

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

March 27, 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

Do not fear!

by Clarence Rempel, WDC Conference Minister

“Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death” (Luke 22:33). Peter boldly declared his loyalty to Jesus when the other disciples apparently remained quiet. And Peter followed up on his commitment as the only disciple who accompanied the arrested Jesus to the courtyard of the high priest. It is there that Peter denied having any connection with Jesus. Mary Schertz, Professor of New Testament at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), notes, “Peter fails because he puts himself into a position to fail by his very loyalty and steadfast obedience. His failure is bigger than that of all of the other disciples except Judas exactly because he risks more to follow Jesus than the others do.”

Following through on our best commitments may put us in that place of greater testing. Professor Schertz asserts, “Sometimes we fail not out of our weakness but out of our strength. Sometimes we fail because we are doing our very best to follow Jesus faithfully.”

These reflections were offered at a retreat for Area Conference Ministers hosted by AMBS faculty and staff at The Hermitage near Three Rivers, Michigan, March 15-18. The theme for the retreat was “Whom shall I fear?” We traced Peter’s encounters with fear – both the fear of God as in the huge catch of fish that nearly swamped two fishing boats in Luke 5 and fear of people in the passion story in Luke 22.

One strong testimony from Peter’s life is that failure is not the end. Failure and restoration is part of the journey of following Jesus. Jesus forgave Peter’s failure and

restored him to strong ministry as an ambassador of the good news to the Jews in Acts 2 and 4 and to the Gentiles in Acts 10-11. Peter stands up for Jesus in spite of his arrest and threats to his life. He becomes the agent for throwing open the door of salvation to the Gentiles. His bold action of going to the home of an occupying Roman soldier releases the gospel to Europe and from there to the Ukraine and from there to the United States, and then it came to me as a farm boy living in Henderson, Nebraska. I am blessed to be in God's family as a child of God because of Peter's brash obedience to the assignment from heaven.

Peter's restoration to fruitful ministry in spite of his failures is because of Jesus' commitment to Peter. "But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32).

Peter did and continues to do so with this strong word to disciples of Jesus today, "Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord" (1 Peter 3:13).

Prayer Requests

April 1 – Pray for the new leadership of our Bi-Conference Youth Ministry Network. Dwight Regier, Newton, KS has been named Network Team Leader, and Jesse Bladsel, South Hutchinson, KS has been named Network Event Leader.

April 8 – Pray for Clarence Rempel, Conference Minister, Diana Schunn, Moderator-Elect, and Jacob Castro who will be participating in the Constituency Leaders Council of Mennonite Church USA in Goshen, Indiana, April 12-15.

April 15 - Pray for Marlene Bogard, Assembly Director, and the Assembly Planning Team as they prepare for our gathering in Oklahoma City, July 6-8. The emerging theme is "Becoming One to Be Sent in Christ" from John 17.

April 22 – Pray for Conference Ministers Clarence Rempel and Gilberto Flores who along with other Mennonites will be participating in a national church planting conference, Exponential, in Orlando, Florida, April 23-26.

April 29 – Pray for the seven active Pastoral Search Committees in Western District – Beatrice Mennonite, Bethel Mennonite – Inman, Goessel Mennonite, Kingman Mennonite, Tabor Mennonite, West Zion Mennonite, and Zion Mennonite.

Coming Events

Apr. 6 - WDC Office closed for Good Friday

Apr. 20-22 - Men & Boys Retreat, Camp Mennoscah

Apr. 23-25 - Retirees' Retreat, Camp Mennoscah

May 5 - Pastor's Ministry Workshop, Iglesia Menonita Monte Horeb, Dallas, TX

May 12 - Summer Worship Planner, New Creation Fellowship, Newton, KS
July 6-8 - WDC Annual Assembly, Oklahoma City, OK
Aug. 18 - Day on the Farm, Rural Hillsboro, KS

Parish Paper

The April issue of Parish Paper, entitled "How is Your Congregation's Health" can be viewed at: <http://mennowdc.org/resources/publications/parish-paper/>

WDC Announcements

1. Western District and South Central Conferences announce the formation of a new Bi-Conference Youth Ministry Network. The "Network" will rely on a greater contribution of youth pastors in our area churches to plan and lead bi-conference youth events. Dwight Regier from First Mennonite Church, Newton, KS has been appointed Network Team Leader to help identify overall vision, to facilitate youth pastor gatherings, and to serve as resident Anabaptist theologian and youth ministry strategist. Jesse Blasdel from South Hutchinson Mennonite Church has been appointed to serve as Network Event Leader to resource the Youth Ministry Committee and to be the catalyst for bi-conference youth ministry events. The goal is to host one junior high event and up to six senior high events each year with youth pastors taking the initiative as event coordinators. The new Network experiment will be evaluated after one year. The vision for youth ministry is "to raise up passionate disciples of Jesus who live in the Anabaptist way of transformation, service, peacemaking and community."

2. Read the March 2012 report about the work of the WDC Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force at: <http://mennowdc.org/conference-life/ministries/task-forces/>

3. Mark your calendars, Men and Boys Retreat at Camp Mennoscah is April 20-22. Brett Klingenberg will be our speaker for the weekend. Bring your chainsaw; this year our service project will be removing trees that died in the heat wave last summer. Saturday supper through Sunday lunch will be provided. No pre-registration is necessary.

4. Lookin' for Cookin'--Camp Mennoscah is looking for head cooks for the weeks of June 10-16, June 24-30 and July 8-12. Head cooks receive either a stipend or camper discount. We're also still looking for kitchen staff for all of our summer youth camp weeks (camper discount). We know you volunteer just for the free tee shirt, but it's also a great way to be part of our ministry to campers and staff. It's a fun time--peeling potatoes included!

5. Retirees' Relaxation Retreat--Our retreat for retirees and others is coming up on April 23-25! We're taking a virtual trip to Paraguay with some of our sessions and journeying through all sorts of other topics with the rest. We'll have coffee breaks, Bible Study, singing, and lots of time for fellowship and sharing. Don't forget your talent, joke, or other skill to share for our Tuesday evening activity. Need a brochure? Give us a call

at [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290)--we're happy to send you one!

Kansas Announcements

1. KIPCOR's Film Series continues with the showing of Budrus at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 27th in Krehbiel Auditorium on the Bethel College campus (300 East 27th Street, North Newton, Kansas). The film is free and open to the public. A freewill offering will be taken.

Budrus is an award-winning feature documentary film about a Palestinian community organizer, Ayed Morrar, who unites local Fatah and Hamas members along with Israeli supporters in an unarmed movement to save his village of Budrus from destruction by Israel's Separation Barrier. Success eludes them until his 15-year-old daughter, Iltezam, launches a women's contingent that quickly moves to the front lines. Struggling side by side, father and daughter unleash an inspiring, yet little-known, movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories that is still gaining ground today. In an action-filled documentary chronicling this movement from its infancy, Budrus shines a light on people who choose nonviolence to confront a threat.

The film's trailer is available at: <http://www.artwithimpact.org/featurefilm/budrus>. For more information on the screening or film series, call [316-284-5217](tel:316-284-5217). We invite you to attend on March 27!

Mennonite Church USA Announcements

1. 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!

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