

- *“Many Latino/Latina people are moving into the Moundridge community. I feel as if God is speaking to us that as followers of Christ we are to offer hospitality and hope to our new neighbors...Perhaps these are the people God is calling to revitalize our churches.”*
- *“How do we do this? ‘Just do it!’ proclaimed Brother Gilberto Flores. Sure we will have some unsuccessful attempts, but that’s better than not trying at all. We can not wait for folks to walk into our church. We must meet them in their environment. I must not miss this opportunity. I believe God will provide the chance. Sharpen my eyes, open my ears, and be ready. BE INTENTIONAL!”*
- *“We need to get back to our first love – Jesus. We need to recapture the excitement of being the saved people of God. We need the Holy Spirit’s guidance to go the direction God wants us to go.”*



(All photos this issue: Steve Kaufman)

Western District Conference
 Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117
 Phone: 316-283-6300; FAX: 316-283-0620
 Email: wdc@mennowdc.org; Website: www.mennowdc.org



WDC News

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CHURCHES LEAN INTO GOD’S MISSION

“How does what we are doing matter to our community? Would anyone notice if we disappeared?”

With provocative questions like these, Conrad Kanagy, sociologist and pastor from Elizabethtown, PA, challenged the 145 seminar participants who filled the fellowship hall of West Zion Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS, on Saturday, February 11. The seminar was organized and



hosted by the three churches of Moundridge - West Zion, Eden, and First Mennonite of Christian - along with the staff of Western District Conference. Participants came from 16 churches and the Hesston College Pastoral Ministries program for the seminar, **"Maintenance to Missional: Looking Back So We Can Move Forward."**

Kanagy described the reality of Mennonite Church USA. We are diminishing. We are aging. Thirty percent of our members are age 18-45 which is even less than mainline denominations. We are highly educated. Very few Anglo church members share their faith or invite others to church. Which led to this startling question from Kanagy, "What if the Spirit of God is dismantling the church for the sake of the world God so deeply loves?" He noted that Israel was created and called to bring God's shalom blessings to the nations (Genesis 12:1-3; Psalm 67). Instead of worshiping God in the temple, they worshiped the temple, its traditions and its songs. Their failure led to the dismantling of exile in Babylon. However, whatever our failure, God's mission will not be thwarted.



Kanagy exhorted seminar participants to pray God's salvation shalom on their neighbors. "We need to pray ourselves to the heart of God's love and God's love for the world." He noted that the Mennonite church in the global south is growing at a phenomenal rate. The character of the church in the global south reminds him most of 16th century Anabaptism - orthodox in belief, conservative in moral commitments, Pentecostal in spirituality, and holistic in mission. Again and again Kanagy

returned to the theme of being open to the transformation of the Holy Spirit and obediently following the Spirit into the world with the good news of Jesus. Kanagy cited parallels with the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2 which was known for abundant good works but had lost their first love for Jesus. "We need to passionately follow Jesus and clearly claim and proclaim that Jesus is the way to the heart of God."

Kanagy's sermon from the combined worship service on Sunday, February 12, can be heard at [http://edenmennonite.org/Worship/Sermons and Scripture](http://edenmennonite.org/Worship/Sermons_and_Scripture).

What did God speak to your heart about God's mission in Moundridge and beyond? (Seminar Participant Reflections)

- *"God's purpose for us as the church is to serve the world. That's why we are here. That is why God blesses us – so we can bless the world."*



- *"When Israel failed to share the blessing, God sent them into exile. Perhaps, we too, have strayed from God and our lives of prosperity, education and independence are our present day idols."*
- *"I found it extremely encouraging to know that our Anabaptist congregations in the southern two-thirds of the world are growing rapidly. The fastest growing Mennonite Church in the world is in Ethiopia...I think the vibrancy of these churches can be attributed to their singular devotion to Jesus Christ...The people in the two-thirds world are dependent on Jesus and not their wealth or traditions. When we personally and publicly declare our allegiance to Christ, others will see and believe."*
- *"The good news is that it is not too late. Just because we are of Anabaptist/Mennonite faith does not mean we can't EVANGELIZE!! Evangelization is in our roots. Somewhere along the way it got lost and has been given the stigma of 'watering down' our core beliefs."*