

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

February 28, 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)

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Clarence's Clarion Call - The Greatest Impediment

by Clarence Rempel, WDC Conference Minister

“What was the greatest issue faced by the early church? What was the greatest impediment to the missional call of the church to proclaim Jesus to all peoples?” The question was asked by the presenter at a “Perspectives” mission training course some years ago. A whole list of responses was offered. Then the presenter surprised us with his assessment – racism. “Will Gentiles be included in the new people of God? And if so, how?”

Racism is still with us, though not as obviously as in the days of colonialism or slavery or segregation. Racism is far more hidden in our culture today, but very real to persons of color. As a person who is white, I experience an ease of navigating American institutions and culture unaware of privileges and opportunities extended to me far more readily simply because of my skin color. This white privilege has a cumulative generational impact. Because my great grandparents were white immigrants from Europe, they were favored with the acquisition of land that had been recently “cleared” of Native American owners. That white privilege continues to pass on through the generations with advantages of wealth, education, more profitable vocations, and access to excess. Racism is this combination of privilege, prejudice, and power that favors one race over others. It still affects the church and the church’s mission.

Hence, Mennonite Church USA has named Anti-Racism and Intercultural Transformation as one of its seven priorities. Hence, a consortium of institutions in Western District Conference geography hosted The Damascus Road Anti-Racism Training, February 16-18, at Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, KS. About seventy participants from Texas to Kansas looked at the manifestations of racism in our history

in America and in our lives today. Tears were shed as persons of color shared stories of discrimination and oppression.

One of the striking statements for me was, “Race is myth; racism is real.” Race based on color of skin does not appear in the Bible. There is no “black and yellow, red and white” in the Bible. The development of classifying people by race as color happened in the 1800s with the classifications for plants and animals. People were measured every which way in order to create a clear delineation of race characteristics. It was found that people varied more within a race than between races. Evidence to the contrary, the science of race persisted. Along with the development of classification and the emergence of evolutionary theory came the idea that the white race was more developed and hence superior. Race was a human social construct that made it right for one people to dominate and oppress others. We as humans, and particularly as Christians, have the responsibility to deconstruct this system of oppression.

We are created equally in the image of God, none lesser and none greater (Genesis 1:27). We have all been equally tripped up by sin (Romans 3:23), and we have all been equally redeemed by Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24). We have been placed in the new family of God where the human-made dividing walls have been torn down. Christ is our peace (Ephesians 2:14-16). We now have the privilege of fully living into the spiritual and functional reality of the reconciling and restoring work of God’s comprehensive redemption.

Prayer Requests

March 4 – Pray for Erv Stutzman, Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA, as he preaches at joint services of First Mennonite, Clinton, and Herold Mennonite, Cordell, OK, March 4-6. Pray for the gathering of the Oklahoma Convention on March 10.

March 11 – Pray for developing church plants. Gilberto Flores will be meeting with a Hispanic congregation in Liberal, KS. Pray for Grace Mennonite, Gladewater, TX, Manos de Cristo – Wichita, Metro Mennonite – Oklahoma City, Peace Mennonite – Columbia, and Sembradores de Buenas Nuevas, Palmer, TX.

March 18 – Pray God’s grace and wisdom for the new pastors in Western District Conference. A New Pastor Orientation will be held on March 22 and a Prevention of Clergy Misconduct Training on March 23.

March 25 – Pray God’s wisdom and guidance for these Pastoral Search Committees in Kansas: Bethel Mennonite – Inman, Goessel Mennonite, Tabor Mennonite – Goessel, West Zion – Moundridge, and Zion Mennonite – Elbing.

Coming Events

Mar. 1 - Pastors' Day Apart, Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS

Mar. 2-4 - Scrapbooking Retreat, Camp Mennoscah

Mar. 3 - Sunday school teacher's training, Iglesia Menonita Monte Horeb, Dallas, TX

Mar. 15 - 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. 23-25 - Retirees' Retreat, Camp Mennoscah
Apr. 26 - Summer Worship Planner, Newton, KS area
May 5 - Pastor's Ministry Workshop, Iglesia Menonita Monte Horeb, Dallas, TX
July 6-8 - WDC Annual Assembly, Oklahoma City, OK

Parish Paper

The March issue of Parish Paper entitled "What Type of Future Are We Building?" can be viewed at: <http://mennowdc.org/resources/publications/parish-paper/>.

