

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

November 1, 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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Doug's Clarion Call

(Doug Penner, Moderator of Western District Conference, shared the following meditation at Executive Board on October 1. I commend it to you.)

--Clarence Rempel, Conference Minister

Among the various cross-currents this Western District Conference Executive Board deals with is the desire for closure and completion, the desire to bring things to an end and be done with them so we can move on to other goals and purposes.

Some of that is personal. Remember the old Myers Briggs Personality Inventories that classified people on the basis of four pairs of contrasting styles? The last of those was judging verses perceiving. Some of us are comfortable leaving things open ended, happy to receive more information, while others, the judging types, prefer to tie things up and bless them as done, complete. Count me in that category.

But some of the urging comes from without—from people and congregations who would like to see issues resolved and settled—think back of the conversations at assembly, where folks who stepped up to the mike conveyed, in a variety of ways, their wish just to be done with these vexing issues. Think, as well, of the language of our conference wide and denomination wide assemblies—we provide the opportunity for “resolutions,” collective statements that “resolve” an issue, settling across the gathering of delegates a complicated, troubling issue.

In the midst of all of this, I'm drawn to the biblical messages about patience. The scriptures make many references to patience, to longsuffering, to endurance and steadfastness. It's one of the fruits of the spirit, evidence of submitting oneself to God,

trusting that God is at work in all around us, though most often, we don't understand how.

I especially like some of the images of one of our 16th century Anabaptist forbearers, Pilgrim Marpeck. Marpeck argued for patience and caution in ordering our lives, individually and corporately, and particularly in coming to conclusions about true discipleship. Mennonite scholar Walter Klaassen wrote the following about Marpeck, “. . . Marpeck argues at great length that Christians should not judge in haste. The image he uses is that of the flower and the fruit. Judgment ought not to be made on the basis of the leaves or blossom but left until the fruit appears. That is to say, allowance must be made for growth in Christian discipleship.”

So many Biblical images, including Jesus parables, try to communicate the nature of Christian growth. So often, they tell of planting of seeds in good soil, nurturing and caring for tender plants as they grow, but trusting ultimately in God's faithful, grace-full leading. Remember Paul's words to the Romans, “For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” Christian patience is built on hope.

So in the midst of our continuing deliberations and discernment as a group of individuals called to serve and lead in the Western District, as we consider difficult issues, we might remind ourselves of the virtue of patience, the wisdom of allowing God to work patiently in and through us.

Eternal God, as we scurry about our work, our agendas, our efforts to get things just right, bring us a measure of patience and calm, patience and calm that rests in confidence of a will that transcends our own. Give us energy to stay with it. In the name of Christ, Amen.

Prayer Requests

Nov 6 - Pray for the WDC Texas pastors and lay leaders as they receive training in creating a safe environment for children and youth in their congregations in an upcoming seminar provided by Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian Formation.

Nov 13 – Thank God for the workers of Western District Conference. Pray for God's wisdom and the Spirit's invigoration for the meetings of the Leadership Council, the Executive Board, and the Reference Council around the theme of “Revitalizing our Congregations.”

Nov 20 - Thank God for your pastor(s) and for the spiritual leaders of your congregation. Pray that God will energize them in leading your congregation to the fulfillment of God's missional call.

Nov 27 – Pray that God would open our hearts during this Advent season to new spiritual blessings and new missional initiatives. The Mennonite Church USA Advent theme is “Awesome Deeds We Do Not Expect.”

Coming Events

Nov. 10 (8 am - ?) - WDC Reading Day

Nov. 19 (8:30 am - 12 pm) - WDC Reference Council, Tabor Mennonite Church, rural Newton, KS

Nov. 24-25 - WDC office closed for Thanksgiving holiday

Nov. 27 - First Mennonite Church, Ransom, KS - 125th anniversary

Dec. 23-Jan. 2 - WDC office closed for Christmas and New Years holidays

Jan. 7, 2012 - Out of the Pew (youth event)

Jan. 21, 2012 - Lent 2012 Planner

March 22, 2012 - New Pastor Orientation

March 23, 2012 - Prevention of Clergy Misconduct training

Parish Paper

The November issue of Parish Paper, entitled "Should We Unleash the Power of Congregational Planning?" can be viewed

at: <http://mennowdc.org/resources/publications/parish-paper/>

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.

2. First Ever! Reading and Coffee Cake Day at the WDC Resource Library - Thursday, November 10, 8 am - ? Read, relax, meet friends, and share coffeecake at 10 am Please RSVP to Marlene Bogard: crlib@mennowdc.org or 316-283-6300.

3. All pastors (from Western District and South Central Conferences) are invited to a gathering with Joe and Anna Sawatzky, Mennonite Mission Network workers in South Africa, on Thursday, November 10 from 9 am - 12 pm at Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, KS. Anna and Joe will share experiences in which their beliefs about mission were set in tension amid certain situations that arose within the various church settings in which they work in South Africa. The purpose of the seminar is to stimulate thinking on the core values of mission and how to apply these to the situation of the church in North America/Central Kansas. Anna and Joe work in the area of biblical education for African-Initiated Churches and Pentecostals through Bethany Bible School and in a variety of church settings. They also support the work of the Anabaptist Network in South Africa. Lunch will be provided (catered by Iglesia Menonita Casa Betania). Please RSVP to Kevin Goertzen (keving@mennonitemission.net or 316-281-4385) by Nov. 4.

