



**Western
District
Conference**

*An area conference of
Mennonite Church USA*

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WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE REPORTS

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

August 2-3, 2013
North Newton, KS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Office staff reports:</u>	
Conference Minister	1
Associate Conference Minister	2
Minister of Christian Formation, Director of Resource Library, Director of Assembly Planning ...	4
Conference Treasurer (<i>This report will be posted online after annual audit is completed - see</i> <i>www.mennowdc.org</i>).....	4
Youth Ministry Network Team Leader	5
 <u>Executive Board, Committee, and Task Force reports:</u>	
WDC Executive Board	5
Gifts Discernment Committee	7
Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force.....	7
Immigration Task Force	8
 <u>Commissions, Committees, and Task Force reports:</u>	
Leadership Commission	8
Church Planting Task Force.....	9
Resource Commission	9
Historical Committee	10
Low German Task Force	10
Music & Worship Task Force	11
Ski Trip Task Force	11
Tournament Task Force.....	11
Stewardship Commission	12
Staff Relations Committee	12
Trustee Task Force	12
 <u>Institutions with relationships to WDC reports:</u>	
Camp Mennoscah.....	13
Mennonite Agri-Urban	14
Mennonite Central Committee Central States.....	14
Mennonite Men of the Plains	15
 <u>Organizations with partnerships to WDC reports:</u>	
Mennonite Disaster Service	15
Western District Women in Mission.....	15
Prairie View	17
 <u>Mennonite agency reports:</u>	
Mennonite Church USA.....	18
Mennonite Education Agency.....	19
Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary / Great Plains Extension.....	20
Bethel College.....	21
Bluffton University	22
Hesston College	23
Mennonite Mission Network.....	24
Everence.....	26
MennoMedia	28
Mennonite Health Services Alliance.....	29
Mutual Aid eXchange (MAX)	30

Conference Minister Clarence Rempel

Weather reporting is a significant part of the news in the Midwest. The past year has been marked by extremes of unrelenting heat resulting in severe drought and unremitting cold marked by late freezes. Drought, hail, and tornadoes have grabbed the headlines. The weather in Western District Conference (WDC) has been unpredictable as well. We are experiencing the ethical, theological, and cultural turbulence of changing values in sexuality and changing practices in churchly responses.

If you imagine Western District Conference as a ship navigating through this storm, I would describe us as moving toward a missional future, but the ship is rocking and some cargo is sliding off the deck. As of this writing, four churches and one church plant have given notice of leaving Western District Conference. At least two more have made similar decisions but have not notified us until they can announce a transfer of membership to a different Conference.

Growing up in Nebraska and living in Kansas, I don't know much about seafaring ships. I am told, that in order to weather a storm, a ship needs ballast down deep in the hold to keep the ship riding upright through fierce ocean waves. David Boshart, Central Plains Conference Minister speaking at the March 2013 Constituency Leaders Council, called on the Mennonite church to add enough common theological and hermeneutical ballast to weather this hurricane. For several area conferences that has come in the form of four basic theological affirmations:

- Jesus is Lord.
- The Scriptures are our authority.
- The Confession of Faith is ours.
- We are seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance.

We anticipate adding hermeneutical ballast at our annual assembly with Dr. Loren Johns from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary describing for us Anabaptist ways of interpreting the Bible. Hermeneutical ballast is also coming from Mennonite Church USA in developing a pathway of biblical/communal discernment. A new book [Discerning God's Will Together: Biblical Interpretation in the Free Church Tradition](#) by Ervin Stutzman (in WDC Library) will add ballast as well. The Mennonite Church USA gathering in Phoenix in July will be using this as a major resource for training in interpreting the Bible in community.

I also recognize that we need to add relational ballast among our pastors and churches. Sister church relationships between churches in Texas and in Kansas have certainly helped. Supporting church relationships with new churches are invaluable. But we need additional ways to open lines of communication and build relationships of trust among pastors and among churches.

The Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force is planning our WDC Reference Council for fall as an experience of staying at the table together as we share Scripture and story with one another. We are inviting two Mennonite leaders to demonstrate respectful dialogue as we seek to faithfully follow Jesus.

Among the instructions to a church in profound ethical disagreement, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Romans 14:19). I would encourage all of us to reread Romans 14-15 as an attitude check for continuing together in the present milieu.

In the midst of these challenges we pursue the WDC **vision** and carry out our WDC **tasks**.

Vision

1. ***To witness and invite others to faith in Jesus Christ.*** Iglesia Camino de Santidad, Liberal, Kansas, is boldly inviting family and friends to new life in Jesus. Gilberto Flores, Associate Conference Minister, is meeting with leaders in this new congregation for quarterly all day training sessions. The Chin Emmanuel Church recently received fourteen new members and is actively seeking a meeting place of their own. Their storefront facility is packed and overflowing.
2. ***To dwell in just and loving relationships.*** The Immigration Task Force helped plan the Reference Council gathering, "Citizens of the Kingdom: Immigration and Christian Faith," March 1-2, 2013. In addition to learning about the complexities of immigration in the United States, we heard the personal stories of WDC congregations embracing the stranger. "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords....He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing (Deuteronomy 10:17-18). Registrants from across WDC and nearby Mennonite colleges numbered 130.

