

Comments from the Conference Minister

Heidi Regier Kreider



At the recent WDC assembly, delegates discussed questions related to *Renewed Commitments* (document on Mennonite Church USA identity and priorities) as part of MC USA's *Journey Forward* process. I'd like to share a summary of comments turned in:

Question 1 – How do you imagine using *Renewed Commitments* in your congregation? Ideas included using this statement and *Pathways* (accompanying study guide) as a basis for Sunday school, small groups, evening programs,

catechism, faith exploration, sermons, worship series, visitors' pamphlet, welcoming statement, and as a congregational focus during pastoral transition.

Question 2 – How is WDC already living out *Renewed Commitments*, and how can we grow more fully into these commitments? Many said

WDC's mission statement fits well with *Renewed Commitments*, and offered examples such as the Immigration and Israel-Palestine Relations task forces, sanctuary churches, church planting, annual focus like Year of Evangelism, sexual abuse prevention, supporting pastoral transitions and credentialing, cultural diversity, different expressions of what it means to follow Jesus, discerning scripture together. Delegates encouraged WDC to facilitate interaction and sharing of stories between WDC congregations, including how we are living out *Renewed Commitments*.

Question 3 – What would Mennonite Church USA look like if we lived out *Renewed Commitments*? These responses were the most varied, envisioning qualities such as transformation, vitality, boldness, growing in spirituality and numbers, words and deeds congruent, reconciliation, more "we" and less "I," unity without uniformity, localized mission and grass-roots ministry, resourcing, celebrating, staying at the table, focus on agreements rather than disagreements, inclusion and welcome, witness to God's work in the country and world...and more.

I encourage your congregation to join *Journey Forward*! For resources and to share your own feedback through an online survey, see <http://mennoniteusa.org/journey-forward/>

Immigration Resources

Find resources for **MCC Immigration Legal Program Toolbox** at: mcc.org/media/resources/more/immigration-legal-program-toolbox. This site has legal resources, plus biblical, theological, and practical, hospitable ways to minister to and with immigrant neighbors.

Contact your legislators to protect "sensitive spaces," e.g. schools, hospitals and churches as places where immigrants are protected from immigration enforcement actions. Our own WDC pastors have reported worship attendance is down due to fear of deportation by some of their members.

Is your church considering becoming a Sanctuary Church? Find information at: uucs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Sanctuary-Toolkit-2017.pdf

Review the resources available on the Western District Conference Immigration Taskforce website at: <http://mennowdc.org/committees-task-forces/#immigration>.

Coming Events

October 20
Reference Council
Newton, KS (for WDC
Executive Board,
Commissions and Gifts
Discernment Committee)

October 26-27
WDC Year of Evangelism
Testimony event: "Telling the
Jesus Story"
Iglesia Luz del Evangelio
Dallas, TX

WDC Garden

Stories from Western District Conference
September/October/November 2018



WDC Annual Assembly— Lots of Take-homes!

If you have ever attended a professional convention, you come home with a load of "swag," free stuff that advertises other stuff. You also attend a bunch of workshops and network with colleagues who have similar interests. This year's Western District Conference Annual Assembly was like that.



Delegates and friends got to hear gifted bible scholar and musician Bryan Moyer Suderman talk, sing, and teach about "Reading the Bible with Jesus" and how Jesus interpreted and reframed scripture for kingdom purposes. There were also eight wonderful one-hour workshops to choose from.



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

The gift of God's presence was received through worship that spanned cultural and language differences.



Participants also had opportunity to talk with our ministry partners from local, regional, and denominational agencies and schools.



And, yes, there was even some free swag. But, more importantly, there were so many good ideas, information, rich worship of God and dialogue, that it was a weekend packed with lots of "take-homes".

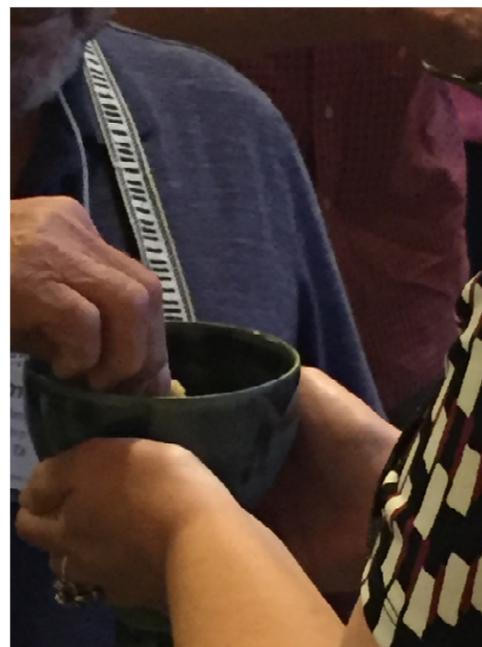
In addition to the regular delegate business of approving next year's budget and new elected leaders, we had a chance to practice and receive hospitality from three different churches in their facilities. Thanks to Tabor and Eden



