



**Western
District
Conference**

*An area conference of
Mennonite Church USA*

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WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE REPORTS

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

July 29-30, 2016
Bethel College
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**Conference Minister
Heidi Regier Kreider**

In a recent leadership training workshop I attended, participants were invited to articulate how our life and vocation fit into a deeper sense of purpose – to describe not just “what” we do, but also “why” and “how” we do what we do. Before reporting “what” I have been doing this past year as Conference Minister, it is important to first review the heart of WDC’s work – the “why” and “how” of WDC.

Why does WDC exist? What vision, purpose and beliefs guide us? Our mission statement says it well: WDC empowers Anabaptist/Mennonite congregations to

- Witness & invite others to faith in Jesus Christ,
- Dwell in just & loving relationships,
- Connect to God’s mission in the world.

How do we do work towards this purpose? What values and strategies guide our work? WDC focuses on three core tasks:

- Sustaining Transformational Pastors
- Resourcing Healthy, Missional Churches
- Networking Anabaptist Church Planting Partnerships

What people, programs and activities will carry out our core tasks and further our purpose? Now the list gets longer! And these items will vary over time, adapting and responding to different circumstances, challenges and opportunities. Always it is important to ask: Why do we do what we do? How do we do it? Does it further our mission and accomplish our core tasks?

In light of this, my report is organized according to the mission and core tasks of WDC.

First, some reflections on WDC’s mission and how that has shaped my work this past year:

Witness and invite others to faith in Jesus Christ: In a year of significant transition, learning and very complex challenges, I have worked to deepen my own trust and faith in Christ, knowing this is essential in order to witness and invite others to faith. At annual assembly in October 2015, I preached on “Listening for the Good News,” nurturing a vision of the church as a contrast community, a caring community, and a Christ-centered community. I urge WDC congregations and all parts of our organization to be grounded in a vibrant and faithful relationship with Christ as our common ground. We are “held together in Christ” in spite of different interpretations of scripture and ways of living out discipleship.

Dwell in just and loving relationships: I am thankful for the rich diversity and network of connections within WDC, and I also acknowledge the disagreements among us. Following the approval of the Rainbow Resolution in October 2015, WDC received communication from a number of congregations and individuals noting both affirmation and opposition to the resolution. Inman (KS) Mennonite Church voted in February 2016 to transfer membership from WDC to South Central Conference in response to the Resolution. Executive Board representatives and I met with leaders or members of several congregations for further conversation about the Resolution. At the denominational level, I and other WDC representatives have participated in Constituency Leaders Council meetings exploring ways to address differences between conferences in MC USA even as we continue focus on the missional priorities of the church. I seek to reach out, connect, listen to the Holy Spirit as well as diverse voices in the church, remain open and non-anxious, accept conflict as opportunity for learning and growth, and continue to nurture relationships in WDC and MC USA.

Connect to God’s mission in the world: As I traveled around WDC in my first year, I witnessed many ways that we are participating in God’s work of shalom. *Loaves and Fishes* grants are one way WDC has

provided support for community outreach projects by congregations. Church planting partnerships offer another link to God's work. Beyond WDC, I joined two other WDC representatives to attend MC USA Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) meetings in October 2015 and March 2016; participated in a Ministry Inquiry Program review retreat in March 2016 with leaders from MC USA-related colleges and denominational leaders; attended MC USA Conference Ministers' meeting in December 2015; and traveled in April 2016 on a *Come and See* learning tour of Palestine/Israel co-sponsored by MC USA, WDC, and South Central Conference (SCC), coordinated by Mennonite Central Committee.

Additional activities that have carried out the core tasks of WDC:

Sustaining Transformational Pastors:

- I worked with Ministerial Leadership Commission to credential persons for ministry, establish mentors for new pastors, support pastor peer groups, provide continuing education and sabbatical scholarships for credentialed persons, offer pastoral care to pastors, plan for continuing education events, and provide resources for pastor-congregation review through a group of consultants in WDC. In addition, Dwight Regier, Youth Ministry Network Team Leader for WDC and SCC, supports youth pastors through regular gatherings and personal visits.
- Nearly 40 WDC pastors and congregational leaders have received training at the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) through a Leadership Transformation Grant that WDC and SCC received in 2015, and additional scholarships in 2016. As WDC liaison for KLC, I worked with SCC to coordinate a follow-up gathering for WDC/SCC participants in March 2016, to focus on implementing leadership competencies in our congregations and communities. I wrote five articles for the WDC *Sprouts* newsletter, relating leadership themes to scripture and ministry. We continue to seek ongoing ways to leverage leadership resources from KLC.
- A new Pastoral Financial Assistance grant through Everence (from a Lilly Grant) was launched in early 2016 to support educational events on financial planning, as well as matching grants to pastors for debt reduction and other needs. WDC Ministerial Leadership Commission has approved funds to provide some matching grants to pastors for this purpose.

Resourcing Healthy, Missional Churches

- During the 2015-2016 year, approximately fourteen congregations in WDC have experienced transition in pastoral staff. I assisted congregations in appointing interim pastors, provided orientation and potential candidate names for pastoral search committees, and offered counsel to congregational leaders in navigating these transitions.
- During this year of staff transition, I have met with the Resource Commission, while working with the Executive Board to review/revise job descriptions and hire new staff to resource congregations. Jennie Wintermote began December 1, 2015, as WDC Resource Library Director, a ¼ time position. Kathy Neufeld Dunn begins July 1, 2016, as Associate Conference Minister (KS-based), a ¾ time position. She will work with the WDC Resource Commission to resource congregations in the areas such as Anabaptist/Christian faith formation, worship, witness, peace and justice, prevention of sexual abuse/misconduct, assist the Conference Minister in relating to pastors and congregations in OK, KS and NE, and coordinate annual assembly planning when assembly is in the northern part of WDC. (Kathy began April 1, 2016, as Interim 2016 Assembly Director).
- In December 2015, WDC congregations in Dallas participated in a Missional Discipleship Group seminar led by Marvin Lorenzana of Mennonite Mission Network.
- *Held Together in Mission* is the theme chosen by Executive Board for 2016 Annual Assembly and Reference Council gatherings. Reference councils will also focus this theme on particular contexts. I worked with Executive Committee to plan Spring Reference Council on the theme *Being Church in the Rural Context*, which took place April 23, 2016, at First Mennonite Church in Beatrice. Forty-five people gathered to hear stories and reflections and share table conversation about how we can be part of God's work in rural communities. (Fall Reference Council gathering will be October 22, 2016, in Dallas, TX on the theme *Being Church in the Urban Context*.)

Networking Anabaptist Church planting partnerships

- This past year I have gotten acquainted with church plants/planters in WDC and worked with Church Planting Commission, while seeking new staff to oversee church planting in WDC. Byron Pellecer was hired to begin May 15 as Associate Conference Minister (TX-based), a fulltime position. He will work with the WDC Church Planting Commission and relate to church plants and partnerships, support pastors and congregations in Texas, coordinate annual assembly planning when assembly takes place in Texas, serve as representative for Iglesia Menonita Hispana (IMH) and Instituto Biblico Anabautista (IBA), and as advocate for intercultural transformation and undoing racism.
- Iglesia Menonita Camino Nuevo began in Fall 2015 as a new church plant in Dallas, TX, with Iglesia Menonita Monte Horeb as partner church, and additional support coming from Southern Hills Mennonite Church (Monte Horeb's Antioch Partner), Iglesia Luz del Evangelio, and Iglesia Comunidad de Esperanza.

As I review the past year, I am deeply grateful for the skilled and dedicated administrative staff who support WDC's work: Nancy Funk, Administrative Assistant; Phyllis Regier, Business Manager; and Sandra Martinez, Administrative Assistant for Texas. I also give thanks for WDC Moderator Richard Gehring, and other members of the Executive Board who serve guide and lead WDC, and for all the congregations, members and leaders that together form WDC. *"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among [us] will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ."* ~ from Philippians 1:3-6

Western District Conference Resource Library

Jennie Wintermote, Library Director

What do you know about the WDC Resource Library? I'm delighted to have this opportunity to share with you about great things happening at the WDC Resource Library, and invite you to take advantage of all we have to offer.

Did you know that I started as the **new quarter-time Library Director** on Dec. 1, 2015? Summer of 2016 I will complete my Masters of Library Science from Emporia State University. I have also served as an interim pastor and a 1st grade teacher. I'm passionate about connecting people with the right resource for their next Bible study, small group or Sunday school class, worship service, personal growth, or just a really good book.

Did you know we have just over **11,000 resources** for you to select from? We have a beautiful library with a fantastic children's department full of great read alouds for children's stories, Sunday school, and to help kids learn **Anabaptist values** such as peacemaking and justice. In the last year we've added **400+ new resources**. Most popular are Bible reference/study (print and DVD) and Christian Living topics.

Did you know in the early days of the "WDC Loan Library" we sent boxes of reading material to CPS (Civilian Public Service) Camps during WWII? We continue this tradition today with the **Box of Books program** that allows your church library to check out **25 books for two months** to extend your library's collection. Church members check out books from your church library during those months, then you send them back for a new selection. Paying for shipping, you pay roughly the cost of 2 new books to borrow 25, what a great deal!

Did you know you can access our **library catalog online** at <http://mennowdc.org/library/catalog/> and on the mobile app? Visit the library page on mennowdc.org to view a **video tutorial on the mobile app**. You can **reserve and renew items**, as well as make your own book lists (requires a library card). Call, email, or stop by today for a library card!

Did you know you or any attendee of your congregation can visit our library at **2517 N. Main Street, North Newton, KS**? You can also contact me via email or phone to request materials be sent to you! **(316) 283-6300** or **crlib@mennowdc.org**.