3. ***To connect to God's global mission in the world.*** On April 29, 2013, WDC hosted two Mennonite leaders from the Congo, Macaire Kilambo Kabanga and Roussel Kumakamba Mimboro, who were seeking ways to strengthen lay ministry in the Congo through job-generating new businesses, church-to-church partnerships, and person-to-person relationships. They invited us to send women pastors from WDC for the celebration of their first ordinations of women in September and October.

Tasks

1. ***To sustain transformational pastors.*** Dwight Regier, our Youth Ministry Network Leader, has gathered youth pastors monthly and encouraged youth pastors in one-on-ones. Eric Massanari, pastor at Shalom Mennonite, led our Pastors Day Apart in "Group Spiritual Direction." A grant from Schowalter makes possible coaching for first-time pastors by Ron Flaming, former Director of MCC International and a certified leadership coach.
2. ***To resource healthy, missional churches.*** "Year of the Bible," the focus of 2013-14, will offer an abundance of resources for congregations to engage the Scriptures intentionally and intensively. Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian Formation, has developed a "Year of the Bible" website that will be available to all 21 area conferences of Mennonite Church USA.
3. ***To network Anabaptist church planting partnerships.*** The message at Exponential, a national church planting conference, in Orlando, Florida, was "Church planting is hard, really hard. It will stress your marriage, your family, your body, and your soul. You will be criticized. You will deal with incorrigible people. You will make mistakes. You will despair. You will be tempted to misuse power in success. Church planting requires an abundance of faith, perseverance, integrity, obedience, co-workers, and hope."

Our new Church Planting Task Force is calling for 50 Church Planting Dreamers to add "abundance" to our church planting mission. Wichita congregations have donated generously in money, time, and talent to the new initiative there which is now being re-imagined. The three new churches announced at Assembly 2012 are doing well – Chin Emmanuel Church, Houston, Texas, Iglesia Camino de Santidad, Liberal, Kansas, and Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Gladewater, Texas. We ask for your continued prayers and support for our church planting enterprise.

Western District Conference is traveling towards God's missional future for us. God is on mission calling peoples from all nations into covenant relationship with the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of humanity. One of the ways God's mission continually expands is by relocating God's witnesses through persecution, wars, disasters, and opportunities. This was true for the early church. "On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1). This was true for the first Anabaptists who were scattered by persecution to new cantons and countries. Jesus anticipated this migration of witnesses and instructed his disciples, "As you go, make disciples of all ethnic peoples" (Matthew 28:19).

Migrations scatter the witness; migrations also open people groups to receive the witness. The Apostle Paul speaking to the intellectuals in Athens notes that God created a variety of ethnic groups and superintends their movements in history and geography "so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us" (Acts 17:27). God is on mission seeking worshippers in all ethnic groups.

So I join the psalmist in praying for the Western District Conference, "May God be gracious and bless us and make his face shine on us—so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all ethnic groups" (Psalm 67:1-2).

**Associated Conference Minister
Gilberto Flores**

Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth (Isaiah 12: 5)

The Lord had been faithful with all Western District churches in Texas. This past year was a time of blessing for our congregations. The church plants in Gladewater, Texas and Liberal, Kansas experienced God's presence as people are transformed and became active followers of Jesus.

Peace Mennonite in Dallas, Texas, is growing; a group of young adults are now part of this congregation. The church is interested and exploring the possibility of moving to a new meeting place that fits well with their current and future needs.

Chin Emmanuel Church, Houston, Texas, has had an influx of new members - new refugees becoming members of the congregation. During this year, 20 plus members have been added to the congregation. They are looking for a new place to move. The current place is too small; there is neither space to keep all children attended nor space for Sunday school classes. They meet Sunday morning for Bible study for their children, and in the afternoon they meet for worship. This creates a lot of stress with time and resources. The plan is to buy a property nearby, a building erected in 2007. For that purpose they already have \$80,000 to put upfront, and they need a loan of \$456,000 to resolve this positive problem.

Camino de Santidad in Liberal, Kansas, is also a growing congregation. Currently the church is worshiping in the Calvary Mennonite Church building. The challenges ahead are clear for them: develop a better connection with the surrounding community, equip congregational leadership, and serve effectively their bilingual youth group. The church needs pastor Moisés Romero to move into a full-time ministry commitment. He is trying to quit his current full-time job, and will look for half-time employment to have more time with the church.

