



**Western  
District  
Conference**

*An area conference of  
Mennonite Church USA*

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# **WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE MINUTES**

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

July 29-30, 2016  
Bethel College, North Newton, KS

**Western District Conference Annual Assembly  
Delegate Session Minutes – July 30, 2016**

Richard Gehring, moderator of Western District Conference (WDC), welcomed the group and made some announcements. He called the delegate session to order at 9:30 a.m. He introduced members of the WDC executive committee taking part in the delegate session and members of a prayer team (Brenda Glanzer-Lilliston, Eugene Thieszen and Kay Schroeder).

Wendy Funk Schrag provided highlights of the delegate session minutes from 2015 Assembly. **Wendy moved that the minutes be accepted. Larry Dixon (Southern Hills Mennonite Church) seconded. The minutes were approved by voice vote.**

Heidi Regier Kreider provided a State of the Conference report. She compared her role as conference minister to a garden. She discussed sprouts of new developments and growth in WDC congregations. She reviewed the WDC mission statement, and the delegates read it together. She reminded the delegates of the three WDC core tasks and shaped her report around them.

- 1) Sustaining Transformational Pastors: Heidi shared several ways she, the WDC associate conference ministers Byron Pellecer and Kathy Neufeld Dunn and Youth Ministry Network Team Leader Dwight Regier support WDC pastors, youth leaders, and church plants. June Thomsen, chair of the Ministerial Leadership Commission, introduced pastors who have started new positions this year. Seven congregations are currently in the pastoral search process. June provided information about additional ministries for WDC pastors, including a meeting yesterday on how pastors can respond to sexual abuse in congregations. She discussed the MLC role in the pastoral review that occurs when pastors conduct same sex marriages. She reminded the delegates that MLC should be contacted prior to the ceremony occurring. She discussed the new matching grant program for pastors in financial need.
- 2) Resourcing Healthy Missional Congregations: WDC Resource Library Director Jennifer Wintermote shared about the WDC resource library. She hopes to expand the Spanish and bilingual resources. The library had a summer program for area children. The box of books program continues to be available to all WDC churches. Kathy Neufeld Dunn shared she is planning ongoing safe sanctuary and circles of grace trainings at WDC and trainings on prevention of pastoral misconduct. She highlighted 19 Loaves and Fishes grants of \$500 were distributed in 2015. Jeff Koller, chair of the Resource Commission, shared additional ways congregations have used grant funds. Heidi provided highlights from the April 23, 2016 Spring Reference Council, “Held Together in Mission: Being Church in the Rural Context,” which was held in Beatrice, NE. The Fall Reference Council will be held October 22 at Iglesia Menonita Luz del Evangelio in Dallas, TX on the theme “Held Together in Mission: Being Church in the Urban Context.” Heidi and several other pastors from WDC participated in a Come and See Israel-Palestine learning tour in April. Since returning, they have been speaking in area churches about what they learned and encouraging just actions. WDC is partnering with several Kansas WDC congregations to host Rev. Alex Awad on September 2-6 as a speaker on the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- 3) Networking Anabaptist Church-Planting Partnerships: Byron Pellecer and Marvin Zehr, chair of Church Planting Commission, shared about the WDC Church Planting Commission. Byron reflected on going and making disciples, using a wild fire as an analogy. Although wild fires are destructive, new life also emerges. Congregations need to go to new places and make new disciples. Byron highlighted several potential church plants including the Iglesia Pentecostes Fuente de Vida Menonita (Fountain of Living Water Pentecostal Mennonite Church). Mision Cristo Viene Pronto (Christ is Coming Soon Mission) is across the Mexico border with contact with Iglesia Menonita Casa del Alfarero in Houston. Conversations are also continuing with Gilberto Flores regarding WDC relationships with churches in Guatemala. The Evangelical Garifuna Church of Houston worships in English and Spanish, and they are interested in being part of WDC. A house church has also started in Plano, Texas. Marvin said two

ways congregations can be involved is in a Barnabas Partnership to provide financial and spiritual support for church plants, or in an Antioch Partnership as an ongoing sister congregation. Marvin and Byron encouraged WDC congregations to think about how they can be involved.