I am humbled to have this opportunity to continue Marlene Bogard's good work of connecting individuals and churches with resources to challenge and help people grow in their faith and their relationship with Jesus Christ. I am also excited to dream about the future of the library, discerning what form the collection will take in the future, and what resources will meet your needs. I would love to meet you and hear what you appreciate about the library, and what your hopes and dreams are for the future of the library. I am in the library Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30-11:30 am. (However, the library is always open when the WDC offices are.)

Conference Treasurer
Phyllis Regier

This report will be posted online after the annual audit is completed. See <http://mennowdc.org/annual-assembly/>.

Conference (WDC/SCC) Youth Ministry
Dwight Regier, Network Team Leader

Conference youth ministry for Western District and South Central Conferences 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 high school and junior high conference-wide events, such as Know Jesus, Out of the Pew, and coordinating Snow Camps with Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp
 - 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 as a group for lunch on a monthly basis for input and conversation. I love the way that ideas and energy grow when you get youth pastors together.

The WDC/SCC Youth Ministry Committee is made up of youth pastors and others who volunteer to help conference-wide events happen: (Isaac Landis (Whitestone), chair; Clayton Gladish (Hesston Mennonite), and Derek King (Eden)). This year the committee is envisioning a model of bringing together a core of youth leaders together for discipleship and leadership training, with an annual youth event coming from this core.

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, 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. The Executive Committee meets six times a year prior to each Executive Board meeting. Board members are: Richard Gehring (moderator), Norma Johnson, Cynthia Loganbill, Johann Reimer, Jerry Reimer, Wayne Albrecht, Kristen Swartley, Anita Kehr (moderator elect), Norma Duerksen, and Wendy Funk Schrag (secretary). Sandra Martinez is serving as a non-voting member of the Board until the Texas based Associate Conference Minister position is filled.

Highlights of four board meetings held since the 2015 report are as follows:

September 2015:

- Reviewed Annual Assembly meeting details including the Rainbow Mennonite Church resolution. Board members discussed whether the resolution does or does not contradict the Mennonite Church USA Confession of Faith. Board actions: The motion to bring the Rainbow resolution to Annual Assembly was passed with one negative vote. The Board's recommendation that the rules of vote that require simple majority as stated in our bylaws not be suspended regarding the Rainbow resolution was passed with one negative vote. The ballot format for the resolution was passed with one negative vote.
- Representatives from Texas on the Board suggested that Annual Assembly be held there in 2017.
- Job descriptions for open positions were approved in principle with authority given to Heidi to make changes as she sees fit.

November 2015:

- The Board reviewed Annual Assembly which was held Oct. 31/Nov. 1, including delegate table comments. Heidi sent a follow-up letter to Ervin Stutzman and Patty Shelly reporting the results of the resolution and an overview of the year of discernment leading up to the resolution. The implementation of the resolution now goes to the Ministerial Leadership Commission (MLC). The MLC has the draft procedures that the Executive Board developed for the pastor review process.
- The 2016 Annual Assembly will be held at Bethel College in July.
- The Board approved the recommendation brought by Heidi for the new WDC Resource Library Director.
- Ideas were generated for the 2016 Reference Council meetings, which for the first time will be held outside of the general North Newton/Wichita area. The spring meeting will be held in Beatrice, Nebraska and the fall meeting will be held in Dallas, Texas. The theme of "Held Together in Mission" will be emphasized in the rural context and urban context with Annual Assembly also having the general theme.

January 2016

- The Board approved some travel funds to assist with expenses for Heidi to attend the Come and See Learning Tour of Palestine/Israel in April.
- Since this was the annual "big picture" meeting, WDC Youth Ministry Network Team leader and Resource Library Director joined and provided summaries of their work and goals for the coming year.
- Planning continued for the 2016 Reference Councils and Annual Assembly.
- A Board committee was appointed to review and provide recommendations for updating the WDC Bylaw 5 regarding institutional relationships.
- The Board approved the recommendation brought by Heidi for the Texas based Associate Conference Minister with a suggested start date in May 2016.

March 2016

- The Board approved recommendations for the use of surplus funds from the 2015 budget surplus.
- The Board approved a recommendation brought by Heidi for the Kansas based Associate Conference Minister with a suggested start date of July 2016.
- Plans were finalized for the April Reference Council meeting in Beatrice.
- The Board approved proposed changes to WDC Bylaw 5, which will be brought to the delegates at the 2016 Annual Assembly.
- The Board approved a recommendation from the Staff Relations Committee to allow for partial health insurance coverage for either dependents or spouses of staff (rather than dependents only), and encouraged the Staff Relations Committee and Stewardship Commission to explore options for increasing insurance benefits for both spouses and dependents.

Gifts Discernment Committee

Brian Stucky, Chairperson

Beginning in January the Gifts Discernment Committee began preparing for the 2016 Annual Assembly. The Committee once again requested pastors from each of our Western District Congregations to provide names of individuals from their congregations for certain positions who they felt would feel a calling to serve on a board or commission of the conference. It is difficult for this committee to function without such input. Some 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, ethnicity, as well as representation from a cross section of congregations and the conference's geographical area.

The Gifts Discernment Committee would like to thank Conference Minister Heidi Regier Kreider for her guidance and wisdom in the discernment process in this past year.

Committee members: Brian Stucky, chair, Roberta Harms Secretary, Jane McNair, Susan Jantzen, Phyllis Goertzen, Ryan Koch and Heidi Regier Kreider, Conference Minister.

Church Planting Commission

Marvin Zehr

Introduction

This is the second annual report for the Church Planting Commission since it was formed in 2014. Thus we are still considered a newly formed commission of the conference. During this time we have experienced considerable turnover in staff leadership for the commission. We worked with Gilberto Flores until his retirement, then we transitioned to Howard Garver until his resignation in August 2015. Now we look forward to working with Byron Pellecer as he begins his assignment as Associate Conference Minister and will live in the Dallas, TX area. Conference Minister Heidi Regier Kreider has provided leadership for us during this interim period.

Due to the above transitions our work together has been limited. With Byron's transition to his new role, this has called for the calling of a new church planter/pastor for the church plant in Wichita, Aposento Alto. The three supporting congregations in Wichita have agreed to continue their support for the next year and a search committee is working to find new leadership for this church plant. I am representing our commission in the search process.

Camino de Santidad in Liberal, KS is considering transitioning from a church plant to membership in the conference. Brad Roth continues to serve as mentor for Pastor Moises.

The Grace Church in Gladewater, TX, under the leadership of Karen Mascho has discontinued meeting and Karen has moved to Tulsa, OK.

Iglesia Cristiana Menonita Camino Nuevo is a new church plant in Dallas, TX under the leadership of Pastor Antonio Caceros with Damian Rodriguez serving as his mentor. Luz del Evangelio, Comunidad de Esperanza and Monte Horeb are partners with this church plant. In addition Southern Hills Mennonite Church in Topeka, KS serves as a sponsoring congregation.

Contacts continue to be nurtured toward the possibility of a new church plant in Omaha, NE under the leadership of Rafael Antonio Aguilar. The group has been meeting and has grown to about 25. Byron will maintain contact to encourage its development.

During the past year several congregations in our conference have used the study guide, "Missional Essentials for Cultivating a Missional Life" with good interest. We are encouraging more of our congregations to enter into this study during the SS hour or as a Wednesday evening special study.

We look forward to Byron's leadership in the coming year. We invite churches to form partnerships with our new and emerging congregations. We have developed two kinds of sponsor relationships: 1) Barnabas-Lydia Partnerships that involves regular contact, prayer and financial support for church plants. 2) Antioch Partnership which is more of a sister church relationship providing prayer and other means of support for established congregations. Churches interested in exploring one of these relationships are encouraged to contact Byron.

We continue to appreciate and depend on the prayers and financial support of churches in WDC as we seek to extend the Kingdom of God among us.

Marvin Zehr, Chair: Violeta Ajquejay, Nita Nikkel, Virgil Penner, Lee Suderman, Veronica Robles

Ministerial Leadership Commission

Kathy Neufeld Dunn, Chair

The Ministerial Leadership Commission's primary focus is credentialing and resourcing persons for ministry.

During the past year the Commission had the joy of interviewing a number of persons for credentialing (in chronological order):

License for Specific Ministry

- Peter Emery, Alexanderwohl, Goessel, KS
- Jennie Wintermote, New Creation Fellowship, Newton, KS
- Jenny Schrag, Joint Youth Pastor for Buhler, Inman and Hoffnungsau Mennonite Churches

License toward Ordination

- Tim Amor, Beatrice Mennonite Church, Beatrice, NE

Ordination

- Derek King, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS

Further Credentialing Work: The Ministerial Leadership Commission terminated the credentials of a former WDC pastor because of misconduct and refusal to enter into a restorative process.

Pastoral Resourcing Opportunity

- **Pastors' Day Apart:** "Christ Is Our Peace: Ephesians 2.14-18," Tom Yoder Neufeld and Chuck Neufeld, Faith Mennonite Church, Newton, KS

Inter-Conference Communication and Process: The commission supported Heidi Regier Kreider in her work of communicating with several congregations and pastors as they responded in favor of and opposed to the delegates' approval of the Rainbow resolution and as they contemplated their ongoing relationships with Western District Conference. In accordance with the Rainbow resolution, we also reviewed the discernment process of pastors and congregations in their response to a request to officiate same-gender ceremonies.

Commission members: Kathy Neufeld Dunn, Peter Goerzen, Terry Rediger, Brad Roth, Weldon Schloneger, and June Thomsen.

Resource Commission

Jeff Koller, Chair

The Resource Commission continues 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."

2015/2016 has seen a lot of change for us. We said goodbye to Marlene Bogard as Minister of Christian Formation, and Resource Library Director. Marlene served WDC for 25 years with passion, insight, and integrity. With the retirement of Conference Pastor Clarence Rempel, we needed to wait until Heidi Regier Kreider began her duties as Conference Pastor to make hiring and staffing decisions.

