

# WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

**September 27, 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.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org) (Conference Life / Publications)*

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## **Clarence's Clarion Call**

### **Formation into Christlikeness**

The goal of following Jesus is to become more and more like Jesus. One of my college professors, Abe Penner, talked about every believer becoming a "little Christ" in the sphere of life God gives you. This is not something we can just do for ourselves. In II Corinthians 3:18 the Apostle Paul ascribes this transformation to the work of the Holy Spirit. "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

The Apostle Peter's transformation into Christlikeness came in a pattern of three steps forward, two steps back. Peter's remarkable confession of Jesus as the Messiah in Matthew 16 was credited as a gift of God's gracious revelation. Peter, however, was imagining a Roman-type conqueror. So when Jesus went on to name his death, Peter immediately objected. Jesus' word to Peter was "Get behind me, Satan." Peter went from star pupil to dunce in the corner.

Somehow Peter kept stumbling forward. The Peter who denied ever knowing Jesus in the passion story was reinstated by Jesus as the spokesperson who in Acts 2 named the cruelty of the religious leaders and boldly announced Jesus as the resurrected Lord of all and the source of salvation. However, the Peter who boldly crossed social/religious barriers and baptized the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10-11) was also the Peter who later refused to eat with Gentiles and had to be reprimanded by Paul

(Galatians 2). But when we come to near the end of Peter's life, we hear the man, who hacked off the servant's ear in violent self-defense, give this instruction, "But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:20-21). Peter's call to suffer evil without even verbal retaliation in 1 Peter seems so Christlike and so unlike Peter.

Scot McKnight speaking at Friends University on September 24 noted that Peter was transformed in encounters with God in the ordinary course of life. McKnight said, "Curiously, the biblical report doesn't mention the practice of spiritual disciplines as being a part of this transformation." McKnight was not discouraging the practice of spiritual disciplines, but calling us to be alert to the God interventions in the ordinary.

We can see something of the Apostle Paul's trajectory into the Christlikeness of Jesus' humility in the New Testament as well. In Galatians 2 the Apostle Paul argues that he is an apostle *equal* to James, Peter and John. In 1 Corinthians 15:9, Paul describes himself as being "*the least of the apostles* and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." In Ephesians 3:7-8, he describes himself as "a servant of the gospel." "Although I am *less than the least of all the Lord's people*, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ." And finally near the end of his life, he confesses, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am *the worst*." What a trajectory over a 25 year period from being equal to the big three to being the worst of sinners! "If God can save me," Paul concludes, "there is hope for anyone."

The Bible calls us to serve like Jesus (John 13:15), to love like Jesus (John 13:34; Ephesians 5:2), to be humble like Jesus (Philippians 2:5-8), to accept others like Jesus (Romans 15:7), to forgive like Jesus (Ephesians 4:32), and to engage enemies like Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-23). How is the Holy Spirit's transformative work unfolding in your life?

### **Prayer Requests**

**Oct 2** – Pray for clarity of mission for congregations currently served by Transitional Pastors: West Zion Mennonite – Moundridge, First Mennonite – Moundridge, Zion Mennonite – Elbing, First Mennonite – Halstead, and Tabor Mennonite – Goessel.

**Oct 9** – Pray God's blessing for Pastor Jerry Acosta who is being installed as the church planter for Manos de Cristo (Hands of Christ) Iglesia Menonita, Wichita, KS. The service will be at 7 pm at Hope Mennonite Church in Wichita.

**Oct 16** – Pray for pastors Katherine and Peter Goerzen, who will be ordained today at 7 pm at the Grace Hill Mennonite Church, rural Newton, KS.

**Oct 23** – Pray for the gathering of the Constituency Leadership Council of Mennonite Church USA meeting in Halifax, PA. Representatives from Western District Conference are Clarence Rempel, Diana Schunn, and Jacob Castro.

**Oct 30** – Pray for the WDC Conference Minister and Staff, located in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, as they seek to sustain transformational pastors, resource healthy missional churches, and nurture Anabaptist church planting partnerships.

