



**Western
District
Conference**

*An area conference of
Mennonite Church USA*

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WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE REPORTS

To the One Hundred and Twenty Third
Annual Session of the
Western District Conference
of
Mennonite Church USA

July 4-6, 2014
Waxahachie, TX

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Conference Minister - 2014

Clarence Rempel

“There is not one person that God is not patiently and persistently pursuing.”

“God is involved in every person’s life calling them to a reconciled relationship through Jesus Christ.”

“Lost people matter to God.”

These affirmations, spoken at the recent Exponential – Church Planting Conference I attended in Orlando, Florida, April 28 – May 1, resonate with my own heart. I was reminded at the Conference of the core missional principles that inform our ministry as an Area Conference within Mennonite Church USA.

1. God loves the world. God is a missionary God *sending* the people of God to be a blessing to all nations, all peoples. God *sent* Jesus. God and Jesus *sent* the Holy Spirit. God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit *sent* the church to be ambassadors of reconciliation in the neighborhood. “At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ’s body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence” (Ephesians 1:22-23 *The Message*).
2. The church engages in incarnational mission like Jesus. “The Word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood” (John 1:14 *The Message*). This Jesus came, not to condemn, but to save (John 3:17). This Jesus had a reputation of being a friend of tax collectors (traitors in collusion with the occupation) and sinners (persons judged unfit for temple worship) (Matthew 11:19).
3. God’s church doesn’t have a mission; God’s mission has a church. We are that church.

Here’s another way of looking at it.

	<u>Old Christian paradigm</u>	<u>Post-Christian paradigm</u>
Sender is:	Church	God
Sent one is:	Missionary	Everyone
Practices are:	Attractional Ministries	Incarnational Ministries
Place is:	Foreign	Across the street and around the world
Purpose is to:	Grow church	Do God’s will

I was challenged to reexamine my own discipleship. What would it look like for me to really love my neighbors *as myself*? What would that look like for our churches?

Let me share some highlights from the core tasks we pursue as Western District Conference.

Sustaining transformational pastors:

- Ron Flaming, a certified leadership coach, led a six-month cohort for new pastors and continues to be available to these pastors for coaching in the year ahead.
- I developed materials for and led two seminars on new pastor mentoring – “Growing in Ministry Journey” using the six pastoral competencies developed by Mennonite Church USA.
- The Leadership Commission planned and hosted a pastor, spouse, family retreat, “Relate and Restore,” at Camp Mennoscah, April 25-27.
- Thirty-two pastors participated in a day-long seminar on “Preventing Clergy Misconduct” led by Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian Formation.

Resourcing healthy, missional churches:

- Healthy churches have a high capacity for maintaining relationships even in the midst of profound disagreements. The Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force planned and led our Reference Council gathering with the evocative title, “The Church and Homosexuality: A Conversation that Can Hold Us Together,” on October 26. Worship for the day began and ended with reflections from Romans 14-15. “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” This was written to the church in Rome that was deeply divided

over significant ethical matters. “Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you.”

- Opportunities for discernment will continue prompted by a resolution submitted by Rainbow Mennonite Church for discussion in the coming year. The core of the resolution states “that pastors, in consultation with their congregations, consistent with Mennonite polity, and without fear of censure, may officiate or refuse to officiate ceremonies that consecrate before God monogamous, life-long unions, regardless of the sexual orientation of those being united.” The WDC Executive Board is developing a plan and appointing a task force to guide this conversation with fuller explanation at Assembly 2014. We will seek to correlate our conversation with anticipated unfolding developments in Mennonite Church USA in preparation for Kansas City 2015.
- The “Year of the Bible” challenged pastors and congregations to a more intensive and extensive engagement with “the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 3:15). Many congregations chose twelve guiding scriptures for themselves. An amazing number of persons and even whole congregations took on the challenge of reading through the Bible in 90 days. Our Year of the Bible website has been used a lot for imagining new possibilities from across Mennonite Church USA.
- “Connect to God’s mission in the world” is the “C” in our WDC vision statement. An invitation from Congo church leaders a year ago prompted WDC to send Amanda Rempel as our ambassador in support of the first women being ordained in the Mennonite Church of Congo. Since returning, Amanda has shared the stories of mutual blessing that occurred during that three-week trip with eleven different church groups. We have also had a follow up visit from the Congo by Pastor Francois Tshidimu and Dr. Nicole Banzene.

Networking Anabaptist church planting partnerships:

- The Hispanic church plant in Wichita has been relaunched as Aposento Alto (Upper Room) Iglesia Menonita with Byron Pellecer as church planter. The development is being supported financially and in person by our three churches in Wichita – Hope Mennonite Church, Lorraine Ave. Mennonite Church, and Mennonite Church of the Servant.
- The Chin Emmanuel Church, Houston, TX became a member congregation at Assembly 2013. They have continued to grow and have moved from a storefront to a Baptist church fellowship hall and are in the process of purchasing property to build their own facility. Pastor Simon Tlumang was licensed towards ordination on August 1, 2013.
- Pastor Moises Romero, Iglesia Camino de Santidad, Liberal, KS was licensed towards ordination on August 1, 2013.
- The Leadership Commission and the Executive Board are recommending the formation of a Church Planting Commission in order to provide more substantial guidance and support for developing new communities of the kingdom. Church planting is creating the future of the church.

As we look to the coming year with its opportunities and challenges, I commend to us a prayer of relinquishment introduced by Ervin Stutzman, Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA, at the recent Constituency Leaders Council meeting in North Newton, KS.

Today, O Lord, I yield myself to you.

May your will be my delight.

May your love be the pattern of my living.

I surrender to you my hopes, my dreams, my ambitions.

Do with them what you will, when you will, as you will.

I place into your loving care my family, my friends, my future.

Care for them with a care that I can never give.

I release into your hands my need to control, my craving for status, my fear of obscurity.

Eradicate the evil, purify the good and establish your kingdom on earth.

For Jesus’ sake, Amen. from Richard Foster (*Prayers from the Heart*, p. 24)

**Associate Conference Minister, Director of Church Planting, Director of Hispanic Ministries
Gilberto Flores**

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him. 1 Corinthians 2: 8b (NIV)

Blessings-Challenges for Churches in Texas: WDC has thirteen churches in Texas. This number includes Grace Fellowship which is an ongoing church planting ministry in the eastern part of the state.

Almost all of these churches are located in metropolitan areas, a context where human-cultural diversity is a blessing and a challenge as well. WDC congregations reflect this social environment. As many people here, the members of our churches are immigrants. Anglos, Hispanic/Latinos and Asians are newcomers that celebrate God's grace in a place they choose to live far from their place of birth.

All these congregations are challenged by the fact that our context is multicultural. And then in regard to becoming relevant for this context, it is imperative to become multicultural. Anglo congregations need to be more intentionally open to receive people from other backgrounds. Obviously, this intentionality only will be possible if congregations turn around their chairs from an inward position into outward missional attitude.

Latino churches are facing generational dilemmas. Second and third generations of Latino /Hispanic descendants are bi-lingual, and many of them prefer English over Spanish. The churches that responded to this trend are in better position to retain this new kind of immigrant segment.

In both cases, Anglo and Latino/Hispanic/Chin congregations depend upon immigrants to keep up and increase membership. There is not yet an urban awareness, an appropriate reading of urban context and willingness to take the necessary risks to impact their immediate or surrounding communities.

Hispanic churches are trying to attract first generation immigrants, and keep Spanish language as an entry point. They do not see the dilemma. Spanish allowed a lot of people to come, but later the Spanish language becomes a barrier to keep the children of that first generation of immigrants. Time to time, Anglo churches receive Mennonites from other places, immigrants interested in living and working in the cities. These people still connect with their geographical origin. The city is a new reality, and then it is complicated to suddenly move from an emotional inner self and start acting as an experienced urban fellow.

If WDC wants to help these congregations, it is imperative to appoint a person with an urban-focused ministry. Urban places have an extraordinary synergy, and our congregations are not ready to take advantage of this synergy. Small congregations cannot, individually, face the urban challenges. They need to be more interconnected beyond their cultural differences; and they need more focused attention from our system as well.

Urban churches have the best resources already to plant new churches: people in the church and people in the community. We need to continue developing new ways to being a witness in our communities. Urban churches do not need tons of money, what they need is spiritual awareness about God's presence in the city. As people of God and communities of faith, our churches have to invest energy and resources to read and exegete their urban context. This spiritual awareness begins with the fact that churches are where God want them to be.

WDC churches in Texas are a blessing for the cities and the conference: "We will stay in the conference. Where shall we go that is free of problems?" The kind of resilience reflected in this statement, as they discussed homosexuality, is a blessing for WDC. What is behind this statement is a spiritual attitude that honors one characteristic of peace churches. A core contribution from Hispanic leaders and congregations is to avoid a judgmental attitude. To be a blessing they want to stay, speak, listen, respect and be respected.

Anglo congregations offer a different perspective about the same concern; nevertheless the intention from Anglo congregations and leaders is to keep in mind that in Texas all churches have the right and grace to differ without a judgmental attitude. Every system needs this kind of contribution.

The way to bless the cities is different from church to church, but in a general, every congregation in Texas touches its community with humility and service.

--Chin Emmanuel Church is serving new refugees, helping them to navigate the social and legal system. Offering an open door for those in need and serving as an entry door to help people settle down with less stress. The church is interested in serving beyond their cultural boundaries, that's why they are trying to purchase a place where the church has direct contact with the neighborhood.

--Luz del Evangelio has opened a workshop in its facilities to train people as AC technicians at no cost. People that come to learn and be trained are from the community around. This church is working as hard as is possible to keep the second and third generations of Hispanic families. English / Spanish languages are used in worship and Bible teaching sessions.

--Comunidad de Esperanza continues supporting and managing a daycare center, located in its facilities. The impact and benefit for low income families is highly appreciated.

--Monte Horeb opened its door for codependent people, mostly all of them with alcohol or drug addictions. People meet there as a support group to contribute in the recovering process and its emotional challenges. At least two people from this group are actively involved in church now.

--Casa de Dios started a few years ago a training program in its facilities. They teach music and train people to become AC technicians. Almost all of its worship leaders received the basics in music in this small school.

--Peace Mennonite, continues involvement in and support of the Dallas Peace Center. Pastor Ryan has been president of the board in the last two years. Peace Mennonite is the founder of this center. The church is very active in events such as demonstrations about immigration reform, protests about war in Syria, and in other similar events. The church members are involved as organizers or serve in leadership roles.

--Houston Mennonite Church has a clear vision about peace and justice's role of the church in the world. Marty Troyer is known as "the peace pastor" for his column in the Houston Chronicle newspaper.

--San Antonio Mennonite Church had been connected with voluntary service. Recently the church purchased Casa Maria y Marta (House of Mary & Martha) to continue serving the community around them.

--Grace Mennonite Fellowship congregation in Gladewater is an example of permanent service to those in permanent need.

