

Comments from the Conference Minister

Heidi Regier Kreider



Over the past several months, I have had a close-up view of the Mennonite Church USA Journey Forward process, growing out of the Future Church Summit at MC USA assembly in Orlando in summer 2017. As a member of the JF Reference Council, I have participated in giving feedback to the Writing Team as they have drafted *Renewed Commitments* (a document articulating identity and priorities for MC USA) and *Pathways* (a congregational study guide exploring these themes). For more information on these materials and the

Journey Forward process, see <http://mennoniteusa.org/journey-forward/>.

The *Pathways* study guide will be sent out to all congregations in June. I encourage WDC congregations to use it in Sunday school classes, small group discussion, and worship services in the summer and fall of 2018. Consider how your congregation connects to *Renewed Commitments*, and how you apply these themes in practical ways in your context. Then, submit your feedback through the online survey by December 31, 2018.

At the WDC annual assembly July 27-28, 2018, delegates will also have opportunity to discuss *Renewed Commitments* and consider how the themes and priorities in that document can be applied in our context in WDC. It is now our opportunity as a conference and congregations to engage in the Journey Forward process. I hope that it will help us to more faithfully follow Jesus, witness to God's peace, and experience transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's join the conversation of where God is calling MC USA in the 21st century!

Renewed Commitments for MC USA: A living document for the Journey Forward Process

God invites us to experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation. We yearn to know and share in God's unending love. We confess that sin fragments our wholeness and strains our relationships with God, each other and the world. Confronted with the misuses of power in our lives, communities and institutions, we seek to tell the truth and repent. The Holy Spirit beckons us toward the restoration of all things in Christ. God continually calls us beloved. On this journey together, we commit to:

- *Follow Jesus:* As an Anabaptist community of the living Word, we listen for God's call as we read Scripture together, guided by the Spirit. Through baptism we commit ourselves to live faithfully as Jesus' disciples, no matter the cost.
- *Witness to God's peace:* We are called to extend God's holistic peace, proclaiming Christ's redemption for the world with our lives. Through Christ, God frees the world from sin and offers reconciliation. We bear witness to this gift of peace by rejecting violence and resisting injustice in all forms, and in all places.
- *Experience transformation:* The Holy Spirit dwells in and among us, transforming us to reflect God's love. Through worship the Spirit gathers the body of Christ, where our diversity reveals God's beauty. The Spirit empowers our communities to embody the grace, joy and peace of the gospel.

Coming Events

July 27
WDC Annual Assembly
Tabor Mennonite Church
Newton, KS

July 28
WDC Annual Assembly
Eden Mennonite Church
Moundridge, KS

July 29
Annual Assembly attendees
are invited to worship at
Alexanderwohl Mennonite
Church, Goessel, KS

October 26-27
WDC Year of Evangelism
Testimony Seminar
Iglesia Luz del Evangelio
Dallas, TX

WDC Garden

Stories from Western District Conference
June/July/August 2018

WDC ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 2018

Burning Hearts!

WDC Annual Assembly will be a "back to the future" experience. This yearly gathering of the churches and people of Western District Conference is for resourcing, renewal, and reconnecting with each other and God.

On July 27-28, we will bring the best practices of hospitality and fellowship forward from the past, as well as look to the future as a people of God who follow the way of Jesus.



"Burning Hearts" is our Assembly theme, taken from the account of the conversation on the Emmaus Road between the risen Christ and a couple of his disciples. "They said to each other, 'Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'" (Luke 24:32).

In a spirit of Christian hospitality, two churches will open their facilities to Assembly-goers. On Friday evening, check-in and worship will be hosted at

Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, KS. On Saturday, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS, will host Assembly delegates and friends for delegate work, diverse workshops, a concert and other fun activities for all ages, as well as four sessions of "Reading the Bible with Jesus" with Bryan Moyer Suderman.



Bryan Moyer Suderman, Bible teacher and singer-songwriter, will be our guide into the scriptures. His invitational way of helping all ages encounter and interpret scripture as Jesus did, is a gift to the church, especially in these polarized times. Bryan's style encourages face-to-face engagement with the gospels by adults, youth

and children. He's "scholarly and yet accessible," weaving music with small and large group interaction as participants make connections between how Jesus



Western District Conference is a regional grouping of Mennonite Church USA congregations located in Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

Western District Conference

PO Box 306, 2517 N Main, North Newton, KS 67117



316-283-6300

wdc@mennowdc.org

www.mennowdc.org

interpreted scripture and how we might do that too, as people of faith.

Moyer Suderman will also be the guest speaker at Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS on Sunday, July 29. Though this is not part of the official WDC Assembly, Alexanderwohl has graciously invited all who wish, to be part of their Sunday morning worship that day.

In addition to the concert on Saturday evening, there will be additional fun events for all ages. Watch for more details! Childcare will be available for children up through 5th grade. Bring the whole family to Assembly this summer!

