

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

December 6, 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

Twilight, Harry and Mary: Forming Faith?

by Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian Formation

'Tis the Season to....understand, imagine and claim the incarnation! What does it mean to have God With Us? Today, nearing the end of 2011? How do we interpret the Gospel in light of current events and popular culture? Are we truly able to read our Bible in one hand and the newspaper (or I-Pod) in the other as Karl Barth once encouraged? In what way does our participation in the culture around us inform the way we live our Christian lives? Or...in what way does our belief in an Incarnational God who comes in the form of a barn-birthed baby shape our daily choices? A member of my family stood in line to gain primo seating at the premier of the new Twilight movie. Another shopped till she dropped at 2 am on Black Friday. There are dozens of young adult Mennonites who know more about Harry Potter than of John the Baptist, or Lydia or Stephen. Anxieties can run high on Sunday noon if church is not dismissed in time for football kickoff. Young children get a bigger kick out of hearing dad read Dr. Seuss's Fox in Sox than Jesus' Parable of the Sower. Mary's Magnificat is still portrayed as marginal in many Christmas re-enactments.

And this is how we find ourselves at the dawn of 2012: Tongue twisters rank higher than the Gospel? Sports trump Christmas Carols? Fantastical vampires and wolves permeate our imaginations? (Yes, I did read Twilight). Shopping and consumerism prevail over sleep and family time? (Or maybe shopping IS family time).

My TOP PICKS this month offer you some options for study - both personal and group. Pastors may find some food for thought as well. No...these specific titles are not about Advent or Christmas. But they are about discerning what kind of people we become as we accept God's gift to us in Jesus, and as we attempt to live an

incarnational life. After all, God is with us, as we read, as we talk, as we view, as we shop, and as we fantasize!

Marlene's Top Picks for studying about The Gospel and Popular Culture

The gospel according to Twilight : women, sex, and God / Elaine A. Heath.

Westminster John Knox Press, c2011.

Includes guide for reflection and discussion, notes and index. Chapters include themes of family, singleness, salvation, power, reconciliation.

The Gospel According to Harry Potter : spirituality in the stories of the world's most famous seeker / Connie Neal. Westminster John Knox Press, c2002

Explores the Potter world of magic and mystery and enumerates more than 50 themes that can be seen as glimmers of the Christian gospel.

The Gospel According to the Earth : why the Good Book is a green book / J.

Matthew Sleeth. HarperOne, 2010.

Retells the Bible's most familiar stories in ways that will stimulate your imagination, soften your heart and challenge you to think more deeply about caring for creation.

The Gospel According to Mary : a New Testament for women / Miriam Therese Winter. Orbis, 2008

This book responds to the question, if one of the gospels were written by a woman, what would it be like?

The Gospel according to Dr. Seuss : snitches, sneeches, and other creachas. Judson Press, c2004.

A close look at Dr. Seuss's stories reveal that they are inspirational and laden with spiritual truth. Each reflection begins with insights from a biblical passage and features lines drawn from the original Dr. Seuss book.

The gospel According to the Beatles / Steve Turner. Westminster John Knox, c2006.

An in-depth look at the development of the group's philosophy and how it affected their music, lives and audience. Distills the message of love, peace, freedom and transcendence that was at the heart of their gospel.

The gospel according to Lost. Chris Seay. Nelson, c2009

Explores the elements of faith, life, history, hope, and multiple biblical metaphors as they were depicted in the television show Lost.

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WDC Announcements

1. (Pastors, please forward this announcement to your youth sponsors): This ain't yer grandpa's gathering! Everyone's going! Nine out of ten youth pastors recommend it! OK - but to be fair, youth groups and rock music weren't invented in grandpa's time, we don't know who "everybody" is, and we bribed the 9 youth pastors with peanut butter pie. But we hope you will still come to Out of the Pew on January 7, 2012 at Journey at Yoder. Your youth will work in the trenches with the Hutchinson MVS unit, connect with Mennonite service agencies, worship together with a Christian rock band, be part of a goofy talk show, hear an awesome speaker and have great fellowship and fun! Not bad for 10 bucks. More information at: www.mennowdc.org/conference-life/youth/. Registration deadline is December 12!