The fact that Camino de Santidad, Casa Betania and Aposento Alto are working very close with undocumented immigrants, serving them as support communities, giving them the grace to learn from the Bible together, growing as new people of God, is a demonstration of what is in God's heart: to serve the poor, the estranged, and the outcast in the world.

All these churches are examples of what churches can do.

As I always pray, may God continue blessing all the churches in Texas and beyond as they serve in the world and in the name of Jesus.

**Minister of Christian Formation, Resource Library Director, Director of Assembly Planning
Marlene Bogard**

Year of the Bible - I stand amazed! Thirteen WDC churches are “Reading through the Bible in 90 Days.” Offerings include multiple classes, on multiple days of the week and multiple times during this Year of the Bible.

When we first provided an energetic overview of this curriculum at our Year of the Bible Launch in August 2013, we had no idea that other congregations would take on this rigorous and personally demanding assignment. But each day (yes, really) I hear comments about how powerful this experience has been for individuals and for whole congregations. Everything from “I can’t believe *that* is in the Old Testament,” to “Thank goodness the New Testament is on the horizon,” to “I have never experienced God in this way.”

And now I wonder...is this what it feels like to have the Holy Spirit move through our churches? I have also wondered...is this what happens when we “raise the bar?”

What if we challenge folks to be more, to do more for their own faith formation? What if the very challenge of “Reading the Bible in 90 Days” is the ticket to success? What if all along, folks just really wanted to be challenged, and *not* pampered?

Can we take some clues from the wildly successful Bible Reading programs for other aspects of Christian life? What if all pastors challenged each household in each congregation to attend worship each Sunday? Might we challenge the parents in our congregations to daily pray for their children? Might we challenge our youth groups to memorize Matthew 5?

The wide use of this method is only one of the hundreds of ways that folks across WDC are finding meaning in God’s Word. From Bible foods to golden (foil) calf idols, to quizzes, skits, sermons and memorization, the scriptures have come alive this year.

The bar is raised, the Spirit is moving! Thanks be to God!

Conference Resource Library: Our one-of-a-kind resource library continues to thrive as a center for Anabaptist Christian resourcing for all ages. In 2013, we added 390 new resources, over half of them in Biblical Studies and Christian living. These additional books and DVD’s boost the collection to provide a buffet of resources to use during the Year of the Bible and beyond.

Most Popular: Bible studies (print and DVD); small group resources, Christian formation and devotional life, children’s literature, youth ministry and peace and justice.

Book a Box! Many congregations are finding that long-term loans of resources are a great way to expand their own Church library. We can customize a Box of Books to fit the needs of your congregation. Perhaps you are doing a series on the Psalms, on Prayer or on a particular issue. We are happy to select 20 resources on these topics and send them to you for a two-month loan. All you have to do is ask!

Be amazed! DVD’s – we have nearly 500 available for personal or small group viewing and study. To access the list, go to mennowdc.org/library/catalog/ then click Visual, then Materials by Type, then DVD.

Surf the Web: Our library catalog provides an overview of our 12,000 resources. Many include summaries and reviews. If you have a library card, you can reserve, renew or make your own book lists.

There’s an App for That: New – an APP for your smart phone (Apple or Android) or tablet is now available for the Conference Resource Library Catalog.

1) Go to the App Store (iDevices) or go to the Play Store (Android) and search for the ‘Atrium on the go’ application.

2) Download the App and add this information in appropriate spaces:

Server: mennowdc.booksys.net

Port: 80 (this can also be left blank as it defaults to 80)

Library: crl

3) Voila!

I look forward to visiting with you and assisting you with your resourcing needs. Stop in at 2517 N. Main Street, North Newton, KS. Or call or email me! 316-283-6300 / crlib@mennowdc.org

Conference Treasurer

Phyllis Regier

*This report will be posted online after annual audit is completed.
See www.mennonwdc.org, Annual Assembly*

WDC/SCC Youth Ministry

Dwight Regier, Network Team Leader

The new model for conference youth ministry for Western District and South Central Conferences is now completing its second year. This model has two main components:

1. Network Team Leader
 - a. Meet individually with youth pastors for consultation, resourcing, pastoral care, and prayer.
 - b. Lead monthly lunches for youth pastors for sharing, input, and discussion.
 - c. Seek vision and coordinate with the WDC/SCC Youth Ministry Committee.
2. WDC/SCC Youth Ministry Committee
 - a. Lead the planning of two high school and one junior high conference-wide events each year.
 - b. Support smaller events envisioned and planned by youth pastors within the conferences.

As Network Team Leader, I have the privilege of hearing where God is at work in the ministry of our youth pastors. I get to be in on conversations about discerning God's vision for their youth and youth groups. I am continually challenged and encouraged by the commitment and dedication of these leaders: their love of God; their commitment to Jesus Christ and his church; their compassion for youth and their desire to see these youth become dedicated followers of Jesus. I am also privileged to meet with the youth pastors for lunch on a monthly basis. These gatherings often remind me of a warm bowl of rising bread dough—brown and lumpy. (Wait, that's not it! It's the way that the ideas and energy grow and grow when you get that many youth pastors together!)

The WDC/SCC Youth Ministry Committee (Isaac Landis (Whitestone), chair; Hope Greiser Graber (Alexanderwohl), Caleb Regehr (Inman/Buhler churches), and Peter Wintermote (FMC Halstead)) is made up of youth pastors who volunteer to help conference-wide events happen. This past year the committee led the Out Of the Pew event in November and coordinated with Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp for Snow Camps in February and March for senior high youth. For junior high youth the committee coordinated Snow Camp with Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, and they are planning on a Know Jesus event early next year.

Please keep our conference youth in your prayers as they seek to understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. And pray too for the folks who are walking with these youth and helping them see the signs of God's Kingdom along the way.

Western District Conference Executive Board

Wendy Funk Schrag, Board Secretary

The WDC Executive Board meets six times a year. At each meeting, the Board reviews financial reports, reports from WDC Commissions and Committees, the budget, staff and conference minister reports. The Executive Board also makes recommendations to the Gifts Discernment Committee for nominations and appointments to the Board, Commissions and Committees. Additional highlights of the year include:

August, 2013

- Year of the Bible kick-off was held prior to Annual Assembly on August 1
- Annual Assembly was held August 2-4 at Bethel College in N. Newton, Kansas
 - Accepted Chin Emmanuel Congregation as a new member of WDC
 - Recognized churches that have left WDC
 - Terry Shue presented on the basics of Mennonite polity
- Executive Committee met: reviewed Annual Assembly, discussed outreach to two churches who are processing questions about continued membership in WDC, discussed plans for the Human Sexuality Task Force reference council event for October. The Board designated Amanda Rempel as the WDC representative to the Congo Mennonite conference.

October 2013

- Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force sponsored the Reference Council event October 25-26, 2013 in partnership with Bethel College by sponsoring a performance by Ted Swartz on the topic of sexuality. Approximately 100 people attended the Reference Council event at Faith Mennonite Church on October 26. The round table event focused on listening and explored Biblical and personal views and experiences of homosexuality. Main speakers were Dave Boshart and Keith Graber Miller, with additional panel members discussing their personal experiences.

November 2013 – Executive Board Meeting

- The Board reviewed the October Reference Council event, planned for Annual Assembly 2014, discerned the future of the Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force, reviewed a draft of a Church Planting Commission presented to the Board from the Leadership Commission, and officially terminated Peace Mennonite in Columbia, MO as a church plant.

January 2014 – Executive Board Meeting

- Executive Board met for an extended annual Board retreat. The Board heard an update from Marlene Bogard on the Year of the Bible activities and moved to suggest Marlene as a speaker at the upcoming Constituent Leaders Council to be held in North Newton in March.
- Continued planning was done for Annual Assembly 2014 which will be held July 4-6 at Camp Waxahachie, TX.
- Clarence Rempel provided a presentation on WDC history of church planting. The Board approved a proposal for a Church Planting Commission to go to the delegates this summer for action.
- Clarence reviewed the Area Conferences/ Church Conference Ministers Retreat he attended in December in Denver, the materials he has provided for pastors who have been mentoring new pastors in WDC, and the state of the WDC staff and their activities.

March 2014 – Executive Board Meeting

- Executive Board received a resolution for processing for Annual Assembly 2014. A resolutions committee has been appointed to work with the resolution to bring back to the Executive Board for consideration at their May meeting.
- The Board approved the remaining members of the Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force continue for another year (March 2014 – March 2015) and re-evaluate their continued existence and mission at that time. Board members received a review of a visit by representatives of the Board and Leadership Commission with a WDC congregation. Concerns were discussed related to WDC's response to homosexuality issues. Clarence shared "relational challenges" among the MC USA and other Area Conferences in the issue of homosexuality including the letter signed by 150 people credentialed for ministry, and Mountain States Conference licensing of an associate pastor living in a lesbian committed relationship.

Gifts Discernment Committee

Brian Stucky, Chair

Beginning in February the Gifts Discernment Committee began preparing for the 2014 Annual Conference. The Committee again requested pastors and congregational chairpersons from each of our Western District Congregations to provide names of individuals from their congregations who they felt would feel a calling to serve on a board, commission or committee of the conference. A number of names were forwarded from which to work and very much facilitated the work of the Committee.

The Gifts Discernment Committee, on behalf of the conference, wishes to thank those, when called, to have their name placed on the ballot for a second term as well as those who have agreed to have their name placed on the ballot for an initial first term. The Committee, as in the past, strives to prepare the ballot so that the board and commissions will have diversity in gender, age, as well as representation from a cross section of congregations and the conference's geographical area.

Committee members: Brian Stucky, chair, Eric Buller Secretary, Jane McNair, Susan Jantzen, Roberta Harms, Phyllis Goertzen, and Clarence Rempel, staff.

Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force

Jim Stucky, Chairperson

Two Thousand Thirteen was active and challenging for the Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force. The highlight and culmination of much of our work came on October 25 and 26 of this past year.

On Friday (25th) we sponsored and coordinated an event we called ENGAGING OUR SEXUAL CULTURE. It was a dialogue event sponsored by our Task Force and Bethel College Campus Ministries.

In the morning Keith Graber Miller (professor of Bible, Religion and Philosophy at Goshen College) spoke in convocation at Bethel College. For the past two decades, he has regularly taught a Religion and Sexuality course in the Religion Department at Goshen College and co-taught a Human Sexuality course in the Sociology Department. His presentation was enthusiastically received by the student body and the campus community.

In the evening an original theatrical production “A PEEK INTO THE CHURCHES JOURNEY WITH SEXUALITY” was presented by Ted Swartz (of Ted and Co. Theaterworks). Ted was engaged by our task force to write and produce a new work which would speak specifically to the topic of human sexuality and the conversations which surround that topic in our churches. As would be expected, with Ted’s style there was much laughter, but also a rich thread of emotion and poignancy. The “sold out” crowd gave many expressions of appreciation for this work.

