

Bringing Easter joy to God with bilingual worship

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Marlene Aquino, member of *Iglesia Camino de Santidad*, felt there was no better way to celebrate the risen Christ than with a joint, bilingual Easter service held at Calvary Mennonite Church in Liberal, Kan.

Aquino, a founding member of *Camino*, a Spanish church plant begun in 2011, translated during the English-Spanish service held March 31. Generally, the two congregations share the same sanctuary at Calvary but worship at different times on Sundays. But on this Easter morning, they shared the same space and the same heart of worship that Aquino believes brings joy to God.

“When Anglos and Hispanics worship together, we get to know each other better and see the heart of each other, not just our skin color,” she said. “I believe there is nothing more beautiful in the eyes of God than to see a colorful congregation worship one God as one people.”

The two congregations experienced the unity Aquino desires when about 50 people from both congregations enjoyed an Easter sunrise breakfast and short service followed by an

11 a.m. worship service attended by 75 people. Spanish and English worshippers filled the services with a bilingual tapestry of hymn-singing, scripture-reading, messages and prayer.

Worshippers sang traditional English hymns followed by Spanish choruses led by *Camino*'s worship team. Young women from *Camino* also shared a liturgical dance.

Lou Gomez, Jr., pastor of Calvary, gave a message from Luke 24:1-12. He challenged worshippers to respond with the same kind of love and witness exemplified by the women at the resurrection of Jesus.

Moises Romero, pastor of *Camino*, shared words of gratitude and encouragement, followed by communion, and the benediction and response: “Jesus is alive! Go in peace to serve the risen Lord!” And all the people said, “Jesus is alive indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!”



“Jesus is alive in Liberal,” said Calvary member Elizabeth Raid. “Because of the blessing and unity we experienced in the joint worship, I feel we are all more equipped to proclaim together the good news of Jesus here in this community.”

Part of reaching out to the community is embracing the increasingly bilingual nature of Hispanic youth in Liberal, said Aquino, who is a youth leader at *Camino* with her husband, Alex. Since its inception, *Camino*, which celebrated its second anniversary on March 16, has grown from about 10 to 70 attenders, many of them children and youth.

“I hope we keep having joint services, because half of my congregation is bilingual,” she said. “Bilingual services are a good way to reach out to the youth, because many of them were born here and have a hard time following Spanish.”

“When we have Sunday evening Bible studies for the youth, about 90 percent of the studies are done in English. This community is definitely moving in that direction, and we need to move along with it.”



Western District Conference is a regional grouping of Mennonite Church USA congregations located in Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Western District Conference
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Coming Events

Aug 1-2, 2013:
Year of the Bible Launch
Bethel College
North Newton, KS

Aug 2-3, 2013:
WDC Annual Assembly
Bethel College
North Newton, KS

Sept 15, 2013:
The Art of Bible Storying,
Michael Novelli (Youth
Leader Training Event),
South Central Kansas

Oct 31, 2013:
New Pastor Orientation
North Newton, KS

Nov 1, 2013:
Pastor Misconduct Prevention
Training, Bethel College
Mennonite Church
North Newton, KS

WDC Garden

Stories from Western District Conference
June/July/August 2013



The pastor's heart

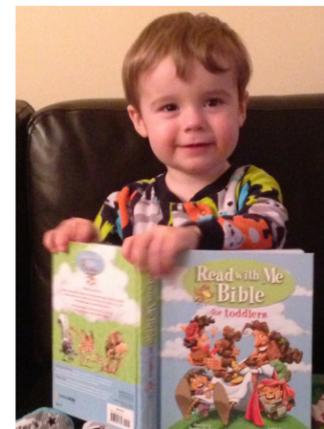
By Clarence Rempel, WDC Conference Minister

*I rejoice in following
your statutes
as one rejoices in great riches.
I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.
I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word.*

Psalm 119:14-16

As a father and now a grandfather I want my descendants to delight in the sacred stories. I want them to know the good news of Jesus ahead of the “gospel” according to Disney World. As a pastor I delighted in unpacking “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) “so that all God’s people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:17).

And now as Conference Minister I am excited about calling our churches to a more intentional and intensive engagement with Scripture called “Year of the Bible.” Our Assembly – “Shaped by God’s Story,” is our annual premier resourcing event for our churches. This year we are adding a day-long “Year of the Bible Launch.” I invite every congregation to send a delegation of five to ten leaders with the purpose of creating a team that would guide the congregation in a year of rejoicing, meditating, and delighting in “the word of the Lord” (Psalm 33:4).



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“Rejoice, meditate and delight” are three delicious words that describe my lifelong growing appreciation for and engagement with the Bible. I was weaned on bedtime Bible stories like the Apostle Paul described his co-worker Timothy. “From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 3:15).

YEAR OF THE BIBLE LAUNCH

August 1-2, 2013

Memorial Hall, Bethel College
North Newton, Kansas

What is happening?

8 hours of quality resourcing on **all things Bible**. Conversations, hands-on learning, singing, dramas, resources, displays, study, exploration, worship, presenters, Bible foods, give-aways!

Who will come?

Dozens of people will be there: parents, youth workers, Christian educators, worship planners, pastors, and lay leaders. Bring a team of people from your congregation for the whole event for only \$100.

Why attend?

Our goal is to plant seeds that God will water. If you yearn for new ideas and techniques for teaching the Bible to all ages, if **Biblical literacy** is important to you, if you are ready to discover new resources, then join in the fun and the learning. By the time you leave, you will have created a framework for how your own church can engage with a customized Year of the Bible.