Heidi concluded her report by thanking the WDC staff and regular volunteers: Nancy Funk, Phyllis Regier, Sandra Martinez, Bill Zuercher, John Good, Marcia Hiebert, and Rosalie Neufeld. Heidi stated that sprouts grow and there has been much growth, promise and signs of God's faithfulness and hope for the future at WDC. Heidi reminded that next year is WDC's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Executive Board is in conversation about how to celebrate this milestone. She encouraged congregations to think about their own history and their hopes and dreams for future growth and vitality.

Table discussion occurred around the question "Where do you see God at work in WDC, and how is your congregation connected to that?" Responses were recorded on sheets to be turned in and compiled by WDC.

Nancy Graber gave the credentials committee report: There are 52 churches and 3 church plants in Western District representing 287 eligible votes. Delegates attending are 149 (*correction 150 – Nancy Funk, WDC Administrative Assistant, 8/5/16*), churches represented are 45, churches not represented are 10, votes represented are 256, and votes not represented are 31.

Brian Stucky presented the ballot as chair of the Gifts Discernment Committee. He explained the process for filling open positions. All those on the ballot have agreed to serve in their respective positions. Richard asked for motions for the ballot. **Weldon Martens (Grace Hill Mennonite Church) provided a motion, Alberto Parchmont (Iglesia Menonita Casa del Alfarero) seconded. Richard asked for a voice vote. The ballot was approved with no objections.**

Richard presented a congregational transitions report. Whitestone Mennonite Church discontinued their associate membership of WDC. Leon Heidebrecht, deacon chair from Inman Mennonite Church, explained why their church has decided to leave WDC. He stated their church was part of the 28% that did not support the resolution presented by Rainbow Mennonite Church at the October 2015 WDC Assembly. The church had conversation and prayer and a meeting with Heidi Regier Kreider, Richard Gehring and Cynthia Loganbill from WDC Executive Board. The church voted 84% that it was time to make a change. Leon stated the decision was not easy as they had been a member of WDC for 95 years. They applied for membership with South Central Conference and have been accepted into membership. Heidi responded with words of thanks to the congregation for their engagement in a process of speaking the truth in love. On behalf of WDC, Heidi released and blessed Inman Mennonite Church and provided a prayer.

Phyllis Regier, WDC Business Manager, presented the financial report. Phyllis reported the fiscal year runs from February 1 – January 31, and the 2015 audit was completed on July 18. A report is available upon request. She described various sources of income, 80% coming from congregations and members in 2015. Total income was \$505,935 in 2015. She described how expenses are divided in WDC. In 2015, expenses totaled \$405,935, mostly due to a lack of being fully staffed. \$40,000 of the surplus was transferred to a church planting fund, and \$60,000 was transferred to a personnel benefits fund to increase health insurance benefits.

**The proposed 2017 budget totals \$588,050.** Phyllis outlined the division of expenses. She stated the budget is 11% more than last year, is ambitious, and commended the congregations that have increased their giving to WDC. **The budget was approved by the Executive Board and is brought to the delegates as a motion. Second by Harlan Bartel (Faith Mennonite Church).** Richard encouraged the delegates to return to their churches and encourage how their individual churches can help support the work of WDC financially. **The 2017 budget was approved by voice vote with no objections.**