Ted’s performance was followed by a conversation (Shameless Sexuality) between Keith Graber Miller and Ted Swartz. The evening closed with a question and response time with audience participation. We want to express gratitude to the “Fransen Family Foundation” and other contributors for helping to make this event possible.

On Saturday (26th) our Task Force facilitated a symposium titled “THE CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY, a conversation that can hold us together”. Our stated purpose was “To demonstrate to ourselves, to each other, to our congregations, to the wider church, and to the world that persons of widely different world views and values can come together to engage and dialogue on divergent issues, to fellowship in trust and love, and to commune with one another in the name of Christ.”

More than 120 persons registered for the all-day event at Faith Mennonite Church in Newton, KS. In the morning two contrasting presentations on the topic “The church’s response to persons of same-sex orientation and to same-gendered couples” were made by David Boshart (Executive Conference Minister for Central Plains Conference) and Keith Graber Miller (professor of Bible, Religion and Philosophy at Goshen College). They were followed by four persons who presented their perspectives and stories. Finally David and Keith closed with additional comments. After lunch there was a follow up questions and response time with Keith and David.

The primary focus in the afternoon was “Sharing Understandings and Convictions” in Dialogue Circles. Each person was asked to respond to the following question. “What lies at the heart of your current convictions about persons of same-sex orientation and same-gendered couples? How does your perspective reflect your most cherished values?” Considerable time was allowed for intentional dialogue to occur. Following this period there was open mic time for persons to address the entire group with “Giving and Receiving Counsel”. As a closing worship time Conference Minister Clarence Rempel led us in reading and reflecting on Romans 14 and 15.

It was a long, tiring day, but generally appreciated by all. It is our hope that participants have returned to their respective churches with new interest in “Maintaining Relationships Amid Conflicting Convictions”.

It has been a blessing and privilege to serve on the Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force. A special thank you to Clarence Rempel for meeting with us and serving as “Liaison” to the Executive Board and as Spiritual Counsel. The participating members through this year have been Heidi Regier Kreider, Nadine Reimer Penner, Brett Klingberg, Marvin Zehr and Jim Stucky. Barb Schmidt and Eduardo Vargas moved out of our District.

While the Task Force will be less active in 2014 we are available to assist individual churches in dialogue processes if requested. We also are available to the Western District Conference Executive Board as needed.

Leadership Commission
Kathy Neufeld Dunn, Chair

The Leadership Commission has two major areas of responsibility: credentialing and resourcing persons for ministry and providing oversight for church planting ministries. The first responsibility continues unchanged. The second is in transition.

During the past year the Commission had the joy of interviewing a number of persons for credentialing:

Ordination

- Brett Klingenberg, First Mennonite, Beatrice, NB
- Susan Janzen, First Mennonite, Hillsboro, KS

License toward Ordination

- Simon Hmung, Chin Emmanuel Church, Houston, TX
- Moises Romero, Camino de Santidad, Liberal, KS
- Brian Harmon, First Mennonite, Halstead, KS
- Nathan Koontz, First Mennonite, Hutchinson, KS
- Derek King, Eden Mennonite, Moundridge, KS

License for Specific Ministry

- Dallas Krehbiel, Kingman Mennonite, Kingman, KS

Transfer of Ordination Credentials to WDC

- Bob Beecher, Beatrice Mennonite, Beatrice, NB

We grieve with the Beatrice Mennonite Church in the April 7 death of their pastor, Bob Beecher.

Pastoral Resourcing Opportunities:

- **Pastors' Day Apart**, James Krabill, "Journeys with Scripture," November 21
- **Mentor/Mentee Resourcing**, "Growing in Ministry Journey, March 13 & April 10
- **Pastor/Spouse/Family Retreat**, "Renew & Relate," April 25-27, Camp Mennoscah

Church Planting Taskforce: Church Planting Task Force has continued to move toward becoming a commission of its own. Necessary WDC Bylaw changes have been discussed. A list of potential names to serve on such a commission have been forwarded to Gifts Discernment.

Brian Pellecer was called as the new church planter for Iglesia Menonita Aposento Alto, the Wichita, KS Church Plant.

Commission members: Kathy Neufeld Dunn, Renee Kanagy, Lee Lever, Terry Rediger, Weldon Schloneger and June Thomsen.

Church Planting Task Force
Lee Lever

The Church Planting Task Force was initiated in 2012 by the Leadership Commission to give more attention to church planting initiatives and to provide more support to Associate Conference Minister Gilberto Flores who carries WDC staff oversight for church planting efforts.

The work of Gilberto Flores is very much appreciated as he visits, counsels, encourages, writes about, and promotes church planting across the conference.

Current members of the Church Planting Task Force are: Jaime Cazares, Lee Lever, Nita Nikkel, and Gilberto Flores. Previous members were Jeff Wintermote, who chaired the task force over the past two years, and Jack Norris. As the task force nears the end of its assignment and a Church Planting Commission proposal comes before this year's delegate assembly, the Leadership Commission decided not to replace departing task force members.

Current WDC Church Plants and Sister Church Partnerships:

- Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church (Goessel, KS) / Iglesia Luz del Evangelio (Dallas, TX)
- Iglesia Camino de Santidad (Liberal, KS) / Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church (Inman, KS)
- Iglesia Cristiana Menonita Mi Redentor (Dallas, TX) / Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church (Wichita, KS)
- Iglesia Menonita Monte Horeb (Dallas, TX) / Southern Hills Mennonite Church (Topeka, KS)
- Grace Hill Mennonite Church (Whitewater, KS) / Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Esperanza (Dallas, TX)

- Hope Mennonite Church, Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church of the Servant (all three of Wichita, KS) / Iglesia Menonita Aposento Alto (Wichita, KS)
- Bethel College Mennonite Church (North Newton, KS), First Mennonite Church and Shalom Mennonite Church (both of Newton, KS) / Iglesia Menonita Casa Betania (Newton, KS)
- First Mennonite Church, Beatrice, NE / Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Vida, San Antonio, TX
- Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Gladewater, TX / Salina Mennonite Church, KS

A proposal to form a Church Planting Commission is before the delegate session this year. The formation of such a commission will bring the work of the Church Planting Task Force to completion and will place this vital WDC ministry on a more solid foundation. We are excited about the renewed emphasis on connecting with and encouraging emerging Anabaptist/Mennonite groups in our conference and pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to new partnerships. Thank you to congregations and individuals who support church planting efforts in many ways, relationally, financially, prayerfully, and by being alert to new possibilities.

Resource Commission

Jeff Koller, Chair

The work of the Resource Commission this past year endeavored to follow the direction given in our mission statement. We are to “Empower WDC congregations as they witness to Jesus Christ in the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition, connect with God’s mission in the world, and provide faith formation resources for all ages.”

We are blessed to work with Marlene Bogard in her role as Minister of Christian Formation, and Resource Library Director. Marlene brings passion, insight, and integrity to her role and she serves our commission well as we seek to serve the conference. Marlene gives substantial effort in the organizing of our annual conference events, and we deeply appreciate the thoughtful work and long hours needed to accomplish this huge task!

The biggest project this past year was the launch of the “Year of the Bible” at last summer’s conference sessions in North Newton. Marlene worked tirelessly on this launch and has served the many congregations and individuals participating in the project. She has kept the Year of the Bible Network Facebook page current with entries that offer a continuous feed of new ideas and approaches to bible study. Marlene has also maintained the Year of the Bible page on the WDC website with the same great ideas and variety of ways to engage. You can check this out at (<http://www.yearofthebiblenetwork.org/>).

In addition to the Year of the Bible efforts, the commission invited representatives of the various task forces and committees who we oversee to report in and give us a current view of their work. We heard from the Music and Worship committee, the Low German Mennonites task force, the End the Death Penalty task force, and the Historical committee. All the groups except the Historical committee have been active and are serving segments of our conference. The Historical committee reported difficulty in finding folks to serve and also in discerning a direction for their work that would be relevant and meaningful to members of WDC.

We are also working on discernment for use of funds allocated to our commission as we go forward. We have a trust fund maturing in 2014, and will decide on reinvesting and spending the funds in a way that will help to provide resources to our membership. Our desire is to utilize the funds in a way that will serve to deepen the faith of the people who use the many resources of the Western District Conference Library.

The current Resource Commission members are: Katherine Goerzen (Grace Hill, Newton); Vicki Hinz-Ensz (First Mennonite, Beatrice); Gordon Houser (New Creation, Newton); Ryan Koehn (First Mennonite, Newton); Jeff Koller (Eden Mennonite, Moundridge); and Jennie Wintermote (First Mennonite, Halstead).

WDC Historical Committee Annual Report

Roger Juhnke

The WDC Historical Committee has been inactive this past year. Currently the sole member of the committee is Roger Juhnke. Anyone interested in joining the committee may contact the conference offices (316-283-3600) or Roger (316-283-0452).

Low German Mennonites from Mexico Support Task Force
Margaret Goering, Chair

1. When did this task force begin?
 - a. Officially in January 2004.
 - b. Before that, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) conducted a survey using WDC member Tina Block Ediger (and others) to conduct a survey of Low German farmworkers in Kansas. That survey documented thousands of Low Germans, particularly in western Kansas, who reported high occurrences of medical needs.
 - c. A partnership between WDC, which supplies the task force to monitor and advocate for Low German healthy living, and the KDHE, which supplies vouchers for direct medical and dental services supported through bi-lingual case managers and health promoters, enables ministry to Low German farmworkers across the state.
2. How often does the task force meet?
 - a. We meet three times (spring, summer, and fall) per calendar year.
 - b. One member typically meets with the statewide advisory council for strategic planning purposes.
3. How does the task force relate to WDC?
 - a. The task force is accountable to the WDC Resource Commission.
 - b. In addition, the WDC task force is connected to the Mennonite Central Committee Canada program based in Steinbach, Manitoba and adopted its guiding statement: *“MCC sees to share God’s love with LGM people by working in a mutually beneficial relationship with local leaders, communities and organizations to enhance their capacity to address such issues as poverty, conflict, literacy, health and natural disasters.”* The WDC task force added a fourth goal: *“to share our common spiritual background and faith.”*
4. How does the program work?
 - a. Case managers and health promoters identify farmworker families in need of medical, dental or mental health needs. Through interpretation services, vouchers for medical assistance, and educational opportunities, the KDHE funds are utilized to support needy families. The farm workers’ program served 5,010 people in 2013. 27% of these are Low German speakers. There has been an increase in funds for dental care, and the program is looking into increasing funds for mental health and substance abuse.
 - b. The salaries of the health promoters are paid through grants from KDHE and administered by WDC. No WDC funds are used by the task force.
 - c. The WDC task force has a representative on the KS Statewide Farmworker Health Program advisory council.
5. Who is on the task force?
 - a. Margaret Goering, Chair; Harold D. Thieszen, vice-chair; Milton Claassen, secretary; Lottie Boschmann, Mary Duerksen, David Harder, Lillian Quiring, Carola Ratzlaff, Amanda Rempel, and Lici Roth.
 - b. In the summer of 2013, Olin and Carol Claassen and Dorothy Nickel Friesen completed eleven years serving on the task force.