We were fortunate to have Jeanette Roberts work as librarian on a part-time basis in the Resource Library to bridge the time until hiring decisions could be made. After Heidi Regier Kreider assumed her new position, she and the Executive board decided to hire a ¼ time Resource Librarian along with a ¾ time Associate Conference Pastor. With this new direction, interviews were held and Jennie Wintermote was offered and accepted the library position. This meant losing Jennie on the Resource commission, and we now await her replacement. The Associate Conference Pastor position has been filled by Kathy Neufeld Dunn, and when she starts her new position, she will relate to the Resource Commission.

Gordon Houser and Jennie Wintermote made a presentation on Faith Formation at last year's WDC gathering. The WDC Anabaptist Faith Formation Launch was held this past June. In addition to the Faith Formation efforts, the commission received and granted requests for extensions of several of the task forces and committees who we oversee. We also extended the Loaves and Fishes grants into 2016, and have had a good response with several additional grants made.

We endeavor to utilize funds in a way that will serve to deepen the faith of the people who use the many resources of the Western District Conference and Resource Library.

The current Resource Commission members are: Katherine Goerzen (Tabor Mennonite, Goessel); Vicki Hinz-Ensz (First Mennonite, Beatrice); Gordon Houser (New Creation, Newton); Ann Hiebert (Alexanderwohl Mennonite, Goessel); and Jeff Koller (Eden Mennonite, Moundridge)

End Death Penalty Task Force

Report not available.

Historical Committee

Roger Juhnke

The WDC Historical Committee has been inactive this year.

Low German Mennonites from Mexico Task Force

Margaret Goering, Chair

Low German Mennonites from Mexico Task Force Members: Margaret Goering, Chair, Harold D. Thiesen, Vice-Chair, Milton Claassen, Secretary, Lottie Boschmann, Lillian Quiring, Carola Ratzlaff, and Lici Roth.

This is a partnership with Western District Conference (WDC), which supplies the health promoters to monitor and advocate healthy eating and living for Low German Mennonites and Spanish speaking farm workers in partnership with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), which supplies vouchers for direct medical and dental services supported through bi-lingual case managers and health promoters. All funding for the work of this task force is from KDHE grants.

Cyndi Treaster, the KDHE representative who has met with this Task Force since its beginning 12 years ago retired from KDHE in September, 2015. Kendra Baldridge has replaced her as the Program Director of Statewide Farm Worker Health and ex-officio member of this Task Force.

A total of 5135 persons were served last year. Seventy-five percent were Latino, just under 20% were Low German, just under 5% were Caucasian and a small percentage were Micronesian.

Harold Thiesen represents the Task Force on the Kansas Statewide Farmworker Health Program Advisory Council.

Safe Sanctuary Task Force

Kathy Wiens

The Safe Sanctuary Task Force was created under the supervision of Marlene Bogard in February of 2015. Members of the Task Force are: Diana Schunn, Ruth Mueller and Kathy Wiens.

The purpose of the Task Force is to be available to talk to pastors and church leaders about particular dilemmas in their congregation regarding boundaries, safe touch and appropriate behavior. Their role is to provide education, clarity and encouragement regarding Safe Sanctuaries programs and child protections policies. They may also refer persons to helpful resources and websites. Providing in-person resourcing and training will be left to the discretion of the task force. This task force will not provide crisis care, nor in-depth counseling.

Kathy Wiens presented a training for Faith Mennonite Church in Newton KS on January 6

Worship and Music Task Force Report

Carol Klingenberg

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

The purpose of our task force is to facilitate resourcing events to promote music and worship in the church. Our specific tasks are to maintain and grow the anthem collection housed in the WDC offices. All of the anthems are listed online.

Many area choir directors use the choral music library to obtain music for their choirs. It continues to be an important resource for the music in our churches as it provides a wide variety of music to enhance worship at no cost to our churches.

Since our last report on August 4, 2015, we have held the Choir Directors Roundtable on September 26, 2015. Nine participants shared anthems, wisdom and suggestions for church choirs. Everyone enjoyed the sharing with coffee, scones and grapes.

As a task force we will work on projects that will promote and resource worship and music in our churches.

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), Dwight Flaming (Trustee Task Force liaison), Stephen Hochstetler (Staff Relations Committee liaison), Leanna Ediger, and Darlene Powers (recently appointed to fill Jim Yoder's resignation). Phyllis Regier, Business Manager, and Heidi Regier Krieder, Conference Minister provide invaluable staff representation and support to the commission.

The Stewardship Commission year was abbreviated because Annual Assembly took place in October 2015 and the 2016 Annual Assembly will be held in July. We conducted meetings November 12, 2015; February 18, 2016; and April 21, 2016. We gave oversight and accounted for the WDC finances and property.

The past budget year income exceeded expenses, however, income was similar to last year. We experienced a rather large surplus, because of staff resignations and transitions. Also there was a lapse in time in filling positions to allow the recently hired Conference Minister time to properly plan for and select and hire new staff. We recommend the surplus to be used to expand staff health benefits and support church plants. The following initiatives and activities contributed positively to this year's budget status:

- 1) Implementation of efficiency practices by dedicated WDC staff operating programs and managing facilities and property,
- 2) Excellent response to the fund drive request letters mailed out twice a year,
- 3) Generous support for church plants,
- 4) Intensive and effective constituent communication in the form of "Seeds", "Sprouts", and "Garden" publications.

Next year's budget and Stewardship Commission business will include some of the following considerations:

- 1) Supporting and building upon a very loyal, faithful, and generous foundation of WDC member congregations,
- 2) Ongoing emphasis on church plants,
- 3) Providing adequate and affordable health insurance benefits for WDC staff and their families,
- 4) Planning and adapting to changes in WDC community membership—potential loss of churches and support of new church plants,
- 5) Generosity initiatives in light of changing social and generational dynamics relating to conference financial support and participation.
- 6) Ownership, management, and maintenance of 2500 Place, N. Newton.

The commission is very grateful for the 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.

Staff Relations Committee

Sondra Bandy Koontz

The staff relations committee meets at least quarterly with the conference minister. Committee members receive the conference minister's work report and discuss issues that affect conference staff. Committee members provide support for the conference minister. They serve as a sounding board and provide a place for open discussion of the joys, concerns, and issues facing the conference.

This year, the committee chair was a member of the search committees for the two associate conference ministers and the resource library director. The entire committee reviewed the memos of understanding for these positions and confirmed pay rates for these positions.

The committee reviewed the process for annual staff reviews and received reports of these reviews from the conference minister.

In consultation with the stewardship commission, the staff relations committee recommended that the executive board change the health insurance benefit for Western District Conference staff to cover 50% of the dependents' premium or 50% of the spouse's premium in addition to covering the employee. It was recommended that the 50% spouse coverage be available only if the spouse is ineligible for other job related health insurance or for Medicare. The executive board approved this proposal. The staff relations committee believes that this policy change will be beneficial in attracting and retaining staff.

Committee members are currently reviewing the format, language, and contents of staff memos of understanding in relation to the personnel policy. Our goal is to create a consistent memo of understanding template for all staff.

Committee members: Sondra Bandy Koontz (chair), Janice Good (recorder), Christy Schunn-Sebes, Stephen 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, 2016, the Revolving Loan Fund had three loans receivable totaling \$34,968.

Gary Rediger (Chairperson), Eric Bruce, Rick Krehbiel, Dwight Flaming, (Stewardship Commission liaison) and Phyllis Regier (ex officio)

Camp Mennoscah Association Jerry Kroeker, Executive Director

Greetings on behalf of the board and staff for Camp Mennoscah. 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 are grateful for the support you have shown Camp over the past year and are excited to share highlights.

To begin my name is Jerry Kroeker and I am the new Executive Director for Camp Mennoscah. I have served as the executive director at Swan Lake Christian Camp in South Dakota for nearly twenty years. Camp Mennoscah was my first camping experience as a young child. Christian camping changed my life as a young adult as I grew in my relationship with Jesus Christ. Now, I am excited to be a part of Camp Mennoscah and see how God will use this place to make an impact on the lives of those who come to this sacred space. I welcome you to bring your children to camp this summer where they will learn more about Jesus Christ and grow in relationship with others seeking to know Him at a deeper level.

Staff: Olivia Bartel and Gardell Stucky continue to serve camp and we are pleased to also introduce Deborah Dimmick. Deborah joined the team as an administrative assistant. This small but mighty team is committed to helping make each camping and retreat experience exceptional.

Rental groups and Retreats: Camp Mennoscah is a place for gathering people together for common reasons. More than 50 churches, families, and other groups visited Camp Mennoscah during 2015. Time at Camp was spent in everything from scrap booking to quilting to relaxation retreats. Family reunions

brought people together. Some came to camp to volunteer getting necessary work for Camp completed. In all situations God was present and active.

Summer Youth Camps: At the core and foundation were 8 weeks of youth summer camps. 535 campers were able to experience the convergence of God, nature, and relationships. This effort requires the time, energy and commitment of 185 volunteers and staff. What Camp is all about is best described by this summer staffer:

“This summer has been simply indescribable. I never imagined being able to work in a place that filled me with such love and joy and brought me so close to God. I think one of the most meaningful experiences for me this summer was during one of the pre-junior camps and it really shows what camp does for these kids. I was helping a little girl read through and fill out her camper evaluation and I asked her what her favorite part of camp was. She motioned me to come closer because she didn't want to say it out loud so I got closer and she cupped her hands around my ear and whispered, "Learning about God"” —Kate, First Mennonite Church (Newton, KS)/Bethel College

Projects: After two years, we are excited to share with you that 44 volunteers spent more than 1422 hours building two new bathhouses. What very generous acts of service. Camp is looking forward to now moving on to the next step in executing on the master plan.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to you for your continued support of Camp Mennoscah. We know that Christian camping changes lives. As staff and board members, it has changed our lives. We invite you to partner with us this year through prayer, volunteering at camp, using our facilities for family or church events or by sponsoring a child through scholarships for camp fees. Your involvement makes our continuing ministry viable. Thank you so very much.