Richard explained the background for the **proposed amendment to Bylaw 5 of the WDC constitution** which focuses on WDC appointments to other organizations. **Richard provided the motion from the Executive Board and Tom Szambecki (Shalom Mennonite Church) provided a second.** Richard explained amending the bylaws requires a two thirds vote. Derek King asked how delegates or members of WDC would know what relationships WDC has with other organizations. Heidi responded that WDC could put this information on their website, and she is open to other ideas. Marvin Zehr expressed a concern about whether this will diminish the relationship with Bethel College. Peter Goerzen, Bethel College campus minister, responded that the Bethel College board made a change in their Board's bylaws to provide more flexibility in terms of scale of numbers and its desire to select particular gifts and skills that they need for Board members. Half or more of Bethel's Board of Directors must come from church affiliated bodies including MC USA and area conferences. WDC appointees to the board now are Jim Entz from First Mennonite in Beatrice and Sharon Nance from Peace Mennonite in Dallas. The college remains deeply grateful for the past relationship and wants to continue that for the future. Willmar Harder stressed the need to keep the relationships with other organizations memorialized in a formal way if they are not outlined in our bylaws. **Motion carried with a voice vote with no objections.** Richard stated the Executive Board will take into consideration the comments and questions and do their best to keep institutional relationships strong.

Terry Shue, Director of Leadership Development of Mennonite Church USA provided greetings from Mennonite Church USA. He emphasized the diversity of conferences across the country and stated the denomination now faces both promise and peril which deserve and require our attention. Terry expressed thanks for the offering last night for the Everance grants' program for pastors in financial need. Terry is moved by the energy WDC has for church planting. Following Kansas City's conference last summer, MC USA is continuing to figure out what it means to live in forbearance with each other. He reminded the delegates of MC USA's vision statement. He commended the work of Patty Shelly as moderator of MC USA. Delegates expressed their appreciation to Patty with applause.

Valerie Klaassen, board member for Camp Mennoscah, reminded delegates that the camp became independent in 2012. She shared photos of ways WDC volunteers continue to help at Camp Mennoscah, especially the building of the new bath houses. She described many ways camp has impacted people of all ages. The next facility renovation project is the kitchen and dining hall. She encouraged delegates to visit the website and Facebook for more information and continued updates.

Richard announced open comment time.

Ruth Harder, pastor of Rainbow Mennonite Church, highlighted the 2017 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of U.S. involvement in World War I. From October 19 – 22, 2017, the national World War I museum in Kansas City will hold an interdisciplinary conscientious objector symposium. MCC and other historic peace church advocates have planned the event. She encouraged WDC churches to participate in this event. A call for papers is due January 31, 2017.

Anita Kehr, representing the resolutions committee offered a resolution of thanks:

**“Whereas Bethel College has warmly welcomed Western District Conference and its staff, delegates, and congregational representatives, and whereas Bethel College has provided fine facilities and services for a wide range of meetings and activities leading up to and including the WDC Annual Assembly, and whereas Bethel College has been a strong supporter of and partner with WDC throughout its history: We do resolve to express our thanks to Bethel College, its administration, faculty, and staff for its significant support of the WDC in its Annual Assembly, 2016.”**

**Second by Christina Litwiller (Salina Mennonite Church). Motion approved by voice vote with no objections.** The delegates offered a round of applause to the college.

Richard announced the end of this delegate session marks the end of his term as moderator of WDC. He reflected on the events of his term, especially the last several years related to staff changes, the implementation of the Rainbow Church resolution, and the ongoing witness of WDC churches in God's mission in the world. He

thanked members of the WDC executive committee for their assistance and gifts. Richard passed the gavel to Anita Kehr, as she assumes the responsibility of moderator for WDC. Anita responded in gratitude to the teaching and leadership of the Executive Board during the last two years she served as moderator-elect. Heidi expressed her thanks to Richard. Heidi provided a prayer of thankfulness for Richard's service and blessing Anita as the new moderator.

Kathy Neufeld Dunn provided Assembly announcements and words of thanks to the Assembly planning committee members.

Katherine Goerzen announced a "Deep Faith" conference on Oct. 6-8 at AMBS in Elkhart. The AMBS Kansas center will host a short course in some evenings during October and November on the topic of communities responding to trauma through a Biblical and theological lens.