Mi Redentor in northern Dallas, has been adding new members and increasing attendance, thirty five people now meet every Sunday. They remodeled the small chapel where the church meets. A new ceiling, new power point and electronic equipment, a better AC system are the results of the active participation of the congregation to be and sound more hospitable for newcomers and their families.

As every year, the Houston MCC Relief Sale helps to create space for Texas congregations to come together. Members from Casa del Alfarero, Monte Horeb, Casa de Dios and Comunidad de Esperanza, commented about this event: "This event enriches our Anabaptist community here in Texas. What we do here allows us to show our care and concern about people around the world and their needs". "This event is now part of our tradition, then we are willing to continue doing the best we can to contribute to MCC, we enjoy the blessing of sharing and serving".

Monte Horeb, Dallas, Texas, is actively participating in the Year of the Bible initiative. Every Sunday all members and their children recite verses memorized during the week. The church sent the last payment of the loan they received several years ago from the WDC Revolving Fund. Because of this, the congregation is very satisfied, praising God for his faithfulness. Now the church has complete ownership of the building, without any debt.

As a consequence of decisions made during WDC 2012 Annual Assembly, we in Texas, have several expressions of concern from our Hispanic pastors and congregational leaders. A certain level of distress and disappointment came out in meetings and in one-on-one conversations about the future of the Conference. One congregation, House of Healing in Dallas, Texas, decided to remove their membership. The Anglo congregations face it in different ways. The other Hispanic congregations across the conference have decided to continue being connected with WDC. Their idea is that the conference has to hear the other voices beyond Kansas.

The last year we meet with Anglo and Hispanic pastors and leaders at Austin Mennonite Church to seek a different approach to our bi-cultural situation. The theme for this meeting was Borders and Bridges (Linderos y Puentes). At the center of this conversation was three components: Build relationships, learn from our different cultures, and move from reactive discussions into proactive transformational dialogues about our cultural differences.

We are working with Hispanic pastors in quarterly continuing education events. During this year we will also have a pastors/spouses retreat in San Antonio, Texas. It was organized with the objective to develop trust and fellowship among pastors and their spouses and to offer a space to refresh the spiritual life of very busy bi-vocational pastors and families.

Celebrating Immigration, an event organized by Hispanic Mennonite Church, is opening new windows for our WDC congregations from other cultures. The intention of this event, celebrated in Fort Myers, Florida in May, was to refocus our immigrant situation from a reactive-hopeless attitude into a joyful celebration of our condition. Transform the shame, rejection and fears into a useful force to move from immigrant condition into pilgrims in a journey as God, our Lord walks with us in an exodus toward

the kingdom of heaven. In the fall the churches in Texas will celebrate a similar event hopefully including congregations from South Central in this area.

Church Planting Task Force

The WDC Church Planting Task Force has been active during this year. We invite you to visit our blog at WDC webpage (www.mennowdc.org/category/church-planting/). You will find information about this ministry, and inspirational and motivational articles about church planting. The Task Force is promoting a Church Planting Dreamers initiative. Our expectation is to have at least fifty committed people ready to share, pray and support the Western District church planting ministry. And as these people get involved and follow God's call, a desirable outcome may be for them to become church planters as well! Showalter Foundation gave us a \$10,000 grant for this ministry. We will use this money to train and equip people interested in church planting.

Words of thanksgiving

O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. (Isaiah 25:1)

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

Year of the Bible! It's Here!

- **Open Wide and say Ahhhh!** We hope that is what hundreds of WDC folks will do as we engage with the Bible, God's Story this year. Many hours have been spent in planning both the Year of the Bible Launch and the Annual Assembly, which focuses on Biblical Resourcing. I was joined by an enthusiastic planning team: Kathryn Bauchelle, Jaime Cazares, Carol Duerksen, Peter Goerzen, Susan Jantzen, Cleo Koop, Jeanette Leary, and Caleb Regehr.
- **First Stop!** In addition, I have created a website especially for Year of the Bible at www.yearofthebiblenetwork.org. Mennonite Church USA is partnering with us to sponsor this site. I serve as the curator and Caleb Regehr posts links and ideas after I have given my stamp of approval. We want this to be the first stop as you consider more intentional interaction with the Scriptures.
- **New Stuff!** Many materials (DVD's and books) are being added to the Conference Resource Library as we enter this intentional Biblical focus. One way to discover them is to search "Bible Study" when you visit the on-line library catalog at www.mennowdc.org. You will get at least 450 hits. If that is too overwhelming, just call or email me and I will put together a customized selection for you, based on your needs. It's that easy!
- **Scholarships available!** The WDC Resource Commission is releasing some of its 2012 Funds for scholarships to take a Bible class at AMBS or AMBS-Great Plains. \$200 could be yours – just contact our office.
- **Grant boosts resourcing.** Thanks be to God for the \$9800 grant that came from the Showalter Foundation to enable our Year of the Bible.