Worship and Music Task Force Report
Kay Schroeder, chair

Task Force members: Carol Klingenberg, Holly Swartzendruber, Steven Miller, Kay Schroeder, chair.

The Music and Worship Task Force said farewell this year to Rosi Penner Kaufman and Ken Rodgers who have faithfully, capably, and wonderfully served for many years. They welcomed two new members: Steven Miller and Kay Schroeder.

The Task Force coordinated a Director’s Round Table event on October 19. Area choir directors were invited to meet together to share joys, challenges, and their top five favorite choir anthems. Those who attended found the morning to be very helpful, encouraging, and went away with several resources including music packets and lists of anthems for their choirs. Future plans are being made for another director’s round table this fall and a children’s choir festival in 2015.

Our committee continues to support and maintain the choral music lending library, a resource to conference congregations looking to share choral and children's music. We feel this is an important service to the music programs of local congregations.

Tournament Task Force

Lynn Eichelberger

The WDC Annual Basketball Tournament was held on March 24, 25, 27, and 29 at Bethel College. Nine teams participated this year. The churches were as follows: Alexanderwohl, Whitestone, **Eden (Division I Champions)**, Hoffnungsau, Grace/Hill Zion, Zion/Grace Hill, **Journey-McPherson (Division II Champions)**, Journey-Yoder, Bethel College.

I would like to thank the officials who officiated this year's tournament: Cory Ferralez, Matt Weaver, Perry Koehn, Terry Kessler, Dwight Suderman, Jerod Hett, and I did a few games as well.

All went well and thank you again to Bethel College for letting us use their gyms again this year.

Task Force member: Lynn Eichelberger

Stewardship Commission

Stan Voth, Chairperson

We thank the following Stewardship Commission members for their dedicated service to the Western District Conference: Stan Voth (chairperson), Karen Zehr (secretary), Jim Yoder (liaison to Trustee Task Force), Stephen Hochstetler (liaison to Staff Relations Committee), Leanna Ediger, and Dwight Flaming (newly appointed). Phyllis Regier (Business Manager) and Clarence Rempel (Conference Minister) provide invaluable staff representation and support to the commission.

The commission met four times this year. It monitors the WDC annual budget and management of WDC 2500 Place facility. This year we are very grateful that income exceeded expenses, even though we did not meet the 2013 budget. The following initiatives and activities contributed to this year's budget status:

- 1) Implementation of efficiency practices by dedicated WDC staff operating programs and managing facilities and property,
- 2) Provision of outstanding services to the congregations through the resource library, pastoral care, and church plant outreach,
- 3) Outstanding response to the annual fund drive request letter,
- 4) Income and staff rebates for hosting the AMBS Great Plains Seminary at 2500 Place,
- 5) Generous support for church plants,
- 6) Year of The Bible program broadly implemented by WDC churches and adopted conference wide by MCUSA,
- 7) Intensive and effective constituent communication in the form of "Seeds", "Sprouts", and "Garden" publications,
- 8) Implementation of generosity practices to foster a conference culture of generosity.

Next year's budget will include some of the following challenging conditions:

- 1) Fewer congregations to support the budget,
- 2) Less income and staff charges because of closure of the AMBS Great Plains Seminary hosted at 2500 Place,
- 3) Discontinuation of receipt of Federal health insurance rebates used by WDC for employee's health insurance,
- 4) Maintenance and management of 2500 Place--finding occupants to fill underutilized space to generate income for the conference.
- 5) Establishing a legacy giving program for long term conference viability

This commission is very grateful for the numerous blessings we received this year, including financial and spiritual support from our constituents. We look forward to meeting the challenges, and providing the WDC with resources to help spread the good news of God working among us.

WDC Staff Relations Committee

Sondra Bandy Koontz, chair

The Staff Relations Committee meets quarterly with Clarence Rempel, conference minister. Committee members hear Clarence's "state of the conference report." Together we discuss the joys, concerns, and issues facing the conference. We provide support and a sounding board for Clarence as he ministers to our conference and administers conference staff.

Committee members also receive reports on individual staff and volunteers and their areas of work. This year members discussed personnel policies related to sabbaticals, vacation, and overtime. We also made changes to the review documents used for staff evaluations.

Committee members: Sondra Bandy Koontz, chair; Christy Schunn-Sebes; Janice Good; Steve Hochstetler

Trustee Task Force

Phyllis Regier, Staff

The Trustees Task Force was formed to review loan applications for the Revolving Loan Fund, make recommendations as to the acceptance of property or disposal of property, evaluate and enter into legal contracts (real property) and to supervise and manage Conference property. As of January 31, 2014, the Revolving Loan Fund had four loans receivable totaling \$57,055.44.

In 2013/14 the Trustees:

- Oversaw the management of 2500 Place.
- Approved a Revolving Fund loan to Mennonite Church of the Servant to aid in the remodeling of a new church building.

Trustee Task Force members: Gary Rediger (Chairperson), Eric Bruce, Rick Krehbiel, Leanna Ediger, (Stewardship Commission liaison) and Phyllis Regier (ex officio)

Western District Conference Women in Mission

Amanda Rempel, Secretary

Western District Women in Mission have had several enjoyable and inspirational events this past year. "Forgiving Ourselves" was the title of the message shared by Joan Boyer at the Women in Mission dinner at our meeting at annual assembly on August 2, 2013, at the Bethel College Mennonite Church. Music was offered by Arlene Hett.

The annual Women's and Girls' Retreat at Camp Mennoscah was co-hosted with South Central Conference on September 6-8, 2013. The main speaker was Denise Nickel whose theme was "Serving creates lifelong memories." She showed us how easy it is to make service part of our everyday experience. Denise is a member of Tabor Mennonite Church and serves on the board of Mennonite Women USA. For the first time a Friday evening program was added to the weekend, and it was well attended.

The annual Spring Supper planned jointly with South Central Conference's Women's Ministry was held in the spacious fellowship hall of Eden Mennonite Church, rural Moundridge on March 20, 2014. Because of around 250 registrants the event was moved from its original location at Faith Mennonite in Newton. The women from Faith Mennonite graciously agreed to proceed with the meal planning and preparation, and were assisted by a willing group of women at Eden. Speaker for this event was Karen Dalke, a Mennonite pastor from Des Moines, Iowa. In her message, "Out of the wreckage came a blessing," she shared about a time of deep personal struggle and how, in time, she came through it a stronger person. Music was provided by a trio from Buhler Mennonite Church.

In addition to supporting the above events, WDC Women in Mission have contributed to the following in the past year: scholarships for international women at Bethel College, Mennonite Women USA, Camp Mennoscah, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, MCC, Western District Conference, scholarships for WDC women at AMBS—Great Plains, Bethel College Women's Association, Know Jesus event, Peace Connections.

Camp Mennoscah Association
Olivia Bartel, Camp Mennoscah staff

Greetings from the Camp Mennoscah Board of Directors and staff!

Staff: Gardell Stucky began his time as the full-time Campus and Facilities director at the end of May and Olivia Bartel began her seventh year as camp director in February. Don & Mary Troyer, former camp directors, joined us as long-term volunteers in nature and kitchen/custodial. The board determined the need for an executive director and expects to fill that position before the start of the 2014 summer.

Financial Report: The 2013 fiscal year was shortened by a month, changing to a Jan.-Dec. fiscal year. Contributions in 2013 totaled \$113,881. Net income was \$93,029 with expenses of \$216,466. Approximately \$14,000 remains on the swimming pool debt. The Camp Mennoscah board of directors approved a 2014 budget of \$322,700.

Rental groups and Retreats: Fifty-three churches, families, and other groups visited Camp Mennoscah. Eight retreats were hosted by Camp Mennoscah from March to November: Spring Scrapbooking (2), Retirees' Relaxation Retreat, Mental Health Spiritual Retreat, Work & Play Camp, Fall Scrapbooking (2), and Family Camp. The intergenerational Family Camp was cancelled due to low interest. Two additional scrapbooking retreats were added due to increased interest. The Mennonite Camping Association Mid-West/West Regional gathering also took place at Camp Mennoscah in 2013. A total of 171 people, including staff and presenters, attended these retreats.

Summer Youth Camps: Approximately 170 volunteers and staff contributed to the success of our eight summer youth camps. The total number of campers was 575 campers (541 campers in 2012). First Camp (3rd & 4th grades) had 62 campers, PreJunior camps (4th & 5th grades) had 138 campers, Junior camps (6th & 7th grades) had 151 campers, Junior High (8th & 9th grades) had 122 campers, and Senior High (10th – 12th grades) had 102 campers. The summer theme was "All Things New: Look What God is Doing." Delon Martens and Tammy Duvanel Unruh ended their time as weekly program directors. Delon directed for over 40 years.

Projects: The Bluestem house was used by a rental group for the first time in October after hard work by dedicated volunteers. A few details remain to be finished. Work on the new bath houses met with some delays and did not start in the fall as originally hoped. New ovens, a new dishwasher, and a new ice machine replaced older versions in the Main Camp kitchen. A new Gator was also generously donated to camp, and the mattresses in the cabins were replaced with new ones in May.

Events: The third annual Camp Sing was held on May 5, 2013 at Faith Mennonite Church in Newton to raise funds for the new bath houses. \$700 was donated specifically for the boys' bathhouse and \$660 for the girls' bathhouse. The second Camp Mennoscah Association annual meeting was held on September 22, 2013. Anna, Lois, and Tom Harder provided musical entertainment.

Camp Mennoscah is a place where people of all ages come to renew themselves, their relationships, and their connection with God. In this most sacred space, we intentionally seek the intersection of God, nature, self, and others. We offer overflowing gratitude to you, our constituents, for all the support you have given to Camp Mennoscah—in prayer, as volunteers, campers and guests, and in your many gifts. Thank you!

Board of Directors (alphabetical order): Greg Bauer, Arlin Buller, Kent Erb, Jay Goering, Darrin Hiebert, Valerie Klaassen, Miriam Krehbiel, George Leary, Weldon Martens, Megan Miller, Kent Peters, and Jill Robb. Staff: Gardell Stucky, Facilities and Campus Director and Olivia Bartel, camp director.

Agri-Urban
Alan Entz, President

We want to give thanks for what God has done for Agri-Urban and look forward to what he has planned for the future. We have been blessed with the help of many people that make Agri-Urban work. Without these people Agri-Urban would not go on. We thank you for all the hard work.

Due to heavy rains last August the 2013 Day on the Farm event was not held, we do look forward to this year's event though. The Day on the Farm is scheduled for August 16, so mark your calendars.

Thank you to all participants for your donations of time, money and energy in 2012 that helped us give \$22,888.05 to Bethel College, Western District and Mennonite Church USA.

