

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

March 6, 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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Pick My Brain- Spiritual Practices

by Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian Formation

Which would you rather hear:

- A. "Practice makes Perfect!"
- B. "Practice is Everything!"
- C. "Fake it 'till you make it!"

I AM talking about Spiritual Practices. We often pay more attention to them during Lent, and for good reason. Here are some nuggets from a recent Faith Forum class I taught at Bethel College Mennonite Church.

Just what is a spiritual practice? Any intentional activity that turns our awareness more fully to God. Spiritual or Christian practices are the things we do together over time that shape us more into the likeness of Christ.

- Spiritual practices open us up to God, transformation happens as we keep company with Jesus.
- Any spiritual practice can be done in an extroverted or introverted manner.
- When we don't "do" any practices, we are at risk to get stuck, stagnate and are under-energized spiritually.
- Spiritual practices don't give us "spiritual brownie points" or help us get a passing grade from God. They simply put us in a place where we can begin to notice God and respond to God.
- Spiritual practices give the Holy Spirit space to brood over our souls. The Spirit knows what disciplines and practices best suit us. The Spirit knows how to nudge us into the "rhythms of grace" that Jesus offers to teach us.
- We bring our desire, our longing for change, our desperation to make a difference, and then we keep company with Jesus by making space for him to work through the discipline / practice.
- Faith practices mediate reality; generate perceptivity; increase receptivity. (This I love!)

- Jesus says in Matthew 11:30 “Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” (The Message).

Marlene's Top Picks for Spiritual Practices:

Search our on-line catalog at: www.mennowdc.org/library/catalog/ for "Spiritual Practices" and you will get a whoppin' list of 85 fantastic resources.

- **On Our Way** DVD 248 Way (IVP, 2010)

13 conversational video clips, each 3-10 minutes based on the chapters in the book, **On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life**, edited by Dorothy Bass and Susan Briehl. Chapters include: Study; Discerning God's Call; Living as Community; Friendship and Intimacy; Singing Our Lives to God; Care for Creation; Making a good living; Honoring the body; Knowing and loving our neighbors of other faiths; Doing Justice; Peacemaking and Nonviolence; Living in the Presence of God.

- **Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: practices that transform us**. 248.4 Cal (IVP, 2005), by Adele Calhoun. Simply the best! If you don't know where to start – start here!
- **Practicing the Way of Jesus: Life together in the Kingdom of Love**. 248.4 Sca (IVP, 2011), by Mark Scandrette. A practice-based approach to spiritual formation - moving Christian faith from thoughts to a life-style.
- **Soul-Tending: Life-forming practices for older youth and adults**. 259.24 Bro (Abingdon, 2002), by Anne Broyles. A nice, basic intro to spiritual formation.
- **Living Well: Christian practices for everyday life**. 248.4 Liv (Life Long Faith, 2009), edited by John Roberto. A how-to book about Christian practices, foundation in scripture and how they can become an integral part of every day life. Love it! Plus there is also a children's version of this that is very cool and adaptable to Sunday School, midweek, weekend retreats, etc.

WDC Announcements

1. What's the Buzz? The new on-line library catalog is the Buzz! Visit it soon. Using your very own PIN, you can log in and reserve and renew books on-line, as well as check your library patron account. We mean to serve you very well - so call or email soon to get your PIN! www.mennowdc.org/library/catalog/

2. Register now! Camp Mennoscah is accepting registrations for our summer youth camps--we bet you're surprised to hear that! We already have almost 3 times the number of registrations than we did at this time next year. We think this is a hoot because we know it's going to be a blast this summer! Confirmation emails and postcards have been sent to those already registered. Give us a holler at campmno@mennowdc.org or [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) if you need a registration form. The catalog can also be found at www.mennowdc.org under the camp link.

3. Yikes! Our Camp Mennoscah scholarship fund needs replenishing. Typically, 20-30 campers receive partial scholarships to our summer youth camps. This allows folks who would otherwise have difficulty attending camp the opportunity to experience the great and wondrous creation and community we have at Camp Mennoscah. With our fund so low, we will only be able to offer partial camp scholarships to approximately 10 campers. Contributions of any size

(marked Scholarship Fund) can be sent Camp Mennoscah at PO Box 65, Murdock, KS 67111. Contact Camp Mennoscah at [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) for more information.

4. There's no better way to spend your summer than to be awash in compliments from campers and staff. You, too, can enjoy such a treat as one of our trusty kitchen volunteers! Volunteers do not need experience, just a happy heart and the ability to follow basic instructions. Parents can receive a camper discount and a free tee shirt. Contact us at campmno@mennowdc.org or [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290).

5. Pastors - remember to register by March 15 for the Prevention of Clergy Misconduct. This required training will be held on March 23 at Bethel College Mennonite Church. See all information at: www.mennowdc.org (Upcoming Events).

6. To new* pastors of WDC: You are invited to a New Pastor Orientation on Thursday, March 22, from 3:00 – 8:30 pm at the WDC office. Supper included. No cost! Register by email or phone: wdc@mennowdc.org or 316-283-6300. (*New = pastors who have begun ministry in the WDC in the past three years.)

Mennonite Church USA Announcements

1. AMBS Webinar: A New Frontier: Doing Theology as Thriving Rural Communities, Presenter: David Boshart, Wednesday, March 21, 2-3:30 p.m. EDT. Congregations that thrive see the tasks of church development and mission as a matter of applied theology. This webinar will explore how rural communities can become thriving centers for mission by reflecting on six major opportunities for developing a relevant witness that can bridge earth and heaven. [Early registration deadline is March 17 http://www.ams.edu/webinars](http://www.ams.edu/webinars)

2. AMBS Webinar: What's Mennonite about the missional church? Thursday, March 8, 2:00 - 3:30 pm EST. Presenter: Lois Barrett. Compare missional theology with Anabaptist-Mennonite theology, and the sixteenth-century European context with twenty-first century North American contexts. What in these contexts is drawing Christians from state-church traditions into a theology of the church as an alternative society? What is drawing Mennonites and other Christians to see Western culture as a mission field? How can Mennonites and other Christians learn from each other about what it means to be missional? Register at www.ams.edu/webinarregistration.

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