

# WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

**April 3, 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](http://www.mennowdc.org) (Conference Life / Publications)*

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### **Pick My Brain – Why Men Hate Going to Church**

*by Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian Formation*

Or do they? A recent book by this title claims that Christianity is the only world religion with a chronic shortage of men. Author David Murrow identifies the barriers to male participation in congregational life. Murrow claims that this book will not call men back to the church...it will call the church back to men. I have placed a sticker (pink) that identifies this book as a worthy study elective choice for small groups and Sunday School / Faith Formation groups because there is soooooo much to discuss here. An excellent free discussion guide is available at [www.churchformen.com/guides](http://www.churchformen.com/guides). A companion piece to this book is How Women Help Men Find God, also by Murrow. Both titles include gentle humor, and therefore I am especially taken with the chapter: How to "Man Up" a Worship Service (Without Driving Women Away), found in the second book I mentioned. Worship Planners - take note!

Your Western District Conference Resource Library has some additional, excellent resource on Men and Spirituality and Christian Faith. Check these out:

#### **1. Under Construction: Reframing Men's Spirituality by Gareth Brandt. 248.842 Bra Herald Press, 2009.**

Warriors, lone rangers, conquerors--these are the common images that come to mind when talking about men. But are those the only metaphors for Christian men? Using the story of Joseph from the Bible, Brandt shows how male spirituality reaches its height when it shows compassion to all people, beginning with those close to us, and finds meaning through participation in building God's commonwealth of love and justice.

#### **2. Present Tense:A Mennonite Spirituality by Gordon Houser. 248.4897 Hou Cascadia Publishing, 2011.**

Gordon Houser explores the heart of Mennonite spirituality and how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short. Present Tense is not a grammar book but a

personal and incisive look at what lies at the heart of Mennonite (and Christian) living. Learn how practice makes perfect, how patience brings peace, how prayer and politics are present in play.

**3. Praying in Black and White: a hands-on practice for men by Sybil and Andy MacBeth. 248.3 Mac Paraclete, 2011.**

Andy begins by talking about what he brings to a prayer experience: "I am independent, task-oriented, self-sufficient." Couple that with what we know about how men learn (concrete, action-oriented, physical, in groups), and it doesn't take long to discern that for many men, they would gravitate to a new way of prayer - that uses the simple tools of paper and pen. FYI - Sybil has also created a series of wonderful books called Praying in Color (a right-brained, active approach to prayer), that I have recommended dozens of times.

**4. Closer Than A Brother Series - published by Faith and Life Resources in 2003 and 2004.**

Today's Christian men long to be spiritually grounded and have a meaningful relationship with God, as well as to understand their roles in family, church, and society. This series helps men's groups enter together into reflection and growth, and guides them to become communities of disciples. Each study of five sessions, designed for ages 40-60, contains biblical reflections on the topic with an emphasis on personal sharing in the context of Christian community. Each of the titles below include ideas for reflection, discussion, and response, with leader's tips at the end of each booklet.

- Building Deep Friendships
- Relatively Speaking: Strengthening Family Ties
- Sex and Faith: Celebrating God's Gifts
- The Meaning of Tough: Wealth and Power
- What Really Matters: Conversation Starters for Men

**5. Wrestling with God: Devotional Readings for Men edited by Gordon Houser and J. Lorne Peachey. Contributions by Ron Adams, Leonard Beechy, Matt Hamsher, Allan Rudy-Froese, Doug Shulz, Ervin Stutzman and Philip Wiebe.**

Wrestling with God is for men who want to get in touch with God inside the struggles of their lives. It contains five articles on the spiritual life and 52 short devotionals based on the stories of biblical men, from Genesis to the letters of Paul. Written prayers and reflection questions make the book handy for personal and group use.

**6. From Wild Man to Wise Man: Reflections on Male Spirituality by Richard Rohr. 248.842 Roh St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005.**

A guide that acknowledges that the lack of male mentors who are willing to guide men through their spiritual journey. An appendix offers structure for a men's group.

Remember - you can call or email to reserve these resources - or using your PIN you can log in to our amazing new Library Catalog and reserve them yourself.

Blessings to you and the men in your lives!

