

**WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE  
E-MEMO**

**August 30, 2011**

*A weekly communication for:*

*WDC Churches and Pastors*

*WDC Executive Board, Commission, Committee and Task Force members*

*Any content may be used in bulletins and newsletters and forwarded to congregational leaders and members.*

*WDC E-Memo is also available at: [www.mennondc.org](http://www.mennondc.org) (Conference Life / Publications)*

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- \*Clarence's Clarion Call
- \*Prayer Requests
- \*Coming Events
- \*Parish Paper
- \*Announcements

**Clarence's Clarion Call**

**Remembering 9/11**

I was in the middle of sermon and worship preparations as a pastor on a Tuesday morning, when news began to filter into the office of airliners crashing into the Twin Towers in New York City. It was a day of bewilderment and growing fear. "Who was responsible? Why? What else?" Early calls to prayer and dependence on God gave way quickly to calls for retaliation. When I heard the poll that 90 percent of Americans were calling for massive retribution, I knew I had to change the planned sermon from "Joyful Giving" to "What do you do with enemies?"

Jesus noted the conventional wisdom about enemies that has carried on for millennia. "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." Jesus was bringing to the surface a deep value of the culture that was more caught than actually taught. "Take care of your family, take care of your friends, take care of your gang or clique, take care of your own nation, and hate your enemies. It makes sense, doesn't it?"

There were some Christians with whom I identify (Mennonites) who caught Jesus' kingdom vision for loving enemies back in 1775. They wrote to the Pennsylvania Assembly and the Continental Congress on November 7, 1775, "It being our principle to feed the hungry and to give the thirsty drink; we have dedicated ourselves to serve all men in every thing that can be helpful to the preservation of men's lives, but we find no freedom in giving, or doing, or assisting in any thing by which men's lives are destroyed or hurt" (Hershberger, War, Peace, and Nonresistance 99-100). They refused to enter into the cycle of retaliatory violence that is often disguised by the word justice. They rejected the common sense approach of "hate your enemy."

What does it mean to love enemies? At the very least these colonial Christians understood that it means you refuse to harm or kill the enemy. Positively, it meant they would help anyone who was needy, even if those people had been labeled "enemy." And specifically it meant that they would pray for the British just like they would pray for the colonists. Prayer in this case was a

radical, confrontative, spiritual-social act just like Jesus saying, "Let's pray for our Roman occupiers."

How can we pray when threatened and attacked by enemies? Here are some thoughts I shared with my congregation in 2001.

1. We combat fear by praising God as our Rock, our Fortress, our Refuge and Strength. God himself is our place of safety. We are not safe because we live in the continental United States. We're not safe because we live in the midwest. We're not safe because we're at home. We are safe because we live in God. And even if we should be attacked and killed, we cannot be separated from God.

2. We can pray for protection from enemies like Psalm 140:1-2, "Rescue me, O Lord, from evil men; protect me from men of violence, who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up war every day."

3. I think it's appropriate to pray that our enemies, that worldwide terrorist organizations, would be confused in their plans. We can pray like Psalm 140:7-11, "O Sovereign Lord, my strong deliverer...do not grant the wicked their desires, O Lord; do not let their plans succeed...Let burning coals fall upon them; may disaster hunt down men of violence." In this kind of prayer, we let go of the need for eye-for-an-eye justice, and we turn people over to God, in the way the Bible instructs. "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath" (Romans 12:19).

4. However, praying for enemies with love takes yet another step. It goes beyond refusing to use violence to actually praying *for the good* of our enemies "that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:45). And what is our Father in heaven like? What does God do with enemies? "God causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). God blesses friends and enemies.

Jennifer, a flight seatmate, informed me, "I don't believe in God. I believe that there's a Higher Power but he doesn't have a name. I have a scientific mind, a mathematical mind."

Further along in the conversation, I shared, "One of the ways I have sensed God's presence in the past two years is just an awareness of God's generosity to me. This year of study, reflection, and renewal is one of those blessings. I sense God guiding me in life. But it's not just blessings here on earth. There are spiritual blessings too. I am loved; I am forgiven; I have been accepted by God as his son. I know I have an eternal home in heaven."

"Whoa, that's strong. That's a really different way of looking at the world. Sometimes I wish I would know something like that. You know I feel really lucky too. I have a wonderful husband. We're madly in love with each other. We have two great kids. I have a great job. We really feel lucky. Do you think God blesses people who don't believe in him?"

"Sure! God blesses everyone and especially people who don't believe in him. Jesus said it this way, 'God sends rain on the just and the unjust.'"

