

# WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

**October 18, 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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### **Lonely?**

This is the time of year when I am often and repeatedly asked whether I am lonely. The summer youth camps are over and groups come only on weekends. Yes, I miss my summer staffers and all the fun folks who come to camp. But I'm not lonely. I like the solitude. I like walking through camp and hearing nothing but the wind and the river and the critters.

We as a society spend so much time inside buildings and away from the wonders of creation that we forget how to BE in creation. Bugs bother us. Noises scare us. The absence of lights makes us uncomfortable.

This is further complicated by the fact that society is completely immersed in technology. Amazing technology that makes our jobs easier and helps us to stay in touch with those far away. However, it also means that we are not building relationships with people or creation. More often we experience others and nature through pictures on flat screens and in abbreviated words and sentences. Many of us are losing the ability to spend any length of time in the company of others without technology and not be bored. I see it with the groups that visit Camp Mennoscah. As soon as people discover the wireless connection, out come the laptops and the fancy cell phones. The decibel level drops significantly as groups switch from talking to each other, playing games, and sharing stories to being glued to a monitor. We tend to orbit in our own little wireless space. Our sense of community is lost.

Camps like Camp Mennoscah are increasingly valuable to our technology-inundated society. Camps provide places for nature to be experienced, relationships with others to grow, and God to be found—all within a "controlled" environment to allow for different needs and comfort levels.

Our family and friends are important enough to put aside the cell phones and computers for a day or two. God's creation is awe-inspiring enough to spend time discovering it. As a community of God, it is worthy to spend time remembering how to be with God in nature and with others.

--*Olivia Bartel, Camp Mennoscah Director*

## **WDC Announcements**

1. Help keep Camp Mennoscah's toilets flushing!—This past week Mike and Olivia were once again fighting with the septic system when the motor on the septic snake sparked prettily then gave off noxious plumes of smoke. We admit that the snake is ancient and likely deserves to rest, but Camp Mennoscah depends on this motorized septic snake gadget. Camp Mennoscah welcomes the donation of a durable, industrial-strength, motorized septic snake in good working condition or a monetary gift for the same. (Never fear! We're making big changes this fall and improving the septic system—but we still need a snake.) Contact us at [campmno@mennowdc.org](mailto:campmno@mennowdc.org) or [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290).
2. Appliance Envy—It sometimes happens that we are struck with appliance envy when we walk past all the freezers and fridges in stores. Camp Mennoscah would absolutely adore another refrigerator for the Retreat Center and another large chest freezer for our kitchen. We're just a phone call away at [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) if you have a bit of spare change for new ones or spare ones to donate.
3. WDC Reference Council - November 19, 8:30 - 12 (lunch included) at Tabor Mennonite Church, rural Newton, KS. Topic: Revitalizing our Churches with Pastor Randy Smith and four testimonies from revitalizing congregations. Reference Council is a gathering of WDC commissions, committees, task forces and pastors. Lay leaders intrigued by the topic are welcome. Please RSVP by November 10 to [wdc@mennowdc.org](mailto:wdc@mennowdc.org) or call [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300).
4. Diamond Celebration gem: Like to read? Want to find a resource for your worship committee? Need to do research on Mennonites and peace? Can't think of ideas for your youth group? Run out of books at home to read to your children or grandchildren? The Western District Conference Resource Library has "answers" to all of your questions! With other 12,000 items, the Resource Library provides current materials for pastors, church leaders and members. Stop by the newly expanded library at 2500 Place in North Newton or scan (and order) materials on-line ([www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org)). Happy 75th birthday to the Resource Library!
5. We invite the prayers of our churches for the Mennonite Church USA Constituency Leaders Council which will hold its fall meeting at Camp Hebron near Halifax, Pennsylvania, Oct. 24-26. This is a group that has been called the elders of the church, bringing together persons from all 21 area conferences, churchwide agencies, denominational staff and constituency groups. Western District Conference is represented by Clarence Rempel, Conference Minister; Diana Schunn, Moderator-Elect;

and Jacob Castro. The theme for this meeting is "Discovering our True Citizenship." Significant time will be spent evaluating the recent convention in Pittsburgh, PA, and doing preliminary planning for the next one scheduled in 2013 in Phoenix. Attention will be given to the Purposeful Plan, including decisions about how best to introduce and implement it at the congregational level throughout the church. An important recurring activity is Dwelling in the Word, which at this meeting will focus on Ephesians 2:14-22.