Mennonite Central Committee Central States
Michelle E. Armster, Transitional Executive Director

INTRODUCTION: The MCC Central States region covers 16 states. The region runs from North Dakota to Texas and from the Rocky Mountains to the Mississippi River, including the state of Mississippi. Approximately 450 Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren and Brethren in Christ congregations are in the region. At this time we are in the midst of recruiting new Board members, but we have the capacity to engage eighteen people on our Board of Directors. If you would be interested in serving MCC Central States in this way, please call the Transitional Executive Director, Michelle Armster.

PROGRAMS: MCC Central States continues to provide programs and opportunities for people to be engaged and involved in the fulfilling the vision of being the hands and feet of Jesus.

- **Community Organizers, New Orleans, LA**
We are a two woman team of organizers – one white, one Black, working in a place-based, multi-strategy, racial justice initiative of MCC Central States. We challenge institutionalized forms of oppression while promoting liberatory practices. Our work centers organizing & advocacy strategies animated by community building, storytelling, capacity building, and popular education in the service of ending harm caused by white supremacist ideologies of criminalization, exclusion, neglect, & displacement.
- **Immigration and Educational Program Coordinator, Houston, TX.**
The Immigration and Educational Program Coordinator (IEPC) will facilitate educational workshops in Houston and across Texas, focused on Latino populations. This educational component, combined with continued outreach and relationship-building with predominately grassroots Latino/a agencies, leaders, activists, residents, churches and interfaith organizations, and Houston's coalition groups continues the work of the Central States Houston Program, which is focused on advocating for social justice for the Latino/a community.
- **Indigenous Vision Center**
IVC is framed from the long standing work with the Oglala Lakota people on the Pine Ridge reservation. Building on the work of OLN, IVC will maintain anti-racist, anti-oppression and decolonization values in its approach to social justice for Indigenous people, as defined by Indigenous people and the IVC support circle. It is intended that the program will serve alongside current organizations doing the work and help to network and connect Indigenous social justice initiatives worldwide. It is the hope of the program to connect in an authentic way based on relationship.
- **MCC CS Northern Tier Regional Associate**
Responsible for building relationships and promoting the ministry of MCC to Mennonite churches, constituents and residents of the Northern Tier states (SD, ND, MN, MT primarily).
- **Peace & Justice Education Coordinator, North Newton, KS**
Coordinate MCC peace and justice initiatives within the region in collaboration with other regional staff and MCC U.S. peace and justice staff. The goal is to raise awareness and encourage action among MCC's predominantly white constituency toward power-sharing, dismantling oppression and peace based on justice.
- **International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP)**
MCC was blessed to have been able to place 4 international young people in the Central States region. Luckily, all of them were placed in the Denver, Colorado area. This allowed them to form relationships and support, that they have expressed, will be important for the rest of their lives.
- **International Work**
MCC Central States is a part of the larger MCC system. Of the more than \$4 million raised each year from this region, over \$3 million goes to support the international work. We also contribute with international service workers from the Central States region.
- **Volunteers**
Thousands of volunteers are doing the work of MCC Central states in 11 Thrift stores, 12 Relief Sales and Meat Canning in various locations. Other ways that people volunteer is by writing letters to elected officials, participating in various educational opportunities and making kits, quilts and blankets.

Thank you for being the hands and feet of Jesus!



www.prairieview.org

Prairie View's ministry is one of healing and hope. Our year can be highlighted by sharing patient stories with you.

One year ago, Margaret was in a wheelchair, barely able to speak and continuing to decline. Through a comprehensive approach to treatment, her clinicians were able to diagnose and treat a medical condition that complicated her mental disorder. Today she is walking, talking, a very active participant in her own treatment, and involved with various community and church activities. Her strong faith, together with our individualized services, is sustaining her as she deals with issues of grief and loss. She says she is "unable to imagine her life without Prairie View." Margaret is a part of our inpatient outpatient program. She spends several hours every week with our expert clinicians, learning new tools to cope with her condition and manage her symptoms.

Every Saturday morning our part-time chaplain leads a spirituality group in the Addictions Treatment Center. One morning a young man said that Psalm 63 really spoke to his heart because of a certain verse. When she asked if it was the verse about crying on your bed in the night, he was amazed that she knew the very verse that spoke to him. (What he didn't know is that she had just read Psalm 63 that week as part of a special activity through her church.) The next week this young man shared a song he wrote called "Psalm 63." Another Prairie View staff had shared a bookmark with him and placed it in a Bible he had been given. The bookmark was placed inadvertently on the page with Psalm 63. That was when he first read verse 6, "On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night." He shared that he had been distressed the night he opened the Bible and that verse had spoken to his need. I was struck by one of the lines in his song, "It took me 35 years to wake up." God brings us into relationship in interesting ways!

In March of 2014, Prairie View celebrated our 60th anniversary of transforming lives. Here are some fun facts related to our six decades of service:

- Prairie View began in 1954, with volunteer labor and donated land and supplies, \$200,000 in charitable support from area Mennonite churches and about \$5000 from the Newton Chamber of Commerce.
- We have served approximately 200,000 patients over these 60 years.
- Prairie View has employed more than 4000 staff in six decades.
- This year we will serve 13,000 patients and employ more than 400 staff.

We have recently completed the fund raising activity to generate charitable support for the renovation of a three story former medical office building in Newton. This remodeled facility is the site of integrated community health services provided by the Harvey County Health Department, Health Ministries Clinic and Prairie View. We look forward to beginning to serve patients in this facility in the summer of 2014.

As part of our community outreach for prevention, identification and treatment for mental health and addictions conditions, mental health organizations across the country are offering certified Mental Health First Aid training courses. To learn more about this life-saving tool, contact Prairie View or visit this website: www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org.

Please remember that Prairie View is anxious to interact with your congregation. Please contact me or Misty Elder, Director of Advancement to arrange a tour, volunteer service or mission project, request pulpit supply or other presentation. *In His service, Jessie Kaye, Prairie View President and CEO*



Greetings to Western District Conference in the name of Jesus Christ!

For many years, I've regularly recorded in a journal the things for which I am grateful to God. This practice shapes my thinking and attitudes about the world around me.

My heart wells with gratitude as I marvel at the countless ways in which I've seen God at work across Mennonite Church USA as I have worked with the national staff. In 2013, these included:

- The enthusiastic embrace across our church of the 12 Scriptures Project and Western District Conference's Year of the Bible initiative.
- The 85+ new fellowships/church plants in Mennonite Church USA over the last five years.
- The commitments and re-commitments to faith made by hundreds of youth and adults during worship together at our biennial convention in Phoenix in July.
- Learning trips to the Arizona-Mexico border during Phoenix 2013, where more than 300 Mennonites learned about the history and current realities of immigration in the United States through BorderLinks.
- The special offerings at Phoenix 2013 that raised more than \$40,000 for the DREAMer Fund (which offers grants to help young undocumented Mennonites apply for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program) and for the development of the new *Shine* Sunday school curriculum by MennoMedia.
- Revisions to our churchwide statement on immigration, and new statements signaling commitments to environmental justice and protecting and nurturing children and youth.
- The Women in Leadership Project, which provides resources and makes space for conversation about women's experiences in the church.
- The Mennonite Church USA Archives, which celebrate our rich Anabaptist history.
- Congregations across the country committed to undoing racism and growing in intercultural awareness and understanding.
- Connections made and new friendships forged during gatherings throughout the year, such as meetings of area conferences, the Constituency Leaders Council, Mennonite leaders of color, conference ministers, and convention.
- Relationships built with people from other denominations and communities across the country.
- The ministries of our churchwide agencies: mission, stewardship, education, health services and publishing.
- The ministries of our 21 area conferences and 900+ congregations, and of the 100,000+ Mennonites who are responding to God's call on their lives each day in their local communities.

Your financial support is a crucial part of the partnership we share. In the fiscal year that ended in July 2013, **your conference gave \$420,618 to the ministries** of the offices and churchwide agencies of Mennonite Church USA in the following ways:

1. through congregational offerings, which are forwarded directly or through your conference office;
2. through your conference office;
3. directly to a denominational office or agency.

Unless designated otherwise, checks made out to "Mennonite Church USA" are divided according to the following formula: 66% to Mennonite Mission Network, 15% to Executive Board/Staff, 14% to Mennonite Education Agency, 3% to MennoMedia, and 2% to Racial/Ethnic Constituency Groups.

I am grateful for the generosity of people like you who share your gifts with the broader church—through prayer, good counsel, volunteer work and financial support—making possible these ministries and more.

I invite your continued contributions to help Mennonite Church USA advance the goals outlined in the Purposeful Plan for 2013 through 2015:

www.mennoniteusa.org/purposeful-plan.

Thank you for your conference's commitment to the partnership we share in the gospel of Jesus Christ. May God bless your conference abundantly.

In Christ,

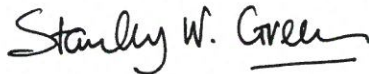
Ervin R. Stutzman, executive director, Mennonite Church USA

www.mennoniteusa.org, 866-866-2872

Be salt. Be light. **Be the Gospel.**



Thanks to Western District Conference congregations for partnering in God's mission with Mennonite Mission Network. By working together, people around the world experience Christ's light and love. We are deeply grateful for your enthusiasm for God's mission! Your prayers, people, time, and contributions are an important part in sharing the gospel. We are thankful for your partnership, and consider it an honor to extend the missional reach of Western District Conference and its congregations.



Stanley W. Green
Executive Director
Mennonite Mission Network

*"You are the salt of the earth ...
you are the light of the world
In the same way, let your
light shine before others,
so that they may see your good
works and give glory to your
Father in heaven."*

—Mark 5:13a, 14a, 16 NIV

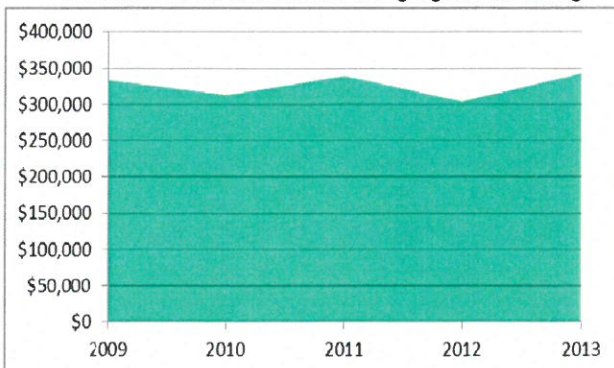
Western District Conference in mission

Reflecting over the past calendar year, Mennonite Mission Network celebrates the ways that we and Western District Conference have worked together to share Christ's light.

- Western District Conference sponsors three Mennonite Voluntary Service units – Hutchinson, Kansas City, and San Antonio; four SOOP sites; and one DOOR location.
- Eleven individuals are serving in MVS, four participated in Service Adventure, two in Radical Journey, and four shared their skills in the SOOP program.
- Forty-four prayer partners pray daily for Mennonite Mission Network.
- Six congregations contributed a total of \$1,120 to Mennonite Mission Network's globe mission bank projects.
- Twenty congregations support 13 Mission Network mission worker families: Bethel College Mennonite, Eden Mennonite, Faith Mennonite, First Mennonite Beatrice, First Mennonite Newton, First Mennonite McPherson, First Mennonite Halstead, Grace Mennonite, Hope Mennonite, Houston Mennonite, Inman Mennonite, Lorraine Avenue Mennonite, Manhattan Mennonite, New Creation Fellowship, San Antonio Mennonite, Shalom Mennonite, Tabor Mennonite, Turpin Mennonite, West Zion Mennonite, and Zion Mennonite churches.