Sabbatical Refreshment

- In the fall of 2012, I was granted a six-week sabbatical. It was a wonderful time of rest, renewal and study. My husband Mike and I were able to participate in a pastor's retreat in Wisconsin, spend some time with the "ancient ones" in California Redwoods, and I worked on preparing the Year of the Bible website after attending a "Vision and Practice of 21st Century Faith Formation" training with Vibrant Faith Ministries.

Resource Library

- **Looking gorgeous at age 77!** I work hard to keep our collection fresh and enticing. Some decline in circulation is of concern, but it seems we are still a hopping place. We hope we are the BEST and FIRST place you should go / call for resources.

**Conference Treasurer
Phyllis Regier**

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

See www.mennowdc.org, Annual Assembly

**Youth Ministry Network Team Leader
Dwight Regier**

Over the past 20 years the Western District Conference and South Central Conference have shared a conference youth minister position. Due to funding issues that role was cut from full to half to one-quarter time. In 2012 the traditional role of conference youth pastor was discontinued and an experimental year begun. The Network Team Leader is a 0.1 FTE position which focuses on 15-plus youth pastors in the south-central Kansas region (in about 20 congregations) with three foci: pastoral care; leading monthly gatherings of the youth pastors; and visioning and coordination with those working with bi-conference level events. A second position, Network Event Leader, was begun as a 0.05 FTE supplement to a youth pastor to lead the events side of conference youth ministry. The Network Event Leader was set up to work with the Youth Ministry Committee to envision and coordinate bi-conference events. Administrative support and some funding has been available to support events.

The first half of the model has received strong affirmation. The youth pastors have expressed significant appreciation for having someone outside of their congregation giving pastoral care, which was not a focus of the previous one-quarter time position. The monthly youth pastor lunches generally have seven to ten youth pastors participating.

The events side of the model has struggled. This part of the model allows very little conference-level time for the leading of bi-conference youth events. It depends heavily on the youth pastors for the vision for events and the investment of time and leadership to make events happen. In the past year, it has been a struggle to find youth pastors prepared to participate in the Youth Ministry Committee. In February 2013 the Know Jesus retreat (for junior high students) was well attended, but relied almost exclusively on the efforts of two youth pastors, which is not a sustainable model. In November 2012, an afternoon seminar on draft registration was led by three youth pastors, and this does seem sustainable.

Recent evaluation of the model is leading us to assess both the role of bi-conference level events and feasibility of this model. My sense at this point is that one focused annual large bi-conference event (e.g., peace witness, service, speaker) would be desired, accompanied by several (1-3) much smaller events specifically visioned and led by youth pastors (e.g., draft registration seminar, discipleship retreat).

A hopeful sign is that there may be youth pastors coming forward to be part of the Youth Ministry Committee. If this group comes together, their first job will be to define what level of events could reasonably be expected under this new structure.

**Western District Conference Executive Board
Wendy Funk Schrag, Board Secretary**

The WDC Executive Board met five times since the WDC Annual Assembly in 2012. Executive Board members during this time include Diana Schunn, (Chair), Eric Massanari, Lois Miller, Richard Gehring, Sheri Lepard, Larry Thimm, Violetta Ajquejay, Eduardo Vargas, Cynthia Loganbill, Karl Kroeker, Marilyn Lehman and Clarence Rempel.

At each meeting, the Executive Board reviews and approves minutes from previous meetings, reviews the financial statements and congregational giving of WDC, receives reports from Conference Minister, Clarence Rempel, and Associate Conference Minister, Gilberto Flores, and accepts minutes from the WDC Commissions and Task Forces, providing guidance upon request.

Additional highlights from Executive Board meetings are as follows:

August 25, 2012:

- New Board members were welcomed – Karl Kroeker, Lois Miller, Richard Gehring, Wendy Funk Schrag.
- Gilberto is meeting quarterly with Hispanic church pastors in Kansas, building networks of support.
- The transition for Camp Mennoscah to become its own independent 501(c)3 organization is going well.
- The audit report was reviewed – no recommendations were made.
- Clarence reported several churches are deliberating about their future with WDC. House of Healing Mennonite Church in Dallas withdrew its membership to WDC. Board members and Clarence expressed sorrow at the loss of this congregation from WDC, especially the relationships their youth had formed with a Kansas youth group.

- Gilberto has been exploring relationships with the Chin Emmanuel Church in Houston.
- Marlene will be taking a sabbatical September through November.
- Board members reviewed Annual Assembly 2012 evaluations and made recommendations for Annual Assembly 2013. The Board discussed how the resolutions committee could be more effectively used to bring stronger and more solid resolutions to Assembly gatherings.
- Pastor Jaime Cazares from Casa Batania in Newton was appointed to be a WDC representative to the Mennonite Church USA Constituent Leaders Council.
- Clarence recommends, and the Board affirmed, that Dave Gerbrandt's WDC associate pastor position not be replaced at this time and that Clarence pick up the responsibility of conference pastor for the Oklahoma churches.
- Jim Stucky, chair of the Human Sexuality Task Force, joined the Board to provide a presentation of the history of the task force and to discuss future activities.

