

# WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

**May 1, 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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## **Clarence's Clarion Call - Martyr Stories in a Missional Church**

*by Clarence Rempel, WDC Conference Minister*

"They did this terrible thing to us" is the way we have been telling our faith story, and it has not been helping us. Andre Gingerich Stoner, Director of Wholistic Witness, named three effects for Mennonites at the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) of Mennonite Church USA meeting in Goshen, Indiana, April 13-14:

1. Separation from the world and separation from other Christian church bodies. Mennonites in migration typically settled in out of the way places.
2. Quietism. We are very reluctant to speak our faith in Christ.
3. Self-righteous victimhood. We imagine that discipleship, community, and service is our stuff, and we resent it when other church groups claim and exhibit these same values and practices. We strut being Mennonite.

"Mennonite is a beautiful adjective but an idolatrous noun" according to Stoner. "Let's self-identify as Mennonite Christians."

Trauma lives on and shapes who we are. We have had just enough experiences of opposition along the way (imprisonment of COs, yellow paint on church buildings in World War I) to keep the victimhood alive.

Iris de Leon-Hartshorn, Director of Transformative Peacemaking, noted that when groups flee, they take the trauma with them, and it becomes a part of their DNA. When persecuted or traumatized groups stay, they find a way to heal from the trauma. Mennonites did a lot of fleeing.

Stoner challenged the CLC participants to a new telling of the martyr stories. For one we have had the most remarkable actions of reconciliation with the Reform, Lutheran, and Catholic

churches. They have asked for forgiveness, and we have granted forgiveness. This now needs to become a part of the telling. "The Lutheran church persecuted us in the 16th century, but 500 years later they came as a world-wide body to ask for our forgiveness. They voted by kneeling at their world assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, on July 22, 2010. And we granted forgiveness through representatives of Mennonite World Conference. They have been set free as our oppressors, and we have been set free as the oppressed." This kind of telling will heal us from our victimhood.

Other churches have martyr stories as well, and we could tell those stories along with our own for the purpose of inspiring disciples to be faithful to Jesus, and not "They did this to us."

For further reflection, I commend to you an article by James C. Juhnke in Mennonite Life, September 2003, "Rightly Remembering a Martyr Heritage." It is available at <http://www.bethelks.edu/mennonitelife/2003Sept/juhnke.php>.

### **Prayer Requests**

May 6 – Pray for Laura Neufeld, who is being installed today as the new pastor of First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge, Kansas.

May 13 – Pray for Church Planter Jerry Acosta and Manos de Cristo Iglesia Menonita as they prepare their first meeting place at 3330 W. Douglas, Wichita, KS.

May 20 – Pray for Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary – Great Plains graduates: Miles Reimer, who will begin a Wesley Medical Centre's CPE Residency in June, and Jocelyn Graber, Topeka, KS, who is seeking a pastoral call.

May 27 – Pray for Olivia Bartel, Camp Mennoscah Director, and the camp staff as they prepare for another season of Christian formation and inspiration.

### **Coming Events**

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

July 28 - Youth Adult Retreat, Camp Mennoscah

Aug. 18 - Day on the Farm, Rural Hillsboro, KS

Sept. 2-3 - Mental Health Spiritual Retreat, Camp Mennoscah

Sept. 7-9 - Women & Girls Retreat, Camp Mennoscah

Sept. 16-20 - Work & Play Camp, Camp Mennoscah

### **Parish Paper**

The May issue of Parish Paper, entitled "How to Turn Bystanders into Active Disciples" can be viewed at: <http://mennowdc.org/resources/publications/parish-paper/>

### **WDC Announcements**

1. Becoming One to be Sent in Christ (John 17) is the theme for the upcoming Western District Conference annual assembly, set for July 6-8 at the Magnuson Hotel & Meridian Convention Center in Oklahoma City. You, as a member of a WDC church, are invited to attend this gathering of resourcing, meaningful worship and community-building conversations. Featured speakers are Chuck Neufeld and Eugene Thiesen. By next week, registration information will be distributed to WDC churches, and available at: [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org)

2. "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](mailto:wdc@mennowdc.org)) to reserve your spot.

3. It's worth it! Unless you slipped your camper registration in the mail today (by May 1), you've missed the Early Registration Discount. But Camp Mennoscah is worth those few extra dollars. We're studying the parables of Jesus this summer and you just can't beat storytelling by the best. The Bring a Friend free tee shirt is still an option (check the catalog for guidelines), so get your discount that way! Contact Camp Mennoscah at [campmno@mennowdc.org](mailto:campmno@mennowdc.org) or [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290). We have all the information you may ever need!

4. We are gob-stoppered and bowled over! The Retirees' Relaxation Retreat raised over \$7500 for various camp projects, including new mattresses, our land debt, and the swimming pool. Don't let these grandmas and grandpas out-give and out-volunteer you! (Though since you could probably beat them at Borrow the Balls, maybe it's a trade-off.) The Retirees have bragging rights--contact Camp Mennoscah at [campmno@mennowdc.org](mailto:campmno@mennowdc.org) or [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) if you would like to challenge them.

5. Free tee shirts! Camp Mennoscah offers free tee shirts (and a whole lot of fun) for those who volunteer at our summer youth camps. We still have a few openings for kitchen helpers and a few more weeks that we could use custodial and/or maintenance help. It's a great shirt this year--once again a Jesse Graber original. Contact us at [campmno@mennowdc.org](mailto:campmno@mennowdc.org) or [620-297-3290](tel:620-297-3290) for available weeks. Nothing screams haute couture like a Camp Mennoscah shirt.

### **Kansas Announcements**

1. Hello all! Camp Mennoscah is gearing up for another exciting summer program and are ready for you to come out and join us. Our cabin mattresses, however, are not. Camp's 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!! The goal for our Camp Sing will be around \$11,000 in order to purchase the mattresses. 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.

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