If you are coming from a distance, consider staying in a fellow WDCer's home! And local folks, please consider opening your homes to Assembly guests. Reconnect with old friends and make new ones. A hotel option is also available.

May our hearts burn within us as we join with old and new friends, creatively explore the scriptures in community, and encounter God together!



For complete Annual Assembly information and online registration, go to: <http://mennowdc.org/annual-assembly/#2018annualAssembly>. Please register by July 13.

Hispanic Pastors Retreat

A WDC Hispanic Pastors Retreat, funded by an Everence Lilly Grant, was held at Lakeview Retreat Center in Waxahachie, TX on March 9-10.



Byron Pellecer, WDC Associate Conference Minister gave input about Missional Leadership and Seeking People of Peace.



Martin Navarro and Mitch Stutzman facilitated financial wellness activities, addressing retirement for Hispanic pastors, debt reduction, savings, charitable services and stewardship Bible studies.

Aposento Alto, Worship Afresh

By Byron Pellecer, WDC Associate Conference Minister (Texas-Based)

It has been said that traditional methods for church growth are no longer applicable to today's reality. These church activities are aimed at church people and do not necessarily include reaching out to the unchurched.

So, the church must think differently about its role in its neighborhood where God is already at work and where the church is a guest. Such an approach indicates thinking incarnationally. "Incarnational" means to live within the reality of those whom God has already reached out and touched.

Such understanding also requires us Christians to believe that God has sent us into God's neighborhoods. In other words, individually and collectively, we are challenged to foster a missional mindset. Perhaps our assumptions about God, church and mission demands a fresh reinterpretation or to consider some sort of realignment.

It was this type of reflection during my coaching conversations with Pastor Jaime Cazares that motivated him to continue church planting efforts for Iglesia Menonita Aposento Alto in Wichita, KS.

Soon after he responded to God's call he began to connect and build relationships with his new community. After much prayer and discernment, he invited Aposento Alto to consider worshipping on Saturdays instead of Sundays. As he listened to Christ's Spirit, he was moved to respond to a "church map" with an updated version—a version that was responding to realities in the Wichita

community and not necessarily to traditional ways of doing church;. He wanted to be contextual.

Moving worship from Sunday to Saturday at 6 pm was not an easy decision. However, it was a way to respond to the new reality of Aposento Alto. It is fascinating and inspiring to hear how people are responding to Saturday worship invitation. Aposento Alto knows that any day is a good day to worship the LORD. This new ecclesiological thinking has allowed church goers to reach out to those who might want to follow in the steps of Jesus, in the 'Via Christi' (the way of Christ)

The heart and mind of our congregations must be captured by a revolutionary way of thinking biblically and by living out the Christian faith. Therefore, we need to entertain serious questions:: Is the current church model working? Why does the church need to rethink mission? What does it mean to be Christian and the Body of Christ today?

These and other questions address the very nature and essence of the church and help us to continue thinking and acting like missionaries both locally and abroad.

Brisco and Ford in *The Missional Quest* assert that "The church must recapture its missionary identity and activate every Jesus follower to engage wholeheartedly in the ongoing mission of God."

Today's church is not immune to this reality of wrestling with God's proposal: to receive, accept and implement God's redemptive mission even with the most unconventional ways of worship like Aposento Alto's experience.

Introducing Beth Yoder—WDC's new Business Manager



My husband Caleb and I moved to Kansas from Iowa in January 2017, and he began serving on the pastoral team at Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church in Goessel. Then, on February 25, 2017, our first child, Austin, was born. We have had our share of new beginnings in the past year!

I grew up in Miller, South Dakota, graduated from Hesston College, lived in Michigan and then Iowa, where I completed a Bachelor's degree in Business Information Systems through Indiana Wesleyan University. I was actively involved at the East Union Mennonite Church, and it was during that time that I met Caleb. We survived a long-distance relationship while he finished seminary in Indiana and then served two years in Ecuador with Mennonite Mission Network. We became engaged during one of my visits to Ecuador (after I carried my engagement ring with me in my suitcase without knowing it), marrying three months after he returned!

In my spare time I enjoy being outside - running, biking, and hiking. I also enjoy travel in and out of the United States, having been to Europe, Rwanda, India, Honduras, and Ecuador.

I am excited to be in this role, learning new things and meeting new people. Thank you in advance for your patience with me as I learn all the ins and outs of the office and this role.

Summer Reading for All Ages in All Places!!

The Conference Resource Library invites everyone to participate in the summer reading challenge! Grow in faith this summer as you read. Summer reading programs for children and adults with prizes. If you live at a distance, we will mail books to you, or start the Box of Books program at your church!

- Kids (ages 0-12) sign up at: <https://goo.gl/forms/uDbWczCjQqZ1Mo6t1>
- Adults (ages 12 and up), sign up and download your reading challenge at: <https://goo.gl/forms/uUVW6calQ1s7sN632>

