

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE E-MEMO

December 4, 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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Pick My Brain - Myth Busters About "Year of the Bible"

by Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian Formation

Rumor has it there will be a "Year of the Bible," sponsored by Western District Conference. It's true! WDC is the blessed recipient of a grant to "do" a year-long focus on the scriptures. We are fielding lots of questions: When? How? Where? What? Just hang on folks, we are working on it! First, our planning team needs to meet and get our heads together (December 12). We need to focus, plan and implement! In process, at this very moment, is the development of a Year of the Bible Network website, which we hope will be a go-to spot for resources, events, links and more. This should go live in January, 2013.

First, however, I want to de-bunk some myths.

1. **Year of the Bible does not need to start on a January 1 and end on a December 31.** It can, in fact, start and end anytime you want it to! It's your choice!
2. **We (WDC) will NOT prescribe how you and your congregation are to DO a Year of the Bible.** Sure - we will supply lots of resources, a great website, links, events, a fantastic Resource Library, but we will not tell you specifically what to do. You get to make those choices yourself. It's up to you and your congregation to take initiative, dream, plan and do and be what you want based on your needs and desires. One size does not fit all and really, never has. Key idea here is customize!
3. **Year of the Bible does not ONLY mean reading through the Bible in one year.** Although it would be a wonderful idea!
4. **Year of the Bible is not only about reading.** Think experiential, think retreats, think memorization, think art, drama, music, think sermon series, think an extra intense (but formational) dig-into-the bible time.
5. **Year of the Bible is not only for adults.** Imagine multi-generational story-telling, Bible memory challenge between the generations, games, camps, potlucks with Biblical foods.
6. **Year of the Bible is not just for Mennonites!** Well obviously - just do a bit of googling and you will find that Christians everywhere are yearning for more Biblical knowledge and action. We all have so much to learn!
7. **Year of the Bible does not have to last just one year!** What if.....you adopted some faith practices during your "year" that you would actually keep on doing long after 365 days are over. What if....folks brought their Bibles (or smart phones with a Bible app) with them to church every Sunday - in full view!? What if....we go so hooked on claiming scriptural texts as a way to

form our daily lives, that we wanted it to go on and on?

What we know so far:

1. Events - Save August 1, 2013 as the Launch date for Year of the Bible. Actually August 1, 2, 3 (including WDC Assembly) will all focus on Biblical stuff. Bring a team of folks from your church to get inspired, attend workshops, get resourced and make a plan. This will happen at Bethel College, in North Newton, KS.
2. Publications. Our first new issue of our yet unnamed WDC news publication released in January will focus on YOTB.
3. Website up. January 2013 is the launch month for our new website that will be all about Year of the Bible resourcing and networking. All your ideas are welcome and we are happy to add to it weekly.
4. I also know that dozens of you have dozens of wonderful ideas. **Send them to me!** Everything from sending your children and youth out the door with a scriptural blessing to showing people how to mark up their bibles in color. These will be added to our "Best Practices" link on our website. **Send them today** to mbogard@mennowdc.org

And of course I would be remiss if I did not list some really super brand new resources on the Bible:

A Year of Biblical Womanhood: how a liberated woman found herself sitting on her roof, covering her head and calling her husband "master" by Rachel Held Evans. Thomas Nelson, 2012. I read this during my sabbatical and give it a 5-Fish Rating. (Aha! a new rating system for YOTB!) This perfect combo of humor and insight takes us on a month-by-month journey into the world of Biblical Woman hood as Evans tries on biblical virtues as valor, obedience, purity, domesticity and more. Her blog is also a treat at: rachelheldevans.com
How to Read the Bible Through the Jesus Lens: a guide to Christ-focused reading of scripture by Michael Williams. Zondervan, 2012. This will be on the YOTB resource list. It's a super guide to each book of the Bible, as Williams briefly (remember, this is 2012 - brevity rules), provides historical context, theme, memory passage, the Jesus Lens and contemporary implications along with hook questions to complete a discussion. All this in chapters that are 5 pages long! Rating: 5 Fish.

Reading the Bible After Christendom by Lloyd Petersen and a forward by highly esteemed Walter Brueggemann. Herald Press, 2012. Ok - more like a text book than a Sunday evening Bible study, this book is well suited for those who want to teach, preach and absorb at a bit more lofty level. It should be obvious therefore that I have not made it all the way through this book, but I did find a GEM section that would serve all of us very well: ***Six Core Convictions of Anabaptist Hermeneutics***. Zowie! This to me examines what reading the Bible might look like in the current period when the church is no longer central in our lives, communities and culture. It's great stuff - I rank it as 5 Fish.

Find these on our website and reserve them there (or call 316-283-6300 or email www.mennowdc.org).