October 27, 2012:

- WDC staff are planning a retreat at Camp Mennoscah on November 12-13.
- Gilberto has had increased travel requirements but is energized by the transcultural experiences he is having, especially with the Chin Emmanuel Church in Houston. The WDC Leadership Commission is working with the Chin congregation on the process of pastoral licensing. Clarence joined Gilberto in Texas for a meeting with Texas pastors.
- Clarence is meeting with some new WDC pastors on a quarterly basis.
- Clarence, Diana, and Jaime Cazares represented WDC at the Mennonite Church USA Constituent Leaders Council meeting which focused on discernment.
- The Board provided counsel to Clarence in his work with the churches who are considering withdrawing or who have withdrawn from WDC.
- Board members reviewed a draft of a new WDC resolutions policy, modeled after the new Mennonite Church USA resolutions policy.
- Karl Kroeker has resigned from the Board. Board members made appointments to fill unexpired terms for the Stewardship Commission, Executive Board, MCC Central States Board, and Camp Mennoscah Board of Directors WDC Representative.
- The Board approved Gilberto Flores' extension of service from February 2013 through January 2014.

December 15, 2012:

- Clarence presented a Mennonite Church USA protocol for churches who wish to leave one MC USA conference to join another. Clarence will distribute the protocol to several churches considering transferring their membership.
- Clarence reported on a 2-day stewardship event sponsored by Everance that the Stewardship Commission, Clarence, and Phyllis Regier attended.
- The Annual Assembly 2013 will be held in North Newton at Bethel College on August 2-3. A Year of the Bible seminar will be held prior to Assembly. A new website will be developed for the Year of the Bible project.
- Eric reported on the Pastors' Day Apart scheduled for January 2 which will focus on calling out small groups within congregations to work on specific issues of spiritual direction and discernment.
- The Board approved a new resolutions policy which will be distributed to congregations.

February 16:

- This meeting was designated as the Board Retreat with a focus of The Big View of WDC.
- Marlene Bogard presented the new Year of the Bible website and the plans to offer a seminar launch on August 1.
- Clarence provided an overview of churches that are in the process of deliberating their future with WDC. Two have left WDC last fall (House of Healing in Dallas and Eden Mennonite in Inola, OK). Executive Committee members and Eric Massanari were chosen to be available to meet with churches or be a support in any other ways that would be helpful.
- Gilberto reports he has read 25 books on church planting in the past three years. There are

currently five church planting initiatives: Gladewater, TX; Wichita, KS; Liberal, KS; Houston, TX; and Columbia, MO. Gilberto would like to identify 50 church planting dreamers with a first meeting occurring during Annual Assembly.

- The Human Sexuality Task Force recommends a seminar for reference council and open to others for the fall of 2013.
- The next reference council meeting will be March 1-2 at Hope Mennonite Church in Wichita and will focus on immigration. It will be open to the public.
- The Board appointed 10 people to serve as WDC delegates to the July 2013 Mennonite Church USA Conference in Phoenix.
- Recommendations were made for a resolutions committee for Annual Assembly 2013. Marilyn Lehman from Austin Mennonite in Austin, TX is appointed to the Executive Board.

April 27, 2013:

- A large portion of this meeting was spent planning for Annual Assembly, August 2-3.
- Next year's Annual Assembly 2014 will be held in Texas.
- Board members reflected on the Immigration reference council meeting held in March. This format seemed to work well, and attendance was above expectations. An offering covered expenses for meals, honorariums for speakers, and travel grants.
- Diana and Clarence reported highlights from a CLC meeting they attended in Hebron, PA which focused on church polity and the new MC USA resolutions policy.
- Mennonite Church USA has decided to use the WDC Year of the Bible website as its hosting website for the project.
- Eduardo and Clarence shared the plans from the Human Sexuality Task Force for a reference council meeting to be held in October, 2013 which will be open to the public.
- Clarence anticipates having a meeting with churches who are leaving WDC and seeking membership in South Central Conference. He has also had discussion with Terry Shue on the process and will invite Terry to be part of the meeting.
- Board members reviewed names provided by the Gifts Discernment Committee and added some additional recommendations for filling Commission openings.
- Board members said farewell to Eduardo Vargas who is relocating to Chicago.
-

Gifts Discernment Committee

Brian Stucky, Chair

Beginning in January the Gifts Discernment Committee began preparing for the 2013 Annual Conference. The Committee again requested pastors and congregational chairpersons from each of our Western District Congregations to provide names of individuals from their congregations who they felt would feel a calling to serve on a board, commission or committee of the conference. At the second request, a good number of names were forwarded from which to work and very much facilitated the work of the Committee.

