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# WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE REPORTS

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

July 6-8, 2012  
Oklahoma City, OK

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Office staff reports:

Conference Minister .....	1
Associate Conference Minister .....	2
Associate Conference Minister for Oklahoma .....	4
Minister of Christian Formation & Director of Annual Assembly .....	4
Conference Resource Library Director .....	5
Conference Treasurer <i>(This report will be posted online after annual audit is completed - see</i> <i><a href="http://www.mennowdc.org">www.mennowdc.org</a>, Conference Life / Annual Assembly)</i> .....	6

### Executive Board, Committee, and Task Force reports:

WDC Executive Board .....	6
Gifts Discernment Committee .....	7
Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force .....	7
Immigration Task Force .....	8

### Commissions, Committees, and Task Force reports:

Leadership Commission .....	9
Church Planting Task Force .....	10
Resource Commission .....	10
End Death Penalty Task Force .....	10
Historical Committee .....	11
Low German Task Force .....	11
Music & Worship Task Force .....	12
Youth Ministry Committee .....	12
Stewardship Commission .....	12
Staff Relations Committee .....	12
Trustee Task Force .....	13
Retreat Commission and Camp Mennosciah .....	13
Tournament Task Force .....	14
Ski Trip Task Force .....	15

### Institutions with relationships to WDC reports:

Mennonite Agri-Urban .....	15
Mennonite Central Committee Central States .....	15
Mennonite Men of the Plains .....	16

### Organizations with partnerships to WDC reports:

Mennonite Disaster Service .....	16
Oklahoma Convention Executive Committee .....	17
Western District Women in Mission .....	17
Prairie View .....	18

### Mennonite agency reports:

Mennonite Church USA .....	19
Mennonite Education Agency .....	20
Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary / Great Plains Extension .....	22
Bethel College .....	23
Bluffton University .....	24
Hesston College .....	25
Mennonite Mission Network .....	26
Everence .....	28
MennoMedia .....	30
Mennonite Health Services Alliance .....	31



**Conference Minister  
Clarence Rempel**

Jesus prayed for his disciples, and, I believe, is still praying for us as the church, as Western District Conference, “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21). Our oneness in Christ is a strong witness to the redeeming, reconciling, and restoring mission of Jesus as the Messiah sent by God. This text is the basis for our Assembly theme, “Becoming One to Be Sent in Christ” as we pursue both the unity and the mission to which Jesus Christ is calling us.

The Conference Staff in October and the Executive Board and Staff in January did an in depth study of unity using the work of David Boshart, Conference Minister for Central Plains Mennonite Conference in a paper entitled, “Becoming a United Church in a World of Division: A Biblical View of Christian Unity.” The full paper can be found at <http://www.centralplainsmc.org/Events/Unity%20Conference%202011/Becoming%20a%20United%20Church.pdf>. I commend it to you. I echo Pastor Boshart’s appeal, “We ask each other to be the living fulfillment of Jesus’ prayer by doing the hard work of remaining in relationship even when we disagree.” Attempts toward unity in our culture pursue avenues of sameness, niceness, tolerance, and coercion, but unity in Christ is something different. It is first of all a gift of our relationship with God through Jesus sealed by the Holy Spirit. It is a gift that we need to treasure and care for.

As we gather for Assembly 2012 in Oklahoma City, and listen to God’s Word, worship together, consider resolutions, share convictions, and engage in loving and respectful conversation, we will “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). The church “keeps the unity” by actions of humility, gentleness, patience, mutual submission, and forbearance in love” (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12-17; I Peter 3:8).

At a retreat for Area Conference Ministers hosted by Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary faculty and staff, March 15-18, I reflected on the challenge to Peter and his fishing companions to sail back out to the deep after a night of hopeless fishing and cast their nets in for a catch. They did and were surprised by a net full of fish that almost swamped two fishing boats (Luke 5:1-11). One message to me in that story was, “Clarence, be attentive and obedient to the strange things God is asking of you.” And then I listed in my journal the many surprises of God’s provision in my time as Conference Minister. God has filled my net with pastors for churches, leadership colleagues for difficult situations, wisdom for specific matters, staff of uncommon commitment, and miraculous God-provisions for particular congregations. I have never been more aware of God’s active intervention in our churches and in our pastors. And all of it is for the sake of our commission from Jesus, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.”

Let me highlight a few of the bright spots in the pursuit of our three Area Conference Tasks.

**Sustaining Transformational Pastors**

Our desire is that pastors are growing in their relationship with Jesus, in their missional vision, and in their leadership skills.

- Pastors were encouraged to be curious about how their ministry is engaging the spiritual growth and missional reach of their congregation in a Pastor’s Day Apart, “Feedback Loops and Fruitful Reviews,” September 20, with Keith Harder and three pastors presenting.
- Pastors were encouraged to be anchored in the foundation of having been created in God’s image and redeemed by Christ’s life, death, and resurrection as they navigate “The Role of Pastors in Difficult Discussions.” This Pastor’s Day Apart on March 1 challenged pastors to develop their capacity to remain engaged in difficult discussions as well as

discern their unique role in guiding congregational process. I, three presenting pastors, and the Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force guided the day.

- We continue to utilize mentors for new pastors, accountability plans, pastor peer groups, and coaching groups to encourage and sustain transformational pastors.

#### **Resourcing Healthy, Missional Churches**

Our desire is that churches are growing in spiritual and relational vitality, extending hospitality, and giving witness to Jesus as Lord.

- “Revitalizing Our Churches” was the theme of Reference Council on Nov. 19 with 70 participants. Four pastors shared stories of congregational revitalization. Randy Smith was our primary presenter. He helped us find ourselves in the church life cycle. Smith said, “The missional church...actively practices hospitality to welcome, draw-in, include, and give place to those who are not yet part of us. We join in God’s global kingdom mission by embracing the work of our conference, denomination, and the larger church.”
- The three Moundridge churches networked with WDC in hosting a seminar, “Maintenance to Missional: Looking Back So We Can Move Forward,” February 11-12, with 145 participants from 16 congregations. Conrad Kanagy, pastor and sociologist from Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, challenged us with questions like, “How does what we are doing matter to our community?” Kanagy exhorted seminar participants to pray God’s salvation shalom on their neighbors. “We need to pray ourselves to the heart of God’s love and God’s love for the world.”
- Annual Assembly continues as our premier resourcing event for churches and their leaders.

#### **Networking Anabaptist Church Planting Partnerships**

Our desire is that we become a community of communities in mission inviting others to faith in Jesus Christ and supporting new church developments.

- Grace Mennonite Fellowship is emerging under the leadership of Karen and Steve Mascho in Gladewater, Texas, who are just being obedient to the next thing they believe God is calling them to do. Through scholarship assistance from Western District Conference, they have enrolled in Pastoral Studies Distance Education with Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.
- New opportunities are emerging with racial/ethnic congregations that are already formed and are attracted to Mennonite faith and practice. Additional church planters are in conversation with staff. The new Church Planting Task Force is still in formation in providing the support of churches and finances to help us be more agile in responding to church planting opportunities.

The early church stood at the doorway of great opportunity of inviting peoples to faith in Christ and forming new communities of mission. Along the way they needed to deal with matters of ethical disagreement (Acts 15) in order to keep at the mission and to care for the unity of the church. I pray that grace for the churches of Western District Conference. “Lord, grant us that oneness that you share with the Father, so that we may be sent into your world with the strong message of your redeeming love (John 17:23).

#### **Associate Conference Minister**

##### **Gilberto Flores**

This year has been a time to rethink a lot of things concerning the church, my job and the challenges we are facing. Coincidentally, in the last four months, I took time to read and re-read Mathew 5-7 using as a core subject verse 13: “You are like salt for the whole human race. But if salt loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless, so it is thrown out and people trample on it”. (*Good News Translation*)



This reading gave me ground to consider the role of the church as a local community; the global dimension of the church, and the work people like me have to perform on behalf of this very church.

Our Anabaptist Mennonite tradition understands properly, that the Sermon on the Mount is an ethical declaration concerning discipleship and behavior. Using verse 13, I decided to focus my attention on the church, avoiding an individual or individualistic approach. What happen if the church loses its saltiness? What happen if the church is no longer necessary to the world? How this could happen?

Then I got into complicated personal and institutional questions. Are we promoting salty congregations? Are we behaving as salty institutions for the sake of this world? Are we keeping a salty taste as a witness of the kingdom of God? Am I instrumental and beneficial for the churches and leaders I work with?

The answer to all these questions gave me a mixed flavor. It is complicated to keep focus on what matters the most for the church, according to Jesus' teaching. Especially in a time when an inward sense of being keeps the church very focused to survive. Suderman mentions in his writing that the church has a role to play in the world yet. This is good to know, because some theologians mentioned years ago that the world will be just fine without the church, because what the world urgently needs is more Jesus. More Jesus and less church!! What a scary statement!

The church needs to remember (me too as individual serving in the church) that the only way to keep relevant for this time is offering more Jesus to the world, more salt of the kingdom of God, more intentional engagement (incarnation) in the world's reality. Surviving without flavor is irrelevant and scary too.

On the other hand, after I read these chapters, I came up with a sense of urgency, good urgency, about the role of the church, the conference and myself. We have all we need to continue growing as a salty church for the world. We have all the resources we need to continue offering our witness in our urban communities.

Personally, on behalf of WDC, I have a lot of resources on hand to continue helping congregations and leaders that confront every day the needs and challenges of this fragmented urban reality.

What I mean by resources is the Holy Spirit, a lot of people (the real capital of the WDC) and the emotional strength of many imagining a church for this time.

A taste of this salty flavor follows:

**Hispanic pastors in Texas are committed** to continue growing in their ministry. We meet every three months for six hours for training and continuing education. The training is focused on pastoral ministry.

**Three Hispanic pastors and nine congregational leaders** from Newton, Wichita and Liberal are meeting every three months for "just in time" training style to receive pastoral training.

I was blessed to be part of a missional church conversation in Moundridge, KS. From my perspective, the most demanding situations rely on those in pastoral leadership and their capacity to "see with mission's eyes" what God is doing in the area of their concern. What Kanagy brought to the table, is the need for more openness to the Holy Spirit, prayer and a good balance between what to keep and what to get new.

Investing time to resource our small congregations, and help them live out a healthy life, internally and in connection with their surrounding community as well, has been rewarding. Our plan is to contribute with them in areas of vision, transformational behavior and attitude, openness to rediscover what they have and see limitations as challenge not a problem. Churches I am working in these issues are Monte Horeb, Casa de Dios, Sembradores de Buenas Nuevas in Dallas. We are in the process of working with Nueva Jerusalem in Houston and Comunidad de Vida in San Antonio.

A new church is planning to become part of WDC, Camino de Santidad of Liberal, KS. Lou Gomez has done a good job to facilitate my connection with Moises and Teresa Romero. The congregation is ready to move into a formal relationship with our conference and we are working for this to be done during the annual assembly in Oklahoma City.

A chin congregation (an ethnic group from Asia) worships God in Houston, TX. They invited me to visit them on May 20, lead the dedication of their new building and have a conversation about Anabaptist Mennonite theology and history. They are seeking a formal relationship with WDC. Pray for this new coming group - this is something we need in Texas. More diversity is a healthy new shape of our identity. Thank God, this is another group seeking for a salty WDC relationship.