6. South Central and Western District Conference churches are invited to participate in a Damascus Road Anti-Racism Analysis Training February 16-18, 2012. The training will be held at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas. Early registration is \$200 per person, and \$250 after January 13. Limited scholarships are available. Please call Pastor Sara Dick at Shalom for more information or a brochure: [316-283-7395](tel:316-283-7395).

### **Kansas Announcements**

1. Last Call: Pastors and Worship Planners: Thursday, Oct. 20, 7 pm, Trinity Mennonite Church in Hillsboro, KS. Join others in sharing ideas about the upcoming Advent Worship season using materials from FALL 2011 LEADER. Marlene Bogard, WDC Minister of Christian Formation, will facilitate and Pastor Jeff Wintermote will host us. RSVP to [crlib@mennowdc.org](mailto:crlib@mennowdc.org).

2. RALLY FOR REPEAL OF THE DEATH PENALTY: Jeremy Schroeder, leader of the successful effort to repeal the death penalty in Illinois, is speaking at the Rally for Repeal, 1:15-4 pm, Saturday, Nov. 5, at the Wichita State University Metroplex, 5015 E. 29th Street North, Wichita. The rally is sponsored by the Kansas Coalition Against the Death Penalty which includes the Western District Conference Task Force to End the Death Penalty. The rally is free and workshops and material will be available that are helpful to congregational committees which want to equip others to end capital punishment in the coming legislative session.

A side note: To read Pastor Peter Goerzen's (Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, KS) letter to Kansas Governor Brownback about abolishing the death penalty in 2012, go to: <http://mennowdc.org/conference-life/ministries/task-forces/>. His letter was published in the "Kansas Coalition Against the Death Penalty" Fall 2011 newsletter.

3. All interested women are invited to a Women's Gathering about Leadership and the Church on Thursday, October 27 at First Mennonite Church in Newton (429 E First St.), 7:00 – 8:30 pm, with light refreshments and tea. Join Joanna Shenk of Mennonite Church USA national staff and coordinator of the Women in Leadership project who is interested in hearing about the experiences of women leaders in this area—in pastoral roles, administrative roles or other leadership capacities. Joanna will facilitate discussion around a number of topics concerning women, leadership, and the church. Upon arrival at First Mennonite, please enter through the south (by the playground) or east (gravel parking lot) doors. The gathering will be held in the basement fellowship hall. Please contact Joanna with questions or to RSVP: [joannas@mennoniteusa.org](mailto:joannas@mennoniteusa.org) or [574.226.7297](tel:574.226.7297).

4. The Tabor Church Mennonite Men's Annual Chicken BBQ will take place on Thursday, November 3, 5:00-7:00pm, at Tabor Church, 891 Chisholm Trail, Newton, KS. Come enjoy our special chicken recipe with delicious sides and ice cream bars for dessert.

5. The Sister Care Seminar: Equipping Women for Caring Ministry will take place Nov. 11-12 at Hesston Mennonite Church. The early registration of \$45.00 has been extended through October 31.

6. First Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, KS - 3RD ANNUAL GREAT PUMPKIN RACE OCT 29

- Proceeds to benefit Main Street Ministries, Hillsboro
- Pre Register Post Mark 10/21/2011
- Walk Up Registration Begins 7:30 a.m.
- 5K Fun Run Begins @ 9 a.m.
- Kids Half Mile Begins @ 9:30 a.m.
- Costume Prizes and Race Awards
- Pumpkin Muffins and Goodies following race
- Registration Forms and Details: [www.fmchillsboro.net/2011\\_great\\_pumpkin\\_race](http://www.fmchillsboro.net/2011_great_pumpkin_race);  
email: [fmcpumpkinpatch@yahoo.com](mailto:fmcpumpkinpatch@yahoo.com)

7. First Mennonite Church, McPherson, KS, will have a Quilt Show and 10,000 Villages Sale, followed by a Fish Fry Oct 29. The Quilt Show and 10,000 Villages Sale will be from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. with the Fish Fry from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Come view the beautiful quilts, do some early Christmas shopping and finish the day with a great meal of fish, coleslaw, baked beans 7 cornbread casserole. Dine-in or carry-out available. Cost: donation. Questions - call [620-241-4040](tel:620-241-4040).

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