The Gifts Discernment Committee this year dealt with the resignation of several Board or Commission members, as most of those represented churches who have withdrawn from the Conference. The result was an increase in efforts and meetings to assist filling unexpired terms.

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

Committee members: Brian Stucky, chair, Melanie Zuercher, Roger Neufeld Smith, Eric Buller, Jane McNair, Clarence Rempel, staff.

Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force

Jim Stucky, Chair

Mission Statement: In keeping with the teaching of Jesus Christ and his saving love for all persons, the Human Sexuality Discernment Task Force 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 Western District Conference on issues related to human sexuality, values and practices.

The current active members of the task force are: Heidi Regier Krieder, Nadine Reimer Penner, Eduardo Vargas, Brett Klingenberg, Marvin Zehr, and Jim Stucky, Chair. Conference Minister, Clarence Rempel serves as liaison to the Executive Board and is a participating member of the task force.

Our primary focus at this point is to plan a conference wide symposium in late October to focus on building an “ethic of sexuality” which reflects our Anabaptist/Mennonite values and beliefs. Part of that dialogue will include discussion of same sex couples and their relationships to the church.

Immigration Task Force

Nathan Koontz, Chair

Current members: Nathan Koontz, chair; Nita Nikkel, Caleb Lazaro, Martin Troyer, Karin Kaufman-Wall, Cheryl Crichley, Dayle Toews, Bret Preheim, James Goerzen.

We have been blessed with many opportunities to teach, learn, and facilitate discussions on the intersection of our faith witness and immigration during this past year. At the WDC Annual Assembly in Oklahoma City, Caleb Lazaro and Nathan Koontz led learning tracks on a Christian witness to the State in regards to immigration. Throughout the year members from our task force have given sermons or other input at various places. These venues include Bethel College Mennonite Church, Shalom Mennonite Church, First Church of Christian, Ransom Mennonite Church, Zion Mennonite Church, First Mennonite in Beatrice, Hope Mennonite, for Mennonite Mission Network staff in Newton, and in talk-back sessions after the theater production of Green Card at Hesston College.

In addition to these engagements, our task force along with the help of Wichita area Mennonite churches and the Western District Conference Reference Council hosted a regional immigration event, Citizens of God's Kingdom: Immigration and Christian Faith, on March 1-2, 2013. Guest speakers from MCC, Tammy Alexander and Saulo Padilla, along with MC USA's Jason Boone helped lead the two-day event at Hope Mennonite in Wichita. There was a great response with over a 100 people in attendance!

On October 13-14, 2012, Nathan Koontz and Cecil & Christian Rodriguez of Newton, Ana Galindo of Dallas, and Eduardo Vargas of San Antonio attended a Bienvenido/ Communities of Hope Training in Chicago. We hope that through this and other trainings, we will become better equipped to work with God and recent immigrant brothers and sisters in our local communities.

This coming year, we hope particularly to find ways for communities outside of the south central Kansas region to organize and tap into the resources that WDC and our task force have to offer.

Leadership Commission

Kathy Neufeld Dunn, 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

- Luann Yutzy, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS
- Ryan Koch, Peace Mennonite Church, Dallas, TX

License toward Ordination

- Karen Mascho, Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Gladewater, TX
- Nadine Friesen, First Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, KS
- Philip Schmidt, Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, KS

License for Specific Ministry

- Steve Mascho, Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Gladewater, TX

Accountability and Discipline

The Leadership Commission returned a pastor's credential to unencumbered active status after a period of accountability and restorative work.

Church Plants/Emerging Congregations

- Chin Emmanuel, Houston, TX, was welcomed in July as an emerging congregation. This recognizes their unique status as a well-developed immigrant congregation (not a church plant) that needs to get to know WDC better over the next year. They will have 1 delegate vote at the 2013 Assembly.
- Camino de Santidad, Liberal, KS was welcomed as a church plant.
- Grace Mennonite Fellowship, Gladewater, TX was welcomed as a church plant.

Church Planting Taskforce went through some positive reorganization. We hope that in the near future this taskforce may become a commission of its own.

Gene Thieszen completed almost 5 years on our commission, 2 1/2 of those as chair. We thank God for his dedicated service and faithful leadership.

Commission members: Kathy Neufeld Dunn, Renee Kanagy, Lee Lever, Weldon Schloneger, Gene Thieszen (through 5/1/13), June Thomsen, and Terry Rediger (effective 5/8/13).