The Church Planting task force has been a blessing. Church planters are a permanent inspiration to my life and ministry. Their passion is immense.

### **Associate Conference Minister for Oklahoma**

#### **Dave Gerbrandt**

A highlight of the year for Oklahoma Mennonite churches was having Ervin Stutzman in the Clinton area for meetings, March 4-5-6. The Herold Mennonite Church was a co-sponsor of the annual Spring Meetings held jointly by the First Mennonite Church of Clinton and the Herold Mennonite Church. Other Oklahoma churches were invited to join in the meetings and a number of persons came from those churches.

Pastoral positions of the churches have been stable with only the resignation of Dave Gerbrandt at First Mennonite Church in Clinton on December 25, 2011. That church has called Jack Norris of Yoder, Kansas as their new pastor and he will assume his duties in Clinton on June 1, 2012. Terry Rediger is the pastor at Turpin, Oklahoma.

A new church plant has come out of the Joy Mennonite Church in Oklahoma City and is called Metro Mennonite Church. Norman Berry is giving pastoral leadership to that group while Zack Gleason has been called to take the pastoral leadership at Joy Mennonite.

A meeting of the Native American Ministries was held in Clinton with representatives from Canada and several other states. Lawrence Hart was honored with a plaque and gifts for his ministries in the Native American Ministries. Dave Gerbrandt attended as a representative from WDC and gave a devotional. Health problems have limited the amount of Lawrence Hart's activities.

### **Minister of Christian Formation & Director of Annual Assembly**

#### **Marlene Harder Bogard**

#### **Beyond the library walls\*\*...I resource!**

- Last August, I hosted a conversation with over 40 folks present: *What's the future of Adult Sunday school?* Feedback generated clearly points to additional resourcing on understanding life-long faith formation, how to invigorate "Sunday school" by utilizing new models, how to do active learning with adults, and more. In fall of 2012, I will use some sabbatical time to read and plan in this area.
- *Safe Sanctuaries* – providing adults who work with children and youth resources on navigating appropriate boundaries and touch. I first started working in this area of prevention of abuse 7 years ago, and the demand for continued resourcing is as strong as ever. In 2011 and 2012 these congregations invited me for training: First Mennonite, Hillsboro, Ks; First Mennonite, Hutchinson, Ks, and the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference.
- *Circle of Grace: a safe environment training program for children.* I was pleased to partner with Gilberto Flores, WDC Associate Conference Minister in Dallas, TX to provide an introduction to this important curriculum for children to Spanish and English speakers in November, 2011. Another group of Kansas educators was trained in June of

2011. It is my hope and dream that each WDC congregation take advantage of this free program to help kids know how to identify safe or unsafe situations, how to regulate boundaries and take action.

- *Prevention of Clergy Misconduct Training.* This is required training for all credentialed ministers within the WDC. I offered it in March, 2012 and also trained the pastors of the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference in Feb. 2012.
- *Advent, Lent and Summer Worship Planners.* Using the materials prepared our peers in Mennonite church USA and found in the Leader magazine, I help coordinate these 2-3 hour sessions so that pastors and worship leaders can network and share ideas.
- *Teach Adult Faith Forum class.* The Bethel College Mennonite Church sponsored a month-long class on Faith Formation.

#### **Beyond the Mennos...I learn!**

- I engage in continuing education opportunities so that I don't remain stagnant! I enjoyed being immersed in a Renovare' sponsored weekend at Friends University on Spiritual Formation in Sept, 2011.
- I participated in three Webinars sponsored by the Vibrant Faith organization: *Faith Formation 2020; Becoming a Cross-Generational Church; Growing Faith at Home.*
- I participated in a Webinar on *Cyber-porn* with Faith Trust Institute.
- Children, Youth and a New Kind of Ministry Conference was held in May, 2012 in Washington DC., and I participated, along with about a dozen other Faith Formation leaders in Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada.

#### **Always, always...I plan!**

- **2012 Assembly.** It was a joy to begin this work in February with a wonderful planning team: Jenny Castro (San Antonio, Tx); Carol Duerksen (Hillsboro, Ks) Terry Rediger (Turpin, Ok); Miles Reimer (Newton, Ks) Joanna Pinkerton (Wichita, Ks).
- **Year of the Bible.** Our grant request from Schowalter Foundation to fund a Year of the Bible, including resource selection and lists, forums, seminars, was fully funded to the tune of \$9500! Thanks be to God. Look toward 2013 to reap the rewards.

**\*\* For more on my role with Conference Resource Library - see next report!**

### **Conference Resource Library**

#### **A Meaningful Conversation with Marlene Bogard, Director**

##### **Q. In the midst of this tough economy – how do you keep going?**

A. We are supported primarily from contributions from congregations of the Western District Conference. In addition, memberships from the Central Plains Conference and the South Central Conference help to keep our boat afloat. Individuals not connected with these area conferences may also purchase an annual membership. These additional funds provide us with the ability to purchase new resources, assist with staff time and share our collection to a large regional chunk of MCUSA. And, chocolate helps.

##### **Q. What's the best thing that happened in the library this week?**

A. Watching a 3 year old Story Hour child dip his toy lobster in a rain puddle. Oh...and observing two pastors "rush" the lectionary commentary for this Sunday.

##### **Q. What percentage of your collection is old and moldy?**

A. Ahem...we prefer to call older books "heritage items." We are mold-free.

##### **Q. Ok – so do you really have NEW resources?**

A. You Betcha! Since 2008 we have added over 2,000 new books and DVD's. That's about 20% of our collection!

##### **Q. But do you have E-books?**

A. No. We have the real ones, though.

##### **Q. I have heard you still have VHS tapes. Seriously?**



A. Mostly, we have DVD's – about 400 of them. And yes – we still do have a few dozen of the 'ol tapes – but mostly because folks still use them!

**Q: I live in Nebraska. What services do you offer for those of us at a distance?**

**A. Lots! Read on:**

\* Have you checked out our **Box of Books** Program? Let us choose a variety of resources for your two-month loan, or you can designate a topic...like peace, stewardship, prayer, and environment and we will customize the shipment.

\* The **Music Lending Library**, a listing of over 3,000 anthems is now available at <http://mennowdc.org/library/music-library/> and searchable by title, composer, season, and voicing. Tell me what you want and I will be happy to send it to Nebraska and beyond.

\***Personalized service like none-other!** Talk to me or another library staffer and we will do our best to corral the resources you need and mail them to you pronto!

\* **Atrium** is our new web-based Library software. We are experiencing a good amount of streamlining of library procedures from both the circulation desk and from the patron/web access catalog. Once you log in (call / email for your PIN) you can manage your own library records. The WDC Resource Commission approved this expenditure to come out of our Vision 2012 funds.

\* Monthly, a "**Pick My Brain**" article is found in the WDC E-memo that arrives in your inbox. Brand-new resources are highlighted here. Read 'em and Reap.

**Q: Is the Conference Resource Library a FUN place?**

A. Absolutely. We are noted for our smiles and good humor. And it's all because we are here to serve YOU!

#### **Conference Treasurer**

**Phyllis Regier**

*This report will be posted online after annual audit is completed.*

*See [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org), Conference Life / Annual Assembly*

#### **Western District Conference Executive Board**

**Berni Kaufman, Board Secretary**

#### **Highlights of the year:**

August 2011

-Approved the Staff Relations committee recommendation to extension of the three-year contract for Gilberto Flores, which will end January 31, 2012. Gilberto continued as half-time church planting and half-time Conference Minister for Texas position. This will be reviewed annually.

October 2011

-A transition team Camp Mennoscah incorporation was formed. The following persons are serving: Arlin Buller, Chair; Diana Schunn, board; Olivia Bartel, director; Valerie Klassen, Retreat Commission; David Stucky; Jay Goering; Alan Bartel

November 2011

-Doug Krehbiel, conference youth minister, resigned effective January 31, 2012.

Clarence began conversations to assure conference resourcing of youth and those who serve our youth.

-Reviewed the Camp Mennoscah bylaws as prepared by the transition team.

-Provided agenda for the Reference Council who met at Tabor Mennonite Church. Randy Smith, transitional pastor, presented his thought on "Revitalizing the Church."

Representative from 4 churches shared stories of their own churches being revitalized.

January 2012

-Met for the annual board retreat around the theme of unity and reviewing the Missional Vision and Purposeful Plan developed by the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board.

March 2012

- Met with representative from the Prairie View Board of Directors and affirmed entering into a covenant relationship between WDC and Prairie View.
- Camp Mennoscah has filed for incorporation and that this process could take up to 18 months. There is a board orientation scheduled on March 31. WDC communicated that at that point the CM board will become self-governing and relationship with the Retreat Commission will cease.

### **Gifts Discernment Committee**

#### **Al Penner, Chairperson**

Beginning in January the Gifts Discernment Committee began preparing for the 2012 Annual Conference. The committee continues to be aware of the fact that a number of WDC churches have not, for some time, had a representative from their congregation on a WDC board, commission and/or committee. The Committee therefore again requested pastors and congregational chairpersons from each of our Western District Congregations to provide names of individuals from their congregations who they felt would have interest in serving on a board, commission or committee of the conference. We, the Gifts Discernment Committee, wish to encourage members of each of our WDC congregations to assist their pastor and congregational chairperson in identifying individuals from their congregation to consider serving on a board, commission and/or committee of the conference. The requested information, when received, very much facilitates the work of the Committee.

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

Committee members: Melanie Zuercher, Ed. Wiens, Don Troyer, Roger Neufeld Smith, Brian Stucky, Al Penner, Clarence Rempel, staff.

### **Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force**

#### **Jim Stucky, Chair**

In 2011 the Western District Conference (WDC) Executive Board appointed the Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force (HSDTF) to resource churches and members to develop our heart and skills in the practice of agreeing and disagreeing in love and to help us understand our perceptions and practices in regard to human sexuality.

Our working premise has been that in order to be authentic, the HSDTF must model, for itself, the principles it suggests to others. In order to initiate that goal we met in retreat with guidance by Kirsten Zerger from the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution for experience and training in conversation and dialogue of difficult topics such as human sexuality and same gender relationships. We gained valuable insights and skills in preparation for our focus as a task force.

The mission statement formulated by the task force is: In keeping with the teaching of Jesus Christ and his saving love for all persons, the HSDTF seeks to foster unity and discern God's will by:

- Providing a framework from which healthy discussion and discernment by congregations can be facilitated.
- Providing resources and support to congregations who are dealing with difficult questions related to human sexuality and ministry.
- Facilitating dialogue within congregations and WDC on issues related to human sexuality, values and practices.

On March 1, 2012, members of the task force directed a Dialogue Circle exercise with the pastors who attended the Pastor's Day Apart event offered by WDC. The theme for the day was "The Pastor's Role in Difficult Congregational Conversations". Our hope is that this experience was appreciated by many and the data gathered will be useful in future events.

We will also be presenting two learning tracks during the 2012 WDC Annual Assembly. One of those tracks will focus on healthy and wholesome attitudes by encouraging better and more open communication and affirmation of our total personhood, including our sexuality. The other track will focus on the discussion of difficult topics as they pertain to gender issues and same sex relationships.