WDC Announcements

1. Pastors - Do you ever wonder if you have crossed a boundary? Wondering if the myriad of social networking opportunities might be a "danger-zone" for you as a pastor? Can you proudly proclaim three ways you do "self-care" as a way to reduce the risks of stress and frustration in ministry? I invite you to spend March 23 with other credentialed pastors and reflect on these questions. Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian Formation for the WDC will present information, lead group exercises and invite conversation on these issues. If you have never received Prevention of Clergy Misconduct training, remember that it is REQUIRED for a credentialed pastor and youth pastor as you serve in the WDC. If it has been five years or more since you've attended, consider signing up. The training will be at the fellowship hall of the Bethel College Mennonite Church from 8:15 am - 5 pm. Lunch and workbooks are provided. It 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. Cost is \$50 for Western District Pastors and \$75 for South Central Conference Pastors. Registration Deadline is March 15. See full description of event at: www.mennowdc.org - Upcoming Events. Hope to see you there! --Marlene Bogard, WDC Minister of Christian Formation

2. Excerpt from Policy Regarding Resolutions for WDC Delegate Discussion and Action - "Any substantive issue regarding faith and life should be discerned through congregations or WDC commissions and task forces and submitted for consideration to the WDC Executive Board 90 days prior to annual conference sessions." See the policy in its entirety at: <http://mennowdc.org/conference-life/annual-assembly/>

3. Free Tee Shirt!--Camp Mennoscah is offering a free camp tee shirt to the first 50 people to volunteer in the kitchen for our summer youth camps! (Or until spaces are filled, minimum age and other requirements apply.) These kitchen volunteers are a valuable part of our camping program, doing tasks including peeling potatoes, testing desserts, and having a great time with other staff and campers. Expert kitchen skills are NOT needed; only the ability to follow directions. Contact Camp Mennoscah at campmno@mennowdc.org or [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) to sign up.

4. Retirees' Relaxation Retreat--Brochures for this year's Retirees' Relaxation Retreat

on April 23-25 have been sent to past attendees. We're always looking for more folks to share this retreat with--it's a great time for conversation and coffee breaks. The theme of our time together is Paraguay Plus! It's a whole lot of Paraguay and much more! Todd Schlosser from Mennonite Manor will be leading our Bible Study. Contact us at [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) for more information.

5. Few extra hours? Camp Mennoscah is looking for 1-2 volunteers to help out in the kitchen with our Retirees' Relaxation Retreat from April 23-25. So many of our volunteers attend this retreat that we often have difficulty filling these spots. You can volunteer for one day or for all 3 days--we're pretty flexible. Contact us at campmno@mennowdc.org or [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) if you can help us out of this tight spot.

6. Church scholarships for Camp Mennoscah--Camp Mennoscah is grateful for the generosity of churches who give camp scholarships to youth in their congregations. Thank you for supporting your campers! If a church is sending a scholarship check to Camp Mennoscah, we ask that the appropriate box be checked on the registration form. If a camp scholarship check is given to the parent/camper personally, we do not need this information. Church scholarships must be received by Camp Mennoscah before the first day of camp or the camper will be responsible for any remaining charges. Please contact Camp Mennoscah with any questions.

7. The 52-voice Bethel College Concert Choir under the direction of Dr. William Eash will be touring during spring break, March 16-25, 2012. Scheduled concerts of sacred music include the following:

March 16, First Mennonite Church, Denver, CO, at 7:30 p.m.

March 18, Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, NE, at 9:30 a.m.

March 18, Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, SD, at 7:00 p.m.

March 19, Freeman Academy Chapel Service, Freeman, SD, at 10:08 a.m.

March 19, Bethel Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, MN, at 7:00 p.m.

March 20, Faith Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, MN, at 7:30 p.m.

March 22, West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, IA, at 7:00 p.m.

March 23, Iowa Mennonite School Chapel Service, Kalona, IA, at 9:46 a.m.

March 23, Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral, Kansas City, MO, at 7:30 p.m.

March 24, Grace Episcopal Cathedral, Topeka, KS, at 7:00 p.m.

March 25, Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka, KS, at 10:30 a.m.

March 25, Bethel College Memorial Hall, North Newton, KS, at 7:00 p.m.

There is no admission charge for these services of worship, but a freewill offering may be taken.

Kansas Announcements

1. Have you ever wondered how to create a missional youth group? Do you want to prepare your youth to talk to their friends and classmates about Christ, but you're not sure how? Do you want a place to talk to other youth workers about some of the tough issues that you face? You are invited to join us at Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston for an evening with Scott Roth – youth pastor with a missional heart, on Saturday, March 10 at 7 PM. Mark your calendars and plan to join us for an evening of

conversation, resourcing and encouragement from Scott and other area youth workers (both paid and volunteer). Bring your whole sponsor team! RSVP to Isaac at isaac@whitestonemc.com by March 4 if you plan to attend.

2. Attention area youth! Is being a disciple of Christ a challenge to you? Do you ever wonder what is the point of church? Is reaching out to the non-Christians in your life difficult? If you've found yourself asking questions like this, then you should come and spend a day with Scott Roth and other youth asking the same questions. Scott Roth was a popular seminar presenter at the youth Convention in Pittsburgh this past summer, and he will be here to encourage and challenge us to be more devoted disciples of Christ.

Why Jesus? will be held at Hesston College on Sunday, March 11 in the Campus Activity Center, and will feature worship, times of input from Scott, as well as breakout sessions where you can wrestle with some of these tough questions. Sign up as a youth group, and join us for this great event. See the attached flyer, schedule and registration form for additional information. If you have questions, please contact Isaac Landis at isaac@whitestonemc.com.

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 March. 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. Learn about the Everence Sharing Fund, a unique grant program that supports social and service programs through mutual aid, by reading the attached news release.

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