

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

November 29, 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)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- *Clarence's Clarion Call
- *Prayer Requests
- *Coming Events
- *Parish Paper
- *Announcements

Clarence's Clarion Call

by Clarence Rempel, WDC Conference Minister

"What if we woke up this morning with only the things we thanked God for yesterday?" This encouragement to greater gratitude came in a letter from a friend yesterday as the last of the Thanksgiving leftovers were being harvested from the refrigerator. I am deeply grateful for the joy of family, the abundance of delicious food, and the warmth of home.

As I move from Thanksgiving to Advent I am reflecting on God's gracious persistence in restoring creation to its God-infused goodness. Adam and Eve sought to transcend their human assignment of stewarding the beauty and productivity of God's creation by assuming only God's prerogatives and disobeying God's instruction. We as their descendants have followed suit through the ages.

But God intervened by calling Abraham and Sarah into covenant relationship with God's self and giving them the assignment of bringing God's salvation blessing to all peoples on earth (Genesis 12:1-3). They and their descendants could only dimly imagine the reach of God's love and mercy. They wavered between faith in God and the foolishness of human foibles.

But God would not give up and rescued the Israelites from the social and spiritual slavery of Egypt to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" that would bring God's redemptive blessing to the whole world (Exodus 19:3-6). The people of Israel committed to God's plan and yet found themselves trying to create their own security and safety by asking for a king. God granted them kings but never gave up on that

greater restorative vision of serving as their one and only king. Through the prophets God promised that he would gather his scattered, often battered sheep. "I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice" (Ezekiel 34:16).

God continued his persevering pursuit by sending Jesus as the good shepherd king whose kingdom would never end (Luke 1:29-33). Some followed, but others again refused to receive God's saving word and killed God's Messiah king who had come to fulfill all the restorative salvation dreams of the Old Testament. God would not be thwarted. He raised Jesus to life, defeated evil and death, and installed Jesus as Messiah and Lord who would rule with justice and righteousness forever (Acts 2:32-33).

Followers of this Jesus were declared to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9-10). By the power of the Holy Spirit they would carry the good news of God's salvation "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In the first step the Apostle Peter brought the good news of salvation to the Gentile Cornelius. From Palestine the gospel moved to Rome, on to Europe, through the Anabaptist movement to the Ukraine, from there to the United States, and in due time it came to this farm kid living in Henderson, Nebraska.

I am so grateful for God's persistent pursuit of all the lost sheep of the world. I am so grateful for Jesus' saving actions and redeeming words. I am so thankful for Peter's obedient crossing of human-made barriers. I am so grateful for the faithful witnesses through the centuries. I am so thankful that "the good news of great joy" was passed on to me. The Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed me from the guilt and addictions of sin, called me as son and even friend, given me a community of mission, assigned me as a co-worker of God's restoring, reconciling and redeeming work, and is preparing an eternal home for me.

Praise be to God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3)!

Prayer Requests

Dec. 4 – Pray for the quarterly fellowship of Oklahoma pastors meeting in Turpin, OK tomorrow hosted by Pastor Terry Rediger.

Dec. 11 – Pray for First Mennonite Church, Clinton, OK as they host a community appreciation and farewell for Pastor Dave Gerbrandt today.

Dec. 18 – Pray for the Immigration Task Force as they seek to help congregations grow in understanding of the immigration dilemma and develop resources and initiatives for a Christlike response.

Dec. 25 – Praise God for the gift of his Son our Savior, Jesus. Pray for boldness in joining the shepherds in spreading the word of God's salvation mercy and kingdom peace.

Coming Events

Dec. 23-Jan. 2, 2012 - WDC office closed for Christmas & New Year's break
Jan. 7 - Out of the Pew, Journey at Yoder, KS
Jan. 21 - Lent Planner, First Mennonite Church, Newton, KS
Jan. 27-30 - WDC Ski Retreat, Copper Mountain, Colorado
Feb. 11-12 - Missional Church Seminar, Moundridge, KS
Feb. 16-18 - Damascus Road training, Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, KS
Mar. 22 - New Pastor Orientation
Mar. 23 - Clergy Misconduct Prevention training
April 26 - Summer Worship Planner, Newton, KS area

Parish Paper

The December issue of Parish Paper entitled "How Do We Successfully Launch a New Project" can be viewed at: <http://mennowdc.org/resources/publications/>.