## **WDC Announcements**

1. An urgent need with regard to our annual WDC Assembly, to be held at Oklahoma City on July 6-8 is for Child care leaders for infants and preschool and Children's activities leader for grade K through grade 6. Contact Marlene Bogard at WDC immediately if you or someone you know may be interested. These positions are considered voluntary, but expenses for the weekend will be covered.
2. Pastors, if you would have interest in a Depression Support Group for yourself, contact Clarence Rempel at [clarencer@mennowdc.org](mailto:clarencer@mennowdc.org).
3. One of the cheapest trips to Paraguay you'll ever find! Okay, so we're not really going to Paraguay, but the Retirees' Relaxation Retreat on April 23-25 will be talking about Mennonites in Paraguay and all sorts of non-Paraguay stuff like antique glass. Registrations will be accepted until full--we still have openings! If you would like more information, give us a call at [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) or check out the brochure at [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org) in the Coming Events section.
4. Camp scholarships--We know many churches give scholarships to their youth to go to Camp Mennoscah. But we have many more youth who do not receive church scholarships and need a small boost to help them make it to camp. We're looking for those folks who'd like to help make it possible for others to come to Camp Mennoscah for our summer youth camps. Maybe all your kids have headed off to college or you'd just like to share the wonderful times you had at camp with someone else. Checks can be sent to Camp Mennoscah marked "scholarship." Contact us at [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) if you would like more information.
5. Want to add 71% to your donation? A donation of \$790.79 to Camp Mennoscah for paying off the new property saves camp approximately \$561.31 in interest. Assuming Olivia's math is correct, of course. Even if she's wrong, wow! You've greatly increased your donation to camp--just make sure to mark your donation "new property."
6. Bethel College Service Day at Camp Mennoscah! We're expecting a van-load of Bethel students on April 11th to share in a day of service with us. You'd hate to miss out on this chance to interact with these cool folks and also get a free (but simple) meal. It's oodles of fun. Just give us a holler at [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) or [campmno@mennowdc.org](mailto:campmno@mennowdc.org) and let us know you're coming. We'll be hovering near the telephone waiting to get your call!
7. THANK YOU! - On behalf of Mennonite Disaster Service in Joplin, MO, we want to thank each one who has had a part in the Joplin Care Project which was jointly promoted by Western District Conference Women in Mission and South Central Conference Mennonite Women. So far, we have collected over \$1700.00 in Gift Cards. These Gift Cards have been distributed to those with the most need and have made a big difference. MDS plans to be in Joplin, MO for over a year and is also currently working in Minot, ND where flooding displaced nearly as many families and in Bastrop, TX where fires destroyed over 1,600 homes. Your continued support of the Gift

Card project is greatly appreciated and Gift Cards collected in the future will be distributed to these areas. May the Lord richly Bless you for your generosity. To learn more and keep up-to-date on our projects, please visit our website:

<http://mds.mennonite.net/regions-units/region-iii/> If you would like to support the MDS Gift Card Project, please send gift cards to: Al and Jan Kroeker, 106 Brome Grass Circle, Inman, Ks. 67546 With sincere gratitude, Al and Jan Kroeker MDS Region 3 Directors, Western District Conference Women in Mission

### **Mennonite Church USA Announcements**

1. The STAR (Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience) program at Eastern Mennonite University is offering a 2 1/2 day workshop on April 22-24 for those who work with youth ages 12-18. The workshop builds on STAR's Level 1 training and covers basic trauma awareness education, techniques for calming the mind and body, nonviolent communication skills, restorative justice practices, and building resilience in youth through self-expression and storytelling. It will include time for designing applications relevant to participants' own contexts. Continuing education credits are available. Online registration is at <http://www.emu.edu/cjp/star/training/youth-workers/> or for more information, please contact Jennifer Fawley at [jennifer.fawley@emu.edu](mailto:jennifer.fawley@emu.edu) or [540-432-4651](tel:540-432-4651).

2. From Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN

Volunteer position open: AMBS seeks an individual or couple to serve as Volunteer Coordinator(s). Housing, grocery allowance and small living stipend provided. Participation in chapel, forum, lectureships, and community life encouraged! [Learn more](#) or contact [Jewel Gingerich Longenecker](#) for details.

Please join us for online and face-to-face events:

Webinar: The Story in the Sermon (Previously Embodying the Story)

Presenter: Allan Rudy-Froese April 19, 2012; 2-3:30 p.m. EDT

Preachers are tellers of short stories. Whether a sermon has a narrative, three-point, or verse-by-verse form, preachers often tell a short story or two somewhere, for some reason. This webinar explores the kinds of stories we tell, what motivates us to include them, how stories function, and best practices for writing and telling short stories within the larger arc of the sermon. [Early registration deadline is April 15.](#)

Theological Lectureship: Join the Dance: Forming Christians for Life Abundant

Presenters: Marlene Kropf and Daniel Schipani

Monday, March 26-Thursday, March 29

On the AMBS campus

[Learn more](#)

Chapel, March 27

Session I: March 27, 7:30 p.m.

Session 2: March 28, 1:30 p.m.

Session 3: March 28, 7:30 p.m.  
Session 4: March 29, noon  
Contact us: [churchleadership@ambs.edu](mailto:churchleadership@ambs.edu),  
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