Board of Directors (alphabetical order): Mariah Banning, Greg Bauer, Mike Doerksen, Kent Erb, Renetta Gooden, Wilmar Harder, Valerie Klaassen, Miriam Krehbiel, George Leary, Patrick Loganbill, Jonathan Miller, and Jim Yoder.

Mennonite Agri-Urban Alan Entz

Thank you to all participants for your donations of time, money and energy in 2015 that helped the Kansas portion of Agri-Urban give \$18,741.13 to Bethel College, Western District and Mennonite Church USA. The Nebraska Agri-Urban gave \$8878 to various different organizations.

MCC Central States - Provoking One Another to Love and Good Deeds Michelle E. Armster, MCC Central States Transitional Executive Director

The title is the 2016 invitation from J. Ron Byler, MCC U.S. Executive Director and Don Peters, MCC Canada Executive Director, to reflect on Hebrews 10:23-24:

²³ *Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.*

²⁴ *And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds,*

How do we begin and continue to spark love and good deeds as we carry out the mission of MCC Central States? Because we are committed to relief, development and peace in the name of Christ, our unwavering hope is that our eyes continue to be opened to the ways that Christ calls us to love and do good deeds.

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 and Brethren in Christ congregations are in the region.

Programs and Support Services

In 2015, we saw the unwavering hope in the work of our **Young Adult Program** Coordinator, Sharon Nelson. She continues to work passionately at actualizing these MCC strategic goals:

- Strengthen support and coordination for the Summer Service Program
- Increase opportunities for young adults to serve through internships and new access points
- Address the barriers that make it difficult for young adults to serve

To this end, Sharon has been and is actively recruiting for our young adult programs - Summer Service, SALT and IVEP. She is also the chairperson for an MCC workgroup that is exploring ways that MCC can provide internship opportunities for young people.

MCC CS **New Orleans** program staff, Pam Nath, continues to find hope- in spite of the ongoing and systemic racism that plagues New Orleans- in her work there. Two of MCC Central States' strategies that encompass Pam's work are, "focusing education and advocacy efforts on the racial disparities in the U.S. criminal justice system," and "exploring and expanding new resources for dismantling oppression within staff and board." Some of her work has included, working to address racial disparities in the criminal justice system, organizing white people for racial justice, and supporting New Orleans partner organizations.

Erica Littlewolf, program coordinator for the **Indigenous Visioning Circle**, and Karin Kaufman Wall, **Peace and Justice Education** Coordinator collaborate to educate about the Doctrine of Discovery. The Loss of Turtle Island is a participatory learning experience that depicts the historic relationship between European settlers and Indigenous nations, is gaining interest across the U.S. Participants continue to share that they learn history that they never learned in school and express a new openness to learning more about their own connection to the history and present-day realities. This past year, the MCC US Board was hosted for meetings on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation at White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church. The response has been deeply affirming.

How to respond to **Immigration and Education** continues to be a challenge. In order for us to really imagine how we can respond robustly and with unwavering hope, we have closed our MCC office in Houston, Texas. This next year, we hope to establish the program in the South Texas. We will continue to develop connections with new nonprofits that are working on legal matters with unaccompanied minors. We hope to develop curriculum and workshops to be shared primarily in Latino/a church settings on topics that have been identified previously in discernment to better resource our Latino/a constituency.

After decades of maintaining an MCC office in Freeman, SD, it was decided to close the **Northern Tier** office. Many hours of prayer and discernment preceded the decision, and finally it was determined that the work could/should be reimagined. Our Donor Relations Director, Maynard Knepp, and the rest of the staff are exploring the many opportunities we have in the northern part of our region to build and maintain relationships and MCC events.

This past year, the MCC Central States **Donor Relations** Team worked intentionally on forming a strategic plan that focused on top donor cultivation. It is our continued goal to improve relationships with those who give to MCC. Moreover, we are working closely with the U.S. Thrift Shop Development Coordinator to encourage Central States **Thrift Shops** to use best business practices.

In 2015, the **MCC CS Material Resource Center** in North Newton, Kan. processed over 600,000 pounds of clothes, shoes, belts and purses, generating over \$100,000 for MCC Central States. We are blessed by the many volunteers who work at the Material Resource Center, the 11 Thrift shops, coordinate the 10 Relief Sales and provide labor at the 13 Meat Canning locations. The total number of volunteer hours served in 2015 in the MCC CS Material Resource Center was 6,169. There were many thousands of kits, comforters and blankets donated, checked and packed for distribution around the world.

MCC CS sent two shipping containers directly out of the Central States' warehouse in 2015. In early Feb. of 2016, we shipped approximately 72,000 pounds of meat to Ethiopia. Looking ahead, to address our strategic goal of focusing education and advocacy efforts on the racial disparities in the U.S. criminal justice system, we are starting 2 new kits: Prisoner Care and Returning Citizens.

Lastly, at this Board meeting, the board will review and, hopefully, approve the job description for a new **Executive Director**! So, shortly, take a look at the MCC website- if you are interested in what the job entails. So what does that mean for me- you ask? Well, I interviewed for the position of Program Director and was offered the position. Once the Executive Director is hired and oriented, I will assume the role of Program Director and I will move to Kansas City, where I will office.

Continue to pray for MCC Central States as we continue to open ourselves to love and good deeds.

Kansas MDS Annual Meeting Submitted by Jordan Miller

Jordan Miller opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, and read from Luke 6. He thanked Whitestone for hosting the meeting. Becky Koller shared the minutes from the last meeting. Don Horst shared the treasurer's report from the last year. Beginning balance was 15,015.56 the ending balance was \$21,597.38. The minutes and the treasurer's report passed with no revisions.

State Coordinator, Gordon Unruh shared about what happened in Kansas in the last year. Kansas MDS helped a family in Ingalls, KS. 31 people showed up to help a couple get their house fixed up to be sold. They had medical issues that made it difficult for them to stay on the farm. It was a very windy day, so much of the work completed was done indoors. When a microburst wind storm went through east of Buhler, Gordon went and checked it out. The Buhler MB church was already there working. He highly recommended the book Eighty-one Seconds. The book tells the story of the tornadoes that went through Stanton, Pilger, Wisner, Wakefield, NE area where MDS Binational had a project set up. Some in Pilger said, the town would never have come back if it wouldn't have been for MDS. One of the things that meant a lot to the community that was totally lost was when the first pop machine was installed in town. It proved to be a sign of hope.

Outgoing Region III director, Al Kroeker shared the Region III report. He shared that the best advocate MDS can have is when we go back to our congregations after an MDS trip and share about our experiences. He and Jan traveled to 12 states, some twice in the past year. He talked about the large impact that Roger Claassen and Lynn Newcomer and their equipment have had on MDS. Both have purchased large equipment they use to help MDS that can clean up demolished homes after a disasters. Projects in Regions III in the last year are in Jamestown, CO, Pilger, NE, Lusk, Wyoming, and two projects in Bastrop, TX. The Search and Rescue team in Arkansas has been busy. They also spent time processing a Grant supplied to some areas of Region III to buy trailers and tools. They thanked God for protection and guidance in the last year. Al Introduced Wayne and Carole Stucky who will take over in Region III as directors.

Wayne thanked Al and Jan for their service of the past years. There are four regional officers, Daniel Swartentruber, Treasurer, Rob Renz, secretary and Dennis Reis vice chair. Wayne shared about their time in Pilger. He also shared that Bastrop, TX will also have a youth project this summer. He talked about the storms of December 30; flooding in MO and IL. He said the volunteers who did initial cleanup after those storms has been valued at \$18 million. Region III goals and objectives: Preparedness, tool trailers, calling trees, organization, enhance unit governance structure, and Unit training, such as early response, CCP, etc.). They also want to work on relationship building and communication, keep the website updated, and keep Binational updated and work with VOAD. More cooks, crew leaders and project directors are needed. He also thanked everyone for sharing the love of Jesus and thanked Al and Jan for their leadership, and the Kansas board for their work.

Jordan shared about the Kansas Unit working with Bylaws update. The updates were presented to the group. Ray Yoder made a motion to approve the revision. Don Horst seconded it. The motion carried.

Ivan White shared his talent of playing the harmonica by playing *Amazing Grace* and *O Happy Day*. You never know what kind of tools you might need when working with MDS. He played for one of the men they were building a home for. It was a very meaningful experience for the homeowner and the workers.

Cleo Koop, the new Disaster Management Program Director thanked Russ Gaeddert for laying the foundation for the Disaster Management Program. It is over ten years since the beginning of the program. Bret Troyer was one of the first graduates, and Alicia Hurst was in the second round of graduates. They are both employed by MDS. Bret is the Logistics Coordinator and Alicia is the Volunteer Placement Coordinator. There are 10 students in the current program. Cleo thanked the MDS board for their donations to the program. The Director of the DMP coordinates summer field experience, is ½ time teacher, and ½ time recruiter. Two second year students, Lane Schrock and Austin Braddock shared.

Lane shared about the Progression of Giving. It begins with appreciation, then anticipation, expectation, entitlement and dependency. He spent 8 wks in Crisfield, MD and learned a lot about “Doing with, not doing for.” He believes we must change people from needy people to needed people, and follow the direction from Micah 6:8 and serve out of mercy and justice. Mercy and Justice must work together.

Austin Braddock shared that the students are required to read the book *Toxic Charity*. His sharing included an interactive element where he encouraged people to get into groups of two or three and thank each other for their servant heart. He shared Proverbs 19:17 “*He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done.*” When teaching people how to do something new, the goal is not to empower ourselves by proving to ourselves we can teach others a new skill, but to empower the learner on learning a new skill and not just completing it.