WDC Announcements

1. Want to plant the seed of Christ's call to do service as a lifestyle? Bring your youth group to Out of the Pew on January 7, 2012 at Journey at Yoder. Your group will do hands on service with the Hutchinson MVS unit, connect with service agencies, worship together with a Christian rock band and have great fellowship and fun! And all this with lunch for only \$10. More information and a great poster by Jesse B at: <http://mennowdc.org/conference-life/youth/> Registration deadline is December 12!
2. Youth In Your Church -- The Camp Mennoscah Retreat Commission is collecting information from churches on the number and ages of the children and youth in constituent churches. This information will help us better plan our future summer youth camps and programming. Please reply to this email with the current ages and number of children and youth in your congregation. Thank you for helping us make our programming better!
3. The Western District Conference Ski Retreat is just around the corner! The trip leaves on Friday evening, January 27, and returns Tuesday morning, January 30. We will again be skiing at Copper Mountain ski area in Colorado. The cost of the trip includes sleeper bus transportation from North Newton, two nights lodging, ski rental, and lift tickets for three days of skiing. Costs have actually gone down a little, and we are working hard to make this more family friendly. Adult package costs \$480, 13-17 year-olds cost \$440, and 12 and under cost \$330. We offer discounts if you prefer to drive in on your own and if you own your own equipment. This is a first come/first served event, so please respond promptly by calling or emailing your reservation to the WDC office ([316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300) or wdc@mennowdc.org). And it makes a great Christmas gift, too! (Please run this announcement in your bulletins for the next two Sundays.)
4. Camp Mennoscah Gathering--All late-night donut junkies who are fans of Camp Mennoscah are invited to a gathering of Camp Mennoscah folks on December 2nd

beginning at 11pm at Druber's Donut Shop in Newton, KS. The first 40 people to arrive wearing a Camp Mennoscah tee shirt get a coupon for a free donut! (Be prepared to pay sales tax and any amount over the coupon amount.) Outgrown your last Camp Mennoscah tee shirt or worn it to shreds? No problem--make your own tee shirt! Use duct tape and a marker or whatever you choose. Best homemade Camp Mennoscah tee shirt/tee shirt design wins a prize!

Kansas Announcements

1. Alan Stucky will be ordained at Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, (1020 E 14th (Hwy 160), Harper, KS) on December 4, at 3:30 pm, with a meal to follow at 5.

2. NIGHT IN THE BARN, the annual living nativity event by the youth of Tabor Mennonite Church, is Dec. 17-18, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. on the farm of Maynard Knepp and Carol Duerksen. This year's program will feature the story of Joseph and will include original music by Doug Krehbiel and script by Carol Duerksen. The menagerie of animals will be hanging out in the barn, and hot drinks will be available to enjoy around the bonfire. This event is by donation and a fundraiser for the youth group. Directions from Goessel: 3 miles north on hiway 15, 4 miles east on 150th, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north on Falcon. Directions from Hillsboro: 4 miles south on Indigo, 3 miles west on 150th, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north on Falcon. Call [620-367-8432](tel:620-367-8432) or [620-386-0709](tel:620-386-0709) if you have questions.

Mennonite Church 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 December. 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. Gathering for New Pastors at AMBS: January 22-23 and 26, 2012 (This gathering is built around AMBS Pastors Week so that participants can attend both.) Pastors in their first years of ministry face many questions: Is this church and community a good fit for me? How do I best minister in this context? How do I navigate the unspoken and spoken expectations? Is pastoral ministry truly my calling? In this clinic pastors in their first three to four years of ministry can talk with each other and with leaders from Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA about these and other experiences common to new pastors. Facilitators: Nancy Kauffmann, Denominational Minister, Mennonite Church USA; Karen Martens Zimmerly, Director of Leadership Development, Mennonite Church Canada.

Session 1: Sunday, 6 p.m. Dinner and first session
Session 2: Monday, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Session 3: Thursday, noon, Lunch and wrap-up

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

3. Pastors Week 2012 at AMBS: 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

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