Byron announced that the 2017 Annual Assembly will be held in the Dallas, Texas area in early August. More information will follow in the coming months.

The session closed with the theme scripture of Matthew 28:16-20 presented by Brenda Glanzer-Lilliston, a song led by Tom and Lois Harder and Katherine Goerzen, and a blessing provided by Kathy Neufeld Dunn and Byron Pellecer.

The delegate session concluded at 12:05 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Wendy Funk Schrag, WDC secretary

12:00 – **Adjourn**

# 2017 Budget

## Western District Conference

### INCOME

	Budget 2017
1 Contributions	378,600
2 Church Plant contributions	72,000
3 Personnel Rebates	25,000
4 Rent Income	3,250
5 Refunds	12,000
6 Restricted Funds - Church plants	20,000
7 Restricted Funds - Historical	500
8 Restricted Funds - Resource	5,200
9 Restricted Funds - Scholarships	2,500
10 Restricted Funds - Interest	1,000
11 Restricted Funds - Personnel	13,000
12 Agri-Urban contribution	10,000
13 Income From Bequest Fund	40,000
14 Interest/Market Adjustment	5,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>588,050</b>

### EXPENSES

	Budget 2017		Budget 2017
<b><u>Executive Board</u></b>		<b><u>Resource Commission</u></b>	
1 Executive - Staffing	46,500	1 Resource - Staff	86,000
2 Executive - Staff Travel	2,000	2 Resource - Staff Travel	1,500
3 Executive - Office Exp	3,500	3 Resource - Office Exp	7,000
4 Executive - Board Exp	2,000	4 Resource - Commission Exp	500
5 Executive - MCUSA Delegates	3,000	5 Resource - Menno Archives	3,000
6 Executive - Reference Council	500	6 Resource - Library	7,700
7 Executive - Camp Subsidy	0	7 Resource - Music & Worship	350
<b>Executive Total</b>	<b>57,500</b>	8 Resource - Youth	3,000
		<b>Resource Total</b>	<b>109,050</b>
<b><u>Leadership Commission</u></b>		<b><u>Stewardship Commission</u></b>	
1 Leader - Staffing	153,500	1 Steward - Staff	52,500
2 Leader - Ministerial Travel	10,000	2 Steward - Travel	1,000
3 Leader - Office Expense	14,000	3 Steward - Office Exp	7,000
4 Leader - Commission Exp	2,000	4 Steward - Commission	500
5 Leader - Ministerial Credential	1,000	5 Steward - Communications	7,000
6 Leader - Seminary Scholarships	5,000	6 Steward - Insurance	9,000
7 Leader - Meetings & workshops	1,000	7 Steward - Audit	7,000
<b>Ministerial Leadership Total</b>	<b>186,500</b>	<b>Stewardship Total</b>	<b>84,000</b>
<b><u>Church Planting Commission</u></b>			
1 Church Planting - Staff	69,500		
2 Church Planting - Travel	5,000		
3 Church Planting - Supplies	3,500		
4 Church Planting - Commission	1,000		
5 Church Planting - Plant Support	72,000		
<b>Church Planting total</b>	<b>151,000</b>		
		<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>588,050</b>