### **Coming Events**

Oct. 27 - Advent Planner, Trinity Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, KS

Nov. 19 - WDC Reference Council, "Revitalizing Our Churches," Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, KS

Jan. 21, 2012 - Lent Planner, (location to be determined)

### **Parish Paper**

View the October issue of Parish Paper at [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org) (Conference Life / Publications). The topic is: *"Why Do Smart Churches Make Dumb Decisions?"*

### **WDC Announcements**

1. Advent Planner - Thursday, Oct. 20, 7-9 pm at Trinity Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, KS. Pastors and worship planners - join others in spending an evening together conversing and brainstorming about planning Advent 2011. Please RSVP directly to Marlene Bogard at [mbogard@mennowdc.org](mailto:mbogard@mennowdc.org), [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300). In order to shape the evening, tell me: 1. How many folks will come. 2. What will be most helpful: conversations about preaching? worship leading? visuals? children's features? more?

2. We had an absolutely rootin', tootin' good time! Our Work & Play Camp folks are a hoot to be around and they did an amazing amount of work. There are things at Camp Mennoscah that have never looked so great! (Did you even know there were these funny trays in the stove that pull out to clean? We didn't until our kitchen folks cleaned them. Huh.) Thank you so much to everyone who came out for just a few hours or every minute possible. So much was accomplished and the camp staff is ever-so-a-lot-bunches grateful. We look forward to seeing even more folks next year!

3. Camp Mennoscah's busiest season may be almost over, but please don't put us out of mind! The fall and winter months are the time of year that we're busy scheduling retreats and groups for the upcoming year. This year we're also working on becoming our own non-profit organization, fixing that blasted septic system, and working on the Bluestem house. We're thinking about how much fun we had with everyone this past year and wondering how to get even MORE folks out to visit us. Give us a call, send us

an email, mail a letter--we'd love to hear your thoughts about camp or reserve a few days for you and your family/friends. We can be reached at [campmno@mennowdc.org](mailto:campmno@mennowdc.org) or [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) or PO Box 65, Murdock KS 67111.

4. Attn: WDC Pastors, WDC Board/Commission/Committee/Task Force members, WDC Staff, and WDC persons on MC USA agency boards - you are invited to attend REFERENCE COUNCIL on Saturday, Nov. 19 from 8:30 am - 12 noon (lunch included). Hear from Randy Smith (transitional pastor) about "Revitalizing our Churches". Hear testimonies from congregations experiencing transformation and new growth. Hear updates on what is happening across the Western District Conference. RSVP by Nov. 10 to Nancy Funk, [wdc@mennowdc.org](mailto:wdc@mennowdc.org) or [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300).

### **MC USA Announcements**

1. Attached are the prayer requests from the member schools of Mennonite Schools Council, and the colleges, universities, seminaries and educational programs of Mennonite Church USA for October. MEA also posts these prayer requests on its website. The prayer request for the day is displayed on our home page and the document is available at [www.MennoniteEducation.org/PRAYERS](http://www.MennoniteEducation.org/PRAYERS). **We encourage you to share *Prayers for Faith and Learning* with others.** The document is set up so it can be a bulletin insert or distributed in church mail boxes. Some churches choose specific prayer requests to include in their weekly bulletins. Congregations or individuals who are interested in a free subscription to *Prayers for Faith and Learning* (or other MEA publications) may subscribe online at [www.MennoniteEducation.org/Subscribe](http://www.MennoniteEducation.org/Subscribe). **Thank you for the many ways you support Mennonite education!**

2. **Everence** ([www.everence.com](http://www.everence.com)), a faith-based financial services company, seeks a **Managing Director** to lead its **Central Kansas region**. This person will report to the VP of Sales & Distribution in the Goshen, Indiana office and supervise 11 staff in Hutchinson, Hesston, and North Newton. Successful candidates will have a Bachelor's Degree (Master's preferred), leadership experience in complex organizational settings, strong sales/marketing skills, and values consistent with the beliefs/practices of the Mennonite Church. It's preferred that candidates have deep experience in financial, insurance, and banking services. However, candidates without such experience, but meeting the other criteria, will be seriously considered. Interested candidates should contact Kirk Stiffney with MHS Alliance at [kirk@stiffneygroup.com](mailto:kirk@stiffneygroup.com) or [574-537-8736](tel:574-537-8736).

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