Thank you for your continued partnership in God's mission!

Western District Conference Congregational Giving



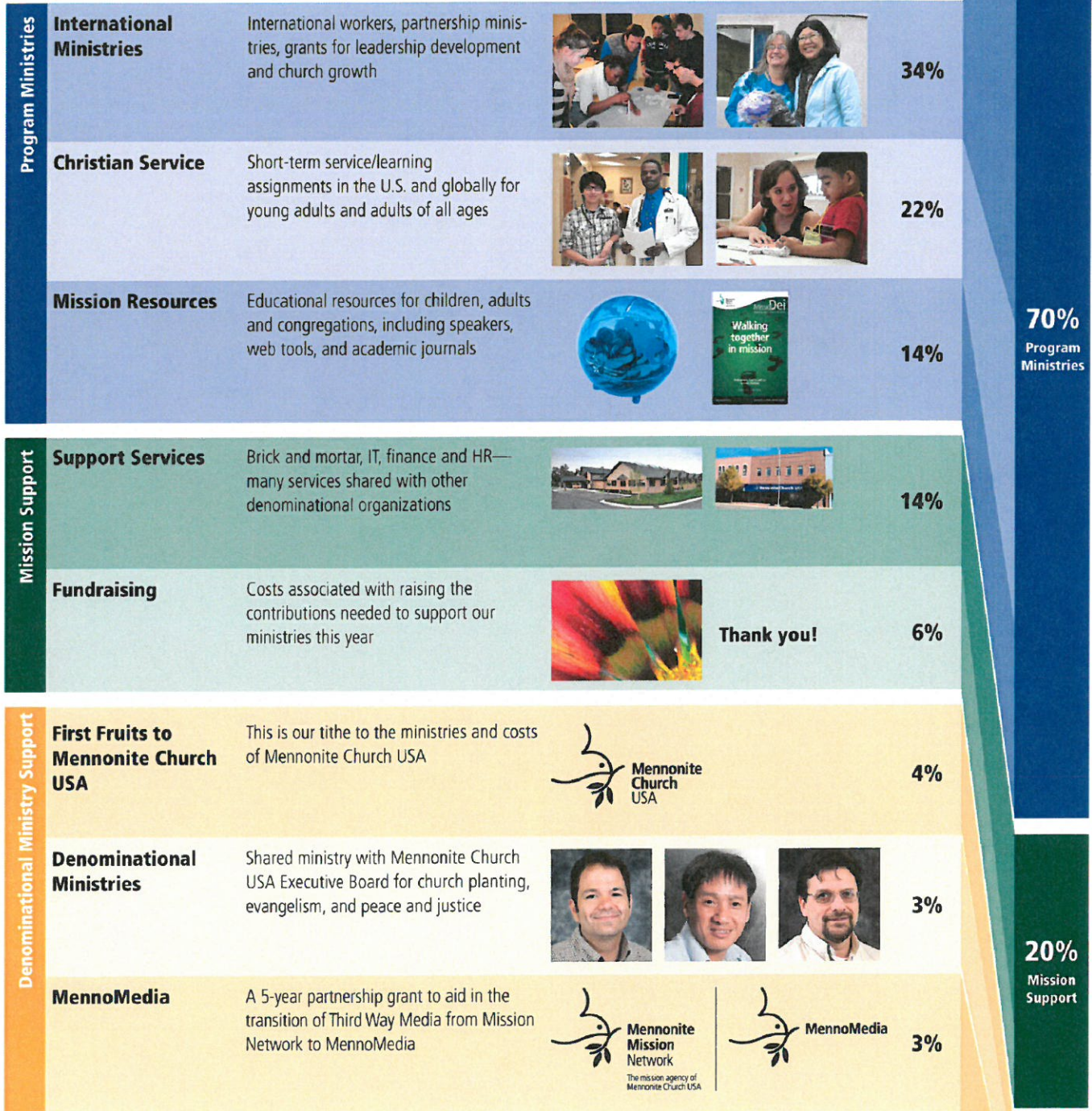
Brady Peters
Western District
Conference
Liaison

A blessing

Whether we are serving and loving our neighbor across the street, or sending and supporting workers across the globe, may we all be encouraged that God is indeed doing a great thing in our lives. I pray that God would continue to water the seeds of your faithfulness so that we would all grow as ambassadors for his kingdom – on earth as it is in heaven.

Spending Plan 2013–2014

\$8,840,000



***Greetings* from the education agency of
Mennonite Church USA!**

Mennonite education is transforming lives and impacting the world. Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) partners with the church and the Mennonite educational institutions to pass on Anabaptist faith and values to the next generation. MEA provides leadership, guidance, support and collaboration to enhance the relationship among the schools and the schools and the church. MEA houses the Hispanic Pastoral Leadership Education office which provides Spanish language based Biblical Anabaptist leadership training to Hispanic Mennonites through the Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA) and Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano (SeBAH), programs. To learn more, visit www.MennoniteEducation.org.

***Thank you* Western District Conference for your
generous gifts to Mennonite education!**

MEA believes in the transforming power of Mennonite education in the lives of individuals. Your gifts help support this work.

**Giving* from Western District Conference
congregations:**

February 1, 2013 – January 31, 2014 - \$83,217.39

**Includes gifts for higher education, MEA and Racial/Ethnic Leadership Education.*

***We are grateful* to those serving on Mennonite
education boards and committees:**

- **AMBS:** Sara Dick, Shalom
- **AMBS-Great Plains Extension:** Dorothy Nickel Friesen, Clarence Rempel, Bethel (Inman); Mark Jantzen, Faith; Kathy Neufeld Dunn, First (McPherson); Anita Yoder Kehr, First (Newton); Katherine Goerzen, Grace; Tom Harder, Lorraine Avenue; Sara Dick, Shalom; Becky Nickel, Zion
- **Bethel College:** Dean Kroeker, Eden; Berneil Rupp Mueller and John R. Suderman, Bethel College; Ray Penner, Faith; Linda Buller, Lorraine; Jim Ensz, First (Beatrice); Sharon Nance, Peace (Dallas); Heather S. Esau Zenger, Rainbow; Debbie Schmidt, Shalom; Joe Friesen, Zion
-

We regret any omissions or errors. Please send corrections to info@MennoniteEducation.org.

A few milestones for the 2013-2014 school year

- 13,932 students are enrolled in Mennonite institutions from preschool to seminary
- MEA continues to facilitate collaboration among the five colleges/universities and two seminaries and 33 PreK-12 Mennonite School Council schools
- Bluffton University, Eastern Mennonite University, and Goshen College are moving forward with a collaborative MBA program
- Twenty-one schools participate in the MEA managed investment committee
- MEA produces the Youth Census report showing the number of Mennonite youth ages birth-college and serves as a valuable tool for Mennonite educational institutions
- 277 students are enrolled in the IBA and SeBAH Mennonite Hispanic leadership programs
- 135 pastors participated in the Mennonite Early Childhood Network survey providing feedback on early childhood resources to the church.
- Mennonite Learning Network (MLN) and Anabaptist Learning Institute (ALI) are providing online classes for teachers to receive graduate credit and certification as an Anabaptist educator ensuring our students receive excellent Anabaptist education.
- A new accreditation protocol for use in the Mennonite elementary and secondary schools is underway.

Connecting with Mennonite education

- Enhance your teaching skills to become a certified Anabaptist educator by taking courses in the Anabaptist Learning Institute online. <http://www.mennoniteeducation.org/ali>
- Pray for Mennonite education using specific prayer requests in **Prayers for Faith and Learning**. E-mail for a free subscription: subscribe@MennoniteEducation.org.
- Encourage parents and teachers working with preschoolers to join the **Mennonite Early Childhood Network** to access Anabaptist-related and age-appropriate resources at www.MennoniteEducation.org/MECN.

Seeking peace of mind

Everence 2014 report

Western District Conference
Annual Assembly
July 4-6, 2014

Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

2 Corinthians 13:11

When you and your congregation turn to Everence for help with stewardship and financial matters, you're encouraging peace of mind through our planning and products. That's because your members are working with people they trust to focus on their best interests when it comes to cooperatively creating a plan and executing it. There are many ways you and Everence can help people find peace of mind, and you'll see a few of them in this report.

Sharing Fund helps people like Noah

What does the Everence Sharing Fund do? Congregations see a need in their communities and decide to provide financial help. They ask Everence for Sharing Fund money to match their donations. The money is used for everyday living expenses or a specific need, such as the partnership of Noah and Dexter.



Noah's church helped his family add Dexter to the household, with assistance from the Sharing Fund. Dexter is being trained to provide alerts if Noah's blood sugar drops to dangerous levels.

Making an impact

Everence Association, Inc. now offers the Advantage Select High Impact Annuity, a fixed annuity with competitive rates. It's designed to help people achieve peace of mind as they secure income for retirement while making an impact on the world in the process. With the Advantage Select High Impact Annuity, you can be part of a larger effort to:

- Help emerging and socially engaged congregations grow their missions and ministries.
- Help nonprofit organizations make environmentally friendly improvements.
- Support community development needs across the country and around the world.

Call (800) 348-7468 or talk with your local Everence representative to learn more.



Finances change with life events

Your financial situation likely will change when important life events occur. That's why Everence offers your congregation a new *Life Events Guide* and updated life event education on our website. Getting married, having a baby, going to college, retiring soon and getting started as a young adult are examples of these life events. Contact your Everence church relations representative about the guide or visit everence.com/life-events/ for additional information.

Using this credit card supports missions

Everence Federal Credit Union donated \$14,000 from its Rebate for Missions™ program in 2013 to Mennonite Disaster Service and Mennonite Mission Network. Everence members voted online to choose the recipients. Rebate for Missions™ is supported by the credit union's 10 percent tithe of income generated when people use their Visa credit cards. Credit union branches also distribute Rebate for Missions™ money in their own communities. Since the program started in 1995, Everence Federal Credit Union has provided more than \$300,000 in grants.

Found Faithful

All that we have is a gift from God. A four-part worship series called *Found Faithful* can help us recommit ourselves to be wise and generous stewards of all that we have been given – the gift of time, the gift of talents and the gift of money and material goods. A scripture passage, sermon starter and children's lesson are included for each session. Visit everence.com for more information.

Guidance for end of life planning

Everence is putting together a curriculum to help people think and talk about important end-of-life issues. The information grew out of *Final Arrangements* and *Natural Dying* workshops developed by members of Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church (pictured).