4. Mark your calendars: 2012 marks the centennial of Mennonite presence in Congo, which will be celebrated with special events in Congo in July 2012. Here in North America, AIMM (Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission) is also sponsoring celebration events in several locations in September 2012. These celebrations will include a visual display, presentations by Congolese and mission representatives, and release of a book

of stories from the church in Congo. In the Newton, KS, area an AIMM/Congo Church Centennial celebration is scheduled for Sunday, September 30, 2012, at First Mennonite Church in Newton in the afternoon/early evening (time still to be determined, including refreshments or a meal). Please note this on your calendar, with further information to follow at a later date. Thank you for planning to join Congolese sisters and brothers in giving thanks for God's work over the past century! – Heidi Regier Kreider, for the local planning committee which also includes Leona Schrag, chair; Jim Juhnke, Don and Naomi Unruh, Anita Kehr, and Sara Regier.

5. WDC churches in Texas are in need of folding chairs and a portable amplifier system for use at youth, women's ministry and pastoral training events. Several of these congregations are new churches or church plants, without resources to host larger multi-church events. Their goal is to rotate events to these smaller congregations. The equipment will also be helpful for camps and summer fellowships. If you or your organization can help with funds for this project please send them to Western District Conference, Texas Church Project. Estimated costs: 50 folding chairs - \$1200; Amplifier system - \$600. For more information: Gilberto Flores (972-293-1603 or gilbertof@mennowdc.org)

6. Coming January 7, 2012 - an exciting opportunity for your high school youth! The Western District/South Central Conference Youth Ministry Committee is organizing Out of the Pew, a day for youth to connect with one another, serve together, and hear about many inspiring Mennonite service opportunities available to youth. More information at: <http://mennowdc.org/conference-life/youth/>

Kansas Announcements

Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS will dedicate the improvements to their church building on Sunday, November 13 (10:30 am - Worship, including a building improvement dedication; 12:00 noon - potluck with German ethnic foods; 1:00-3:00 pm - open house/informal tours)

MC USA Announcements

1. Calling everyone ages 14-22: Are you looking for a fun and meaningful way to serve for a few weeks this summer? Youth Venture locations for 2012 include Bolivia, Botswana, France, Honduras, Alaska, California, Florida and Texas! Learn more at Service.mennonitemission.net or contact Jill Schmidt at Jills@mennonitemission.net. (see attached poster)

2. Seminary announces discounts for online courses and spring class offerings Elkhart, Ind. (AMBS) – Tuition will be cut in half for first-time online students at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in a new arrangement that will begin with spring semester.

To be eligible for the discount, students must be taking their first online course from AMBS and must not be enrolled in any theological education program. The 50 percent discount is for tuition only, but registration and online course application fees will be waived; student service fees will be charged.

Two online courses are offered from AMBS for spring 2011:
Biblical Foundations of Peace and Justice, taught by Mary Schertz, professor of New Testament;

Turnaround Strategies for Churches, taught by Gerald Shenk, sessional instructor.

AMBS teaches courses from an Anabaptist perspective, emphasizing core values of worship, community and mission that integrate evangelism and peacemaking. To learn more and register for a course, visit www.ambs.edu/academics/courses.

3. From Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary -Please join us for these online and face-to-face events:

Webinars

Engaging the Bible in the Congregation

Presenter: Robert J. (Jack) Suderman

Tuesday, November 8, 1:45-3:00 p.m. EST

Get details and register by November 4 at www.ambs.edu/webinars

Identity Crisis in the Pulpit: What is the Preacher's Purpose and Authority?

Presenter: Ryan Ahlgrim

Wednesday, November 16, 2-3:30 p.m. EST

Get details and register by November 12 at www.ambs.edu/webinars

Re-forming Anabaptism: Recent North American Experiments in Discipleship

Presenter: Joanna Shenk

Thursday, December 1, 2-3:30 p.m. EST

Get details and register by November 27 at www.ambs.edu/webinars

Leadership Clinic

Turning Disgust, Demoralization and Depression into Empowerment for Ministry

Presenter: Gregory A. Hinkle

Monday, January 23, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. EST

Get details and register by January 5 at www.ambs.edu/leadershipclinics

Pastors Week 2012

Understanding Revelation for Today

Presenter: Loren L. Johns, with a special session by J. Nelson Kraybill

Monday, January 23, 7 p.m.-Thursday, January 26, 3:30 p.m. EST

Get details and register by January 5 at www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek

Western District Conference

2517 North Main, PO Box 306

North Newton KS 67117

316-283-6300; FAX: 316-283-0620

Email: wdc@mennowdc.org

Website: www.mennowdc.org