Church Planting Task Force

Jeff Wintermote, Chair

After a slow start during our first year, the Church Planting Task Force has spent this year reorganizing and finding direction. The purpose of the Task Force is 2-fold: to guide the church planting mission of WDC and to support & give counsel to Gilberto Flores, Associate Conference Minister. As a Task Force we have been meeting every other month and have been setting out priorities and goals for the next year. Plans are being made for a 2 day resourcing retreat for church planters and those interested in becoming church planters, and for networking with supporting congregations and "dreamers" who will support the church planting efforts through visioning, and financial & prayer support. Goals are to plant 3 new churches in this fiscal year while continuing to strengthen the current church plants and sister church relationships.

We are incredibly fortunate to have the great resource that Gilberto Flores is. He is both knowledgeable and innovative in his approach to church planting and we are so glad to have him as part of the "team."

The Task Force asks for your prayers as we seek God's leading for planting churches in Western District.

Task Force members are: Jaime Cazares, Lee Lever, Nita Nikkel, Jack Norris, Jeff Wintermote and staff member Gilberto Flores.

Resource Commission

Lois Harder, chair

Our mission statement continues to guide the work of the commission: "Empowering 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."

Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian formation and Resource Library Director, continues as the WDC staff person with whom we work. Her many and varied gifts are utilized, stretched and put to their fullest potential and capacity as she offers her time, energy and expertise in so many ways. We are grateful for her!

In order to support and encourage participation in *Year of the Bible*, (check it out at www.yearofthebiblenetwork.org), the Resource Commission, at their April 23, 2013 meeting recommended that for the year August 1, 2013 through July 30, 2014 ten \$200 scholarships will be made available from Resource Commission Vision 2012 funds for anyone wishing to enroll (credit or audit) in a Bible course through the AMBS or AMBS Great Plains. Priority will be given to WDC members and regular attendees. Contact Nancy Funk at wdc@mennowdc.org to request the scholarship; include a letter of recommendation from your pastor.

The Youth Ministry leadership in the WDC is evolving as clarity is sought for how best to serve the needs of the youth and their pastors. Dwight Regier is working with this program; Jesse Blasdel,

event coordinator has resigned. A new Youth Ministry Committee is in process of forming and being called to serve.

The Historical Committee is inactive currently; The Resource Commission is searching for ways to encourage and train congregations of the WDC to use the GAMEO (Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online) index to record their congregations' history.

Other Task Forces and Committees under the Resource Commission are: Music and Worship committee, Low German Mennonites from Mexico Support task force, End the Death Penalty task force, The Ski Trip task force and the Tournament task force.

As always, the Resource Commission welcomes new task forces to be formed as The Spirit moves and calls people to tend various issues and/or to offer various gifts. Task Forces are created as people are convicted about wanting to organize and be active about anything that reflects the Mission Statement of the WDC and the Resource Commission – for the glory of God! A task force application (which has a 3-year term) can be filled out and given to the Resource Commission who will offer support and encouragement as the focus of the task force is carried out.

Current Resource Commission members are: Ryan Koehn (First Mennonite, Newton); Katherine Goerzen (Grace Hill, Newton); Jeff Koller (Eden Mennonite, Moundridge); Lois Harder (Lorraine Avenue Mennonite, Wichita), Lynn Schlosser (Bergthal Mennonite, Pawnee Rock). Shirley Kroeker resigned her post when her congregation, Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman withdrew their membership from the WDC.

WDC Historical Committee

Roger Juhnke

The WDC Historical Committee has been inactive during the past year.

Low German Mennonites from Mexico Support Task Force

Dorothy Nickel Friesen, Chair

1. When did this task force begin?
 - a. Officially in January 2004.
 - b. Before that, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) conducted a survey using WDC member Tina Block Ediger (and others) to conduct a survey of Low German farmworkers in Kansas. That survey documented thousands of Low Germans, particularly in western Kansas, who reported high occurrences of medical needs.
 - c. A partnership between WDC, which supplies the task force to monitor and advocate for Low German healthy living, and the 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. We meet three times (spring, summer, and fall) per calendar year.
 - b. One member typically meets with the statewide advisory council for strategic planning purposes.
3. How does the task force relate to WDC?
 - a. The task force is accountable to the WDC Resource Commission.
 - b. In addition, the WDC task force is connected to the Mennonite Central Committee Canada program based in Steinbach, Manitoba and adopted its guiding statement: *“MCC 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.”* During spring 2012, we met with scholars and researchers from Canada who specialize in Low German populations.
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; Lotti Boschmann, Olin and Carol Claassen, Mary Duerksen, Margaret Goering, David Harder, Lillian Quiring, Carola Ratzlaff. Cyndi Treaster from the Kansas Farmworker Health Program serves as staff.
 - b. In 2012, Lee Suderman completed serving three years. Olin and Carol Claassen and Dorothy Nickel Friesen will complete serving 11 years in summer, 2013. Lici Roth and Amanda Rempel will join as new task force members in 2013.