The members of the task force are, Marvin Zehr, Eduardo Vargas, Heidi Regier Kreider, Barbara Schmidt, Nadine Reimer Penner, Bob Koehn, and Jim Stucky, Chair. Conference Minister, Clarence Rempel meets with the task force when possible. We covet your prayers and your counsel as we find our way forward with God's help.

### **Immigration Task Force**

**Marty Troyer**

The Vision Statement of the WDC Immigration Taskforce is:

*Through action, advocacy, education, worship and prayer, we invite congregations and members to embrace the directive of the MC USA statement: "We reject our country's mistreatment of immigrants, repent of our silence, and commit ourselves to act with and on behalf of our immigrant brothers and sisters, regardless of their legal status."*

We celebrate how God is at work in our churches and world in making this vision more of a reality. We invite you to join God in this essential ministry as a direct expression of your faithfulness to Christ. Here's how it's happened this year:

#### **Resourcing**

In 2011 a Learning Community was led with great participation and attendance on the issue of immigration. In 2012 two Learning Communities are planned, "So we want to welcome the stranger... Now what?" is planned as an "Immigration 201 course; the second is regarding college entrance and aid for immigrants in WDC churches. This is a direct response to what we've heard in listening to Hispanic church members is a key need.

Several churches and the Wichita area churches hosted learning events or had Taskforce members preach (including children's story with Jesus as an immigrant in Egypt) in worship. This invitation is still available from Taskforce members! Caleb Lazaro, scholar in residence at Bethel College, has been a resource both for the Taskforce and for area churches, in particular at a public event January 17 at New Creation Church. We also recognize immigration and racism are connected in our country, and thus see the Damascus Road: Anti-Racism training hosted at Shalom Mennonite in February as an essential resource for WDC churches. The Taskforce recommends that WDC as a body explore the possibility of its own Damascus Road training. We look forward to WDC's participation in the MCUSA Bienvenido Training happening fall 2012 and the potential it has in the conference. A small team will be equipped to work within WDC congregations on building bridges with immigrants in our communities and also be a resource at our annual conference. We hope to be a channel of information to and within WDC churches regarding immigration events and actions, resources and training. We'll continue to utilize The WDC Memo and emails to broadcast resources such as the Immigration Resource list housed at the WDC library with Marlene Bogard. If you need something, ask!

#### **Connecting**

While our taskforce charter has been Anglos informing Anglos on immigration, we continue to push at these barriers as we connect more deeply with our Hispanic brothers and sisters. In 2011 we hosted a Listening Session and identified a distance that exists in WDC between Anglos and Hispanics who feel marginalized. We're hearing an eagerness to identify



and respond to this distance from recent immigrant churches (mostly in Texas), who want to work together with the Task Force. One Hispanic leader expressed a sense of disconnect between the daily realities of Hispanic church members and the rest of WDC congregations. While this might be overcome by inviting stories to be shared with other churches, many are tired of telling their story with little or no measurable follow-up.

We would like to pursue deepening these connections as a Taskforce. And invite all WDC churches to deepen relationships with recent immigrant churches at a deeper and more sustainable level. We celebrate the growing number of “sister-church” relationships already established.

As Mennonite churches in Western District we have a long, proud history of being an immigrant people. We believe this places us in timely position to respond prophetically to anti-immigrant rhetoric in our country and faithfully to those “strangers” among us. We call WDC and her churches to “love the stranger as yourself, for you were aliens in the land” long before the recent immigration crisis was created (Leviticus 19:34).

Task Force members: Nita Nikkel (chair), Cheryl Crichley, Gail Goelke, Nathan Koontz, Marty Troyer, Karin Kaufman-Wall

### **Leadership Commission 2011-2012 Report**

#### **Eugene Thieszen, Chair**

The Leadership Commission has two major areas of responsibility: credentialing persons for ministry and providing oversight for church planting ministries.

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

#### **Ordination**

- Katherine Goerzen, Pastor, Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, KS
- Peter Goerzen, Pastor, Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, KS
- Doug Krehbiel, Youth Pastor, Tabor Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS

#### **License toward Ordination**

- Jerry Acosta, Church Planter, Wichita, KS
- Brett Klingenberg, Pastor, First Mennonite Church, Beatrice, NE
- Jack Norris, Pastor, First Mennonite Church, Clinton, OK
- John Regier, Pastor, Beatrice Mennonite Church, Beatrice, NE
- Luann Yutzy, Interim Associate Minister, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS

#### **License/Commission for Specific Ministry**

- Zachary Gleason, Pastor, Joy Mennonite, Oklahoma City, OK
- Justin Osborn, Youth Pastor, Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, KS

Commission member Robert Kaufman presented the rationale for the Leadership Commission action regarding Joanna Harader’s ministerial credential at the 2011 WDC Annual Assembly in July and the Leadership Commission has continued to process responses to that particular decision.

In July the Commission met for an extended time together with the WDC Church Planting Task Force. Gilberto Flores, Associate Conference Minister for Texas, shared a presentation entitled: *The Church as a Primary Instrument of God’s Mission* which was followed by discussion of possibilities and priorities for future church planting.

Robert Kaufman competes six years on the Leadership Commission this year and we give thanks to God for his willingness and faithful service.

Commission members: Robert Kaufman, Lee Lever, Kathy Neufeld Dunn, Weldon Schloneger, Gene Thieszen, June Thomsen

## **Church Planting Task Force**

(Report not available.)

## **Resource Commission**

### **Lois Harder**

The Resource Commission continues to tend to the work of “empower(ing) 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.”

Our greatest treasure and asset for this work continues to be Marlene Bogard, the WDC Minister of Christian Formation and Resource Library Director. Marlene offers a depth of knowledge, experience and passion for the tasks of offering resources, providing seminars and workshops, and training WDC members of all ages for becoming more faithful followers of Jesus.

The most recent change in the Resource Commission has been Doug Krehbiel’s retirement, followed by a new structure for shared youth ministry leadership for WDC and SCC. Dwight Regier is the Bi-Conference Youth Ministry Network Team Leader and Jesse Blasdel is the Bi-Conference Youth Ministry Network Event Leader.

Work continues for the various Task Forces of the Resource Commission. We celebrate and appreciate the work done by the Health and Wellness Task Force; they have concluded their work for now.

The Resource Commission is open to welcoming new Task Force groups as folks are moved to “take on” the work of their gifts, interests and passions for the building up of The Kingdom in the Western District!

Current members of the Resource Commission are: Tom Claassen, Sharon Nance, Lois Harder, Lynn Schlosser, Jeff Koller and Shirley Kroecker.

## **End The Death Penalty Task Force**

### **Stan Bohn, Chairperson**

Our witness efforts are directed to the Kansas legislature where many of our district congregations have influence. At times ending the death penalty seems unlikely and at other times possible. Illinois ended the death penalty and other states, having seen convictions and death sentences overturned on faulty evidence, are considering abolishment. Sixteen states have abolished the death penalty.

At present the Kansas Senate had a tie vote to end the death penalty in 2010 and on March 15, 2012, the House Standing Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice held a hearing to hear testimony which includes testimony from several church groups. Western District Conference passed a statement on the death penalty in 2009.

Our efforts this year included:

- Helping to locate Kansas audiences in June-July 2011 where Beth Klassen Landis could tell the story of her journey from the murder of her mother to her campaign to end capital punishment.
- An information table at Western District annual conference in 2011
- Representatives at a November 5, 2011 Wichita conference/workshops to end the death penalty. James Juhnke shared information from that event with several groups.
- Task Force meeting to alert churches about Representatives from their area who were House committee members holding the hearings on the death penalty. We encouraged those churches to contact those committee members.
- Encouraging persons to attend the March 15, 2012 House hearing on the Death Penalty.

-Letters to the Editor of newspapers and to legislators.

Ben Jefferies, from the **Kansas Coalition Against the Death Penalty**, has been our main source of information of Kansas Legislature activities. We would encourage anyone to be on that mailing list: P.O. Box 2065, Topeka, KS 66601, 785 235 2237, [info@ksabolition.org](mailto:info@ksabolition.org).

Task Force Members: Miles Reimer, Eric Massanari, Jeff Koller, James Juhnke, Tim Huber, Peter Goerzen, Duane Friesen, and Stanley Bohn, Chair

### **WDC Historical Committee**

#### **Roger Juhnke**

The Historical Committee has not been particularly active during the past year. Some work has continued with a few church contacts concerning the creation and/or updating of congregational histories for the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO).

The committee members are Rachel Waltner Goossen, Sara Keckeisen, and Roger Juhnke.

### **Low German Mennonites from Mexico Support Task Force**

#### **Dorothy Nickel Friesen**

1. When did this task force begin?
  - a. Officially in January 2004.
  - b. Before that, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment conducted a survey using WDC member Tina Block Ediger (and others) to conduct a survey of Low German farmworkers in Kansas. That survey documented thousands of Low Germans, particularly in western Kansas, who reported high occurrences of medical needs.
  - c. A partnership between WDC, which supplies the task force to monitor and advocate for Low German healthy living, and the KHDE, which supplies vouchers for direct medical and dental services supported through bi-lingual case managers and health promoters, enables ministry to Low German farmworkers across the state.
2. How often does the task force meet?
  - a. During 2011, we met quarterly.
  - b. Beginning in 2012, we will meet three times during the year.
3. How does the task force relate to WDC?
  - a. The task force is accountable to the WDC Resource Commission.
  - b. In addition, the WDC task force is connected to the Mennonite Central Committee Canada program based in Steinbach, Manitoba and adopted its guiding statement: *"MCC seeks to share God's love with LGM people by working in a mutually beneficial relationship with local leaders, communities and organizations to enhance their capacity to address such issues as poverty, conflict, literacy, health and natural disasters."* The WDC task force added a fourth goal: *"to share our common spiritual background and faith."*
4. How does the program work?
  - a. Case managers and health promoters identify farmworker families in need of medical, dental or mental health needs. Through interpretation services, vouchers for medical assistance, and educational opportunities, the KHDE funds are utilized to support needy families.
  - b. The salaries of the health promoters are paid through grants from KHDE and administered by WDC. No WDC funds are used by the task force.
  - c. The WDC task force has a representative on the KS Statewide Farmworker Health Program advisory council.
5. Who is on the task force?
  - a. Dorothy Nickel Friesen, chair; Harold D. Thieszen, vice-chair; Milton Claassen, secretary; Tina Block Ediger, Olin and Carol Claassen, Mary Duerksen, Margaret



Goering, David Harder, Lee Suderman. Cyndi Treaster from the Kansas Farmworker Health Program serves as staff. Lotti Boschmann, a case manager, often meets with the Task Force.

- b. In 2011, Vern and Helen Jantz completed serving nine years; Tina Block Ediger concluded nearly 10 years of service with the Low German project in spring, 2012. Lillian Quiring joined the Task Force in February, 2012. Lee Suderman will conclude his term in summer 2012.

### **Music and Worship Task Force Report**

#### **Rosi Penner Kaufman, Chair**

The Music and Worship Task Force is still viable, although we have taken a “sabbatical” to regroup and reenergize this year. We are in the process of enlisting new task force members and exploring ways to serve the music and worship needs of Western District. We continue to support the choral music lending library.

Task Force Members: Rosi Penner Kaufman, Carol Klingenberg, Ken Rodgers

### **Youth Ministry Committee**

(Report not available.)

