for a small fee, food is optional, provided by.....you!

Why: The Conference Resource Library is a gem. Even though this is our busiest year in history, we know there are hundreds of folks out there who have yet to explore our 12,000 items. Come, explore, discover!

When: dozens of dates are open in the coming year. Contact Marlene if you are interested. 316-283-6300, crlib@mennowdc.org

Cost: A donation to the WDC would be very nice.

Hymnsing for Christmas

Mark your calendars now for a special musical evening on Saturday, **December 12**, 7:00-8:30 p.m. at Bethel College Mennonite Church led by Dr. William Eash. This is a fundraiser with proceeds divided 50% for Western District Conference Vision 2012 and 50% for Bethel College. Let's sing together!

Thinking ahead to Advent and Christmas?

* It's not too early to find resources for programs, readings, family gatherings. Search our Conference Resource Library on-line catalog (<http://www.mennowdc.org/Library.html>) for ideas or give us a call to find out about the latest new stuff: 316-283-6300. New materials have been added!

* A warm and wonderful approach to family faith nurture through the time of Advent is available as a free downloadable booklet at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/ResourceView/2/11269>. Thanks to my friend Elsie Rempel in Winnipeg, Manitoba for creating these every year, based on the themes and scriptures found in the **Leader**.
-Marlene Bogard, Director, Conference Resource Library

New resource lists

Check out these listings of print and DVD materials available at the Conference Resource Library:

1. Resources on Ethics in End of Life Issues, Death and Dying - www.mennowdc.org/EndofLifeEthics.pdf
2. Resources on Immigration Issues - www.mennowdc.org/2009-10-CIO.pdf
3. Children with Special Needs Sunday School Teacher Resources (list prepared by Christy Weems, ADNET student associate, 2009 from Bethel College, North Newton, KS) - www.mennowdc.org/SpecialNeedsResources.pdf

New!

Power-Point presentations available on-line

1. Outline for the Learning Community on Intentional Faith Formation, presented by Marlene Bogard at WDC, August 2009: www.mennowdc.org/IntentionalFaithFormation.pdf
2. Outline for a basic 2-hour introduction to Safe Sanctuaries, preventing sexual abuse in the congregation, created by Marlene Bogard, August, 2009: www.mennowdc.org/SafeSanctuaries.pdf

Video Catalog Recently Updated!

About 50 new DVD's have been added to our ever-expanding collection at the Conference Resource Library. Check out the new listing at: www.mennowdc.org/2009Videocatalogwithoutindex.pdf
Sorry, no index available at this time...browse, call, email, see ya!

Seminary course offered

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary—Great Plains Extension offers *The Church's Witness in the World; Mission and Peace* class in **January 2010**. It meets Tuesday and Thursday evenings plus all day Saturday, January 5-21; Lois Barrett, M.Div., Ph.D., is the professor; 3 credit hours. For more information contact: AMBS-GPE, 2517 Main, PO Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117; 316-283-7098; lbarrett@ambs.edu; www.ambs.edu/GreatPlains

Simply Sustainable

Mennonite Publishing Network is working on a new book called *Simply Sustainable* that you can be a part of! To be published in fall 2010, this book is designed to collect ideas from people around the world about how they are seeking to live more simply and sustainably. Submit your idea using the form at www.simply-sustainable.org.

Western District Conference coming events

Nov. 6-8 - Discipleship Now, Wichita, KS
Dec. 12 - Hymnsing, Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS
March 12-14, 2010 - Scrapbooking Retreat, Camp Mennoscah
July 9-11, 2010 - WDC Annual Conference, Lakeview Conference Center, Waxahachie, TX

Conference Ministers' schedules

Nov. 1 - First Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, KS (CR); First Mennonite Church, Newton, KS (MB); First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge, KS (DNF)
Nov. 3 - MC USA leaders; AMBS Great Plains Board (DNF)
Nov. 6-9 - Vacation (DNF)
Nov. 8 - Hesston (KS) Mennonite Church (CR)
Nov. 10 - Low German Task Force (DNF)
Nov. 13-15 - Houston (TX) Mennonite Church (DNF)
Nov. 17 - Western Kansas Peer Group; Goessel (KS) Mennonite Church (CR); Wichita pastor peer group; Stewardship Commission (DNF)
Nov. 18 - Bethel College career night (DNF)
Nov. 19 - Pastoral Review consultants (DNF)
Nov. 20 - Prairie View Executive Committee (DNF)
Nov. 25-29 - Thanksgiving break (DNF)
Nov. 30 - Goessel Mennonite Church (CR)
(Marlene Bogard-MB; Gilberto Flores-GF; Dorothy Nickel Friesen-DNF; Dave Gerbrandt-DG; CR--Clarence Rempel)

The MEMO is published monthly for WDC pastors and committee members.

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