

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

January 31, 2012

*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

Meeting Jesus Again

I began the New Year with a new engagement with Jesus. It began with a reading of the Gospel of Matthew. One of my goals for 2012 is reading through the New Testament and Matthew seemed like the place to start.

This Gospel has a strong Jewish flavor with an abundance of quotations from the Old Testament often introduced by, "This was to fulfill what was written." So I was again surprised by all the references to God's global redeeming mission that reaches to non-Jews and includes the Gentiles. It begins in chapter one with four Gentile women being named in Jesus' genealogy to Jesus' manifesto in the last chapter, "Make disciples of all nations or all ethnic groups." Jesus is the Messiah for all peoples. And guess what? Gentiles, Magi from Persia, are the first worshipers of the newly born Messiah (2:11). Given the typical Jewish perception of Gentiles as being outside the rule of God, it is amazing that this story was included in a book by a Jewish author written for a substantially Jewish audience.

Later, Jesus began his ministry in "Galilee of the Gentiles" (4:16). Jesus named a Roman centurion as the greatest example of faith and announced that non-Jews will be coming from the east and the west to enter into God's advancing rule (8:10-11). The next person of "great faith" is a Canaanite woman who pleads for the healing of her daughter (15:28). That is followed up by the feeding of the 4,000 in Gentile territory

making it clear that Gentiles are also invited to the banquet feast of the kingdom just like the 5,000 earlier.

All of this is too familiar. We can hardly imagine the surprise of these events and statements to Jesus' traveling companions or to the first readers of the Gospel. It might also surprise contemporary readers who have acquiesced to the conventional dogma that any way to God will do. The Gospel boldly asserts that the resurrected Jesus is Lord of all the religious and civil powers in the world. Jesus claims, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." And that is why it is necessary to make disciples of all ethnic groups in the world so that people might experience the goodness of God's rule on earth as it is in heaven. We can already live in the righteous goodness of the Sermon on the Mount. "Forgive your brother or sister. Keep your covenants. Tell the truth. Love your enemies." It is an easy way to live. This way of living is possible when we are connected with Jesus.

Jesus gives us this invitation for 2012 and the rest of our lives. "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (Matthew 11:28-29 The Message).

It's been good to start the year with Jesus!

Prayer Requests

Feb 5 – Pray for a fuller heart and a greater mission for the participants in the February 11 seminar, "Maintenance to Missional: Looking Back So We Can Move Forward." Pray for a fullness of the Spirit for the presenters Wilbert Shenk, Conrad Kanagy, and Gilberto Flores.

Feb 12 – Pray for Justin Osborn, the newly licensed and commissioned Youth Pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, KS.

Feb 19 – Pray that God would continue to call out pastors and teachers from within our congregations. Pray for Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary – Great Plains in their role in calling and training future pastors.

Feb 26 – Pray God's wisdom and grace for the pastors of Western District Conference. Pray for the Pastor's Day Apart on March 1 regarding "The Pastor's Role in Difficult Discussions."

Coming Events

Feb. 11 - Agri-Urban Banquet, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS
Feb. 11-12 - Missional Church Seminar, Moundridge, KS
Feb. 16-18 - Damascus Road Anti Racism Analysis Training, Shalom Mennonite Church
Mar. 1 - Pastors' Day Apart, Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS
Mar. 14 - Spring Supper, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS
Mar. 15-17 - WDC Basketball Tournament, Bethel College, North Newton, KS
Mar. 22 - New Pastor Orientation, WDC Office
Mar. 23 - Prevention of Clergy Misconduct Training, Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS
Apr. 26 - Summer Worship Planner, Newton, KS area
July 6-8 - WDC Annual Assembly, Oklahoma City, OK

Parish Paper

The February issue of Parish Paper entitled "How To Manage Change Resistance" can be viewed at: <http://mennowdc.org/resources/publications/parish-paper/>.