WDC Announcements

1. Looking for something different to give this Christmas? How about giving the gift of physical activity, family bonding, and meeting good folks from the area?! The **Western District Ski Retreat for Adults and Families** will be January 25-29, 2013 at Copper Mountain Ski Resort in

Colorado. This trip leaves from North Newton, and the cost includes chartered sleeper bus, two nights lodging, ski rental, and lift tickets for three days of skiing. (Adults \$534, 17-13 yrs. olds \$518, and children 12 and under \$385). A limited number of spaces are also available for those who would rather drive on their own. For registration forms and/or additional information call the WDC office at [\(316\) 283-6300](tel:3162836300). **WDC Ski Retreat--One size that fits all!**

2. Attention pastors! Pastors' Day Apart, sponsored by Western District Conference, will be Tuesday, January 22, 2013, from 8 am - 1 pm at First Mennonite Church, Newton, KS. Topic: An Open Place - Exploring Models for Group Spiritual Direction and Discernment. Resource Person: Eric Massanari. See attached for more information and registration form, please register by Jan. 15.

3. They're in the mail/e-mail! Camp Mennoscah reservation forms and information for the 2013 year should be received by the group/family contact person no later than December 7. If you or your group have not received this information, please contact Camp Mennoscah at [620-297-3290](tel:6202973290). We're looking forward to seeing you at Camp Mennoscah!

Kansas Announcements

1. Dec. 6 Table Talk at WDC Offices: (noon to 2 pm) Bring your own lunch, drinks provided. Topic: How does your church pay attention to and meet the needs of children? Special presenter is Kathy Wiens, of Newton-based ministry *Welcome the Children* (welcomingchildren.blogspot.com/). Conversation may include children in worship, honoring children's gifts and contributions to the body, designing programs and more. Pastors and others involved with children's ministries are invited.

Mennonite Church USA Announcements

1. Join Hesston College students as they study prophetic and apocalyptic genre, and interact with the books of Jeremiah and Revelation. Weekend dates are February 1-3, March 1-3 and April 5-7. Download the attached brochure for more information or call Michele Hershberger at [620-327-8292](tel:6203278292).

2. Seminary launches series of short courses
Elkhart, Ind. (AMBS) – A series of short, online courses in aspects of Anabaptist thought and practice begins in February, taught by professors of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

Each six-week course will connect the sixteenth century Radical Reformation with the church today. They will allow people from different backgrounds and locations to explore Anabaptist witness through five centuries as a source of guidance for their own lives and witness.

The first two courses in the series are:

Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology in the 16th Century, February 11 to March 22, taught by Lois Barrett, AMBS professor of theology and Anabaptist studies.

Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture: What's Different and Why?, April 8 to May 17, taught by Loren Johns, AMBS professor of New Testament.

Readings and discussion will be similar to that of seminary courses, assuming some previous academic study. However, the shorter duration, the online delivery and the cost of only \$200 per course will make these courses more accessible to a wide variety of learners. Continuing Education Units are available to course participants.

For more information and to register, visit www.ambs.edu and search for "short courses," or contact the AMBS Church Leadership Center, churchleadership@ambs.edu.

3. KIPCOR is offering a two day course on Managing Differences within Faith Communities on January 29-30, 2013.

If you are a pastor or leader in your congregation and want to increase your leadership skills and awareness of how to work through discernment and decision making processes, consider enrolling in this course. How decisions are made has as much to do with how well a congregation functions than the decision itself. If people aren't happy with how a decision is made, they will have a hard time helping to implement any approved action. **Fees are discounted** if your congregation sends two or more persons and having a group attend together will increase the congregation's ability to incorporate what is learned into its discernment and decision making processes. This course is led by Robert Yutzy, Senior Associate for KIPCOR's Congregational Ministries, and Kirsten Zerger, KIPCOR's Director of Education and Training. For more information, please see the attached flyer.

To register, go to: <http://www.kipcor.org/Registration/2013-SSC469-Registration.doc>

4. The latest issue of ***On the Way***, Mennonite Church USA's online newsletter, is available at www.mennoniteusa.org/on-the-way. *On the Way* is a free, short, bilingual online resource—published about every six weeks—for everyone in Mennonite Church USA. Each issue focuses on one of the seven churchwide priorities. You can subscribe to receive *On the Way* directly at <http://eepurl.com/i8oX9>. The issue focuses on **Undoing Racism and Advancing Intercultural Transformation**, highlighting some processes that Mennonite Church USA is making available for congregations who desire to grow in intercultural competence (Communities of Hope) and for those who are responding to a call to deepen their support for immigrants in their setting (Bienvenido). We hope you'll enjoy the content and consider sharing your responses and ideas via our [website](#) or [Facebook](#) page.

5. Do you remember the annual Christmas Festivals at Bethel College? A new 2-CD set, "Nights of Wonder", is available at the Bethel College Bookstore featuring musical selections performed at 9 of the last 19 years (1979-1998). Performing groups include the Bethel College choirs, Sinfonia, Wind, Brass, and String Ensembles, 2nd Century (Madrigal) Singers, and the Newton Community Children's Choir. The Bethel College Women's Association is promoting this 2-CD package for \$20. Call the Bookstore for pickup (316-284-5205) or Donna Becker (316-284-5327) for mail orders. All proceeds go to Bethel College.

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