

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

April 24, 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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Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity

*by Pete Flaming, Everence Church Relations Representative, and Phyllis Regier,
WDC Business Manager*

At our next meeting, the Stewardship Commission will be receiving information about a new seminar that will be offered by Everence. At that time we will also be considering how we can involve our WDC congregations in this stewardship training opportunity.

Everence, the stewardship agency for MCUSA, entered into a partnership with the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving to offer a 2-day seminar called Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity (CCCG). This seminar is designed to awaken the spirit of generosity in congregations.

Everence understands the correlation between ministry and generosity – when generosity increases, ministry increases; and when generosity declines, the local church's mission can be compromised and the missional efforts of many parts of our church are constrained by lack of resources.

It's important for attendees to understand that CCCG is not a pre-capital campaign seminar and is unlike other stewardship seminars, many of which do not focus on the central challenges of developing a "culture" of generosity, which takes time. Stewardship teaching is important, but the questions church leaders must address are, "is it really working?" and if not, "why not?", then "what needs to be done differently to inspire generosity?" THAT is the focus and the instruction that differentiates CCCG.

The material is biblically based and theologically neutral which allows each denomination to bring their own theology to bear on the material presented. This seminar is one that the Lake Institute has facilitated for hundreds of churches in mainline denominations across the country over the past 10 years.

Some of the questions and issues discussed include:

- Do we understand the fundamental marriage between generosity and the mission of the local church? As church leaders, have we articulated the mission of our churches in a way that our congregations and our communities joyously and generously join with us in this missional call?

- Is it possible that while we believe our congregations and our households have a greater capacity for generosity, we just may not know how to inspire it – or perhaps choose to not engage in this seemingly tender conversation?
- What are the taboos about money and generosity that may be hindering the ability of our churches to launch or grow ministry?
- Why, when Jesus spoke so fluidly about possessions, generosity and giving – do we generally find it so difficult to do the same?

This 2-day seminar workshop is taught in cluster venues, typically of no less than 20 participants and no more than 40, with very clear expectations of who should attend from each church (i.e. 4-5 congregational leaders/lay leaders). It is an interactive session and concludes with each congregational team developing a preliminary plan for implementation in their churches.

For more information contact Pete Flaming, Everence Church Relations Representative – [877.467.7294](tel:877.467.7294) or e-mail – pete.flaming@everence.com .

WDC Announcements

1. One week left! It's the end of the Camp Mennoscah sale! The Early Registration Discount ends in ONE WEEK (give or take) on May 1st. Get those registration forms and full payment postmarked by May 1 and you'll get \$10 off the price of one camp week! Send a second child/sibling and get an extra discount. Camp Mennoscah is the place to be this summer--we're absolutely sure of this.

2. Hey, everyone! It's the second annual Camp Mennoscah Camp Sing! We have horrible mattresses but great musicians. Our 20-year-old mattresses have finally bit the dust and we're ready to replace 'em. Please join us Sunday, May 6 at 7 pm at Faith Mennonite Church, Newton, KS for "Mattress Melodies." Camp song leaders from years past will lead us in favorite camp songs as we raise funds to replace cabin mattresses. Please note the youth group who raises the most money (\$500 minimum) for the cabin mattresses will earn a pool party at Camp Mennoscah!! Be ready to test your knowledge of Camp Mennoscah with a fun trivia game, sing favorite camp songs, and have a good time! Camp style popcorn and generic pop will be served outside the building following the Camp Sing.

3. "Seek Peace and Pursue It" is the theme for the worship resources that are found in the Summer 2012 LEADER, written by Peace Mennonite Church, Lawrence, KS, Pastor Joanna Harader. Join Joanna and others in a resourcing time on Saturday morning, May 12, 9-11 am, at New Creation Fellowship in Newton, KS. Call Nancy Funk ([316-283-6300](tel:316-283-6300)) or email (wdc@mennowdc.org) to reserve your spot.

MC USA Announcements

1. 2012 Summer Institute on Theology and Disability Now Open for Registration

The Third Annual Summer Institute on Theology and Disability is being held July 16-20 at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Information about the Summer Institute program, speakers, and registration are now available at:

<http://bethesda-institute.org/theology>. On-line registration is preferred but the site also contains a PDF form that can be printed out and mailed in.

The Summer Institute is coordinated by The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities in New Jersey with major sponsorship funding this year from The Bethesda Institute. Other sponsors include Catholic Theological Union, Chicago Theological Seminary, and The ARC of Illinois with endorsements from the Association of Theological Schools, the Association of University Centers on Disability and the new Collaborative on Religion, Disability and Inclusive Spiritual Supports.

As in the two previous Institutes held in Pennsylvania, a core group of faculty/mentors who are leaders in the growing field of theology and disability will serve as speakers, discussion group leaders, responders and facilitators: Hans Reinders from the Netherlands, John Swinton from the UK, Tom Reynolds from Canada, Deborah Creamer from Denver, Erik Carter from Nashville, and Bill Gaventa from The Boggs Center. This group will be doing short presentations on the first day of the Institute followed by afternoon discussion groups with each speaker. On Tuesday through Friday, other guest faculty join the Summer Institute to deliver plenary presentations focused on a theme for each day: Biblical Studies, Families/Parents/Siblings, Religious and Spiritual Development, and Community Building. Speakers include Fr. Donald Senior, Rabbi Bradley Artson, Amy Julia Becker, Rud Turnbull, Katie Arnold, Ben Conner, John Swinton, Christina Gangemi, and John McKnight. Afternoon workshops and discussion groups will be led by the speakers, the Summer Institute faculty, and other participants.

Academic credit and CEUs for the Summer Institute for seminarians and clergy are being offered through Chicago Theological Seminary. Human services professional CEUs are also being offered through the ARC of Illinois. Scholarships for people with disabilities and families from Illinois are also available through the Arc of Illinois. Other scholarship funding is being sought but currently not available. Housing is available at Catholic Theological Union and McCormick Seminary. A Cooperative Resource Exhibit will showcase some of the growing number of resources in this area of study and ministry. More information on all of these options is at the website above. Registration is limited.

The Summer Institutes have proven to be dynamic weeklong events that bring together academicians in the area of disability and/or theology, seminary faculty, seminarians, graduate students, clergy, leaders in faith based services and supports with people with disabilities, advocates, people with disabilities and family members and professionals in other human service disciplines. Information about the two previous Summer Institutes, along with audio-recordings of the major speakers, can be found at <http://rwjms.umdnj.edu/boggscenter/projects/SummerInstituteonTheologyandDisability.html>. For questions about the program, contact Bill Gaventa at [732-235-9304](tel:732-235-9304) or bill.gaventa@umdnj.edu. Questions about registration, contact David Morstad, [920.206.4405](tel:920.206.4405), or david.morstad@mailblc.org.

Please forward this to any network, organization, or individuals who may be interested.

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2. Make plans now to join Gayle Gerber Koontz, visiting professor of theology and ethics from AMBS in Elkhart, Indiana and a leading John Howard Yoder scholar in exploring the politics of Jesus through his writings at AMBS-Great Plains Extension, North Newton. The course, **John Howard Yoder's Theological Legacy**, runs May 29-June 16, Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturdays. Register by May 1 to receive a \$50 discount. Auditors are welcome. To register (credit or audit), visit www.ambs.edu/admissions/register-online. If you have questions, please call our office at [316-283-7098](tel:316-283-7098) or email: eraid@ambs.edu.

3. 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 May**. 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!

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