WDC Announcements

1. Calling all Pastors! On Friday, March 23, WDC will provide training called "Prevention of Clergy Misconduct" with Minister of Christian Formation Marlene Bogard. It will be held in the fellowship hall of the Bethel College Mennonite Church from 8:15 am - 5 pm. This 8-hour experience is designed to help pastors become aware of the risks that need to be managed as they lead and minister from a position of power. Other topics such as safe touch, monitoring social networking and internet behavior, and good self-care will be covered and a variety of resources will be offered. Perhaps you have had the training, but it has been a while, or in another setting. Marlene suggests that if it has been five years or more, you consider attending. There will ample time for conversation, questions and food. Cost is \$50 for Western District Pastors and \$75 for South Central Conference Pastors. Registration Deadline is March 15. Please use the attached document as the main information piece. It is also available at: www.mennowdc.org - Upcoming Events.
2. Pastors and church leaders, please register by February 3, for "Maintenance to Missional: Looking Back So We Can Move Forward" on Saturday, February 11, 9:00 AM - 3:30 PM, planned and hosted by the three Mennonite churches of Moundridge, KS and by Western District Conference. Presenters are Wilbert Shenk, Conrad Kanagy, and Gilberto Flores. Cost: \$25/person or \$75 per church for as many as can come. See www.mennowdc.org - Upcoming Events for information and registration.
3. "The Pastor's Role in Difficult Discussions in the Congregation" is the theme for Pastors' Day Apart on March 1, 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS. More information and registration is attached and also at www.mennowdc.org - Upcoming Events.

4. First Mennonite Church, Beatrice, NE has about 120 Sing and Rejoice books to donate to a church plant or mission church if they could use them. Please contact us at [402-228-2231](tel:402-228-2231) or fmcbearice@hotmail.com.

5. Last summer WDC delegates voted to form a separate non-profit organization for our church camp - Camp Mennoscah. This change will enable both the Camp and WDC to focus more intentionally on their missions. The Executive Board of WDC and the Camp Mennoscah Retreat Commission have drawn up a memo of understanding that will ensure that the organizations will continue to work with and serve each other. The mission of Camp Mennoscah will stay the same and the primary constituency and board representation will come from WDC churches. The Camp Mennoscah Association will be responsible for their own finances and fund raising. In order to continue programming, Camp Mennoscah will need the intentional and ongoing financial support from churches and individuals in WDC churches. Please consider adding Camp Mennoscah to your church budget and to your individual giving plan. THANK YOU!

6. The summer is coming quickly, and Camp Mennoscah is looking for enthusiastic college students to serve as Summer Staff. Recruiting will take place at Hesston College (Feb 6-7), Bethel College (Feb 8), & Tabor College (Feb 9). Stop by to tell Olivia hello, and find out more about spending a summer at Camp Mennoscah.

7. Look What's New! A web-based Conference Resource Library Catalog! Find it at: <http://mennowdc.booksys.net/opac/crl/index.html?mode=start#menuHome> Or go to Western District Conference's website: <http://mennowdc.org/library/catalog/>, and click on the Online Library Catalog.

It's full of patron-friendly features that will serve our congregations better than ever. Open up each tab, click on the red links, explore! If you are a registered library patron, you may now interact with your own Library Record.

First, you need your PIN. It is the number on your yellow library card. Don't have one? Left it in the laundry? Cat ate it? No worries – we can look up your PIN for you. Once you Log on with your PIN in BOTH spaces, you may review which items you have checked out, when they are due, renew them, or make reserves. You can also fill a “book bag” with items you may want to check out in the future.

If you are not a registered library patron, call, email or stop in to make those arrangements. We offer FREE library cards to regular attenders of Mennonite congregations in Western District Conference, Central Plains Mennonite Conference and South Central Mennonite Conference. If you would like a card, but are not a member of one of these churches, a small annual fee of \$25 / person and \$40 / family will be charged. Congregations can become members by paying a \$1/per attendee/per year fee.

This Library software upgrade was funded by Vision 2012 funds, and approved by the WDC Resource Commission. Questions may be directed to Marlene Bogard, Library Director, [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300), crlib@mennowdc.org.

