

Three Church Plants Announced at Assembly

Gilberto Flores, Associate Conference Minister, introduced three new church plants being launched in the Western District Conference this year, at the Friday, “The Spirit of WDC” opening session. Metro Mennonite Church was launched in January 2011 in Oklahoma City with Norman Berry serving as the church planting pastor.



Sembradores de Buenas Nuevas was an embryo church in Hutchins, Texas, that contacted Julio Duenas to serve as their pastor. Subsequent work with Conference Minister Flores and Pastor Julio led this group to request affiliation with Western District Conference.

And thirdly, a new Hispanic church plant is underway in Wichita, Kansas, supported by Mennonite Church of the Servant, Hope Mennonite, and Lorraine Avenue Mennonite. Jaime Casares, pastor at Casa Betania, has been meeting for a number of months with a Bible study group in Wichita out of which five new believers have been baptized. Since Assembly, Jerry Acosta, a recent Hesston Pastoral Ministries graduate, has been called to be the church planter.

Conference Minister Clarence Rempel named this challenge in his “The Big Story” address. “We need to plant more Anabaptist churches because the percentage of people without Christ and without a church home in our geographical area is rapidly increasing. The leading edge of God’s redemptive mission is calling people into a transformative relationship with Jesus Christ and then gathering those believers into new communities of faith. There’s a harvest that’s ready, and we need some new bins for new believers. One of our core conference tasks is networking Anabaptist church planting partnerships.”

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WDC News

September 2011

Iglesia Menonita Casa Betania Becomes Member

Three years after being launched as a church plant in Newton, Kansas, Casa Betania officially became a member church of the Western District Conference by action of the Assembly delegate body on Saturday, July 30, 2011. The church was welcomed with a standing ovation as children and adults from the church filled the stage.

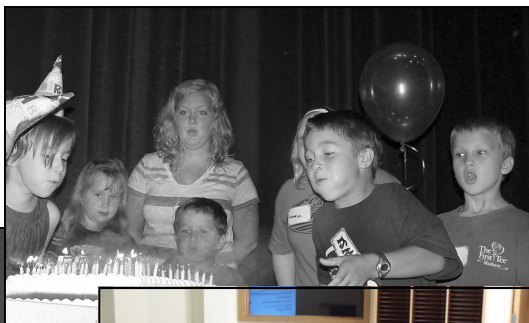
The church of 35 adults and 18 children is currently meeting in a large Sunday School classroom of First Mennonite Church, Newton. They have Bible Study on Wednesday night and Sunday school and worship Sunday morning with a half hour fellowship time in between with cookies and coffee. Pastor Jaime Cazares says, “Primary places to meet new contacts in the community are the Etcetera Shop and garage sales.” In its application for membership Casa Betania stated, “Our primary purpose as a church is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, our Savior.”



A Pastoral Support Group was formed in April 2008 for the church plant. Three churches in Newton have provided the primary financial support for this church plant: First Mennonite, Bethel College Mennonite, and Shalom Mennonite. Financial support was set up on a five-year decreasing basis.

Resource Library Celebrates Birthday

Cake, gifts, balloons, party hats, slide show and sharing! All the ingredients for a fun celebration were present at the 75th birthday celebration of the Conference Resource Library at the WDC Assembly. The next part of our celebration will occur as we feature a Story-Telling space at the Bethel College Fall Fest on October 8. Bring your children, offer to tell a story, buy a specially priced Library tote!



A Banquet of Resources: Learning Tracks



275 folks participated in opportunities to learn, worship, discuss, imagine and serve. Gifted leaders provided direction and facilitation on immigration, service, Anabaptism, welcoming children, spirituality, end-of-life issues, turn-around churches, church planting and the Low German Farmworker program. Now here is **your** assignment: ask the delegates from your church what they experienced at WDC Assembly, and what they learned!



Delegates Act, Write, and Discuss

In addition to receiving Casa Betania as a member church, delegates approved a budget for 2012 of \$600,250, down \$13,000 from 2011. Eleven persons were elected to serve in Western District's governing agencies. Doug Penner will be continuing as Conference moderator for 2012. Bylaw changes were approved, making it possible for Camp Mennoscah to become its own non-profit, 501(c)3 entity in 2012. The impact of Vision 2012 in strengthening our camping ministry, expanding our Resource Library, and increasing our church planting and ministerial resourcing was grandly celebrated. With the capstone project of the Camp Mennoscah swimming pool, \$1.4 million was given in the past five years and is being utilized for kingdom ministries.

After the Leadership Commission explained their course of action in finding a pastor's credentials in order after performing a same-sex covenant service, delegates wrote their responses to five questions which have been compiled into a 31-page document that will go to Western District Conference leadership and Assembly delegates. A heart-felt open mic time followed, guided by Gary Flory from the Kansas Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (KIPCOR). Clarence Rempel, Conference Minister, concluded the business session with a prayer from Philippians 1:9-11 asking God for greater love, greater insight, purity and righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.

Children Welcomed at Banquet

Children of WDC Assembly delegates created table decorations, placemats and special foods as they prepared for their own banquet. A Learning Track on Welcoming Children led by Kathy Wiens offered opportunities to be with children as they learned and played. Saturday night worship featured a special drama presented by the children.

