

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

October 25, 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 (Conference Life / Publications)

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WDC FINANCIAL UPDATE

We are now eight months into the WDC fiscal year. Contributions are very similar to last year, however spending is down by 7%, so that at the end of September the deficit was about \$9,000 less than last year at this time. To date the Vision 2012 campaign has raised \$1,389,012 for the three critical priorities of the conference -- camping ministry, ministerial and congregational leadership and congregational resourcing services. Contributions for the Camp Mennoscah swimming pool project, which is part of the Vision 2012 campaign, totals \$334,000 which is \$53,981 short of the cost of the pool.

--Phyllis Regier, WDC Business Manager

WDC 2012 BUDGET

The Western District 2012 budget was passed by the annual assembly delegates in July. The total 2012 budget is \$600,250. The portion of the WDC budget needed from member congregations is \$498,250.

The WDC 2012 budget includes a big increase for Church Planting – new work. This comes as a result of a commitment by Western District Conference to make church planting a priority. In order to sustain these new churches, supporting groups will need to be found for every new church planted. Also beginning next year the Western District Conference budget does not include a Retreat Commission. Work continues by the Retreat Commission to make Camp Mennoscah a separate organization with the goal of launching the new organization in 2012. Western District Conference will continue to support Camp Mennoscah with a subsidy that is part of the Executive Board expenses and with WDC staff time to help the camp run efficiently.

Contributions from member congregations make the services and programs of Western District Conference possible. If our congregations would contribute \$50 per member or \$100 per attendee, our delegate-adopted budget would be fully funded. We understand

that this is not possible for some congregations; however, we have many congregations that can and do give more as mutual aid for their sister congregations. This mutual aid guarantees that we can provide services to all our congregations and we all benefit from these connections.

---Phyllis Regier, WDC Business Manager

Advent 2012 Ideas

Pastors and Worship Planners - Here is a summary of ideas that were generated and shared at the Advent Planner at Trinity Mennonite, Hillsboro, KS on Oct.

20. NOTE: These all connect to the theme: Awesome Deeds We Do Not Expect as found in the Fall 2011 issue of Leader, by Menno Media.

1. Candle lighting. The order of service in the Leader encourages congregations to "mix-up" the time of lighting the Advent candles as a way to model the unexpectedness of the season. Most of the group felt this would work, as long as it is planned for well....as a holy disturbance.

2. Home Faith Formation. A wonderful tool for at-home worship is available, thanks to our friends at Mennonite Church Canada. Elsie Rempel, Christian Formation Consultant has written a home devotional and activity guide that connects with the Advent materials. It is free at: <http://www.leaderonline.org/supplement.htm> I would also suggest that if you want some alternatives for the children's time, this would be a great place to look.

3. Remember that there are lots of **additional helps** and docs available at www.leaderonline.org/supplement.htm for suggestions for candle-lighting, communion, visuals, and much more.

4. Children's Time: Option 1: Alternatives to what is printed in the Leader: The Surprise Box. When the children come forward for the story, the worship leader announces that she / he has a surprise box for the storyteller. And that the storyteller does not know what is in the box. So it will be a surprise to her / him. The object really can be a surprise, and then the storyteller has to think on her feet rather fast and explain after she opens it how it fits in with the theme / focus statement of the service. The point here is for the children to participate in the anticipation and in the unexpected gift. Obviously, you may alter these ideas. One one would be to make sure the storyteller DOES KNOW what is in the box ahead of time, so they would be able to adequately prepared a bit of a script and make good theological connections for the children. We all agreed that nothing in the surprise box should be: 1. Alive. 2. Dead. :)

5. Children's Time Option 2. Use a book or other images on the theme for each Sunday. Always take time to develop a bit of context for your story or object lesson, either before, or to tie it to theme at end. My suggestions:

Advent 1: Theme: Pay Attention. Use a "hidden picture" book or a Where's Waldo, or something with lots of detail. You can find lots of hidden pictures to download from web. Then you can hand them out to kids. Another idea would be to play Simon Says, or another game where they have to pay attention.