## 2016 ELECTION RESULTS

**Moderator Elect:** Ray Reimer

**Board Secretary:** Allen Jantz

**Executive Board:** Cynthia Loganbill, Jim Stucky

**Church Planting Commission:** Marv Zehr, Violeta Ajquejay

**Gifts Discernment Committee:** Roberta Harms, Susan Jantzen

**Ministerial Leadership Commission:** Dave Stevens, Gail Graber

**Resource Commission:** Vicki Hinz Ens, Gordon Houser

**Stewardship Commission:** Emily Voran, Darlene Powers

## CERTIFIED DELEGATES AT 2016 CONFERENCE

### KANSAS

1. **Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel:** Linda Ewert, Morris Ewert, Dwight Flaming, Delbert Peters, Brian Stucky (514 members, 18 votes)
2. **Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton:** Hugo Boschmann, Mary Ann Boschmann, Dianne Epp, Marlene Faul, Lou Gomez, Norma Johnson, Don Kaufman, Megan Kohlmann, Sondra Koontz, Lois Preheim, Ron Preheim, Vern Preheim, Elizabeth Raid, Adam Robb, Jill Robb, June Thomsen, John Tyson, Susan Wheeler (538 members, 18 votes)
3. **Buhler Mennonite Church, Buhler:** Sara Janzen, Don Ratzloff, Jenny Schrag, Willmar Harder (334 members, 12 votes)
4. **Calvary Mennonite Church, Liberal:** David Quiring (10 members, 1 vote)
5. **Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge:** Beverly Goering, E. Fred Goering, Derek King, Becky Koller, Jeff Koller (594 members, 20 votes)
6. **Faith Mennonite Church, Newton:** Harlan Bartel, Jesus Martinez Jr, Vernon Pauls, Darlene Powers, Arlys Schwabauer, Rachel Siemens, James Stucky (210 members, 7 votes)
7. **First Mennonite Church, Halstead:** Arnita Haury, Lois Loflin, Robert Yutzy (248 members, 9 votes)
8. **First Mennonite Church, Hillsboro:** Douglas Graber, Nancy Graber, Keith Harder, Susan Jantzen, Jeff Wintermote, Tammy Wintermote (272 members, 10 votes)
9. **First Mennonite Church, Hutchinson:** Bill Klassen, Thea Klassen, Esther Koontz, Nathan Koontz, Delon Martens, Ken Neufeld, Bonnie Swenson, Cheryl Warkentin, Tanya Ramer Wenger (253 members, 9 votes)
10. **First Mennonite Church, McPherson:** Dayle Toews (60 members, 2 votes)
11. **First Mennonite Church, Newton:** Anita Yoder Kehr, Wendy Funk Schrag, David Wiebe (290 members, 10 votes)
12. **First Mennonite Church, Ransom:** Eldon Epp (32 members, 2 votes)
13. **First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge:** Steve Kaufman, Randy Stucky (153 members, 6 votes)
14. **Goessel Mennonite Church, Goessel:** No delegates present. (154 members, 6 votes)
15. **Gospel Fellowship, Montezuma:** No delegates present. (27 members, 1 vote)
16. **Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater:** Marge Harms, Roberta Harms, Valerie Klaassen, Weldon Martens, Virgil Penner (224 members, 8 votes)
17. **Hanston Mennonite Church, Hanston:** Eugene Thieszen (20 members, 1 vote)
18. **Hoffnungsaue Mennonite Church, Inman:** Orlin Martens, Luann Yutzy (201 members, 7 votes)
19. **Hope Mennonite Church, Wichita:** Michelle Jantz, Brenda Glanzer Lilliston, Cynthia Loganbill, Dave Stevens, Kendal Warkentine, Marjie Warkentine, Karen Zehr (244 members, 9 votes)
20. (Church Plant) **Iglesia Camino de Santidad, Liberal:** Moises Romero (70 members, 1 vote)
21. **Iglesia Menonita Casa Betania, Newton:** Suhelen Cazares (25 members, 1 vote)
22. (Church Plant) **Iglesia Menonita Aposento Alto, Wichita:** Nita Nikkel (15 members, 1 vote)
23. **Kingman Mennonite Church, Kingman:** No delegates present. (98 members, 4 votes)
24. **Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita:** Lois Harder, Tom Harder, Ellsworth Kaufman, Adella Ozor, Amber Schroeder, Tyler Schroeder (401 members, 14 votes)