Don Horst closed the meeting with prayer.



Providing high quality mental health and addictions treatment services since 1954
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Expanding integration activities, increasing education, promoting prevention, facilitating identification, providing early intervention and client engagement activities are among the proactive measures we have advanced during the past year.

That means Prairie View is committed to holistic, coordinated care in collaboration with all healthcare providers. It means that it is part of our role to give presentations and teach courses in Mental Health First Aid in our communities. Our activities include working with childcare providers, educators and pediatricians on screening new mothers and young children for mental health risk factors. Our role encompasses work in various community settings to help families get the services they need. We are more actively reaching out to homeless persons and individuals who are incarcerated or struggling with substance use issues – all as an extension of the core responsibilities of a behavioral health organization.

In addition to operating a hospital, an addictions treatment center and a residential treatment center for youth, we have five outpatient locations in south central Kansas. We use charitable support for patient assistance funds to ensure needed treatment to those without health insurance coverage or inadequate financial resources to access services.

As part of our role as a community mental health center, we are also expected to respond to crisis and emergency situations in our area. Prairie View was (and continues to be) extremely involved in making services available to those affected by the mass shooting which occurred in our county.

Prairie View was founded by Mennonites as an expression of the sense of Christian obligation to create a humane, treatment focused and high quality institution to meet mental health needs for the people of this region. That sense of advocacy is still an underlying value for our organization. And advocacy (Identification of and Influence on Longer Term solutions to challenges affecting our patient and constituent populations and our organization) is an important priority identified in our new strategic and long range organizational plan.

Other priorities in the plan are:

- *Advocacy: Identification of and Influence on Longer Term solutions to challenges affecting our patient and constituent populations and our organization.* That's the core value that resulted in the founding of this organization and the building of the original hospital 62 years ago.
- *Program Revision: Service Expansion and Development based on Data Driven Decision-Making.* That refers to planfully and responsibly meeting the needs of our communities, as effectively as we are able.
- *Integration: Care Coordination, Collaborative Relationships, Information Accessibility across all healthcare providers.* Before anyone talked about Integration or health homes, Prairie View practiced holistic and comprehensive care. Now it's expected of all medical professionals.
- *Managing Information: Electronic Health Record Conversion, Health Information Exchange, Data Analytics, Preparation for alternative payment environment.* These are the tools required to be successful in healthcare in today's world.
- *Staff Recruitment and Retention:* Prairie View doesn't provide services – our people do! We need to be able to attract, reward and fulfill talented clinicians and team members to continue to excel in providing high-quality treatment.
- *Capital Needs: Maintenance, Improvement, Replacement and Financing Plan for Buildings, Grounds, Vehicles and Technology.* These aren't the most exciting items on our wish list, but they could be the most basic.
- *Diversification of Revenue Streams, especially related to fund raising and marketing.* The first six decades of our history involved very few billboards, television commercials or social media posts, but in 2016, we can't be successful without them.

Please contact us if we can provide a speaker for a worship service or class; a trainer for an education event or other resources to your congregation. Give us a call or send an email to arrange a tour or work project for your volunteer group. Contact us to schedule a Mental Health First Aid or Youth Mental Health First Aid course in your community. Let us know how we can collaborate to improve the quality of life in our shared communities.

And most importantly, please accept our gratitude for your prayers and support over the past 62 years~

Respectfully submitted,



President and CEO (Check us out: prairieview.org, FaceBook, Twitter, Pinterest and in your local media)

Western District Women in Mission

Pam Schrag

Western District Women in Mission (WDWM) started off 2016 welcoming Jennie Wintermote as vice president and Marlene Faul as secretary to our Executive Board. We met in January to plan with South Central the annual Spring Salad Supper and plan events for the year.

Our first event for 2016 was a Sister Care event lead by Rhoda Keener and Carolyn Haggen from Mennonite Women USA. WDWM hosted 75 women for the Seminar at Bethel College Mennonite Church. There were women from 5 states and many local ones who experienced a time of celebrating and sharing stories of Gods healing grace. The time provided tools for responding more confidently and effectively to the needs of others. MAY 5-6 2017 Sister Care 2 will be offered, mark your calendars, more info to come.

The Comforter Blitz on March 5-7 brought together 385 women from 68 different churches who were able to make 287 comforters for the Kansas Relief Sale. Mark your calendars for March 6-8, 2017 for next year.

March 17 brought the Spring Supper hosted at Whitestone with their youth group providing the meal for 254 women attending. Marlene Bogard - Director of Mennonite Women USA spoke on *Making Connections: Friendships, Faith, and Woman Today*. She challenged us to find those moments where we share our stories and build one another up.

This year WDWM will be supporting The Women in Leadership Project in two ways. We will be sponsoring the upcoming Women Doing Theology conference November 4-6 and the curriculum that they are currently developing for churches. Be sure and look for these great opportunities.

The next event on the calendar is the Women and Girls retreat at Camp Mennoscah September 9-11. Katherine Goerzen is the speaker this year, with the topic being Blessed, Beautiful and Beloved. The retreat committee has been hard at work to bring another amazing weekend for women. Save the date and look for the registration forms in the next few months.

This is the work of your Western District Women in Mission as we support, strengthen, and build one another up. Thank you for your donations that make this work possible. Please let us know how we can continue to serve you as we move into this year. Blessings to you all.

Report to Western District Conference

"Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action" (1 John 3:18).

Through its ministries, Mennonite Church USA seeks to demonstrate the love of God to one another and our world. Below, we've invited people to share how they've experienced love in action through Executive Board initiatives.

The Gathering Place website

Through this website and virtual meeting space, youth leaders can connect, learn, support and inspire one another by participating in learning circles, webinars, peer groups and spiritual direction.

"The Gathering Place is a place to interact with others, increasing our own spiritual and life understandings, so that we can share love in a more comprehensive manner with the youth around us. This is a wonderful opportunity to establish relationships beyond our local community, helping us to become the persons we want to be in our communities!"



—**Merv Stoltzfus**, Smoketown, Pennsylvania
Conference minister/youth, Atlantic Coast Conference

Sexual abuse prevention

In 2015, the Discernment Group on sexual abuse and the church wrote a Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse, passed by the KC2015 Delegate Assembly. The group also created the Care and Prevention fund, which received nearly \$61,000 in contributions — approximately \$42,000 to go to victims of sexual abuse, and \$19,000 to be divided among Mennonite Women USA's Sister Care ministry; the Women in Leadership Project of Mennonite Church USA; and Dove's Nest, a church organization that works to keep children and youth safe from abuse.

"Love means that while we love each other like family, we acknowledge that we are capable of doing harm to one another. We don't live in denial that abuse happens in our midsts — and in church. The Churchwide Statement on Sexual Abuse calls churches to make sure that child protection policies are in place and that reporting guidelines are followed. To me, this practical recommendation for all is love in action."



—**Anna Groff**, Tucson, Arizona
Executive director, Dove's Nest

Ministry with veterans

Resources for congregations supporting veterans as they seek healing for their emotional and spiritual wounds include a monthly newsletter, a Sunday school curriculum and a congregational training on relating to veterans. These are provided by the Peace and Justice Support Network (a partnership of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Network) and Mennonite Central Committee U.S.



"Our group that used the *Returning Veterans, Returning Hope* Sunday school materials included veterans, relatives of veterans and two people with no military connections. Everyone contributed freely and listened respectfully and with great interest. Sometimes there were tears as stories from the battlefields were shared.

Even though there was a biblical setting for each study period, most of our time together was spent in telling and listening to personal stories. I want to thank Mennonite Church USA for taking the initiative to create this study for the church. It was needed."

—**John Kreider**, Newport News, Virginia

Retired minister; member of Huntington Mennonite Church, Newport News

Doctrine of Discovery educational initiatives

Since the 15th century, the Doctrine of Discovery (DoD) and the laws based on it have legalized the theft of land, labor and resources from Indigenous Peoples across the world and systematically denied their human rights. The Christian church has historically supported the DoD. Through partnerships with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the DoD Working Group, Mennonite Church USA seeks to raise awareness, educate and involve the church in denouncing and dismantling the doctrine. See dofdmennon.org.



"The Doctrine of Discovery is aggressively exploiting and dehumanizing people every day. Through education and activism, we show what it means to love actively 'in a world that is very rapidly losing its understanding of being human' (to quote John Trudell)."

—**Erica Littlewolf**, North Newton, Kansas

Program coordinator, MCC Indigenous Visioning Circle

Immigration justice work

Resources available to congregations and individuals include the free Bible study, *Radical Hospitality: Responding to the issue of immigration*, and the DREAMer Fund, which helps undocumented young adult immigrants with tuition fees and supports other immigration justice initiatives.

"In the upheaval around Pastor Max Villatoro's detention and subsequent deportation, the outpouring and organization of community support were unprecedented. We found excellent support from a high-profile immigration attorney who came alongside our conference. This was expensive, however, and we wondered if we had the capacity to meet the costs of this action. We reached out to Mennonite Church USA staff, and it was a major show of support when the denomination immediately offered a grant to get us started in the fundraising campaign to cover legal costs and ongoing support for Max's wife, Gloria, and their four children, who remain in the U.S."



—**Shana Peachey Boshart**,

Wellman, Iowa

Conference minister for
Christian formation, Central
Plains Mennonite Conference



2016
mennoniteusa.org

Be salt. Be light. Be the Gospel.



Thank you!

In recent decades one thing has become clear:

Mission is all about relationships and partnership—with God, with congregations, and with

global partners. God's mandate inviting us to be partners in mission remains valid, our global partners' interest in working together continues to grow, and Mennonite Mission Network's commitment to extend the

witness of local congregations is unwavering. Thank you for your partnership and sharing in God's global mission. We appreciate the prayers, the people, and the generous financial resources that Western District Conference and

its congregations have shared. With deep gratitude!