### **Stewardship Commission**

#### **Bob Esau, Chairperson**

The Stewardship Commission met four times this past year; we focused on the responsibilities delegated to the commission under the WDC structure. The following items were reviewed and acted on by the commission.

- The Commission reviewed all property owned by WDC.
- The Commission worked with Treasurer Phyllis Regier on a narrative budget, which was provided to all churches.
- The Commission reviewed financial statements of WDC prepared by treasurer Phyllis Regier.
- The Commission reviewed and consulted with the Treasurer in preparing the proposed budget for the next fiscal year. This budget is then recommended to the Executive Board.

Two of the Commission members will complete their terms this year, Jeanette Stucky and Bob Esau. Thank you for your contributions to WDC.

Commission members: Max Fuqua, Greg Pankratz, Jeanette Stucky, Stan Voth, Karen Zehr and Bob Esau.

### **Staff Relations Committee**

#### **James Regier, Chairperson**

The Staff Relations Committee—James Regier, Chair; Donna Becker, Recorder; Christy Schunn-Sebes, Stan Voth, and Clarence Rempel, ex officio—worked on the following agenda items this past year:

1. Discussed and reviewed staff reduction within the conference. These changes were necessitated by budget shortfalls.
2. Ongoing review of the conference budget, and its impact on staffing.
3. Considered staffing changes and endorsed those presented to the SRC by the conference minister—Gilberto Flores and Clarence Rempel.
4. Heard staff performance reviews as presented by Conference Minister, Clarence Rempel.
5. Reviewed pay practices for overtime hours worked by non-ordained staff.
6. Reviewed salary guidelines for non-ordained staff.

7. Visioning for the future as it related to staffing, programs, and expenses and income streams.
8. Continue to provide counsel and advice to Conference Minister regarding conference staffing issues.

**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, 2012, the Revolving Loan Fund had five loans receivable totaling \$170,185.77

In 2011/12 the Trustees

- Oversaw the management of 2500 Place.
- Replaced the main heating and cooling unit in the 2500 Place building

Task Force Members: Gary Rediger (Chairperson), Eric Bruce, Rick Krehbiel, Jeanette Stucky, (Stewardship Commission liaison) and Phyllis Regier (ex officio)

**Retreat Commission and Camp Mennoscah Report**  
**Olivia Bartel, Camp Mennoscah Director**

It was a veritable wildlife variety show this past year. The deer and the turkeys continued to traipse across the prairie (and stand stupidly in the middle of the road), but the drought-like conditions also brought out more critters. The raccoon were regular visitors to our compost pile, and the mice and ants persistently tried to make the kitchen home. But the wildlife we liked the most were the human ones.

**Staff:** We're pretty boring folks—there's nothing new to report, really. Mike Albright started his second year in March 2012 and Olivia started her fifth year in February 2012. There were no MVSers in 2011, but we're always looking for people interested in these positions for office and maintenance. Olivia continues with her position as the Fourth Member on the Mennonite Camping Association board.

**Rental groups and Retreats:** Another busy year for us! There were 52 church groups, schools, organizations, and family reunions that visited Camp Mennoscah this past year. Some long-time groups decided on other options for their annual retreat, but several new family groups visited us, many for longer than a weekend. We hope they visit us again! Our two "regular" school groups were back again this year, as was the Anthony-Harper Football Team. The USDA held a Range Management camp for youth and the Picket Fence Quilt Company from Wichita, KS, had two quilting retreats, both for the fourth consecutive year. Two pastors enjoyed spiritual retreats at camp. Seven retreats were hosted by Camp Mennoscah from March to October: Scrapbooking, Sustainable Living, Retirees' Relaxation Retreat, Mental Health, Work & Play Camp, Fall Scrapbooking, and Young Adult Retreat. The Sustainable Living Retreat was cancelled. The JOY (Just fOr You) Retreat was not scheduled this year due to a lack in leadership and interest. A total of 129 people, including staff and presenters, attended these retreats. Interest has been expressed for starting a Family/Intergenerational camp.

**Summer Youth Camps:** It was one sizzling summer! Temperatures for the second half of the summer were consistently over 100 degrees, and often nearing the 110 degree mark. Thank you, everyone, for helping us get the new pool finished in time! We would have been fried eggs on a sidewalk without it. The heat required creativity from our summer staff, as did the septic system. Our septic system for the 2 staff houses and the Buffalo Room bathrooms became very temperamental during the summer, requiring staffers to shower in other locations. Then—we're not kidding—the septic system at the pool had problems. The pool septic problems were fixed relatively quickly, but the main camp issues will require more extensive work.

This summer we had 8 summer staffers, instead of the usual seven. The eighth summer staffer was hired to help with extra lifeguarding responsibilities due to the larger size pool. The number of campers also increased in 2011, up approximately 10% from 2010, with 539 campers over 8 weeks of summer camps. Our summer theme was “Got Spirit? Finding God in the Everyday” and campers explored different ways God reveals God’s self. First Camp (3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grades) had 70 campers, PreJunior camps (4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> grades) had 136 campers, Junior camps (6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> grades) had 138 campers, Junior High (8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> grades) had 95 campers, and Senior High (10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades) had 100 campers. 175 people served at Camp Mennoscah this summer as summer staff, support staff, and youth camp volunteers. As always, some served multiple weeks.

**Volunteers and Gifts:** The Camp Sing, a camp song sing-a-long, raised \$47,834 for the new swimming pool! Enthusiasm for this event was so great that this may become an annual event. Thank you to all involved! Several memorial funds were designated towards projects this year. The Elaine Schwartz memorial was designated to the swimming pool. Wanda Neufeld’s memorial was designated to a kitchen-related need. The Nick Martens memorial purchased equipment and licensing to allow for an LCD projector to display the lyrics for camp singing times, and a bequest was received from the Lola L. Miller estate. The Steve Krehbiel memorial has been designated to where needed most. Volunteers continue to be a vital part of our ministry and important to our program. More than 150 volunteer days were given to Camp Mennoscah in 2011.

**Current and Upcoming Projects:** Our wonderful, bigger, and leak-free swimming pool is complete, but as of April 2012, approximately \$42,000 still needed to be raised. Before the pool project had even been finished, we started working on our troublesome septic system. Plans are to repair the staff/bunk house septic system in the spring of 2012.

Renovations on the Bluestem house on the new property began in the summer of 2011. The main floor bedrooms were ready for kitchen staff to use by our Senior High camp, needed since all our other facilities were being used. Work is being done to add another bathroom in the basement and to create two areas for lodging. An egress window was added in February 2012 by folks from First Mennonite Church in Beatrice, NE.

Our biggest project, however, has been the incorporation of Camp Mennoscah into its own nonprofit organization. As of March 31, 2012, the new Camp Mennoscah board took over the oversight of Camp Mennoscah. The process of obtaining nonprofit status was still in process. Incorporation does not change how Camp Mennoscah relates to our constituents and churches. Our mission stays the same. A change that would have happened, regardless of incorporation, is that Camp Mennoscah, like many ministries, will rely more on volunteer and direct financial support from churches, individuals, and organizations.

Your involvement with our camping ministry at Camp Mennoscah is something for which we are everlastingly grateful. For every minute spent in prayer, every offer of help, every gift given, we thank you. We look forward to seeing you at Camp Mennoscah soon—bring your family, your small group, or congregation with you!

Commission members (alphabetical order): Eric Bruce, Darrin Hiebert (SCC representative), Valerie Klaassen, Kara Klingenberg, Dan Kroeker, Jill Robb, and Galen Waltner; Staff: Mike Albright, maintenance coordinator, and Olivia Bartel, director.

### **Tournament Task Force**

The WDC Basketball Tournament was held March 15-17 at Bethel College. Eight teams, representing nine churches (including one South Central Conference church) participated: Alexanderwohl (Goessel KS), Hoffnungsau (Inman KS), Bethel College Mennonite (North Newton KS), Zion (Elbing KS), Grace Hill (Whitewater KS), Hope (Wichita KS), Tabor (Newton KS), Eden (Moundridge KS), South Hutchinson Mennonite (KS). Each team played four games, and the winning team was Hope with four wins! Players are looking forward to another tournament next year.

Task Force member: Lynn Eichelberger



## **Ski Trip Task Force**

### **Ken Regier, Chair**

The Western District Ski Retreat took place January 27 through January 31 at Copper Mountain Ski Resort in Colorado. This was the 33rd WDC Ski Retreat, and 31 people participated. Ages ranged from 8 to 86! The timing worked out well as there was significant snowfall the two weeks prior to our trip, providing good snow just in time for our arrival.

The trip continues to be a great time to get to know people across the Western District Conference who share enthusiasm for recreating together. We appreciated having individuals and families coming from all over the Western District Conference area. It is very gratifying to see old friends getting reacquainted and new friendships being made. It was a great weekend for skiing as well, with lots of fresh powder to enjoy in the grandeur of God's Rocky Mountains!

We did a better job this year getting information out, thanks to the help of Dwight Mueller who is assisting in administering the trip. There is a lot of interest for this trip, and we need to continue to evaluate who comes on the trip and how much of a need this meets for WDC. I appreciate getting to know many people across the WDC, and have enjoyed building relationships with people I wouldn't normally meet in my day-to-day work. Thanks to all of you who participated. You make this an easy and fun trip to organize, and represent WDC well. We are also building a new base of "regulars", as many who have been regulars are starting to "retire" from skiing as they "mature" J.

The tentative dates for next year's ski trip are January 25-29, again at Copper Mountain.

Task Force Members: Ken Regier, Jane Schmidt, Bill Unruh, Kevin Neufeld, Dwight Mueller

## **Agri-Urban**

### **Alan Entz**

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

The Day on the Farm was canceled this past summer due to the heat and dry condition of this past summer. The Day on the Farm is scheduled for August 18, 2012 so mark your calendars.

Thank you to all participants for your donations of time, money and energy in 2011 that helped us give \$33,982.30 to Bethel College, Western District and Mennonite Church USA.

## **Mennonite Central Committee Central States**

### **John Stoesz, Executive Director, MCC Central States**

**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, plus the state of Mississippi. About 450 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ congregations are in the region. The Board of Directors consists of 18 individuals. Moses Mast is the board representative for WDC.

**Support for the International Work** - MCC Central States is a part of the larger MCC system. Of the more than \$5 million raised each year from the region, over \$4 million goes to the rest of MCC – mainly for the international program. At work in 55 countries around the world, MCC promotes relief development and peace in the name of Christ. Currently there are 41 international service workers from the region.

**New Orleans Program** - MCC Central States employs two workers in New Orleans – Pam Nath and Wendi O'Neal. Both are supporting the work of grassroots organizations seeking social justice related to racism and poverty. Part of Wendi's work has been to research and make available the history of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) in New Orleans. Part of Pam's work has been to stand with the Fight Back Center as it has opposed the unjust taking homes from poor people.

**Indigenous Vision Center** - The purpose of the IVC is to identify and resource the strength and genius of Indigenous people. MCC Central States employee Erica Littlewolf (Northern Cheyenne) is currently living out the vision by participating in the “School of Peace” in Bangalore, India to network with Asian Indigenous People – as well as a Canadian First Nations person – who are seeking “justpeace” in their respective contexts.

**Houston / Immigration Program** - Monica Barba – a part-time MCC Central States employee – is discerning the future of our Immigration work. She is interacting with grassroots Latino organizations, leaders, activists, and churches. The plan is to hire a full-time Immigration Justice Worker in Houston about October of this year.