"Well, if I believed in God, that's the kind of God I'd like to believe in."

What if Christians portrayed by their actions a God who loves enemies and rains on the just and unjust? Would not many believe?

--Clarence Rempel, WDC Conference Minister

### **Prayer Requests**

Sept 4 – Pray for the Beatrice Mennonite Church and their new pastor, John Regier, who is being commissioned today for this new place of ministry.

Sept 11 – Praise God for the abundant provisions for Grace Mennonite Church, Enid, Oklahoma, that is dedicating their debt-free, \$1.4 million new facility today. Pray for a strong outreach in this new location.

Sept 18 – Pray for Caleb Regehr, who is beginning as Youth Pastor of Buhler Mennonite, Hoffnungsau Mennonite, and Inman Mennonite churches. His third service of installation is today at Buhler.

Sept 25 – Pray for Renee Kenagy, who will be ordained at New Creation Fellowship today.

### **Coming Events**

Sept. 4-5 - Mental Health Spiritual Retreat, Camp Mennoscah

Sept. 9-11 - Women & Girls Retreat, Camp Mennoscah

Sept. 20 - Pastors' Day Apart, West Zion Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS

Sept. 18-22 - Work & Play Camp, Camp Mennoscah

Nov. 11-12 - Sister Care Workshop, sponsored by Mennonite Women USA, Central Kansas

### **Parish Paper**

View the September issue of *The Parish Paper* at [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org) (Conference Life / Publications). The topic is: "Why Do People Connect with Christ and a Congregation?"

### **WDC Announcements**

1. WDC Pastors' Day Apart - September 20, 8:30 am - 1:00 pm at West Zion Mennonite Church - see: [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org) (Upcoming Events) for information. Pastors, please register by Sept. 13.

2. A few of the BEST books on Christian Leadership - available at your Western District Conference Resource Library.

**Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: being calm and courageous no matter what** by Peter Steinke, Alban, 2006. A gem that offers wisdom on providing **healthy, effective church leadership via the "family system" lens.**

**Humble Leadership: being Radically open to God's Guidance and Grace** by N. Graham Standish. Alban, 2007. Chapters on being humble, self-aware, prayerful, unifying, Spirit-led.

**A Willing Heart: how to serve when you think you can't** by Marci Alborghetti. Ave Maria, 2011. A compilation of humor, personal stories, wisdom and attainable goals in this vision of Christian service. Includes lots of Psalms as inspiration for service, and questions for conversation.

**Faithful Guides: coaching strategies for Church Leaders** by Thomas R.

Hawkins. Discipleship Resources, 2006. Describes how coaching is rooted in the Bible and church traditions, is an essential strategy for personal and organizational transformation, and is different from consulting and counseling.

**Making Shifts without Making Waves: a coach approach to soulful leadership** by Edward Hammett. Chalice, 2009. Based on the theory that a "coaching culture" facilitates effective transformation, provides lots of models, ideas, questions for discussion, toolkits and sources.

**Knowing Me, Knowing God: exploring your spirituality with Myers-Briggs** by Malcolm Goldsmith. Abingdon, 1997. Does the possibility of a silent retreat appeal to you or would you be reluctant to go? Should faith be concerned with transforming the soul or transforming the world? Included in this resource is a spirituality questionnaire that once embraced, will deepen your understanding of your own personality as well as enhance your relationships, both essential for being a good leader.

**But Wait, There is More, Much More.** Visit our on-line library catalog at

[www.mennowdc.org/library](http://www.mennowdc.org/library) and search: Christian Leadership or Church Leadership. Either way you will get over 60 titles that are available for you. Simply call Marlene Bogard at [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300) or email [crilib@mennowdc.org](mailto:crilib@mennowdc.org) and she will be happy to send them your way. We are here to serve **YOU!**

3. WDC Resource Library - Pre-School Story Time for children in the Newton, KS area. Children ages 3-5 are invited to sign up for fall session now by calling [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300). Story Time starts Wed. Sept. 21 at 10:a.m. Storytellers will be Pat Schmidt and Marlene Bogard, who will introduce your children to excellent children's literature and illustrations, the joy of books and much more.

4. Did you miss part of the 75th Birthday Party of the Resource Library? We are not done yet! Check out this poster-size document that features Library Director Marlene Bogard's top 75 books that are available for you to check out. This colorful list includes children and adult titles. Find it at: <http://mennowdc.org/resources/>.