8. Do you have us "linked?" We are delighted that we are important in the lives of your congregation and want to do whatever we can to improve quick, streamlined communication. One way of doing that is by making sure the all links are current. If you have links to Western District Conference Home page - it should be linked to www.mennowdc.org. If you want a link directly to the Conference Resource Library catalog - you will need to use this NEW link: <http://mennowdc.booksys.net/opac/crl/index.html?mode=start#menuHome> Please note that this link is NEW as of Jan. 25, 2012. The old link will not work and will result in frustrated parishioners, and let's have none of that. Please do your part in reducing world-wide frustration by updating your links to this important site TODAY. thanks, Marlene Bogard

9. A WDC Basketball Tournament is being planned for March 15-17 at Bethel College in North Newton, KS. (There will NOT be a volleyball tournament due to lack of interest.) Information and registrations forms are attached to this E-Memo, as well as accessible on WDC's website: www.mennowdc.org - Upcoming Events. (Note to Church Offices - please route this information to the appropriate persons in your congregations. Thank you.)

Kansas Announcements

1. Please bring or send Boxtops and Labels for Hopi Mission School to the WDC office in North Newton, or Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston, by Friday, Feb. 10.

2. You are invited to a Verenike supper on February 18, from 4:30 - 7:00 p.m. at the First Mennonite Church in Halstead, KS (427 West 4th). Cost by donation: proceeds support the high school youth group service trip to the Hopi Mission School in Arizona.

3. 4 bedroom (2.5 bath) house for rent May-July 2012, in Wichita. Price negotiable. Email thiessen528@gmail.com for details.(Mike & Kellie Thiessen, from Lorraine Ave. Mennonite Church)

4. Michelle Hershberger will be the guest speaker at the Women's Spring Supper March 15 at 6:00 p.m. at the Eden Mennonite Church. Hershberger is a well-known speaker and professor at Hesston College. Due to limited seating, reservations are due March 5 to Marge Gundy [620-463-3991](tel:620-463-3991).

5. Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston is planning to begin a Saturday evening worship service on Feb. 18. A core group of 6 or 7 couples from Whitestone has been meeting for several months to plan this service targeted to reach persons not now involved in any church. A half-time position for a Minister of Outreach and Discipleship has been approved by the congregation to provide primary leadership to the new group. Anyone reading this who has interest in being considered for the position can

obtain a Job Description from the church office: phone [620-327-4123](tel:620-327-4123), or email whitestone@whitestonemc.com.

6. Pastors: We look forward to hearing from you with regard to the invitation you received several weeks ago for the Church Vocations Banquet, February 26 at 6 pm at KIPCOR (2515 College Ave., North Newton, KS). This is your opportunity to encourage lay people interested in ministry to explore their discernment and call as well as learn about seminary study with Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary--Great Plains Extension in North Newton, KS. Please make reservations for you and your guests by February 17. Email Elizabeth Raid: eraid@ambs.edu or call Nancy Funk at [316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300).

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 February. 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. Happy birthday, Mennonite Church USA! On Feb. 1, 2012, our denomination turned 10 years old. We invite you to join us in celebrating this milestone and giving thanks for the countless amazing ways that God's Spirit has been at work among us in this last decade—in our lives and relationships, in our congregations and communities, in our agencies and organizations. May God bless each of our congregations and strengthen us all in our efforts to live out our denominational vision: God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

—Mennonite Church USA national staff

3. Women in Conversation—Join the conversation with other Mennonite women across the country at one of two biennial retreats (April 13-15 in Mt. Pleasant, Pa.; April 27-29 in Hesston, Ks.) jointly sponsored by Mennonite Women USA and Laurelville Mennonite Church Center. Pastor Meghan Good (Albany Mennonite Church, Albany, OR) will serve as guest speaker, and the weekends will also feature time for worship, workshops, fellowship and rest. Visit laurelville.org/women-in-conversation or call [800.839.1021](tel:800.839.1021) to register or to learn more about these extraordinary retreats.

4. Great Whitewater Connection—Find out what over 200 youth experienced before and after the Mennonite Church USA convention last summer. Designed to connect

youth across the Mennonite church, this whitewater rafting retreat is still available for an incredible \$50/person. This year's event (July 6-8 at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa.) will feature speaker Kent Miller and worship leader Jeremy Kempf. Due to its popularity, the Great Whitewater Connection fills up fast; reserve your places today at Laurelville.org/whitewater or by calling [800.839.1021](tel:800.839.1021). NOTE: You can also watch highlights from last year's retreats at Laurelville.org/whitewater-video.

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