**Peace and Justice** - Our Peace and Justice Education Coordinator – Karin Kaufman Wall – is leading regional participation in MCC’s national campaign called “Fear Not – Seek Peace.” Individuals from 26 churches and organizations signed more than 1,500 postcards urging our US Senators and Representatives to cut Pentagon spending and invest in life-giving programs. Also, Karin helped plan the February 16 – 18 Damascus Road anti-racism analysis training in Newton, KS with 65 participants. Finally, Karin is an active member of the WDC Immigration Task Force.

**Summer Service** - Last summer we provided the support for nine young People of Color to serve as Summer Service Workers. These young people – along with Co-Program Administrators Je T’aime Taylor and Jake Castro – joined West Coast MCC Summer Service Workers and Staff for a week-long orientation in Fresno, CA.

**Volunteers** - Thousands of volunteers are working with 11 Thrift Stores, 12 Relief Sales, and Meat Canning in various locations. People are writing letters to elected officials and participating in marches and protest events. Others are riding bicycles and hiking for MCC. Hundreds are at work making kits, quilts and comforters. Thank you!

### **Mennonite Men of the Plains**

#### **Kevin Neufeld**

Men and Boys Retreat at Camp Mennoscah was the main activity and also primary fundraiser for Mennonite Men of the Plains in 2011. Approximately 150 men and boys came for a weekend of fun, relaxation, and fellowship. Doug and Jude Krehbiel were the resource people for the weekend, and we wonder whether this was the first time a woman was one of the resource people at Men and Boys Retreat. Mennonite Men of the Plains sponsors scholarships for seminary and ministry inquiry students with Kansas connections. In 2011 and January 2012 we provided funding as follows.

- Miles Reimer, AMBS-Great Plains \$500
- Brett Klingenberg, Eastern Mennonite Seminary \$500
- Julia Schmidt, Ministry Inquiry Program \$250
- Laurie Hesed, AMBS-Great Plains \$500

### **Mennonite Disaster Service**

#### **Dwight Mueller, WDC Representative**

The Kansas MDS Board continues to hold regular meetings every 6-8 weeks. We have a warehouse in Hesston where we house tools, and maintain a tool trailer, 2 vans and a truck that are used for MDS projects. Kansas MDS continues to operate with all volunteer help and is supported totally by donations. Our Annual Meeting was held at First Mennonite Church in Halstead where the featured speaker was Al Kroeker from Inman.

On May 22, 2011 a tornado hit the town of Redding KS destroying ½ the homes and killing one in the town of 250 persons. Hundreds of MDS volunteers helped clean-up efforts the weeks following the tornado. During the summer of 2011 youth groups from Kansas participated in the MDS Youth Project at Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp at Divide CO. Many volunteers also helped in Joplin, MO where a devastating tornado killed 160 people and leveled a large part

of the town on May 22, 2011. On February 28, 2012, Harveyville, KS was hit by a tornado damaging much of the town and MDS volunteers responded to help with clean-up.

Bi-National (US and Canada) MDS remains very active with work sites in Bastrop, TX ('11 wildfires), Birmingham, AL ('11 tornados), Cameron, LA ('08 hurricane), Chickasaw, MISS ('11 tornados), Joplin, MO ('11 tornados), Minot, ND ('11 floods), New Orleans, LA ('05 hurricanes), Phil Campbell, AL ('11 tornados) and RV projects in New Iberia LA ('05 hurricanes and Cordova AL ('11 tornados). You can follow MDS activity on the Bi-National web site [www.mds.mennonite.com](http://www.mds.mennonite.com),

Plan to be a part of a MDS project during this year as MDS volunteers continue to be the 'hands and feet of Christ' for those whose have experienced disasters.

Thank you for your continued support of MDS!

### **Oklahoma Convention**

#### **Robert Koehn, Acting President**

The Oklahoma Convention organization has not been fully active for some time. The Oklahoma Mennonite Retreat has been fully active but the executive committee has not been meeting. However, through the initiative of pastors and others we are working to reestablish a viable organization. A meeting was held on March 10, 2012 to review history and to think about the future. At the initiative of pastors the following vision statement was proposed for discussion: "We are a fellowship of Mennonite Churches in Oklahoma gathering in a common biblical, Anabaptist understanding centered in Jesus Christ for sharing the Gospel through church planting, shepherding the flock and ministering to those in need." Those in attendance celebrated our heritage in Christ through singing and sharing. Dave Gerbrandt, Associate Conference Minister for Oklahoma spoke on "Centered in Jesus Christ for sharing the Gospel." Gilberto Flores, Associate Conference Minister for Texas spoke regarding church planting. Other aspects of the statement were spoken to by Wilma McKee, Eugene Thieszen and Norman Berry. Near the end of the meeting the vision statement was confirmed and we plan to proceed according.

Future work will be done to establish the organization further and solidify plans for fulfilling the vision.

### **Western District Women in Mission**

#### **Lois Loflin, President**

Women in Mission has had a busy year since the last annual conference meeting when Patricia Burdette, editor of *timbrel*, outlined the programs of Mennonite Women USA. In September Western District and South Central women had their annual joint retreat at Camp Mennoscah. Laurie Oswald Robinson was the keynote speaker.

A committee of Western District and South Central women helped to organize a Sister Care Seminar, a ministry of Mennonite Women USA. Rhoda Shenk Keener and Carolyn Holderread Heggen are the presenters of this Caring Ministry. More than 80 women gathered for this seminar November 11-12 at Hesston Mennonite Church. To carry forward the concepts of Sister Care, we will focus on compassionate listening and caring with guest speaker Ruth Buller at this year's annual meeting in Oklahoma City.

The joint WDC/SCC Spring Supper was March 15 at Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, with Michelle Hersherberger the speaker. Seeds of Joy provided special music. The guest registry was signed by 285 women.



**Prairie View**  
*mental health and addictions treatment services*  
*changing lives since 1954*

**Jessie Kaye, President and Chief Executive Officer**

Prairie View joins Western District Conference in celebrating our new Covenant Relationship, as described in a statement signed earlier this spring. We are delighted to be taking steps to formalize a closer and more connected relationship between the churches of the Western District and Prairie View. We look forward to opportunities to collaborate and make resources available in the future. Because our bylaws require that we have majority representation on our governing board from Anabaptist denominations, we welcome suggestions of persons who bring skills and interest and come from these areas of faith background.

After nearly four years without a staff chaplain (relying on community volunteers), we are thrilled to have received charitable support to partially fund a part-time chaplain position to help meet the spiritual needs of patients in our hospital, adolescent residential facility and addictions treatment center. Rev. Gary Bell will also assist in coordinating clergy volunteers.

Our two newest programs are the Addictions Treatment Center (ATC) and the Comprehensive Diagnostic and Treatment Center for Older Adults (CDTC). The ATC is an inpatient/residential treatment program for adults suffering from serious addictive disorders. CDTC is a program where older patients are lodged in the hospital facility while they experience an array of tests that can identify the source of their dementia, confusion, personality or behavior changes and physical ailments. The CDTC team consists of an internal medicine specialist, psychologist, psychiatrist, clinician/therapist and others who are available to respond to the individualized needs of our patients and their families. After the diagnosis is determined, treatment recommendations are formulated and can begin to be implemented. If the patient is from a distance, suitable referrals to providers in the patients' home area are made in order for care to continue.

In the past year, we were excited to add a new, non-pharmacological treatment for severe depression known as Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation or TMS. Prairie View is the only TMS provider in Kansas.

Another exciting program development in 2011 was the inception of our integration collaboration with Health Ministries Clinic in Newton. Through funding from a foundation grant, Prairie View provides three behavioral health clinical staff to the safety net clinic serving Harvey, Marion, McPherson and Butler counties in south central Kansas, providing primary and dental care to uninsured individuals.

We are seeking additional charitable and church support to further increase chaplaincy time and to provide more community education and clergy consultation resources to better respond to the mental health and addictions issues our communities are facing. We look forward to collaborative opportunities in the future.

Prairie View offers a full range of services for children, adolescents, adults and older adults: inpatient hospitalization, intensive outpatient treatment, emergency assessment services, psychological testing, a special residential school, experience-based learning on our adventure course, individual, group and family therapies, employee assistance programs and focused treatments through the Center for Sexual Health, addictions treatment and older adult services. We are proud to provide faith-based mental and behavioral health services in your name and in your behalf.

We continually seek invitations to participate in forums to educate on health care access, mental health matters or prevention programs. Please invite us to provide information about our ministry or contact us to schedule a tour or speaker for a worship service, Sunday School class, mission fair or other event.



Mennonite Church USA is made up of more than 100,000 members in about 900 congregations, 21 area conferences, various constituent groups and churchwide agencies. Together, we are inspired by **Vision: Healing and Hope: God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.**

To carry out this vision, we pursue the following purpose: *Joining in God's activity in the world, we develop and nurture missional Mennonite congregations of many cultures.* We believe that congregations are the primary expression of God's work in the world. Together with area conferences and churchwide agencies, the national conference nurtures the life and ministry of congregations by providing:

- a place of **identity and belonging** in interdependence with other congregations.
- **education, resources and encouragement** for pastors and congregational leaders.
- means for calling, training and sustaining **leaders**.
- avenues for **mutual discernment and witness** beyond ourselves.

As part of the Anabaptist world, Mennonite Church USA enjoys unprecedented favor in the eyes of our world community. Many other Christians are looking to us for examples of ways to live in a post-Christendom society. Our emphasis on discipleship and Spirit-led Christian living helps people envision the practical implications of the gospel. Our commitment to relief and development attracts many people outside our church to support our missional causes. And our focus on peace and justice attracts many to consider peaceful alternatives to violence.

Over the past few years, Mennonite Church USA leaders have been cultivating a forward-looking, missional approach to church life. We have developed a missional vision and purposeful plan to draw all parts of the church to work toward common goals. You can find the statement online at [www.mennoniteusa.org](http://www.mennoniteusa.org).

Mennonite Church USA has adopted seven priorities to guide our ministry across all parts of the church. The first three priorities express the core of congregational life from an Anabaptist perspective. The other four priorities identify areas for particular emphasis over the next 10 years, particularly through area conferences, churchwide agencies and the national conference.

1. **Christian formation.** This priority reflects the centrality of Jesus Christ in the church. Missional Mennonite congregations call people to Christian commitment, disciple them in the way of Christ, teach them to embrace the scriptures, help them develop Christian identity from an Anabaptist/Mennonite perspective, and cultivate their vocational calling.
2. **Christian community.** This priority reflects the communal, organic nature of the body of Christ. Missional congregations worship together, extend hospitality, practice scriptural discernment, cultivate Christ-centered unity, and learn to agree and disagree in love.
3. **Holistic Christian witness.** This priority reflects the winsome nature of the church's witness. Missional churches share the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed, birthing new communities of faith. They reflect God's coming reign by striving for peace and justice.
4. **Stewardship.** This priority reflects our commitment to surrender all that we have for the sake of God's reign. Missional churches cultivate whole-life stewardship, care for creation, and practice mutual aid.
5. **Leadership development.** This priority reflects our commitment to develop leaders at all levels of the church. Missional churches help all of their members reach their potential as they follow God's call.
6. **Undoing racism and advancing intercultural transformation.** This priority reflects our intent to dismantle individual and systemic racism in our church, develop intercultural competence, heal racial divisions, and value all the gifts of God's diverse people.
7. **Church-to-church relationships.** This priority reflects our desire to give and receive gifts in the broader body of Christ, working toward Christian unity as a witness to the world. We cultivate a particularly close relationship with Mennonite Church Canada since we share a common history, confession of faith, and ministerial polity, and many joint ministry ventures.