5. Work a little, play a little. There's always gobs of work to do at Camp Mennoscah and our "to do" list is never any shorter. But the best and important part of our Work & Play Camp is not the work we do, but the good conversations and the fun times. All ages and abilities are invited to come to Work & Play--take an extra nap or spend a few more minutes finishing a project. It's up to you! Contact us at [campmno@mennowdc.org](mailto:campmno@mennowdc.org) or [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) for more information or to register.

6. We're doing it by the book! Well, by the scrapbook, that is. We had such a blast with our spring Scrapbooking Retreat that we are having another one! The fall Scrapbooking Retreat is Sept. 30 - Oct. 2, 2011. Check out the brochure at [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org) or contact us at [campmno@mennowdc.org](mailto:campmno@mennowdc.org) for more information. The theme for this retreat is "You Inspire Me."

7. 2012 Reservations--Be on the lookout, folks, and start thinking about next year. We're not quite ready, but we are so almost close to sending out reservation forms and information for 2012. Don't miss out on your chance to have your family gathering or church retreat at Camp Mennoscah. Give us a call, send us an email--we're more or less by the phone waiting to hear from you.

8. Note: There will not be a September 6 issue of WDC E-Memo.

## **MC USA Announcements**

1. Hal didn't grow up in a Mennonite church. He discovered the theology—and loved it. And he loves making space for people who like Jesus, but for a variety of reasons might not be too crazy about church. But can he, someone from the outside, really feel like he belongs? Well, he's Lead Pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church in Phoenix, Arizona. **And he's got a story to tell.**

Joanna didn't grow up in a Mennonite church. Sure, it sounds like she's got the right name, whatever that means, but she lived on the mission field overseas and studied at Focus on the Family—and then graduated from a “liberal” seminary. She's passionate about working with Christian congregations that are committed to Anabaptist discipleship . . . but not necessarily filled with ethnic Mennonites. **And she's got a story to tell.**

Anton didn't grow up in a Mennonite church. He still doesn't call himself Mennonite. But he's very attracted to Anabaptist theology. Quite frankly, he lives that theology better than most people do, though he's too humble to say that. He left a university faculty position to work with people who, try as they might, couldn't become legal in this country. He walks with them, lives in community with them. **And he's got a story to tell.**

Getting Beyond them and Us—to We. A conference about being faithful to a radical way of life and inviting others to join that life.

Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series - Hesston College - **October 28-30, 2011** - Visit us on the web at <http://hesston.edu/AVDS>

**2. Are you looking for a way to serve while sharing your faith?** Thousands of tourists come to Northern Indiana every year from all around the world. Many of them are looking for hope and peace. Menno-Hof, located in Shipshewana, Indiana, creatively interprets and presents the history and values of the Amish and Mennonites, building on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Since 1988, when Menno-Hof first opened its doors, over 850,000 people have heard stories of God's work in Anabaptist communities. During July 2011, Menno-Hof welcomed visitors from 48 states and 46 different countries! Menno-Hof needs individuals and couples in agreement with Anabaptist values and beliefs to serve as host and/or hostess for a minimum of one month. Current openings are during December 2011-April 2012 and November 2012-January 2013. Responsibilities include conducting tours and some light housekeeping. Two furnished apartments are available on-site. For more information contact Susan Miller, managing director: [260-768-4117](tel:260-768-4117) or [smiller@mennohof.org](mailto:smiller@mennohof.org).

### **3. FROM LAURELVILLE MENNONITE CHURCH CENTER:**

**SPIRITUALITY & AGING RETREAT**—Join Professor Marcus Smucker on October 7-9 at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center during this retreat for people 55 and older. Discover the gifts of this season of life and how to live it well at Aging with Spirit. Visit [Laurelville.org/aging-with-spirit](http://Laurelville.org/aging-with-spirit) or call [724.423.2056](tel:724.423.2056). **GRIEF RETREAT**—Find encouragement for your journey after the death of a spouse during this small, safe gathering at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center

on October 14-16. Pastor and writer Rachel Nafziger Hartzler will explore questions related to losing a spouse. Also, learn more about Rachel's own story in *Life after Losing a Spouse: Discovering God's invitation in the midst of grief*, a free eBook published by Laurelville. The eBook and registration information are available at [Laurelville.org/grief-retreat](http://Laurelville.org/grief-retreat) or by calling [724.423.2056](tel:724.423.2056). **MUSIC & WORSHIP LEADERS RETREAT**—Celebrate 25 years of music, worship and community at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center on January 6-8, 2012. Registration for this popular event is now open but is limited to the first 200 participants. Find out more at [Laurelville.org/mwlr](http://Laurelville.org/mwlr) or by calling [724.423.2056](tel:724.423.2056).

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