Advent 2: Changing Landscape. Do the examen (spiritual practice) with the kids. Ask them to identify happy times and sad times, or highs and lows (mountains and valleys). Pray together about how God is with us all the time, when we are sad, when we are happy, when we are surprised. Or... a book about saying "I'm sorry," since this Sunday includes a call to repentance. If you want to provide a tactile

experience for the children, provide a large tub with sand, rice or small gravel in it for them to experiment with making valleys and mountains, and making their own changing landscape. Read aloud the scripture from Isaiah 40: 3-4 (in a child-friendly version) as they play and recreate.

Advent 3: Transforming Sorrow. A wonderful children's book is *Harriet and the Garden* by Nancy Carlson. A little dog (child) accidentally smashes a neighbor's prize dahlia and she makes amends by helping plant a new one. Or...any book / story about fixing something that is broke.

Advent 4: Reordering Our World. Show pictures of unexpected things. Like one green apple in a basket of red ones. A fern growing out of a rocky hill. Two favorite books with surprise endings (happy) are *Mrs. Morgan's Lawn* by Barney Saltzberg and *Crazy Hair Day*, also by Saltzberg.

Christmas: Celebrating the Savior. Have a Happy Birthday song, party, snack, clap offering. Another suggestion is that this Sunday the children get a small gift, since all the weeks before the Storyteller may have received one. This might also be good for Epiphany, since that is a gift-giving time too. The children could receive a small mirror. Once they open this up, invite them to breathe on it to symbolize the "first breath" that Jesus took when he was born. Another suggestion: invite children to look in the mirror and smile. This is a gift that they can give to everyone...Their joy, their smile, their presence.

The books suggested are not faith-based and could be found in many public libraries, or Inter-Library Loan. WDC Library has them, but they are hot items!}}

6. Christmas Day Service. Some in our group wondered if indeed they would have a service, since they had just had one the night before; some folks said this is when they would have communion; some folks said of course they would have a service, but it would be simple with stories, and carols. One suggestion was that instead of thinking of Christmas Eve and Christmas morning as two services, they could be designed as one continuous service, so that they flowed better.

*---Marlene Bogard, Conference Resource
Library Director, Minister of Christian Formation*

WDC Announcements

1. 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 or call [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300).

2. Now on display in your Conference Resource Library: Resources for Advent and Christmas. Services, activities, dramas, readings, fiction.

3. First Ever Reading and Coffee Cake Day at the Conference Resource Library. Thursday, November 5. 8am - ? Read, relax, meet friends, and share coffeecake at 10 a.m. Please RSVP to Marlene Bogard: crlib@mennowdc.org or [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300).

4. There is a need in a WDC congregation for Gather Round curriculum ("winter" materials). If your church has extras of these materials, please contact Nancy at the WDC office: wdc@mennowdc.org or call [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300) as soon as possible.

5. First Mennonite Church in Beatrice, Nebraska has approximately 120 copies of "Sing and Rejoice" songbooks to donate. If your church can use these, contact Vicki Frerking at [402-228-2231](tel:402-228-2231)

Kansas Announcements

ReUse It Center, the dream of First Mennonite Church, McPherson, a Christian non-profit ministry that receives donations of and sells surplus new and used building supplies and household goods, will open November 1 at 1060 W Kansas Ave, McPherson, KS. ReUse It Center is a recognized MCC Thrift Shop. Come shop and share the good news. For more info, call [620-242-7008](tel:620-242-7008).

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 November. 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. 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. Thank you for the many ways you support Mennonite education!

2. The fifth Sarasota (Florida) Mennonite Male Voice Festival, with Lloyd Kauffman as director, is being planned for Sunday, February 12, 2012 at Bahia Vista Mennonite Church at 6:00 p.m. Rehearsals will be held at the church on the evenings of January 26, February 2, and February 9 from 7:00-9:00 p.m. An all-day Saturday rehearsal will be held on February 11 from 8:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The final rehearsal is Sunday afternoon, February 12 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. All men who enjoy singing to God's glory are invited to participate in this thrilling event. Any questions, or a request for music and CD in advance, may be addressed to Lynn Miller, [941-724-4057](tel:941-724-4057); or Lloyd Kauffman, [941-379-3390](tel:941-379-3390).

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