2. Please send us information about 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 (wdc@mennowdc.org) with the current ages and number of children and youth in your congregation. Thank you for helping us make our programming better!

3. Note to Church Offices - WDC is gathering information on membership and worship attendance trends. Would you please help us by answering this question: For the two years of 2000 and 2010 - what was your church membership number and your average church worship attendance number? Please email us: wdc@mennowdc.org or call [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300) before December 31. THANK YOU!

4. Bethel College Women's Association Announces Limerick Contest

*A new Bethel book needs some text.
About this we were quite perplexed,
But got quite excited
When soon we decided
A contest is what would come next.*

*An alphabet book 'bout BC
(A rhyme for each letter, you see).
If your limerick's chosen
Amongst those proposin'
We know you'll be dancing with glee!*

*If you fancy you're good with a rhyme,
This contest has come just in time.
It's your time for fame,
So join in this game
Through text for a book most sublime.*

With this limerick, the Bethel College Women's Association launches the first phase of the production of "A BC ABC Book." In the book, each letter of the alphabet will describe an aspect of Bethel College (Kansas) with a limerick. Aspiring writers who have knowledge of and/or association with Bethel College are invited to submit limericks. Participants may submit as many limericks as they like. Submissions must be postmarked on or before January 15, 2012. They can be mailed to Bethel College Women's Association at BCWA, 300 East 27th Street, North Newton, KS 67117; or they can be submitted online on or before January 15 at www.bethelks.edu/bc/affiliateorganizations/bcwa/limerick/. Limericks submitted by mail must include name, address, relationship to Bethel College, and the statement, "I accept that submitted limericks become the property of Bethel College Women's Association," along with signature and the date. A committee of the Bethel College Women's Association will judge the limericks. Contest winners will be immortalized as published authors and will receive a copy of the book. Questions can be directed to Susan Bartel ([316-283-5632](tel:316-283-5632), asbartel@cox.net) or Berneil Rupp Mueller ([316-283-1663](tel:316-283-1663), tabco@cox.net).

Oklahoma Announcements

1. All are invited to a farewell reception for Pastor Dave and Marilyn Gerbrandt on Dec. 11 from 2-4 p.m. at First Mennonite Church in Clinton, OK, where he has served for more than 11 years. He is retiring from active pastoral ministry on December 25. He has also pastored Mennonite churches in Amarillo, Texas and Shafter, California. Dave will continue serving as WDC Associate Conference Minister on a part-time basis.
2. Charlotte Kroeker will give a concert on the new grand piano at Grace Mennonite Church, Enid, OK on Dec. 11 at 3 p.m. The concert will be followed by a light lunch and she will talk about her new book on Church Music at 5:30 p.m.
3. The MCC meat canner will be at the Hydro Retreat Grounds on December 12-13 to can turkey.
4. A Winter Retreat for Jr. and Sr. High students will be held at the Hydro Retreat Grounds on December 29-January 1. Contact Paula or Lawrence Sawatzky if interested: [580-323-2050](tel:580-323-2050), [580-515-1652](tel:580-515-1652), [580-445-8511](tel:580-445-8511).

MC USA Announcements

Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Partners in China seek a teacher/administrator for the English-language program of the Nanjing Theological Seminary, beginning in Fall 2012. A B.A. in English or an education-related field is required; an MA degree in ESL or education is preferred. Several years of English-language teaching experience, preferably in China or a similar overseas location, are required. The candidate should possess experience in arranging curriculum, testing, lesson planning and preparation and overall administration of a language teaching program. Some theological training or a background in theological studies is preferred.

Must have genuine interest in and sensitivity to Chinese students and colleagues. Please contact Sharon Norton at SharonN@Mennonitemission.net for more information or apply on our website www.MennoniteMission.net.

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