Associate Conference Minister Texas

Byron Pellecer

*“After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.  They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Rev 7:9-10 NRSV).*

This report reflects commitments based on my responsibilities as Associate Conference Minister based in Texas. I work with the Church Planting Commission to nurture emerging congregations. I advocate for intercultural transformation, undoing racism, and Hispanic ministries across WDC. Furthermore, I seek opportunities to connect and build relationships with agencies and institutions within MC USA.

**Networking Anabaptist Church Planting Partnerships**

Iglesia Menonita Palabra Viva in Liberal, KS is a certified church plant that emerged with leadership from Iglesia Menonita Camino de Santidad. We have new leadership at Iglesia Menonita Aposento Alto. These congregations are vibrant and growing in numbers.

The church planter from Iglesia Menonita Camino Nuevo in Dallas, TX has resigned due to medical reasons. Consequently, the Support Group with support from the Church Planting Commission will be meeting to discuss and discern the future.

One joyful highlight from 2018 was the opportunity to share about church planting ministry with some congregations in Kansas and in Texas through biblical reflections or Sunday school.

**Church Planting Retreat Dallas, TX**

We held our first Church Planting Commission Retreat. It was a gathering of church planters, church leaders and guests seeking to proclaim the kingdom of God in their local settings. The goals were to:

* Explore and learn about calling, equipping and commissioning.
* Build and foster relationships with other WDC church planters.
* Explore new ways of collaboration and networking across the WDC.
* Sharing church-planting experiences and strengthening existing relationships

Our theme, **Missional Communities of Peace,** emphasized the proclamation of the kingdom of God, cultural challenges, practices and geography. Church planters and church leaders were invited to healthy rhythms of life and spiritual discipline practices. We are planning our next Church Planters retreat for this fall or spring of 2020.

**Church Planting Trainings.**

I attended SENT 2018, a Mennonite Mission Network church planting summit. The theme was: Beloved Feet: Hearing Christ’s call to Proclaim the Good News. My personal goal was to learn and implement best church planting practices from a Mennonite-Anabaptist perspective, and in the future to develop a core of church planting mentors and coaches within WDC.

**Supervise and nurture church planting pastors and their families.**

I meet with church planters on a regular basis to provide holistic support and pastoral care. Additionally, I facilitate two different support groups for planning and implementation of church growth, communal outreach, financial sustainability, and visioning.

We have implemented monthly coaching and mentoring sessions. Coaching sessions are centered around specific challenges for each church planter and church plant. Mentoring sessions are centered around church planting strategies and sharing best practices across WDC.

**Texas Staff Meeting.**

We meet on a weekly basis for planning, evaluation, and implementation. We assist and provide administrative support to congregations, pastors, Hispanic Ministries, and church planters. Our work includes church documents, files, meetings, trainings, events coordination and Annual Assembly planning in Texas.

**Kansas Staff Meeting.**

I meet with Heidi Regier Kreider, Conference Minister, on a weekly basis for reporting, planning, and strategizing. We communicate mainly via zoom, emails and over the phone.

**Joint Staff Meeting.**

Once a month staff from both Newton and Dallas offices get together to plan, report, and conduct administrative and ministerial business. Recently, we have implemented a “joint coffee break.” We use zoom platform to join in conversation with our colleagues in Newton.

**Support the WDC core task of “Sustaining Transformational Pastors.” Equip and support WDC pastors and congregations in Texas.**

As I visit, worship, or share biblical reflections in Texas congregations and occasionally in Kansas, I am deeply touched and fascinated by their deep missional approaches, hospitality, welcoming practices and generosity.

I attended pastor peer groups in Texas, and served in other capacities like congregation pastor review consultant, assisted with local congregation projects and promoted inter-congregational gatherings.

**Intercultural transformation and undoing racism in WDC; connect pastors and congregations to WDC and Mennonite Church USA resources and mission.**

Assisting congregations, pastors and MC USA agencies has been also part of my ministerial duties. I attended the bi-national MC Canada and MC USA Conference Ministers gathering, and maintained communications across the denomination for resources and dialogues pertinent to the life of our conference.

I connected and built relationships with MCC, Iglesia Menonita Hispana (IMH), Everence, MEA / Hispanic Ministries (IBA – Anabaptist Biblical Institute, SeBAH - Hispanic Anabaptist Biblical Seminary), MMN, AMBS, Menno Media, WDC Hispanic Ministries and pastors.

Supported local youth initiatives to explore local social impact and networking across WDC congregations.

**Coordinate WDC Annual Assembly planning when it takes place in Texas.**

We began planning for WDC 2020 Assembly in Texas. We have secured a location in Denton, TX, Camp Copass and we have our keynote speaker: Dr. Daniel Carroll.

**Serve as WDC liaison to Iglesia Menonita Hispana (IMH), Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA) and SeBAH (Hispanic Anabaptist Biblical Seminary).**

There are several IBA Centers across the denomination providing theological training and leadership development from an Anabaptist/Mennonite perspective. In WDC, we have 2 volunteer tutors and approximately 24 registered students. Currently, 9 students are active (attending classes).

We had 4 study centers throughout WDC: Casa Betania in Newton, Kansas is currently inactive. In 2018 three students from Casa Betania graduated at the Certificate Level. In Texas we have Luz del Evangelio with 9 students (active), Casa del Alfarero with 5 students (inactive) and Comunidad de Esperanza with 7 students (inactive). There are other congregations interested and wanting to implement this program.

SeBAH provides theological training at higher education level. Currently, we have three students (two in Kansas and one in Dallas). WDC, provided 12.5 % tuition financial assistance for these students after grant applications were submitted. For both programs, Spanish is the preferred language. However, some tutors and professors are fluent in both English and Spanish languages.

I served as tutor for IBA and professor for SeBAH. In addition, I served on the Academic Advisory Committee of IBA.

I served on the church planting advisory committee for Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church). Additionally, three IMH’s Executive Board members, Sandra Montes-Martínez (Moderator), Hildalejandra Pellecer (Secretary) and Suhelen Cazares (Treasurer) are members of WDC congregations. Their term will end on July 1, 2019.

We hope and pray for more congregations to reach out to these theological and faith formation trainings.