25. **Manhattan Mennonite Church, Manhattan:** Caprice Becker, Cathy Coon Bitikofer, Barbara Krehbiel Gehring, Janet McGillivray (107 members, 4 votes)
26. **Mennonite Church of the Servant, Wichita:** Bret Preheim (30 members, 1 vote)
27. **New Creation Fellowship, Newton:** Galen Miller, Ruth Penner, Peter Wintermote (74 members, 3 votes)
28. **Peace Mennonite Church, Lawrence:** Joanna Harader, Ken Lohrentz (42 members, 2 votes)
29. **Rainbow Mennonite Church, Kansas City:** Peggy Coriell, Gail Goeke, Nancy Grittmann, Ruth Harder, Keith Jantz, Andrew Moore, Phil Rhoads, Andy Shelly, Carmen Shelly (263 members, 9 votes)
30. **Salina Mennonite Church, Salina:** Carolyn Funk, Christina Litwiller, Lois Newcomer (63 members, 3 votes)
31. **Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton:** Johann Reimer, Debbie Schmidt, Tom Szambecki, Juan Coy Teni, Jeannie Zehr, Marv Zehr (200 members, 7 votes)
32. **Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka:** Janet Dixon, Larry Dixon, Cynthia Neufeld Smith, Kerry Wedel (115 members, 4 votes)
33. **Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton:** Phyllis Goertzen, Katherine Goerzen, Peter Goerzen, Rosie Jantz, Ron Schroeder, Myron Voth (307 members, 11 votes)
34. **Trinity Mennonite Church, Hillsboro:** Norma Duerksen, Arlene Hett (53 members, 2 votes)
35. **West Zion Mennonite Church, Moundridge:** Geneva Wedel (196 members, 7 votes)
36. **Zion Mennonite Church, Elbing:** Josh Andres, Kristy Andres, Rosie Epp, John Janzen, Reinhild Janzen, Raymond Reimer (156 members, 6 votes)

#### NEBRASKA

1. **Beatrice Mennonite Church, Beatrice:** Jen Amor, Tim Amor (132 members, 5 votes)
2. **First Mennonite Church, Beatrice:** Brett Klingenberg (227 members, 8 votes)

#### OKLAHOMA

1. **Greenfield Mennonite Church, Carnegie:** No delegates present. (8 members, 1 vote)
2. **Joy Mennonite Church, Oklahoma City:** Kristen Swartley (22 members, 1 vote)
3. **Koinonia Mennonite Church, Clinton:** No delegates present. (20 members, 1 vote)
4. **Turpin Mennonite Church, Turpin:** No delegates present. (77 members, 3 votes)

#### TEXAS

1. **Austin Mennonite Church, Austin:** Ruth Anne Abraham (50 members, 2 votes)
2. **Chin Emmanuel Church, Houston, TX:** No delegates present. (130 members, 5 votes)
3. **Hope Fellowship, Waco:** No delegates present. (29 members, 1 vote)
4. **Houston Mennonite Church, Houston:** Marty Troyer (58 members, 2 votes)
5. (Church Plant) **Iglesia Cristiana Menonita Camino Nuevo, Dallas, TX:** Antonio Caceros (9 members, 1 vote)
6. **Iglesia Cristiana Menonita Monte Horeb, Dallas:** Susy Caceros (42 members, 2 votes)
7. **Iglesia Menonita Casa de Dios, Garland:** Natividad Hernandez (15 members, 1 vote)
8. **Iglesia Menonita Casa del Alfarero, Pasadena:** Aurora Parchmont (35 members, 2 votes)
9. **Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Esperanza, Dallas:** Macario Garcia, Damian Rodriguez (42 members, 2 votes)
10. **Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Vida, San Antonio:** No delegates present. (10 members, 1 vote)
11. **Iglesia Menonita Luz del Evangelio, Dallas:** No delegates present. (220 members, 8 votes)
12. **Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas:** Ryan Koch (80 members, 3 votes)
13. **San Antonio Mennonite Church, San Antonio:** John Garland (55 members, 2 votes)