Learning Centers:

1. **40 Ways to Study the Bible** (Cleo Koop)
2. **Navigating the YOB website** (Caleb Regehr)
3. **Exploring the 12 Scriptures Project, Houston Style** (Marty Troyer)
4. **Dig In: Bible Resources from MennoMedia** (Marlene Bogard, Terry Graber)
5. **Reading the Bible in 90 Days** (Brenda Glanzer Lilliston, Laurie Regehr)
6. **Written on our Hearts: Scripture Memory Methods for All Ages** (Peter and Jennie Wintermote)
7. **The Lectionary Lens** (For pastors, worship planners) (Joanna Harader, Ruth Harder)
8. **Become Like a Child: Speaking Kid's Language in Children's Time** (Kristin Neufeld Epp)
9. **Walk This Way - Bible Walkin' on the Plaza** (Susan Jantzen and Team)
10. **Mining the Web: Bible Resources for Youth and Young Adults** (Michael Bogard)
11. **Acting Out in Church: Bible and Drama** (Judy Harder)
12. **Seminary in your Backyard: Studying the Bible at AMBS—Great Plains** (Dorothy Nickel Friesen)

Year of the Bible is sponsored by WDC, with assistance from the Schowalter Foundation. Make www.yearofthebiblenetwork.org your first stop for planning and inspiration. WDC sponsors this site in partnership with Mennonite Church USA.



Year of the Bible

READ IT STUDY IT PRAY IT LIVE IT

Presenters



Loren Johns,
Associate Professor
of New Testament at
AMBS

If we want to engage Scripture in healthy and accessible ways, we ask, "What is the Bible good for?" There are a number of good answers to this question, but in a post-Fundamentalist and postmodern context, sometimes we are not sufficiently clear on how to answer this.

The historic emphasis on the role of community and mutual dialog continues to be a pivotal, key element of Anabaptist biblical interpretation today, especially in a postmodern situation.

Some historic emphases on how Anabaptists have approached Scripture are so wise and valuable that we should not ignore our own history and tradition. There are some historic emphases that have outlived their usefulness. An example of the latter would be the strong preference historically for the New Testament, to the near ignoring of the Old Testament. --Loren Johns, *Year of the Bible Launch speaker, Assembly speaker and Learning Center leader*

Our first priority commits us to fashion our lives after Jesus Christ. As missional communities, our congregations invite people to make a commitment to Christ, be disciplined in the way of Christ, teach engagement of the scriptures, and help develop Christian identity from an Anabaptist Mennonite perspective.

How does life-long Christian formation happen? One important way is through increasing our capacity as a community of faith to use the Scriptures as a faithful guide for daily living. How do we "let the word dwell in us richly?"

First, read the Bible together as a church! Second, immerse ourselves in the stories, psalms, wisdom, instruction and prophecy writings. Third, discern the Spirit of God in our midst speaking God's word in our time, as we seek to follow Jesus. --Patty Shelly, *Year of the Bible Launch speaker and Assembly Learning Center leader*



Lois Barrett, Director,
AMBS—Great Plains

When we talk about "Engaging the Word Through Life and Service", what we are really exploring is how we make our outer lives match our inner spiritual lives. -Lois Barrett, *Year of the Bible Launch speaker and Assembly Learning Center leader*

Find all information for both events at www.mennowdc.org

NEW THIS YEAR:

Register and pay for both events online!



The Bible is a Living
Word! Patty Shelly,
Bible Professor, Bethel College

WDC ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

August 2-3, 2013

Memorial Hall, Bethel College
North Newton, Kansas

**Shaped by God's Story:
Word and Spirit in the Books of Acts**

You are invited . . .

to our annual gathering of Western District Conference congregations. Our theme reflects our goal of immersing in God's Word, the Bible, for the next year. Our worship and learning will be centered on stories from the Book of Acts, and the Bible as a foundation for Christian living. In addition to Loren Johns as preacher/presenter, we have a stellar lineup for seminar leaders.

Seminars:

1. **History, Hooks and Heilsgeschichte: Learning the Bible So It Sticks** (Michele Hershberger, Hesston College)
2. **Four Ways the Bible Makes Sense: Finding Community Amidst Diversity** (Doug Miller, Tabor College)
3. **Anabaptist Approach to Scripture** (Loren Johns, AMBS)
4. **The Bible and MC USA (in moderation)** (Patty Shelly, Mennonite Church USA Moderator Elect, Bethel College)
5. **What the Bible Says About the Mission of God** (Lois Barrett, AMBS—GP)
6. **Immigration Reform: Where it Stands and How You Can Help** (Tammy Alexander, MCC Washington DC)
7. **Sexuality in the Bible from Anabaptist Perspectives** (Loren Johns, AMBS)
8. **Multi-Cultural Bible Study: Explore the Scriptures Through Difference Lenses** (Ron Moyo, Carola Ratzlaff, Moises Romero, Cleo Koop)
9. **The Biblical Foundation for Holistic Stewardship** (Jeanette Roberts, educator/librarian; Pete Flaming, Everence Church Relations)
10. **Exploring the 12 Scriptures Project, Houston Style** (Marty Troyer, Houston Mennonite Church)

MOST WANTED: Church Planting Dreamers

There are people with a passion for God's mission in the world! Many of them are "dreamers", seeking a space in the church to express their dreams. WDC has space open for those ready to imagine, support and pray for church planting ministry. These people have to be ready to experiment, share creative ideas, and dare to think out of the box. They need to seek alternatives for church planting and connect to others who are willing to serve as agents of blessing for non-churched people in our communities. We welcome you to register to attend and bring a donation to the Church Planting Dreamers luncheon at Annual Assembly and take up the challenge.