

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

November 8, 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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Pick My Brain

by Marlene Bogard, *Minister of Christian Formation*

So did you notice? My new title? I happily claim this recently nuanced descriptor of my job. And yes, our Conference Minister Clarence Rempel endorses it as well. Christian Formation fits better than Christian Nurture. With the change, I feel empowered, I feel enabled, I feel, well...ok...really no different than I did last month. However, language does matter. Perhaps you are aware that Mennonite Church USA has now identified as its first and highest priorities in the Purposeful Plan, Christian Formation: (please see: <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=2%2baoYW2d38Y%3d&tabid=1743>) This first and highest priority commits us to fashion and mold our lives after that of Jesus Christ. As the sent One of God, Jesus sends us into the world.

In the WDC, at least three congregational staff carry Christian Formation as part of their title. At least one congregation has identified what happens after the Sunday morning worship service as Christian Formation. (Previously Sunday School.) I'd like us to think of Christian Formation as the best possible blend of Discipleship, Christian Education and Spiritual Formation for all ages. We are not just talking curriculum and Sunday School here folks, we are wiggling way beyond that to speak of and learn about and embody fully entering into a whole-life engagement with scriptures, faith-talk, Christian community and spiritual practices.

Christian Formation is what I pay attention to...the lens through which I resource library patrons, the framework that I use in selecting books and media for the WDC Library. I am inspired by these verses from Ephesians 4: 12-13 He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist and pastor-teacher to train Christians in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily

with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ (The Message).

This fall I have had conversations with dozens of pastors, teachers and leaders about what is “next in Adult Faith Formation.” Virtually everyone I have talked with agrees on several things: In many cases, we are not effective in what we have been doing in the last 10, 20, 50 years. In most cases, there will be a call for a fairly radical shift in how we understand and do Adult Christian Faith Formation.

Are you ready to take a plunge? Take a risk? Join with others who are imagining new formats, structures and practices? I like what youth ministry guru Mike Yaconelli once said... “Jump First, Fear Later.” Yup, I am a risk taker. Care to join me?

And just in case you are wondering, my other two titles remain unchanged: Resource Library Director, Director of Annual Assembly Planning.

What? No Check It Out?

Well folks, we are thinking through the creation of a monthly Check It Out Newsletter. A month ago, when I posed some questions about how often you use it, and even offered free gifts, I received only 3 responses, and one of them was my husband. So here's the plan for now. Quarterly, I will create a Check It Out, which will be filled with brand new resources. Monthly, I will include my Top Picks. In light of my earlier article on Christian Formation - here they are:

Marlene's Top Picks on Christian Formation:

Forming Faith in Children: **Images of God for Young Children** by Marie-Helene Delval. Eerdmans, 2010. Beautiful book shares a colorful illustration and a brief description of the character of God as a rock, fire, covenant, justice, mercy, savior and more. **Praying in Color: Kids Edition** by Sybil MacBeth. Paraclete, 2009. Introduces the simple way of praying through the use of crayons and markers.

Forming Faith in Youth: **Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens** by Bass and Richter, Upper Room, 2002. **Transforming Prayers: 40 unique experiences for youth ministry** by Jenny Baker. Group, 2004. Each one includes a scripture, overview, ideas for additional visuals and creating the setting.

Forming Faith in Families: **The Gather 'Round TalkAbout**, published quarterly and really cool! Multiple ways to keep households talking about their faith and life. Order from MennoMedia.org.

Forming Faith in Adults: **A Faithful Future: teaching and learning for discipleship** by Carol Krau. Discipleship Resources, 1999. **Reframing Spiritual Formation: discipleship in an unchurched culture** by Edward Hammett, Smyth & Helwys, 2002.

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. Serving up warm Coffee Cake to all who attend our first ever Reading Day at the Conference Resource Library. Thursday, November 5. An RSVP would be just grand. crlib@mennowdc.org, [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300).
3. BIG BIBLE NEWS! WDC is the very happy recipient of a \$9500 grant from the Schowalter Foundation to create a Year of the Bible. Marlene Bogard is keeping her ears and eyes open for how this might unfold in the coming year or two. We are blessed and oh so grateful for the opportunities to create learning options, seminars, resource lists and idea sharing all about the Bible, God's Word! Thanks be to God!
4. 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](tel:316-281-4385)) **immediately**.
5. Circle the date now! A Lent Planner will be held on Saturday, January 21, 2012 from 8:45-11:00 a.m. at First Mennonite Church, Newton. People from Kansas make up the Lent 2012 planning group, and they will be introducing and sharing resources on January 21. Pastors, worship planners and music leaders will be inspired and benefit. You will need to bring your own copy of Leader magazine with the Lent 2012 resources.

Kansas Announcements

1. Steve Wiebe-Johnson of Mennonite Mission Network (MMN) will lead Sunday School time and preach in worship time at First Mennonite Church in Hillsboro, this Sunday, November 13. Steve is Africa Director for MMN following service with his wife, Dorothy, in Liberia, Ghana, Benin and Ivory Coast. Ron Moyo of the Hesston Pastoral Ministries program, along with his family, are contributing music. A meal will follow, featuring cakes decorated in an African theme! All are welcome.

Mennonite Church USA Announcements

1. The Gather 'Round curriculum, produced by MennoMedia and Brethren Press, is accepting applications to write for Preschool, Primary, Middler, Multiage, Junior Youth, or Youth age groups for 2013-14. Writers produce well-written, age-appropriate, and engaging material for teacher's guides, student books, and resource packs. All writers will attend an orientation March 19-23, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois. See Job Opportunities at www.gatherround.org. Application deadline: January 9, 2012.
2. Eastern Mennonite University is offering a two-credit graduate-level online restorative justice course with Howard Zehr, which runs Feb. 1-April 25. This course is for those who have some background in restorative justice and want to explore this area further. If you have questions, please go to <http://emu.edu/cjp/restorative-justice/online-course/> or contact Janelle Myers-Benner at bennerj@emu.edu.
3. The Summer Peacebuilding Institute at Eastern Mennonite University is now accepting applications. SPI offers four sessions with five courses running concurrently, and courses can be taken for professional skills training or master's level academic credit. This year's classes include Faith-Based Peacebuilding, Leadership for Healthy Organizations, Mediation Skills, Designing Restorative Approaches to Complex Crime and Violation, and more. For additional information or to register, please go to www.emu.edu/spi or call [540-432-4295](tel:540-432-4295).
4. Music & Worship Leaders Retreat—Celebrate 25 years of music, worship and community at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center on January 6-8, 2012. Per congregation registration limits are lifted beginning December 1. Find out more at Laurelville.org/mwlr or by calling [724.423.2056](tel:724.423.2056).
5. Mennonite Women's retreat—Join the conversation with women across the Mennonite Church at Women in Conversation at one of two (or both!) biennial retreats sponsored by Mennonite Women USA and Laurelville Mennonite Church Center. Meghan Good, pastor at Albany Mennonite Church (Albany, OR), will serve as keynote speaker April 13-15 at Laurelville (Mt. Pleasant, PA) and April 27-29 at Cross Wind (Hesston, KS). To register or for more information, visit Laurelville.org/women-in-conversation or call [724.423.2056](tel:724.423.2056).
6. Work at Laurelville—Laurelville Mennonite Church Center is searching for a maintenance technician. Qualified applicants will have prior experience with general repairs and maintenance tasks. Responsibilities include supervising volunteer projects and working with skilled contractors. Plumbing, electrical and carpentry skills a plus. This is a full-time, year-round position with some weekend hours. To apply, visit laurelville.org/jobs or call [724.423.2056](tel:724.423.2056).

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