Mennonite Churches for offering their facilities for Assembly on July 27 and 28, respectively. Though it was not an official part of Assembly, Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church also hosted Bryan Moyer Suderman as their Sunday morning preacher and invited any WDC friends to join them. The "take-home" was an incredible gift of welcome by these congregations.



There were also opportunities for fun and service for kids and youth. Children shared creative craft ideas, stories and games with wonderful adult volunteers. The small group of WDC youth tied comforters for refugees through Mennonite Central Committee. They also listened to Bryan Moyer Suderman, then pelted each other with water balloons! They took home memories of new friends and doing good in the name of Christ.



It was a wonderful weekend packed full of things to learn, experience, and take home. Join us again next year for Assembly, July 26-27, 2019 (location in Kansas to be confirmed).

Telling the Jesus Story

We have good news to share, but have we done it lately? Each of us who follow Jesus has a story to tell.

As part of the Year of Evangelism, join brothers and sisters in Christ for a gathering focused on the theme of testimony October 26-27 at Iglesia Luz del Evangelio, 1524 Dowdy Ferry Rd., Dallas, TX. Hear accounts of faith and practice sharing your own stories of the good news. Keynote speaker is John Garland, pastor of San Antonio Mennonite Church. A van from the Newton, KS area is an option for folks who want to travel together. Register on the WDC website at: <http://mennowdc.org/year-of-evangelism/>



Mustard Seed Grants Update

In April, the WDC Resource Commission offered Mustard Seed Grants to resource congregations as they share the good news of Jesus in creative ways. Here's a snapshot of how grants were used by congregations:



- West Zion Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS, funded the food for their "Come and See" Sunday, a relaxed atmosphere of engaging worship and creative hospitality with neighbors.
- Iglesia Menonita Monte Horeb, Dallas, TX, is offering a health promotion initiative as part of a holistic gospel. They pray diabetes will be decreased as part of this ministry.
- Beatrice Mennonite Church in Nebraska updated their playground equipment near the church to make it and the church more welcoming.
- Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church hosted a community supper and movie night under the stars this summer to get to know new neighbors.

Because of the generous offerings received at the Annual Assembly, more Mustard Seeds grants are now available! See more information and apply at: <http://mennowdc.org/mustard-seed-grants/>

Missional Communities of Peace Church Planting Retreat

A retreat in Dallas, TX, July 13-15, gathered WDC Church Planting Commission members, church planters, other leaders and guests seeking to proclaim the kingdom of God by planting missional communities of peace. The theme Missional Communities of Peace emphasized the proclamation of God's kingdom, cultural challenges, practices and geography. The retreat provided biblical foundations and theological identity, and invited church planters to healthy rhythms of life and spiritual practice – crucial components for proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ as emerging communities of faith sharing God's shalom in the community. Retreat goals were to explore and learn about calling, equipping and commissioning; build and foster relationships among WDC church planters; explore new ways to collaborate and network across WDC and share church-planting experiences and strengthen existing relationships.



We started Friday evening with worship, biblical reflections and fellowship. Participants met each other while enjoying pastries hosted by Iglesia Menonita Monte Horeb. On Saturday morning were workshops on Church Planting 101 and Missional Communities of Peace. After lunch we had conversation about best practices for church planting, challenges, dreams and failures. It was a time to listen and learn how to support each other. The retreat concluded with communion led by Church Planting Commission members Lee Suderman and Tonya Ramer Wenger. On Sunday morning commission members visited various WDC Dallas churches. After worship, we enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Esperanza.

The Church Planting Commission encourages WDC congregations to be alert to God's activity in their locations that may signal an emerging group, and to understand that creating new congregations is an essential and natural activity of every healthy church.

-Byron Pellecer

Looking for ideas?

We've got some! Contact the **Conference Resource Library** to hear our ideas for: Wednesday night programs, adult elective studies, personal studies, books for children's stories during worship, and good books that help you grow in your faith! We mail books to any congregation or individual in WDC! crlib@mennowdc.org or 316-283-6300