Stanley W. Green

Stanley W. Green
Executive Director
Mennonite Mission Network

Western District Conference + Mennonite Mission Network

Worker support

The following Western District Conference congregations help support 12 long-term international Mission Network workers/families: Bethel College, Eden, Faith, First-Beatrice, First-Halstead, First-McPherson, Grace Hill, Hope, Houston, Inman, Lorraine Avenue, Manhattan, New Creation Fellowship, San Antonio, Tabor, Turpin, West Zion, and Zion-Elbing Mennonite churches.

In addition, New Creation Fellowship and Bethel College Mennonite Church serve as the ministry support lead congregations for the workers they are supporting.

Service participants

SOOP

Recent SOOP participants from Western District Conference include Willard and Ellen Ebersole from Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, serving in Carlsbad, New Mexico; Dorothy Goertz from Tabor Mennonite Church, serving in Three Rivers,

Michigan; Keith and Judy Harder from First Mennonite Church-Hillsboro, serving in Washington, D.C.; Weldon and Florence Schloneger from Shalom Mennonite Church, serving in Glendale, Arizona; LaVerle Schrag from First Mennonite Church-Hutchinson, serving in Atlanta; and Ib and June Thomsen from First Mennonite Church-Newton, serving in Tucson, Arizona.

SOOP also offers international opportunities!

Mennonite Voluntary Service

Six Western District young adults are serving in MVS: Erin Bradley from Shalom Mennonite Church and Neal Brubaker from Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, both serving in San Antonio; Elsa Goossen from Southern Hills Mennonite Church, serving in Alamosa, Colorado; Emily Harder from Bethel College Mennonite Church, serving in Washington, D.C.; and Roger Navarro from Rainbow Mennonite Church, and Melinda Regehr from Grace Hill Mennonite Church, both serving in Kansas City, Kansas.

Service Adventure

Service Adventure participants from Western District Conference include Aaron Woelk from Goessel Mennonite Church, and Matthew Garber from Faith Mennonite Church, both participating in Anchorage, Alaska; Robert and Sonda Tolle, from Eden Mennonite Church, serving in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Sarah Balzer of Buhler Mennonite Church participating in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Christian Service host locations:

San Antonio Mennonite Church and Rainbow Mennonite Church serve as hosts for Mennonite Voluntary

Service units located in Western District Conference.

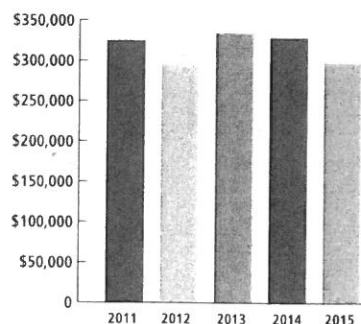
And three congregations serve as SOOP host sites: San Antonio Mennonite Church, Austin Mennonite Church, and Hope Fellowship.

Prayer partners

49 people have committed to pray daily for Mennonite Mission Network ministries.

Globe bank gifts

\$3,527.62 was raised from the children of Tabor, Faith and Alexanderwohl Mennonite churches.



**Western District
congregational giving
to Mission Network**

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

www.MennoniteMission.net Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872

Greetings!

MEA is pleased to share information with you for your annual conference. We are partnering with Mennonite educational institutions, preschool through continuing education to transform students to become Christ followers, service givers, peace seekers, rigorous learners, difference embracers and community builders.

This year **11,517 students** are enrolled at Mennonite institutions – 25 Mennonite School Council (MSC) schools, 5 colleges/universities, 2 seminaries and 2 Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education (HPLE) programs. Many future church and community leaders are being shaped with skills needed to succeed.

MEA is working with school leaders and teachers to ensure schools have the tools they need to transform lives through an Anabaptist lens. Over the past year we have worked in several areas to further Mennonite education.

- In MEA staff has been involved in two presidential searches at Eastern Mennonite University and Hesston College.
- In April, EMU announced the appointment of Dr. Susan Schultz Huxman as the 9th President, beginning January 1, 2017. As part of the transition time, Dr. Lee Snyder was jointly approved by the boards of MEA and EMU to serve as interim president beginning July 1.
- The Search Committee for the new president of Hesston College has met several times. Their work is on track as scheduled.
- Planning is underway for the joint MEA/ Mennonite Health Services board governance conference scheduled for March 9-11, 2017. This event will not only bring the boards from Mennonite educational and MHS institutions together, but it is also open to conference leadership and boards to participate in board development training.
- Over 475 registrants participated “In the Image of God: Faith Community, Reconciliation” Mennonite Educators Conference 2016 February 4-6, 2016. Registrants came from the U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico, Colombia and Benin.
- MEA is providing leadership for the planning for a Hispanic Anabaptist Academy Pastor and Spouse Spiritual and Training Retreat to take place this June. MEA is partnering with Goshen College and Everence in this event.
- The MEA board and committees have entered into conversations on the current landscape of the denomination and its implications on Mennonite schools.
- MEA is providing leadership for the planning for a Hispanic Anabaptist Academy Pastor and Spouse Spiritual and Training Retreat to take place this June. MEA is partnering with Goshen College and Everence in this event.

We are grateful to members of your conference who are serving on Mennonite educational boards and committees.

- **AMBS:** Sara Dick, Shalom
- **Bethel College:**
Chair: Heather Esau Zerger, Rainbow; Linda Buller, Lorraine; Jim Ensz, First (Beatrice); Sharon Nance, Peace (Dallas)

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

Thank you to Western District congregations who support Mennonite education*:

February 1, 2015 – January 31, 2016: \$83,871

**Giving includes gifts for higher education, MEA, Racial/ Ethnic Leadership Education and Hispanic Pastoral Leadership Education.*

One of our greatest accomplishments is the testimony of students to the transforming power of Mennonite education. Stories are plentiful and many of you could echo these words from a current Mennonite college student: “Attending a Mennonite college shaped who I am today and brought me to my own understanding and ownership of my Mennonite faith.” Thank you for your work in partnering with Mennonite schools of all kinds as well as Mennonite Education Agency. ***We are grateful for your support.***



Carlos Romero, MEA Executive Director

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary; Sara Wenger Shenk, president

Conference Connections

AMBS Board: Sara Dick from Newton, Kansas, serves as a member of the AMBS board of directors.

Students: Students from the conference who took classes in the 2015-16 year include **Kristine Regehr Bottorff, Ronald Moyo, Karen Mascho, James Branum, Laurel Mast Swartzendruber, Renee Reimer, Hope Graber, Caley Ortman, Asia Frye, Joel Schroeder, Kay Schroeder, Angela Smith, Michael Unruh, Eugene Thiesen, and Stanley Epp.**

AMBS Kansas Center events and courses: **Allan Rudy-Froese** led a preaching seminar in November 2015 and February 2016. **Dorothy Nickel Friesen** led a discussion group, *The Mission of Rural Congregations*, January to April 2016. **Kathryn Damiano** led a short course, *Being Formed by God through Scripture*, in April 2016.

This year at AMBS

Graduates: Fifteen students graduated from AMBS in May 2015. Eleven students received the Master of Divinity degree. One student earned the Master of Arts: Peace Studies, and one the Master of Arts in Christian Formation. Two students received Certificates in Theological Studies.

Lifelong learning: In the 2014-15 year, there were 667 enrollments in AMBS Church Leadership Center events and offerings. This includes webinars, workshops, online Anabaptist Short Courses, Pastoral Studies Distance Education, Pastors Week, Business Leaders and Pastors Workshop, and more. 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.

Pastors Week: *The Bible Says What?* was the topic for this year's Pastors Week, held January 25-28, 2016. 175 people attended. Sessions considered how Jesus read and interpreted Scripture as he preached, taught and healed the people of his day.

Resources for all in the church:

Practicing Reconciliation, a blog by Sara Wenger Shenk, asks questions and engages issues in the church: www.ambs.edu/practicingreconciliation

Anabaptist Short Courses and Webinars are two resources, online and non-credit, for exploring topics of Anabaptist faith and ministry. Visit www.ambs.edu, select *Lifelong Learning*.

Webinars: Topics in the 2015-2016 calendar included How We Got the Bible, Where is the Good News for Rural Folk?, as well as a series with Greg Boyd on Anabaptism, in which he engaged Drew Hart and others: www.ambs.edu/webinars

Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology, copublished with Canadian Mennonite University, focuses on Technology in the fall 2015 issue, edited by Andy Brubaker Kaethler: www.mennovision.org

Anabaptist Witness, copublished with Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church Canada, fosters a global Anabaptist and Mennonite dialogue on key issues facing the church in mission: AnabaptistWitness.org

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.

April 2016 3003 Benham Avenue, Elkhart, IN 46517 www.ambs.edu 574.295.3726

The 2015-2016 academic year at Bethel College is nearly over, and we have much for which to be grateful. We thank God for the following (and much more):

- An increase in enrollment, with an exceptionally enthusiastic Freshman class.
- A dramatic increase in Chapel attendance and spiritual life involvement.
- A strategic plan that is beginning to unfold.
- *Daily* campus ministries opportunities for students, including:
 - Bible Studies
 - Centering prayer
 - Tough Talks and Tasty Treats (discussing faith questions)
 - Navigator Bible Study
 - Weekly Chapel Services
 - Bedtime Prayers
 - Fellowship of Christian Athletes with vastly increased participation
 - Local church tour group
 - Special events, like 24-hour prayer and packaging 25,000 food packs.
- Eight wonderful student chaplains who help monitor and lead spiritual life activities on campus. Two of these students participated in the Ministry Inquiry Program this past year, in Salem, OR, and in North Newton, KS.
- A beautiful campus with well-maintained facilities.
- The women and men of our excellent faculty and staff, who give of themselves tirelessly, who teach and instruct carefully, who model Christian character daily.
- The new members of our staff and faculty, including Bob Milliman, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean; and Andy Johnson, Vice President for Admissions. Both of these VPs have graduate theological degrees and have served as pastoral leaders of Anabaptist congregations.
- The Constituency Leaders Council held meetings on the Bethel College campus. The meeting was chaired by the now-moderator of Mennonite Church USA, Bethel's own Dr. Patricia Shelly.
- Providing ten seminars and two worship speakers for the Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City.
- A release of *Mennonite Life* with major articles on Vincent Harding and John Howard Yoder, among others.
- Commissioning and hosting important research on Mennonite/s Writing, presented by Jeff Gundy of Bluffton University.
- Hosting the third biennial Worship and the Arts Symposium, featuring local artists and nationally-known scholars Michael Driscoll and Christine Pohl.
- Hosting Biblical lectures by Safwat Marzouk of AMBS and Tom Yoder Neufeld of Conrad Grebel.
- Hosting Michelle Armster of MCC as our MLK Celebration speaker.
- Providing speakers and musicians for congregations roughly two-thirds of the Sundays while classes are in session. Contact Peter Goerzen to schedule!
- Working closely with AMBS-Kansas Center to provide courses for seminary credit and continuing education.