We encourage every area conference to think of ways to advance at least several of these priorities over the next few years. As you move that direction, we will find ways to share your insights and experience with the rest of the church. In this way, we can grow together in God's call.

Ervin R. Stutzman, executive director, Mennonite Church USA



## Report to Western District Conference July 2012

For more information, visit [www.MennoniteEducation.org](http://www.MennoniteEducation.org).

**Greetings** from our new office in Elkhart, Ind.! MEA, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Church USA National Office and The Mennonite now share the same building on Benham Avenue. Stop by for a visit if you're in the area.

As the education agency for Mennonite Church USA, we connect with the 34 member schools of Mennonite Schools Council (MSC), five colleges/universities, two seminaries, and educational programs such as Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA), Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano (SeBAH) and Mennonite Early Childhood Network. Together, we explore how we can provide access to an Anabaptist/Mennonite education.

### Western District Conference intersects with Mennonite education in many ways:

#### Church relations:

Mennonite educational institutions can be a source of excellent speakers and performance groups. We want to encourage you to take the initiative to contact Western Mennonite School and any of the higher education institutions to visit your congregation.

#### *Instituto Bíblico Anabautista*

IBA continues to collaborate with the conferences' Hispanic churches by training new leaders in the local congregations. In 2011 IBA provided leadership training for three congregations in Dallas and Pasadena, Texas. The following are 2011 highlights:

- A total of 20 students enrolled and met weekly for their study sessions at three different study centers.
- There are a total of four volunteer tutors.

- Three courses were taught:

<i>Courses</i>	<i>Students</i>
The Life of Christ 1	6
The Life of Christ 2	15
Preaching	5

- Six students participated in the Annual IBA Student Retreat.
- Three tutors participated in the Annual IBA Tutors Gathering.

IBA plans to continue to unite efforts with WDC to work in leadership development and help equip the WDC Hispanic Mennonites churches with trained leaders who will contribute to the expansion of God's kingdom.

### Members serving on Mennonite education boards and committees:

- **AMBS:** Sara Dick, Shalom
- **AMBS-Great Plains Extension:** Clarence Rempel, Bethel (Inman); Alice Suderman, Bethel College; Mark Jantzen, Faith; Brett Dewey, Hope; Tom Harder, Lorraine Avenue; Sara Dick, Shalom
- **Bethel College:** Berneil Rupp Mueller and John R. Suderman, Bethel College; Ray Penner, Faith; Jim Ensz, First (Beatrice); Sharon Nace, Peace (Dallas); Debbie Schmidt, Shalom; Joe Friesen, Zion.
- **Eastern Mennonite University:** Gilberto Flores, Peace (Dallas).

*We regret any omissions or errors. Please send corrections to [info@MennoniteEducation.org](mailto:info@MennoniteEducation.org).*



**Giving\* to Mennonite education from  
Western District Conference  
congregations:**

February 1, 2011 – January 31, 2012 -  
\$88,807.30

***Thank you for your generous support!***

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

**English version of HPLE curriculums**

MEA is in the process of translating Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education (HPLE) curriculums—IBA and SeBAH—into English. The work is being done in collaboration with Terry Shue, director of leadership development for Mennonite Church USA, and we hope to launch the English versions in 2012. The ultimate goal is to have three options—Spanish only, English only, Spanish and English side by side—in order to provide biblical and theological training to a broader audience. For more information, contact Rafael Barahona at 1-877-665-6662, ext. 21315.

**Consider a Sunday**

While Christian Formation Sunday materials use scripture designated for the second Sunday in September, MEA and MennoMedia would like to encourage you to plan a Christian Formation Sunday or use some of the material on a date that is best for your congregation. Go to [www.MennoniteEducation.org/Sunday](http://www.MennoniteEducation.org/Sunday) to access current materials.

**Resources for congregations**

MEA offers a number of Anabaptist-related materials at no cost through its website (under the Educational Resources tab). They can be used for Sunday school and small group studies and as helpful resources for church leaders. Consider the following items made possible with the support of MSC and MEA:

- *Anabaptist Dramatic Readings* by Alan and Eleanor Kreider (24 readings)
- *Financial Foundations: Stewardship Curriculum for High School Students*, a collaborative effort of MSC and Everence (which offers additional resources on its website)
- Age-appropriate ideas can be found in the *Journeys with God* Bible curriculum (kindergarten through eighth grade) and the *Mennonite Schools Council High School Bible Curriculum* by Elam Peachey (updated by Bronwyn Histan in 2010)
- *Teaching that Transforms: Why Anabaptist-Mennonite Education Matters* by John D. Roth in 2011
- Free study guides for *Teaching that Transforms*
- *Through Fire and Water: An Overview of Mennonite History* by Harry Loewen and Steven M. Nolt (updated by Nolt in 2010)



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## ***Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and AMBS–Great Plains Report to Western District Conference***

**Faculty and administrator notes:** AMBS welcomed two new faculty members last fall: **Safwat Marzouk**, teaching Old Testament and **Allan Rudy-Froese**, teaching Christian proclamation. **Scott Janzen**, a 2011 AMBS graduate, is the new registrar, replacing Irene Koop who retired.

**AMBS students and graduates:** Students from the conference studying at AMBS–Great Plains this year are **Ruth Buller, Asia Frye, Katherine Goerzen, Peter Goerzen, Gail Graber, Hope Greiser Graber, Jocelyn Graber, Laurie Hesed, Vicki Hinz-Ensz, Nathan Koontz, Elena Nussbaum, Caley Ortman, Joel Schroeder, Kay Schroeder, and Angela Smith.**

Graduates in 2011 included **Scott Janzen and Miles Reimer.**

AMBS offers two undergraduate ministry preparation programs, Pastoral Studies Distance Education and Journey: A Conference-based Leadership Development Program. Participants in these include several from Western District Conference: **Linda Berry, Karen Mascho and Steve Mascho.**

**!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth** introduces youth to theological study and listening to God's call to ministry. Over the coming year, AMBS will reshape the program so it is more closely linked to the graduate ministry programs.

**Courses and resources:** A new financial aid benefit allows students to receive a **50 percent discount for tuition for online courses** if they are taking a first online course and are not enrolled in a graduate theological program. See [www.ambs.edu/student-resources/tuition/online-course-discount](http://www.ambs.edu/student-resources/tuition/online-course-discount).

AMBS offered nine webinars and five workshops through the year, along with Pastors Week and Leadership Clinics in January. More information at [www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter](http://www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter).

**AMBS Board:** **Sara Dick**, Newton, Kan., and **Yvonne Diaz**, San Antonio, Texas, serve on the AMBS board.

### **Resources for you from AMBS:**

- **Listen in on what's happening at AMBS:** Lectures and sermons at AMBS are available for listening on iTunes U. Visit [www.ambs.edu/news-and-publications/iTunesU](http://www.ambs.edu/news-and-publications/iTunesU).
- The AMBS library serves more than just seminary students. See the new library website ([www.ambs.edu/library](http://www.ambs.edu/library)) for resources that may be helpful to you.
- A calendar of AMBS events—workshops, seminars and lectures. You can subscribe to this calendar, so that you get notices when new events are added: [www.ambs.edu/calendars/events](http://www.ambs.edu/calendars/events)
- *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* is published two times a year by CMU and AMBS. Read selected articles online at [www.mennovision.org](http://www.mennovision.org).
- New books from the Institute of Mennonite Studies ([www.ambs.edu/IMS](http://www.ambs.edu/IMS)):
  - *Youth Ministry at a Crossroads: Tending to the Faith Formation of Mennonite Youth*, edited by Bob Yoder (Goshen College) and Andy Brubacher Kaethler (AMBS);
  - *Forming Christian Habits in Post-Christendom, The Legacy of Alan and Eleanor Kreider*, edited by James R. Krabill and Stuart Murray.
- The Mennonite Cooperative Bookstore at AMBS serves anyone interested in books about Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and ministry. See more at [www.ambs.edu/bookstore](http://www.ambs.edu/bookstore).

*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.*

I have just returned from another spring break tour with the Bethel College Concert Choir visiting churches [primarily] in the Central Plains Mennonite Conference, with brief forays into both Mountain States Mennonite Conference and Western District Conference. The tour was absolutely fabulous, characterized by outstanding music (frequent comments like “this is the best college choir that has ever sung in our church”), exemplary behavior (“the finest students we have ever hosted”), and profoundly meaningful worship. This last claim may require some explanation.

I tend to measure the power of worship, at least in part, by its ability to generate a strong emotional response—in particular, tears. And on that basis, this year’s tour was unique. Last June, William Eash, director of choral activities, chose to add Eric Whitacre’s *When David heard* to this year’s choir repertoire. It’s an amazing piece. Based on II Samuel 18:33, the song describes David’s response when hearing of the death of his rebellious son, Absalom. The song is very difficult and very intense. It is over 12 minutes in length; it has, at points, 16 parts instead of the usual four. It was given added poignancy at Bethel by the fact that one of our students, Seth Dunn, a rising senior, was killed in a tragic skateboarding accident a month before school began. The song was first performed on campus in a chapel service in October (a service I described in the fall *Church Relations Update*, which can be seen at [http://www.bethelks.edu/bc/news\\_publications/church\\_relations\\_update/?urlid=279](http://www.bethelks.edu/bc/news_publications/church_relations_update/?urlid=279).) In venue after venue, *When David heard* moved both audience members and choir members to tears. And, not surprisingly, I’m convinced that it contributed to what many choir members said was an uncommon—and much appreciated—sense of community among the members of this choir.

There is much else that I could—and should—mention about this year at Bethel College:

- A roadmap (strategic plan) for Bethel College that is in place and being followed with excellent results;
- A second year of an almost ten per cent increase in enrollment;
- The scheduled completion of the Academic Center at the end of May;
- The addition of a graphic design major with a distinctive Bethel interdisciplinary focus, and minors in sports management and computer science;
- The anticipated approval of an on-line RSN to BSN program later this month;
- Another year of positive and well-attended worship experiences in weekly chapels.
- Eager anticipation of a Fall Festival celebration on October 12-14 which will celebrate Bethel’s 125<sup>th</sup> year!

But less than two weeks after returning from choir tour, I am still basking in the glow of that experience, and I wanted to share it with you. For ten days I was privileged to see Bethel College at its very best, and I thought you’d like to know.

Thankful for the many prayers, students, dollars, and good wishes of the Western District Conference, we humbly ask for your continued support.



## **Bluffton University**

### **Mast book makes case for churchgoing**

It has been said that going to church is good for the soul. In his latest book, Dr. Gerald Mast asserts that the benefits extend much further.

“The church should not be taken for granted ... just reading the Bible, baptizing and singing together help prepare us for life in the world,” says the Bluffton University communication professor and author of “Go to Church, Change the World: Christian Community as Calling.” Published by Herald Press, the book asserts that going to church—not just personal virtue or ethics—is at the heart of Christian vocation. Mast, who grew up in the Mennonite tradition, outlines Christ’s call to all believers to be the church, whether gathered for worship or scattered for service.