Issues include preparing a will, naming a medical power of attorney and talking with family members about your wishes. Peace of mind often comes from knowing that your wishes are understood and your family will know what to do when the time comes. Learn more by contacting Beryl Jantzi, Everence Director of Stewardship Education, at beryl.jantzi@everence.com or (800) 442-7930.

A better way to explain church finances?

Does your congregation use a line-item or narrative budget when church leaders present financial information to your members? Many churches are finding that narrative budgets better describe how revenues and expenses relate to carrying out the congregation's mission. Find the *Congregational Stewardship Resource Manual* at everence.com to see examples of each type of budget and learn about the most effective and least effective ways to report congregational finances.

Bringing investing and stewardship together

What is shareholder advocacy? It's basically using your position as a shareholder, or part owner, in a company to push for improved corporate environmental, social and governance practices. Shareholder advocacy is part of the Everence stewardship investing philosophy of financial decision making. This philosophy is informed by faith convictions, and it balances social and financial considerations so people can find the peace of mind that comes from investing in companies they feel comfortable about. Learn more at everence.com/Stewardshipinvesting/.

Benefits of congregational endowments

Setting up an endowment fund can help your congregation stretch its outreach. The fund is invested, with the earnings available for supporting your ministry. Everence Charitable Services can help make the endowment process easier for you. We'll help to educate and train your endowment commission – something few financial institutions offer. And your congregation's mission and values will be incorporated into the investment selection process. Visit everence.com for details.

Everence offers credit union services that are federally insured by NCUA. Investments and other products are not NCUA or otherwise federally insured, may involve loss of principal and have no credit union guarantee. All products are not available in all states.



MennoMedia

An agency of Mennonite Church USA
and Mennonite Church Canada

The big news this year for MennoMedia is the launching of our new Children's curriculum, *Shine: Living in God's Light*, a dynamic Sunday school curriculum for ages 3 through grade 8 that engages Christian communities in

their life together. This is the first new curriculum created for children since the launch of the highly successful *Gather 'Round* in 2006. Specifically, *Shine*:

- Calls children to experience the transforming power of God's love.
- Nurtures trust in God and invites children to follow Jesus.
- Encourages imaginative, interactive biblical storytelling.
- Explores the meaning of the Bible within the gathered community.
- Cultivates the inner life of the Spirit through spiritual practices.
- Expresses faith through lives of compassionate peacemaking and service.
- Invites all ages to shine God's light in the world.

A pastor in Ontario recently spoke about the importance and need for a curriculum for children which comes from the Anabaptist tradition:

Because these are the things I really value in curricula, I'm very excited to use the new children's curriculum from MennoMedia that will come out in fall 2014, and no, I'm not being paid to say this! It's called *Shine: Living in God's Light*. And I know it won't be perfect, no curriculum is. And I know I'll need to adapt, that's a given with any curriculum. We always need to remember that any curriculum is meant as a guide, and a springboard and requires contextualization. But I know without a doubt that the beliefs of the writers will be clear. I know it will be Christocentric, I know it will value both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, it will be inclusive, rooted in peace and love, community, story, ritual and practice. I know that the most important ground work that needs to happen when writing curriculum will have been done, and done with integrity, making it possible for me to focus my attention on my own faith development, and the developing faith of the children in front of me. Because that's what good curriculum writers do, they do the ground work, so we have the tools we need to enter into sacred spaces together.

We are glad that we can serve Mennonite Churches and a wider North American audience with this curriculum.

Also available this spring, from Herald Press, are two wonderful books from some bestselling authors, Ervin Stutzman and Saloma Miller Furlong. In *Jacob's Choice*, Ervin uses historical fiction to tell the story of Jacob Hochstetler, his ancestor (and ancestor to nearly 100,000 people in North America) an early Amish settler, whose wife and daughter were murdered in an attack in 1757, and who was taken into captivity along with his sons. In *Bonnet Strings*, Saloma tells the story of her painful leaving of her Amish community in Ohio.

Please keep abreast of our vision and plans for the future via our new blog at www.Mennobytes.com.

Russ Eanes, Executive Director, MennoMedia, Harrisonburg, Virginia

2014 REPORT TO WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE

MHS continues to carry out our mission to strengthen and extend Anabaptist-affiliated health and human services organizations. Within Western District Conference, the following organizations are part of MHS:

- Mennonite Friendship Communities, South Hutchinson, Kansas
- Prairie View, Newton, Kansas
- Bluestem Communities - Kidron Bethel Village, N. Newton and Schowalter Villa, Hesston, Kansas – MHS serves as the national sponsor

Also a member of MHS, ADNet, is a national membership organization of congregations, families, friends, and persons living with mental illness and/or other disabilities. We invite you to get involved with these organizations, through employment, serving on the board, accessing services, volunteering or contributing financially. To learn more, ask a representative or visit www.mhsonline.org.

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

In January 2013, we expanded our team to provide a broader range of consulting services to non-profit organizations. As part of the expansion, we studied our brand and made a decision to use the name “MHS” rather than Mennonite Health Services in order to better represent our service to other Anabaptist groups and to the larger nonprofit arena.

In July, we were accepted as an agency of Mennonite Church USA. We are gratified to have health and human service ministry recognized as an important part of the church’s mission.

In November, several staff and associates travelled to China and met with Christian leaders for education and discussion about the development of church-sponsored retirement centers.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

In keeping with the board’s priority to catalyze collaboration and shared learning, we supported a delegation from China that visited several Kansas retirement communities and attended Mennonite Health Assembly in Kansas City in March.

Another priority is to equip executives to lead in ways that reflect the mission and values of their organizations. We are creating a set of on-line resources for leaders on Anabaptist values, beliefs and practices and how those practices can be carried out in an organizational context.

For our members, MHS strives to be a community where staff and board leaders can share ideas and serve as a resource to each other. Our membership programs include an Executive Circle, resources and tools for board members and the Values-based Leadership Program, a formational program that serves business and non-profit leaders as well as pastors and other church leaders.



AMBS

Report to Western District Conference

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary; Sara Wenger Shenk, president

New degree program: AMBS launched a new Master of Divinity program last fall with a distance option and fewer credit hours. MDiv Connect allows students to study in their home context with only brief visits to campus two or three times a year.

Changes in AMBS offerings for the WDC region: The advisory board of the AMBS–Great Plains extension recommended that on June 30 the site, as it has functioned for the last 11 years, should close. AMBS graduate-level classes will continue to be offered with reduced administrative structures. A newly formed advisory group will help determine how AMBS can continue serving the region with courses, continuing education offerings and collaboration with other organizations.

Sara Wenger Shenk blog: Join Sara Wenger Shenk in asking questions and engaging issues in the church. In her blog, Sara will “pose questions, test assumptions, resist labels, play with possibilities, experiment with integration, practice wholeness”: www.ambs.edu/practicingreconciliation.

Board members: Sara Dick from Newton, Kan., serves on the board.

Students: Students from the conference who studied at AMBS–Great Plains, AMBS in Elkhart, or in the new MDiv Connect program this year are **Karen Andres, Melissa Atchison, James Branum, Ruth Buller, Asia Frye, Barbara Krehbiel Gehring, Katherine Goerzen, Peter Goerzen, Gail Graber, Hope Graber, Laurie Hesed, Rosie Jantz, Karen Mascho, Laurel Mast, Ronald Moyo, Caley Ortman, Brady Peters, Caleb Regehr, Jennifer Schrag, Joel Schroeder, Kay Schroeder, Angela Smith, Jennifer Wintermote**. In the Pastoral Studies Distance Education program, **Steve Mascho and Cynthia Smith White** are students.

Discounts for seminary study: People exploring seminary study can receive a **50 percent discount on tuition when they take a first online course** if they are not enrolled in a graduate theological program. See www.ambs.edu/academics/Online-Courses.cfm.

Emphasis on creation care: AMBS was invited to become a member of the Seminary Stewardship Alliance, an organization dedicated to connecting Christians with the biblical call to care for God’s creation. AMBS was affirmed for efforts such as restoring native plants on campus, constructing and refurbishing buildings according to green building standards, gardening, recycling and more.

Resources for all in the church

Anabaptist Short Courses and webinars, online, non-credit learning that explores topics of Anabaptism, worship, and theology. Visit www.ambs.edu, select *Lifelong Learning*.

Vision: *A Journal for Church and Theology*, copublished with Canadian Mennonite University: Spring 2014 focuses on economics, edited by Gordon Zerbe: www.mennovision.org.

New book from the **Institute of Mennonite Studies** (www.ambs.edu/IMS): ***The History of Mennonite Youth Ministry: 1885–2005***, edited by Bob Yoder, explores how Mennonites in North America have nurtured faith in youth.

We thank God for your support and ask for your prayers as we continue to prepare leaders for mission, peacemaking and spiritual vitality in the church of Jesus Christ.



Report to Western District Conference

AMBS–Great Plains Seminary Extension

Dorothy Nickel Friesen, Interim Director

Program Demand Study and Assessment: The academic year from July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014 has been a year of assessment and decision. As Interim Director, I conducted a Program Demand Study of former and current students, donors, pastors and those who have been involved with the Great Plains Extension. A total of 584 surveys (online and paper) were distributed; 255 usable surveys were returned for a 44% rate. Outstanding! The results showed two important findings: 1) over 50% of the respondents already had advanced degrees (many with MDivs) and were interested in continuing education (or noncredit) courses/seminars; 2) the other half were thinking about taking classes in the next three-five years depending on finances and a call to ministry. In addition to the Program Demand Study, I conducted student interviews, several focus groups, and interviewed colleagues in local Mennonite-related institutions.

Enrollment: The two classes (each for 3 credit hours) in the fall had a total of nine credit students and six audit students. The interterm course (one credit hour) had seven credit students and 10 audit students. The spring semester had two classes (one for three credit hours and one for one credit hour) for a total of nine students and zero auditors. We cancelled classes in both semesters due to lack of enrollment. That translates into about 2.0 full-time enrollments when our annual goal was 4.0 FTE plus producing a significant financial deficit. Some of our GP students are taking online and hybrid courses from AMBS but then do not count in GP statistics. This expanded course option is very good for students but decreases a need for a classroom site in Kansas.

Continuing education: Efforts to test the continuing education offerings included: 1) “Mental Health First Aid” with Prairie View CEO Jessie Kaye had 18 enrollments; 2) “Preaching Seminar” with AMBS Allan Rudy-Froese had 10 registrations; 3) Webinars from AMBS but hosted at Great Plains were offered twice; 4) “The Nonviolent God” with J. Denny Weaver featured multiple lectures over five days. All were very successful—but netted no income for Great Plains. In addition, we hosted a “Simple Supper” in September to report on the Program Demand Study and then President Sara Wenger Shenk in March at a “Presidential Brunch”.