In gratitude for the prayers and good wishes from the Western District Conference, we humbly ask for your continued support, as we seek to build, for generations to come, upon the foundation that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.



Report to Western District Conference 2016

Reaching Young Mennonites

The State of Youth Ministry in the Ohio Mennonite Conference

Bluffton University professor Dr. Randy Keeler explained his findings as the 2014-15 Ohio Conference Youth Ministry Resource Person during Friday Colloquium at the university on Dec. 4. The presentation related to Keeler's ongoing work to articulate what defines Anabaptist youth ministry.

He led six workshops across Ohio for youth workers during his term. "It was an attempt to help the participants think through why they do what they do in youth ministry, and if what they do is consistent with an Anabaptist approach, making them unique to other ministries in their communities," Keeler said.

Keeler said a particularly rewarding component of this role was meeting with 49 pastors of the 73 churches in the conference. He found that while youth ministry is thriving in some congregations, a dwindling number of participating youth in others has pastors rethinking how youth ministry should be carried out.

He analyzed the information gathered from these meetings through the lens of his doctoral findings, which includes three focus points for Anabaptist youth ministry: discipleship, community, and peace and nonviolence.

One of the questions he asked pastors was how young people were invited to Christ in their congregation. Answers included: an invitation to join a baptismal class, discussions in the home, through the mentoring program Life Planning or during the "camp experience"/ MCUSA Convention. The frequency of this invitation to faith, according to the pastors interviewed, ranged from every Sunday to never.

Keeler also noted that a lack of centrality is different than other MCUSA conferences, as the number of Ohio Conference youth that attend Camp Luz (Orrville, Ohio) is disproportionately lower than the number of Central District Conference youth that regularly attend Camp Friedenswald (Cassopolis, Mich.). "Large group events such as Convention or camp are places where decisions to follow Christ are often made, but fewer and fewer congregations are investing in these venues as places of spiritual decision," Keeler said.

Keeler was happy to report that the involvement of youth through their talent and abilities is thriving in Ohio Conference churches. Many are involved in the Sunday morning service by leading music, serving as worship leader,

performing in dramas and dances, collecting offering, helping with technology or even preaching. While it is difficult to include youth on boards and committees because of the scarcity of their availability throughout the school year, he praised those that are making an effort.

He noted the Mennonite Church as a whole tends to ignore the importance of confessional times where youth are encouraged to be honest about the struggles they're dealing with. He says that is how community really happens, and adults need to be models of how to go about doing so. "We ask them, 'Are you willing to be held accountable?' at baptism, but we never practice it," he said.

Conflict resolution training indicates an intentionality to live out peace and nonviolence, but very little has been done in this area. Some pastors indicated that as little as half of their members would consider themselves a pacifist, though many pastors report a long history of non-participation in the military. Keeler's response is that conflict resolution training is needed now more than ever, as congregations continue to splinter over issues regarding homosexuality. One pastor reported that 80 percent of his time was spent trying to hold his congregation together, with very little time left to spend on youth ministry.

"It's important to remember that the problems of the Ohio Conference are not unique. Churches leaving both the conference and the denomination may cite that they are remaining faithful to being Anabaptist and feel as though others aren't." Keeler's findings are available in greater detail in a document on the Ohio Conference website www.ohiomennoniteconference.org.

— Written by Meg Short '16

Thank you, Western District Conference!

Bluffton University student, **Emily Huxman '17**, is part of Western District Conference. She attends Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kan.

For more information on Bluffton University:
Robin Bowlus, director of public relations
bowlusr@bluffton.edu www.bluffton.edu

President opens year with message on Christ-Centered Servant Leadership

During the 2015-16 school year, the college is focusing on its core value of "servant leadership." President James E. Brenneman opened the year by asking students and staff to consider what it means to be a Christ-centered servant leader. Saying that it sounds like an oxymoron and is difficult to define, Brenneman pointed out that "we know what servant leadership is when we see it." He added that as Christians, our primary understanding of servant leadership comes from the life and teachings of Jesus himself, as well as from God attaching God's very self to creation. "The servant leader God is motivated by love, pure and simple. The servant leader God of love is affected by our wrongs, woos us with infinite love – an honest-to-God real love filled with pathos, whimsy, mirth, limitation, creativity, agony and ecstasy." Brenneman, a 1977 graduate of Goshen College, is in his third term as President.

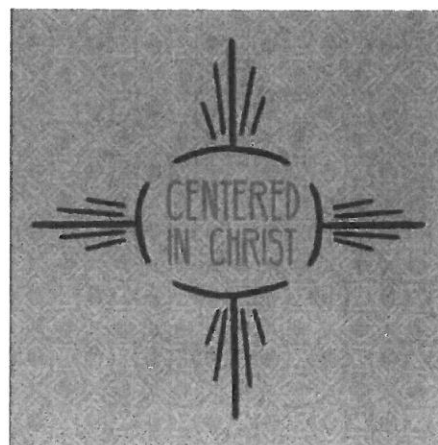
Conference connections

This academic year we have 19 students enrolled from 11 Western District Conference congregations. Those churches generously pledged \$40,267 in congregational student aid for the academic year. The Goshen College 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.

Students from the conference are involved on- and off-campus in many edifying ways but we particularly recognize Daniel Smucker from Shalom Mennonite who spent the spring semester in Cambodia and Brenner Burkholder from Southern Hills Mennonite Church and Ardys Woodward from Shalom Mennonite Church who are spending this summer in Senegal through GC's Study Service Term program.

2015-16 Campus ministries theme

The Campus Ministries theme this year is "Centered in Christ." Eleven Ministry Leaders, eight Worship Assistants, and countless other Goshen College students provide leadership as we explore what it means to center ourselves before God in the midst of a busy world. In the first chapel of the year, Campus Pastor Bob Yoder shared that Jesus's spirituality, portrayed in the Gospel of Luke, was one of both "doing" and "being." He often went to the "deserted places" after his "good deeds" to spend time in prayer with God. Students were then invited to write down a hope or a prayer for the upcoming year on mirrors. Students and employees were also invited to engage the theme through the GC Prayer Book, which includes twelve devotions written by students as well as over a dozen different ways to pray. This material is available to people in both print and electronic formats. Visit www.goshen.edu/faith/campus-ministries to learn more about GC Campus Ministries.



For more information, contact Dan Koop Liechty, Director of Alumni and Career Networks. Call (574) 535-7002 or e-mail churchrelations@goshen.edu.

WESTERN DISTRICT OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA REPORT

April 2016

2015-16 enrollment – Official fall enrollment numbers show a greater percentage of students returned to Hesston College in the fall of 2015 as compared to returning students a year prior. The increase is about 10 percent in nearly all primary areas. Total enrollment for the year is 409 students from 31 states and 13 countries, including 46 percent from Kansas, 43 percent from other U.S. states and 11 percent international. Mennonite students make up 31 percent of the student population.

Campus theme - The 15-16 First-year Experience course invited the local community to participate in its "common read" with the theme, "Be the Change that Matters." Regina Calcaterra's memoir *Etched in Sand* traces her childhood experiences of abandonment, physical abuse and fear of the foster system she and her four siblings endured. The common read serves as a catalyst for a series of student projects, campus forums, community discussions and service activities. Calcaterra visited campus Oct. 5.

Homecoming 2015 - Campus

Transformation was the theme for A Hesston College Homecoming Sept. 24 to 27. The weekend celebrated a new north entryway to campus, renovations to the Northlawn performing arts building and the first official chiming of the new alumni carillon bells. A scale replica of Green Gables, the campus' first visual marker, was unveiled, emeritus faculty were recognized and outstanding performers who got their START at Hesston College participated in a Performing Arts Showcase following the Saturday evening alumni banquet.

AVDS conference encouraged vibrant faith practices every day - Ordinary Radical and follower of Christ, Shane Claiborne, founder and board member of *The Simple Way*, joined other peacebuilders, youth leaders and social justice advocates at the college's Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series conference Feb. 19 to 21, 2016. The conference theme, "Not Just on Sunday" helped attendees explore what it looks like to live a vibrant Sunday through Saturday faith - to live as if Jesus meant what he said and he was talking to us. Claiborne is the author of over a dozen books and was a worship speaker at MCUSA Convention 2015.

Presidential transition – Hesston College President Howard Keim announced that he will transition away from his role at the college at the end of the 2015-16 academic year, concluding 11 years of leadership as the college's eighth president. "I have always viewed myself as a steward, not an owner of the office of president, and it has been my goal to ensure students are well-served and the mission of the college was advanced and strengthened and for the future," said Keim. A search for the college's next president began in January with Ken G Kabira, Hesston College Board of Directors member, as search committee chairperson.