By exploring such practices as baptism, communion and singing, the author asks readers to consider how participation in the life of the church shapes their daily witness—how “going to church” transforms “going to work” in the world.

At the end of each of the book’s chapters, a reflection is provided with questions to provoke thought and discussion. “Go to Church, Change the World” was written in part for Sunday school and Bible study audiences, but more generally, according to Mast, for “people who go to church and are tired of it.” The book, he says, is for those who wish to reenergize their beliefs and their relationship with church.

### **Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center marks 25<sup>th</sup> year**

Bluffton University’s Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> year in 2011-12.

Special events were held throughout the academic year. Last fall, they included “Celebration of Peace: A Bridge Between Us,” a conference for students in grades 3-7. This spring, children’s author Jane Kurtz spoke on campus, and the university’s Musselman Library hosted a Lion and Lamb event during Bluffton’s annual May Day weekend celebration.

In addition, 2012 graduate Todd Trotter produced a series of short video clips highlighting artwork at the center that can be seen online at [www.bluffton.edu/lionlamb/art/](http://www.bluffton.edu/lionlamb/art/).

### **Thank you, Western District Conference!**

Four students from the Western District Conference attended Bluffton in 2011-12—**Mary Schrag**, a first-year student from Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kan.; **Emily Klassen**, a sophomore from Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, Kan.; **Karla Funk**, a senior from Salina (Kan.) Mennonite Church; and **Alison Janzen**, a junior from Zion Mennonite Church, Elbing, Kan. Support for these students through the Church Matching Scholarship Program was \$4,000 for the year.

Schrag is a member of Bluffton’s **Shining Through** music ministry team, which traveled to Kansas and Nebraska for part of its spring-break tour and shared worship experiences with Mennonite churches in both states. The team also volunteered for a day of service at Camp Mennoscah in Murdock, Kan.

**For more information on Bluffton University:**

**Jeff Boehr**, coordinator of church relations, 419-358-3388, [boehrj@bluffton.edu](mailto:boehrj@bluffton.edu)  
[www.bluffton.edu](http://www.bluffton.edu)



# Hesston College Church Relations

## REPORT TO WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA

*Hesston College, the two-year college of Mennonite Church USA, educates and nurtures each student within Christ-centered community, integrating thought, life, and faith for service to others in the church and the world.*

**2010-11 Fiscal year ends in the black**—Hesston College met the Annual Fund goal for the third consecutive year. About 750 households are members of the Partner program which provided 80 percent of the \$1.24 million goal. All dollars raised for the Annual Fund provide institutional scholarships for students. The fiscal year also ended with a positive balance for the sixth consecutive year with careful management of budgets across campus.

**Increased enrollment**—Official fall 2011 numbers show an increased enrollment with a total student count of 468 compared to 448 a year ago, including 249 new students. Hesston students represent 27 states and 14 countries with 30 international students. Spring term 2012 added 31 new students including 6 international. Strong retention numbers are a major contributing factor to the positive enrollment by improving ways to identify student needs, and address student issues.

**College explores sustainability**—Hesston College observed its first No Impact Week fall 2011. It was an opportunity for the campus community to experiment with sustainable living and care of the environment on campus and in their personal lives, focused on consumption, trash, transportation, food, energy, water and eco-Sabbath. The culminating event was a service day in which about 470 people packaged 51,296 meals to be sent to the horn of Africa through Numana, Inc. Hesston is deepening its commitment to sustainability by forming a campus-wide stewardship group in 2012 and also becoming a member of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

**AVDS Conference explored ways to be inclusive**—Pastors, students, and church leaders gathered for the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series (AVDS) at Hesston College fall 2011. The theme was “Getting Beyond Them and Us – to We.” Discussed was the tension of the church’s call to be both distinctive and open to those who are unfamiliar with Anabaptist or Mennonite theology. Speakers included Anton Flores-Maisonet, co-founder of Alterna, a missional community of U.S. citizens and Latin American immigrants in LaGrange, Ga.; Hal Shrader, pastor of Trinity Mennonite Church in Phoenix, Ariz.; and Joanna Shenk, associate for Interchurch Relations and Communication with Mennonite Church USA in Elkhart, Ind.

*2011-12 Campus Theme Verse—What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. —Micah 6:8 (NIV, adapted)*

**Erb Hall Dorm Renovation**—Hesston College reached its nearly \$3 million goal for renovations to the central and west wings of the dormitory. The college will complete the renovations by adding an elevator and lounges connecting the separate wings of the building throughout 2012. Local businesses and alumni and friends from around the country gave generously to the project in order to update the space and improve the student experience.

**Outstanding Recognition Received**—The Hesston College Bel Canto Singers and director Bradley Kauffman were selected by recorded audition to perform as part of the Kansas Music Educators Association annual in-service in February. Distinguished educators from across Kansas heard performances featuring the state’s best ensembles. Bel Canto is a mixed chamber choir whose members are selected by competitive audition. The 21 member ensemble is available to perform at churches and schools across the country with annual tours during Fall Break, and for two weeks every other May.

**A glimpse at Pastoral Ministries**—In 2006, Ron Moyo took the first steps that would lead him to Hesston College. He left his home country of Zimbabwe due to civil war and unrest and gained political asylum in the United States. It did not take Moyo long to find a home in the Hesston College community. The diversity and variety of life experiences among the student population allows each person to learn from another. Program Director Tim Lichti notes that, “Ron brings a depth of life experience to the Pastoral Ministries program and to the Hesston College community.” Ultimately, Moyo hopes to carry the knowledge he has gained back to his hurting country and will graduate May 2012.

**The Pastoral Ministries Program** started in the fall of 1985 as a way for non-traditional students to receive formal training in congregational leadership. The program has trained 135 graduates to discern their call to ministry and will celebrate 25 years of graduates fall 2012. If there is someone in your congregation with a gift for ministry, contact Hesston College Pastoral Ministries at 620-327-8295 or [timl@hesston.edu](mailto:timl@hesston.edu).

### WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA STATISTICS AND CONNECTIONS

#### 2011-2012 Academic Year Students—21

**Congregational Student Aid**—13 congregations provided \$36,896 in tuition assistance for 18 students as of April 1, 2012.

**Pastoral Ministries Students**—Kenzie Intemann—First Mennonite, Clinton Okla.; Ron Moyo—Faith Mennonite, Newton, Kan.

**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

Larry Martin, Phyllis Weaver, Kris White, Development Officers

Brent Brockmueller, David Horst, Charles Hostetler, Luke Mason, Carson

Stutzman, Rachel Swartzendruber Miller, Admissions Representatives

**For Hesston speakers or student groups, please contact**

**[DallasS@hesston.edu](mailto:DallasS@hesston.edu) or call toll-free at 866-437-7866**

**For complete details on these news stories and others, go to**  
**[www.hesston.edu](http://www.hesston.edu)**



**Mennonite  
Mission  
Network**

The mission agency of  
Mennonite Church USA

**Western District Conference  
of Mennonite Church USA**

**April 2012**

## Stories that shape us



**Y**ou responded to the call. You became a partner in God's mission. You gave of yourself, volunteering your time; you gave of your time, praying for God's purposes to be fulfilled; you shared your resources. And we at Mennonite Mission Network celebrate the privilege we had to be your partner in opportunities to be instruments of God's healing and hope in the world. We are honored to join with Western District Conference in responding to God's call and telling the story of the hope we share through Jesus Christ.

*Stanley W. Green*

Stanley W. Green  
Executive Director  
Mennonite Mission Network

*Let the redeemed of the LORD tell  
their story—those he redeemed  
from the hand of the foe, those he  
gathered from the lands, from east  
and west, from north and south.*

— Psalm 107:1-3 (NIV)

### Western District Conference in mission

**M**ennonite Mission Network celebrates the ways that we and Western District Conference worked together to share the good news of Christ this past year. Thank you for your faithful participation in mission.

#### At this Western District church, service is 'part of the DNA'

At First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan., young adults are lining up to do service.

And this year is no exception. Although numbers vary from year to year, for many years the church has encouraged and sent their young adults on service assignments.

"It's been part of the DNA at First Mennonite," said Joel Schroeder, the church's youth pastor since 2004.

Schroeder and the young adults who are in service programs—Mennonite Voluntary Service, Service Adventure, and Radical Journey—say the key is the structure the church put into place to

make sure youth had the information and resources they needed to make a year of service a reality.

"All this summer, the outreach commission told me exactly when I should send out letters, what kinds of things I should say," said Sierra Pryce, who works with the Migrant Farmworkers Project through MVS in Kansas City. "Then all the money from my church congregation went straight to the outreach commission. It just made it so easy."

The outreach commission also helped participants plan a program to raise awareness within the congregation about their call to serve, and to motivate congregational prayer and financial gifts. The participants shared both their service plans and their musical skills in an inspiring and enjoyable evening.

For Erin Regier, who is in Service Adventure in Albuquerque, N.M., the presentation by two mission workers came at a time when she was trying to make her final decision about whether to go to Bethel College or head into Service Adventure. At the time, she said, she was afraid to plunge into the unknown.

"(The mission workers) talked about how we are only strangers to this earth and that heaven is our true home, so it was OK to feel uncomfortable," Regier recalled. "Afterward, my aunt also mentioned that often in this culture we are obsessed with being comfortable. She said that it was time that we get comfortable with being uncomfortable. At that point it was clear what God was calling me to do."

#### Program participation

Western District Conference sent 21 volunteers into Christian Service programs. Nine served with MVS in Kykotsmovi, Ariz.; San Francisco, Calif.; Washington, D.C.; Kansas City, Kan.; Rochester, N.Y.; St. Louis, Mo.; Sioux Falls, S.D.; and San Antonio, Texas. Five served with Service Adventure in Anchorage, Alaska; Raleigh, N.C.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Albany, Ore.; and Philippi, W.Va. Four served with SOOP in Tucson, Ariz.; and three served with Radical Journey in China, Paraguay and South Africa.

Western District hosted four service workers at their MVS Kansas City site (from Indiana, Michigan and Kansas),



three volunteers at their MVS San Antonio location (from Indiana and Kansas), and seven volunteers at their San Antonio SOOP site (from Illinois, Ohio and Kansas).

In addition, Western District/South Central Conference hosted four volunteers in 2011 at the MVS Hutchinson unit. The MVSers hailed from Colorado, Ohio, and Germany.

## Partnerships

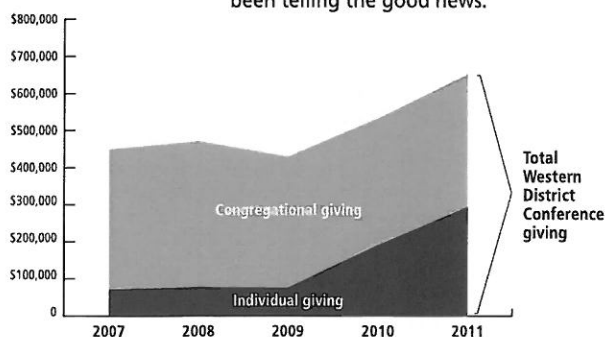
Twenty-one Western District congregations offered their prayer and financial support of 23 mission workers in 11 countries, including Australia, Bolivia, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Mongolia, Senegal, South Africa and Ukraine.