Conclusion: The Great Plains Extension will “close as we know it” (down-size and re-organize) on June 30, 2014 but remain open as an “ongoing course offering site” with one course for each term. In addition, administrative and facility costs will be reduced. Professor Lois Barrett will remain an AMBS tenured faculty teaching classes in Elkhart and Kansas and serving as adviser to admitted students. Efforts to collaborate with other Anabaptist-related organizations will continue in order to offer continuing education options. AMBS will continue to fund and support Kansas-based courses. A celebration of over 30 years of theological education in this region will be held on June 1, 2014 at Bethel College Mennonite Church at 4:00 p.m. Thanks be to God!

Bethel College has been privileged to serve the Mennonite Church USA in a special way this year by hosting a number of significant meetings with implications for the broader church:

- A benefit concert for Mennonite Disaster Service that raised over \$5000 for MDS's continuing work in and around Oklahoma City.
- Hosting a Faith Mentoring conversation on our campus that involved all of the vice-presidents for student life and most of the campus pastors at all five U.S. Mennonite colleges.
- Co-sponsoring a highly successful symposium on "Engaging Our Sexual Culture" with the Western District Conference's Human Sexuality Discernment Committee, featuring presentations by Ted Swartz of Ted & Co. and Keith Graber Miller of Goshen College.
- Hosting another wonderful symposium, this one entitled "Mothering Mennonite," with accessible and interesting presentations by faculty members from almost all the Mennonite colleges and universities in both the US and Canada.
- Sponsoring the second in a series of Worship and the Arts symposia, made possible by an endowment established by the generosity of Rosella and Harold Duerksen and the Estate of Lucille Graber. This one again featured Thomas Long of Candler School of Theology at Emory University and John Ferguson of St. Olaf College. The focus this time was on death, dying, and the Christian funeral. It was a remarkably successful event, deeply appreciated, especially by pastors.
- This month the Constituency Leaders Council, as well as the Mennonite Education Agency Board, held meetings on the Bethel College campus. The former meeting was chaired by the moderator-elect of MC USA, Bethel College's own Dr. Patricia Shelly.

Add to that a very successful 24-Hour Prayer Event planned and hosted by our student chaplains, some powerful chapel services—not to mention a significant enrollment increase—and it has indeed been a very good year.

After thirty years at Bethel College, I have decided to retire at the close of this academic year. It has been a wonderful, meaningful, satisfying journey, and I thank all of you who have supported me throughout those thirty years. I have seen the list of applicants for my position and am confident that church relations and campus pastoring at Bethel will be in excellent hands when I am gone. God is indeed providing!

In gratitude for the prayers and good wishes of the Western District Conference, we humbly ask for your continued support.



Report to Western District Conference 2014

Bluffton group aids tornado cleanup

While some college students migrated to Florida beaches for spring break, a group of Bluffton University students braved zerodegree temperatures in Illinois to serve others.

Members of Shining Through, Bluffton's music ministry team, spent a day sorting through snow-covered debris from a home destroyed by a November 2013 tornado in Washington, Ill.

Ashley Litwiller, a Bluffton junior and student coordinator of Shining Through, is an Illinois native who knew of the devastation the tornado had caused. "I knew that there was still some work to be done," she said.

She arranged for the group to aid in disaster relief while on its spring-break tour, during which the members performed worship music at churches in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

They faced an immediate weather-created obstacle after arriving at the home site. "As we started picking through the pile, we realized a lot of it was frozen together," Litwiller said.

Fortunately for the group, a good Samaritan stopped and offered assistance. "Turns out, the man was a neighbor and had a skid loader back at his house," she said. The man was able to break up the frozen rubble, allowing the group to move it more easily toward the street for pickup. "It was such a blessing," she added.

Shining Through's 2013-14 theme was "God's Love: Beyond All Measure," which drew on Ephesians 3:14-21 and focused on "being rooted and established in God's love," Litwiller said.

Although the tornado caused much destruction and heartbreak, she believes acts of service allowed the group to put God's love—which can handle anything, she said—in perspective.

She said, too, that times of tragedy are an opportunity for churches to reach out to those in need. "When something like this happens, God provides us with a community that will help support you through tough times," she said.

"It's not just family helping out family," Litwiller added. "If you are hurting or struggling, God's Kingdom will reach out to help you as Christians are called to do."

Stephen "Tig" Intagliata, campus pastor, traveled with the group's 11 student members. "They were really glad to give back to a community that suffered so much devastation," he said.

The combination of leading worship services and providing service—which was like "offering ourselves in God's service," he explained—was a good one, and "something we want to continue to do" on future tours, he added.

Thank you, Western District Conference!

Three students from the Western District Conference attended Bluffton during the 2013-14 academic year—**Bethanie Wedel**, a sophomore from First Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.; **Emily Huxman**, a first-year student from Lorraine Avenue Mennonite, Wichita, Kan.; and **Mary Schrag**, a junior from Eden Mennonite, Moundridge, Kan. Their church matching scholarship support was a combined \$2,300.

Wedel was active in chapel and a member of the Spiritual Life Week committee, as was Schrag, who was also a chapel worship band leader and involved with Sunday Night Worship.

For more information on Bluffton University:
Robin Bowlus, director of public relations
419-358-3453 bowlusr@bluffton.edu

www.bluffton.edu

Goshen College Report to Western District Conference, July 2014

President opens year with message on Compassionate Peacemaking

Welcoming 828 undergraduates from more than 32 states and 36 countries, Goshen College President James E. Brenneman opened the 2013-14 school year by encouraging students to take up the challenge of being compassionate peacemakers in all aspects of life. Understanding that peace is the manifestation of human compassion, Dr. Brenneman encouraged the gathered community to extend that compassion to all aspects of life. "I hope that at ... GC our understanding of the meaning of the core value, Compassionate Peacemaking, will be as deep and wide and fully human and wonderfully Divine as life itself is. And I hope that a spirit of compassionate peacemaking generously pervades even our attempts at defining its meaning."

Conference Connections

Goshen College has been enhanced by the contributions and involvements of WDC students this year: Worship Assistants (Sam Smucker, Shalom Mennonite and Hillary Harder, Lorraine Avenue), Inquiry Program participants (Maria Jantz, Shalom Mennonite), Student Senate (Joanna Epp, First Mennonite) and many, many enthusiastic musicians in Women's World Choir, Men's Choir Concert Choir, jazz band as well as informal musical groups. Western District Conference nurtures and supports 23 other students from 9 congregations who were enrolled at Goshen College for the 2013-2014 school year. Those churches generously pledged \$36,150.00 in congregational student aid for the academic year. The Church Aid Matching Grant program provides a dollar-for-dollar match of the first \$1,000 per student and a 1:4 match after that, up to full tuition.

Campus ministries theme

The Campus Ministries theme this year was "Sowing Compassion, Side by Side." Seven Worship Assistants along with twelve Ministry Leaders and countless other Goshen College students provided leadership as we explored, in a variety of ways, what it means to sow compassion in the context of a community. During the first chapel of the year students reflected on how they hoped to sow compassion this year. Intentions included "Invite people over for meals," "I will show compassion by being more open minded and standing up for those with unpopular opinions," "smiling at strangers," "being a friend to those who need it," "compassion through simply loving and listening," "sowing compassion through music," "encouraging and praying for those around me," "learn more about myself through relationships with others and God," and "truly act for peace in relation to SOA and Syria." These are just a few of the hundreds of hopes that were articulated – and lived out - this year at Goshen College.



For more information, contact Gwen Gustafson-Zook, Minister of Worship and Church Relations. Call (574) 535-7563 or e-mail churchrelations@goshen.edu.

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA REPORT

March 2014

2013-14 enrollment – Official fall enrollment numbers for the year are 449 students from 32 states and 17 countries, including 64 new and returning international students who make up 14 percent of the total enrollment. Students from Kansas comprise 44 percent of the student population, with 42 percent coming from other states. **2014-15 enrollment** – Campus visits are running high for Fall '14, including the college's first Leaders and Academic Scholars weekend, attended by 40 students and their parents. We continue to emphasize the recruitment of students of all backgrounds whose parents are alumni.

Campus theme – The Hesston College campus-wide common read theme for 2013-14 is **“Extending Home: Stories of Migration and Transformation”** inspired by the common read book *Outcasts United: An American Town, a Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference* (Spiegel & Grau, 2009). Author Warren St. John, a journalist and former *New York Times* reporter, was on campus in September and shared about his research and challenges and rewards of refugee resettlement and creating community in an atmosphere where people do not seem to have much in common.

Homecoming 2013 – 500 Hesston College alumni and friends gathered on campus in September for A Hesston College Homecoming: A View from Everywhere with a special emphasis on nursing and holistic health. Nursing and health care alumni were featured in a Holistic Health Symposium. **Homecoming '14** will be Sept. 25-28 with the theme Each Other's Light: A Multicultural Celebration, focusing on the rich multicultural history of Hesston alumni from around the U.S. and the world.

AVDS conference employs Heilsgeschichte - The Heilsgeschichte timeline (The Salvation Story) was a key part of presentations during the college's annual Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series conference Feb. 21 to 23 with the theme “Reading the Bible in an Instagram World.” Using a condensed version of the well-known Biblical Literature curriculum, 190 participants explored the Bible's relevance in social media-heavy contemporary life. Learning and worship was enhanced by dramatic performances from Ted Swartz of Ted & Company TheatreWorks (Harrisonburg, Va.) and worship leader Jeremy Kempf (Glendale, Ariz).

Congregational student aid – Hesston College offers a match grant for scholarships provided by

students' churches. During the 2012-13 year, 91 churches contributed \$241,713 in student scholarships to 148 recipients. Hesston College matched a total of \$149,229. The average church aid per student was \$1,633 while the average church-and-college aid per student was \$2,642. **If your congregation is interested in providing a scholarship program to support Mennonite higher education, contact the Church Relations Office at 866-437-7866.**

Cultures Fair highlights multiculturalism – International students provided a glimpse into their cultures during the annual Cultures Fair in February. Students prepared and served food and performed music from their countries while interacting and sharing about their cultures with their peers, faculty and staff. International students comprise 19 percent of dorming students and help expand all our students' world views through interaction.

Read these full stories and more at hesston.edu. For questions or more information, contact Dallas Stutzman, director of Alumni and Church Relations tollfree at 866-437-7866.

2013-14 campus theme verse

The Lord's Prayer
Matthew 6:9-13 (Traditional)

Western District Conference of Mennonite Church USA Statistics and Connections

2013-2014 Academic Year Students—13

Congregational Student Aid—12 congregations provided \$13,700 in tuition assistance for 13 students as of March 11, 2014.

Hesston College Board of Directors—Luke Roth-Mullet, New Creation Mennonite Fellowship, Newton, Kan.

Pastoral Ministries Student— Courtney Becker, Goessel (Kan.) Mennonite Church

Unified and Designated Giving—We are grateful for the financial support of conference churches to Mennonite colleges and Mennonite Education Agency through Unified and Designated Giving and for personal contributions given from individuals.

Howard Keim, President
Dallas Stutzman, Director of Alumni and Church Relations
Mitch Stutzman, Phyllis Weaver, Kris White, Derek Yoder, Development Officers