Congregational student aid – Hesston College offers a match grant for scholarships provided by students' churches. During the 2014-15 year, 87 churches contributed \$195,193 in congregational aid to 121 recipients. Hesston College matched a total of \$127,621. The average church aid per student was \$1,613 while the average church-and-college aid per student was \$2,667. **If your congregation is interested in providing a scholarship program to support Mennonite higher education, contact the Church Relations Office at 866-437-7866.**

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

2015-16 campus theme verse

"The Greatest Commandment"

Mark 12:30-31 (New International Version)

Western District of Mennonite Church USA Statistics and Connections

2015-2016 Academic Year Students – 11

Congregational Student Aid – 7 congregations provided \$10,850.00 in tuition assistance for 11 students as of April 15, 2016.

Hesston College Board of Directors – Luke Roth-Mullet, New Creation Fellowship Church, Newton, KS.

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

Phyllis Weaver, Development Officer

Bethany Miller, Admissions Representative

Common ground

Everence 2016 report

Western District Conference
Annual Assembly
July 29-30, 2016

*Let us then pursue the things
that make for peace and
build up the common life.*

– Romans 14:19 (NEB)



Everence values its strong congregational partnership

For more than 70 years, Everence® has worked with congregations and their members, helping people of faith “build up the common life” through their financial decisions. These connections are vital to us, and we look forward to many more years of focusing on the best interests of your members – helping them create and implement plans tailored for their needs and aspirations to share with others.

As we have since 1945, we will continue to serve the Anabaptist community as partners in stewardship throughout 2016 and beyond.

Sharing Fund is helping congregations extend their reach

The Everence Sharing Fund encourages churches to aid individuals and families in their congregations and communities by providing matching grants. Thousands of people benefit each year in all kinds of ways, including a homeowner in Pennsylvania whose roof (pictured) was replaced by a church’s volunteers.

Even though the congregation is quite small, members pitched in when they

learned that water was leaking into the house of a man who had to retire early because of an illness. One church member was even ready to pay for materials and do all of the work himself before the pastor suggested that it become a congregational project. It’s another example of doing better together, combining gifts of time, talents and financial resources.

Everence can help you offer financial coaching

Everence recently launched a program to train congregational financial coaches, who will encourage, guide and help members of your community put financial goals into action. This ministry is for congregations wanting to take the next step to help people deal with budget, debt and savings habits.

Becoming a congregation that provides financial coaching is about identifying people with a passion to walk with and help others with their finances. Our coaching resources include a training manual and balanced money workbook to help participants allocate their resources in a healthy and sustainable way. Contact your Everence church relations representative to learn more.



Spanish-language website offers Everence information

A new Spanish-language website offers foundational information about Everence at everence.com/espanol and everence.com/spanish. Designed to provide an overview of what Everence offers its members, the website also includes contact information for Spanish-speaking staff available to answer questions about Everence products and services.



Martin Navarro, Church Relations Representative, is developing relationships with people and communities

whose primary language is Spanish. Martin, who is bilingual, meets with pastors, Everence advocates, small groups, individuals and families to talk with them about their financial stewardship journeys.

Gospel of Luke curriculum focuses on 12 key passages

Luke highlighted stories from Jesus that address issues of wealth, poverty and generosity in his gospel. Everence now offers *The Gospel of Luke: the relationship between salvation, discipleship and wealth*, a new curriculum that focuses on 12 key passages. Many of Luke's stories were not included in the other gospels.

The lessons are designed to be versatile enough to be used by teachers in a classroom setting or pastors as sermon starters. Each of the 12 lessons includes teacher tips, introductory commentary on the key texts and discussion questions. You may download the lessons at everence.com, or contact Stewardship Education Director Beryl Jantzi at beryl.jantzi@everence.com for more details.

Using our credit card aids more charitable groups

Everence Federal Credit Union donated \$16,200 to The Mennonite and MennoMedia in 2015 from our unique Rebate for Missions program. Rebate for Missions is supported by the credit union's 10 percent tithe of income generated when people use their Everence Visa credit cards.

In addition to these awards to national agencies, our credit union branch offices share Rebate for Missions money with charities in their communities. Since the program started in 1995, the credit union has given nearly \$400,000 in grants to churches, missions and relief organizations. Learn more at everence.com/banking.

Virginia couple honored with National Journey Award

Marvin and Sarah Slabaugh are generous with their time and financial resources, supporting their congregation, Weavers Mennonite Church, and a variety of mission- and education-related organizations.



Everence recognized the Slabaughs, of Harrisonburg, Virginia, with its national Journey Award for 2015. As part of the award, Everence donated \$5,000 to charities Marvin and Sarah chose. In addition to the national award, seven regional Journey Award winners chose charities to receive \$500 Everence donations. The

Journey Awards highlight how people are living out their faithful stewardship of their God-given gifts.

Being generous is easier than you think

Everence Asset Management services help people increase their capacity for charitable giving through planned gifts, retirement security and investment services. You can grow your ability to make an impact on the people and causes you care about through professionally managed portfolios, access to faith-rooted investment choices and a personal relationship with a financial advisor.

We'll help you simplify your finances into a streamlined strategy, so you can spend time on what matters to you. Visit everence.com/asset-management for complete information.

Lilly Endowment awards \$1 million grant to Everence

Everence learned in November 2015 that it was approved for a \$1 million grant from the Lilly Endowment, Indianapolis, aimed at improving the financial lives of pastors. The grant allows Everence to launch a new program through Mennonite Foundation.

The three-year program – aimed at pastors who are part of Mennonite Church USA and Conservative Mennonite Conference – will include grants to help pastors experiencing financial difficulties. It also includes an education program designed to improve personal financial skills.

Report to Western District Conference from MennoMedia

March 2016

MennoMedia plans a new hymnal

Mennonites sing together as a way to express our faith. This past year, a team from MennoMedia, Mennonite Church Canada, and Mennonite Church USA planted seeds for a new song collection to be released in 2020. It will be more than a printed hymnal, with electronic versions and other supporting products. Next year, a 10 to 12 member hymnal committee will be appointed and MennoMedia will hire a project director to oversee the process. We are eager to see this new song collection serve and nurture Anabaptist Mennonite believers as well as shape our common identity as followers of Jesus. To receive updates about the project, or to nominate a person for one of the committees, send an email to hymnalinfo@mennomedia.org.

Two new resources for the whole church



What if racial reconciliation doesn't look like what you expected? The high-profile killings of young black men and women by white police officers, and the protests and violence that ensued, have convinced many white Christians to reexamine their intuitions when it comes to race and justice.

In this provocative book, *Trouble I've Seen*, theologian and blogger Drew G. I. Hart places police brutality, mass incarceration, antiblack stereotypes, poverty, and everyday acts of racism within the larger framework of white supremacy. Leading readers toward Jesus, Hart offers concrete practices for churches that seek solidarity with the oppressed and are committed to racial justice. What if all Christians listened to the stories of those on the racialized margins? How might the church be changed by the trouble we've seen?



Should I sign up our seven-year-old son for the travel team? What should we do about our daughter's Sunday morning games? Am I the only one longing for a sane balance between children's sports, family time, and church commitments?

In *Overplayed*, David King and Margot Starbuck offer good news for Christian parents stressed out by these questions and stretched thin by the demands of competitive youth sports. Join King, athletics director at a Christian university, and Starbuck, an award-winning author and speaker, as they investigate seven myths about what's best for young athletes. Listen in as they talk to parents, pastors, and coaches about the peril and promise of children's sports. Learn practical ways to set boundaries and help kids gain healthy identities as beloved children of God—both on and off the field.

Resource Samplers

Resource Samplers are a new kind of lending library from MennoMedia and Herald Press, designed to help you make curriculum choices. Each Resource Sampler contains five to six titles for Sunday school classes and small groups to sample, free of charge, for up to 60 days. Call our customer service department at 800-245-7894 for more information on the five types of samplers available.

Russ Eanes
Executive Director, MennoMedia
Harrisonburg, Virginia



MennoMedia seeks to engage and shape church and society with resources for living the Christian life, from an Anabaptist perspective.

2016 REPORT TO WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE

The mission of MHS is to strengthen and extend Anabaptist-affiliated health and human service organizations. The following organizations belong to our network of 77 ministries and are located in the Western District Conference region:

- Bethesda Home, Goessel, Kansas
- Mennonite Friendship Communities, South Hutchinson, Kansas
- Prairie View, Newton, Kansas
- Bluestem Communities - Kidron Bethel Village, N. Newton and Schowalter Villa, Hesston, Kansas

Our activities

- The 2015-2016 Values-based Leadership Program began in October and ended in February with 36 participants. The program is committed to promoting intercultural competency, through diverse resource team members and participants, the Intercultural Development Inventory, videos and cohort work.



Character Collaboration



Culture



Change

- In March 2015, we launched a new website – ValuedLeadership.org to help leaders explore what it means to be an Anabaptist organization today. The resources on the website are free and available to anyone interested in building, reinforcing, aligning, and integrating Anabaptist values into practice.
 - A successful international gathering of more than 90 healthcare leaders was held in conjunction with the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in July. At the end of two days of speakers and fellowship, attendees agreed to create a Global Anabaptist Health Network.
- The 2016 Mennonite Health Assembly in Sacramento, California explored the theme *Finding Abundance in Scarcity*. Planning is underway for a joint gathering in March 2017 with Mennonite Education Agency's Education Leaders Gathering. All Mennonite Church USA agency boards will also gather there.
- A survey of member organizations showed that boards and executive leadership are less diverse than employees and people served. We are exploring goals and resources to support member efforts to strengthen diversity and intercultural competency.

We are grateful for the wise counsel of our national board, which includes Maribel Ramirez Hinojosa from Iglesia Menonita Buenas Nuevas and Houston Mennonite Church.

Submitted by Rick Stiffney, President/CEO

www.mhsonline.org