## Prayer Partners

Thirty-seven prayer partners in Western District Conference provide daily prayer support for mission workers all over the world.

## Mission Network stories from around the world

Mission Network shares the story of Jesus through teaching, training leaders, and providing resources for congregations. Here's a glimpse into some of the ways that Mission Network and our friends, associates and partners have been telling the good news:



In the past year, more than **200 Mennonite Church USA congregations** engaged in supportive relationships with **50 individuals, couples and families**.

Mission Network **Christian Service program applications remain high** as young people continue to have interest in Mennonite Voluntary Service, Radical Journey, Service Adventure, Youth Venture, and DOOR. SOOP, a service program for adults and families, continues to grow by leaps and bounds.

Long-term Mission Network worker in Spain, **Dennis Byler**, released the third book in his trilogy on understanding the Bible. The book, written in Spanish, serves as a resource for Anabaptists (and others) in Spain and beyond.

In July 2011, **Kuaying Teng**, the denominational minister of Asian Ministries for Mennonite Church USA, met with Laotian Ambassador Seng Soukhathivong at the ambassador's home at the embassy in Washington, D.C. After several meetings over the years with Laotian top officials, this meeting was a vital step in securing a diplomatic visa, as well as crucial government support, for Teng's ministry of reconciliation among the Laotian people.

Mission Network volunteers **Erica Hartman and Kelsey Hartman** spent time in Ecuador teaching peace education to children. Sponsored by Quito (Ecuador) Mennonite Church, the monthly workshops attract nearly 50 children ages 3 through 11, and feature songs, games, theater, crafts, and discussions to teach the children how to be peacemakers.

Mission Network associates **Ray Epp and Akiko Aratani**, directors of Menno Village in Japan, offered help to those

affected by the March 2011 earthquake and resulting nuclear threat. The husband-and-wife team made Menno Village, a Christian community involved in agriculture and education, available as a temporary home for evacuees.

In the face of potential civil war in Ivory Coast, **Martine Audéoud and her husband, Gary Wittig**, Mission Network associates, model a different way of being. Audéoud leads a post-traumatic healing and reconciliation training project, where church leaders learn systematic ways to counsel those who have been ravaged by war, to forgive in order to heal communities and help the nation move toward unity.

Together, in these and other ways, Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church USA—along with you—have partnered together this year. Visit our website, **www.MennoniteMission.net**, to learn more.

## A blessing

Western District Conference,

Thank you for the many ways you support and partner with Mennonite Mission Network as we work together to witness, dwell, and connect with God's mission in the world. May you be richly blessed by God, and may others be blessed by your faithfulness, both across the street and around the world.



*Kevin J. Goertzen*

Kevin Goertzen  
Western District  
Conference Liaison

Elkhart office  
Elkhart, Ind.

Newton office  
Newton, Kan.

Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872  
[www.MennoniteMission.net](http://www.MennoniteMission.net)



**Mennonite  
Mission  
Network**

The mission agency of  
Mennonite Church USA

# Faithfully yours

## *Everence 2012 report*

Western District Conference Annual Assembly  
July 6-8, 2012

*"... I will proclaim  
your faithfulness to  
all generations."  
-Psalm 89:1*

Every generation needs to be reminded to serve God faithfully as it receives God's faithfulness in turn. We may not always feel "all is well," but ultimately we can always serve and trust. At Everence, this call to faithfulness extends to our relationships with you. In this report, we discuss some ways we help you and your congregations manage finances in tune with how you are being faithful to God's call.

### **Members respond to new name**

In 2011, Everence surveyed its members on a wide range of issues, including our name change. When MMA and Mennonite Financial Federal Credit Union moved to the Everence name, 60 percent of members surveyed supported the change, 32 percent were neutral, and 8 percent disagreed with the change. In the same survey, almost 90 percent of the members gave Everence one of the top two customer satisfaction ratings; 94 percent considered Everence trustworthy.

### **Conflict behind cell phones**

What do cell phones have in common with the Democratic Republic of Congo? Conflict minerals. Miners – including children – are violently forced to extract minerals essential in manufacturing common devices like cell phones. You can voice concerns at [Everence.com](http://Everence.com).



### **New stewardship manual and educational resources**

The new *Congregational Stewardship Resource Manual* is available for treasurers and others who make congregational financial decisions. *Stewards of Grace*, a primer on holistic stewardship, is now available in Spanish. Watch for *But It's Only a Story* early 2012 to help small groups talk about money. Download these free resources from the "Congregational education" section of [Everence.com](http://Everence.com).



**A simple, new gift fund**

Your charitable giving is now easier with the simple new online tools of the Mennonite Foundation's Donor Advised Fund. To learn more and apply online, search for "donor advised fund" at [Everence.com](http://Everence.com). Your Everence charitable services representative can also help.

**Looking for advisors**

Everence is recruiting financial advisors to serve in offices around the United States. Learn more by visiting [Everence.com](http://Everence.com) or calling (800) 348-7468 ext. 3281.

**Global agencies receive credit card mission rebates**

Everence Federal Credit Union donated \$12,700 to the global agencies of Brethren Disaster Services and Mennonite Mission Network last year. The credit union's Rebate for Missions™ program tithes to church and mission work from income realized by members' use of its credit cards. Funds were also donated to local charities close to credit union branch offices. Learn more about the credit cards at [Everence.com](http://Everence.com).

**New features enhance church retirement plan**

Mennonite Retirement Trust, the retirement savings plan for Mennonite Church USA and related organizations, has

enhanced its services. MRT, administered by Everence, is offering broadened investment options and new online and educational services to pastors and other church staff.

**Food and financial aid through congregations**

In 2011, the Sharing Fund assisted churches to feed hungry children and adults. This is only one of many needs that the Everence Sharing Fund helped congregations meet for over 2,000 families through its \$900,913 in matching grants.

**Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity**

Everence church relations representatives are engaged in advanced training by the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, a division of The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. During 2012, they will provide pastors with an overview of the *Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity* seminar. Using a diagnostic approach, the seminar presents practices and tools that help pastors and ministry leaders to encourage

faithful generosity within their congregations. Contact your church relations representative to learn if this seminar is available in your area.

**Everence can help**

Our representatives can help you manage your finances to reflect your faith. They can assist you and your church members with services mentioned in this report and other services including loans, insurance, and savings options. You can contact your church relations representative to support stewardship ministries within your congregation. You can reach Pete Flaming at 620-327-4043 or toll-free 877-467-7294.

*Everence helps individuals, organizations and congregations integrate finances with faith through a national team of advisors and representatives. Everence offers banking, insurance and financial services with community benefits and stewardship education. Everence is a ministry of Mennonite Church USA and other churches.*

Everence offers banking products that are federally insured. Everence also offers securities and other products that are not federally insured and are subject to the loss of principal. All products are not available in all states.





## MennoMedia

An agency of Mennonite Church USA  
and Mennonite Church Canada

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**MennoMedia** serves Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada in creating faith-based print, video, radio, and web resources. It was created last July 1 when Mennonite Publishing Network and Third Way Media merged. Our main office is in Harrisonburg, Va., but we also have staff working from various locations across North America, including offices in Waterloo, Ont., Newton, Kan., and Elkhart, Ind. The merger, relocation of offices, and selling of our facility in Scottsdale, Pa., was a time-consuming process, but we now feel better poised to serve the church with faith formation and the wider society through faith witness.

**Herald Press**, our well-known book imprint, had a best-selling book this past year, *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*, which emphasized the importance of faith, hospitality, and community in the kitchen and around the dinner table. We hope to follow that success with our other new titles this year. You can keep abreast of all our new offerings by going to our online store at [www.MennoMedia.org](http://www.MennoMedia.org).

MennoMedia is also involved in a variety of other initiatives:

**Worship and music.** What are the worship and music trends in our congregations? What resources will be most helpful to them in the future? These are questions being asked by the Worship Council, which is sponsored by MennoMedia along with Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. One issue is whether and when a new hymnal or song collection should be published. To assist in this process, we are surveying many churches across North America, and we appreciate your participation in this process.

**Sunday school curriculum.** The *Gather 'Round* curriculum for children, which was designed to last eight years, began its sixth year last fall. We are looking ahead to what comes next. What are the needs of children, youth, and families in the future? How can we increase advocacy and support for Christian formation through our congregations and families? How can a core curriculum be adapted for use in more than one cultural setting? These questions were discussed in a variety of consultations last year, and decisions about next steps are being made this year.

**Living more with less.** Our new agency, which represents a print heritage and electronic-media heritage, is embarking on projects that combine a variety of media. The first project, which debuted last July, is based on a new edition of the Herald Press classic, *Living More with Less*.

**Weekly radio program.** *Shaping Families*, the 15-minute program launched in January 2010, can be heard on 18 stations. The programs feature interviews with individuals facing various tough family issues, or with experts on topics. The [www.ShapingFamilies.com](http://www.ShapingFamilies.com) website is updated weekly with podcasts of all past programs available.

**Online ministry.** Many churches link to the *Third Way Café* website and members refer people to it in person or through their blogs. The website can be accessed at [www.ThirdWay.com](http://www.ThirdWay.com).

**Documentary on Christian-Muslim theme.** A MennoMedia-produced documentary premiered on ABC-TV in October. Titled *Waging Peace: Christian and Muslim Alternatives*, it shows how peacemaking is taking place today in both religious traditions.

**We are so grateful for your support over the years.** We now solicit your support for MennoMedia—through your prayers, the purchase of our materials, and financial donations.

Russ Eanes, Executive Director  
Harrisonburg, Va.

## Report to Western District Conference

June 2012

Did you know?

There are five Mennonite-affiliated health and human services organizations relating to congregations in the Western District Conference region that are part of MHS Alliance.

- ADNet, Goshen, Indiana
- Bethesda Home, Goessel, Kansas
- Mennonite Friendship Communities, South Hutchinson, Kansas
- Prairie View, Newton, Kansas, forming new covenant relationships with Western District Conference and other regional denominational groups
- Bluestem Communities, a new organization formed by the merger of Kidron Bethel Village, N. Newton and Schowalter Villa, Hesston, Kansas.

You can get involved with a ministry in your community, through employment, serving on the board, benefiting from services, volunteering or contributing financially. To learn more, ask an agency representative or visit [www.mhsonline.org](http://www.mhsonline.org).

### New in 2012

- A study of how church affiliation sustains an organization's mission
- Training materials for boards of conferences and congregations, developed in collaboration with Mennonite Education Agency and Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership
- The addition of Dennis Russell as a vice president providing operational and strategic consultation
- Planning with Mennonite Education Agency for a joint Mennonite Health Assembly and Education Leaders Gathering February 14-17, 2013 in Orlando

MHS Alliance is a national network of 73 Mennonite health and human service organizations. We are a community where staff and board leaders can share ideas and serve as a resource to each other as they meet the needs of thousands of individuals and families each year. Through membership, these ministries can access programs and services to support leadership and operational effectiveness.

- Consulting services (also available to other not-for-profit organizations)
- Executive Circle and Values-based Leadership Program
- Employee health benefits and liability insurance
- Executive search and transition
- Mennonite Health Assembly

Submitted by Rick Stiffney, President/CEO