Worship and Music Task Force Report

Rosi Penner Kaufman, chair

Task Force Members: Carol Klingenberg; Ken Rogers, Holly Swartzendruber, Rosi Penner Kaufman, chair

The Music and Worship Task Force's major project this year was planning and hosting a Women's Choral Festival on March 3, 2013 at First Mennonite Church, Newton. The guest clinician was Doris Prater, choral director at Maize High School. Although the number of participants was fewer than we hoped, the feedback we received from people who attended indicated that they felt positively challenged and that they enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to sing together. The Task Force is evaluating whether to continue with this type of event or look for other ways to be a worship resource/support to Western District congregations. Two members of the task force (Ken and Rosi) are leaving after serving for many years, so we will be looking for new members with fresh ideas to continue the work of the task force.

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

Ski Trip Task Force

Ken Regier

There was no WDC ski trip this year due to lack of interest. The Ski Trip task group is gathering information and will come with a recommendation to continue doing what we have been doing in the past, to modify the current trip model, or to discontinue all together. We will be soliciting information from our core group of participants, from the event planners, and from the Task group itself, and will make a recommendation to WDC staff by October of 2013.

Task Force members: Ken Regier, Jane Schmidt, William Unruh.

Basketball Tournament

Lynn Eichelberger

The WDC Annual Basketball Tournament was held on March 19, 20, 21, 2013 at Bethel College. We collected \$150 per team this as we almost ran out of money last year when we charged \$125 per team. We now have a small amount of surplus in the account to start next year.

Twelve teams participated this year which was up from eight teams in 2012. The churches were as follows: Alexanderwohl (Goessel, KS), **Whitestone (Hesston, KS) (Division I Champions)**, First (Newton, KS), Eden (Moundridge, KS), Hoffnungsau (Inman, KS), Tabor (Goessel, KS), First (Halstead, KS), **Zion/Grace Hill (Elbing/Whitewater, KS) (Division II Champions)**, West Zion (Moundridge, KS), Journey (Yoder, KS), Bethel College (North Newton, KS), Hesston (KS).

I would like to thank the officials who officiated this year's tournament: Tim Breitigan, Matt Weaver, Perry Koehn, Terry Kessler, Rod Koons, Dick Hein, I did a few games as well.

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

Stewardship Commission

Stan Voth, Chairperson

We want to thank the following Stewardship Commission members for their dedicated service to the Western District Conference: Stan Voth (chairperson), Karen Zehr (secretary), Jeanette Stucky (also liaison to Trustee Task Force), Stephen Hochstetler (also liaison to Staff Relations Committee), Leanna Ediger (newly appointed). Max Fuqua and Greg Pankratz both recently resigned. Phyllis Regier (Business Manager) and Clarence Rempel (Conference Minister) provide invaluable staff representation and support to the commission.

The commission met four times this year conducting business, which included the following items.

Oversight of financial operations. The commission monitors the WDC 2013 annual budget and management of WDC property. We are very grateful that even though we did not meet the 2012 budget our income did exceed expenses. We accomplished this due to efficiency practices of staff operations and our constituents' responses of generosity. We were able to cover our expenses because of the following initiatives:

- 1) The Business Manager assuming part-time employment status,
- 2) The Conference Minister assuming responsibilities of the Oklahoma churches' region,
- 3) Exchange of outside communication writing services for underutilized 2500 Place office space.
- 4) Intensive and effective constituent communication efforts and items describing the conference accomplishments, activities and events, resources, vision, needs, and express gratitude to the conference churches for their generosity and God's blessings.

New Generosity Initiatives. Last fall, several members of the commission, including the conference minister and business manager along with a few area churches, participated in a pilot two-day seminar Creating Cultures of Congregational Generosity, provided by Everence Financial Services in coordination with the Lakewood Institute. At the seminar the commission identified initiatives to create a "culture of conference generosity". Initial generosity initiatives include:

- 1) Provide direct, verbal and written thanks to contributing/participating constituents,
- 2) Conduct visits with individual congregation lay leaders to share our gratitude for their participation in the conference and how to enhance our partnership,
- 3) Implement the new conference communication module known as Seeds, Sprouts, and Gardens, via email attachments and social media, at times on a weekly basis, and generating well-presented, color newsletters.
- 4) Conduct on-going analysis of Conference donors to better identify patterns of generosity and giving to make better strategic decisions relating to generosity practices and approaches.

Staff Relations Committee

James Regier

The Staff Relations Committee worked on the following agenda items this past year:

1. Reviewed Personnel Policies
2. Received updates on changes to conference staffing
3. Considered staffing changes and adjustments to job duties
4. Heard staff performance reviews as presented by Conference Minister, Clarence Rempel
5. Reviewed the evaluation instrument used by WDC staff
6. Reviewed and recommended changes to Personnel policies
7. Continue to provide counsel and advice to Conference Minister regarding conference staffing issues.

Staff Relations Committee members: James Regier, Chair; Sondra Bandy Koontz, Christy Schunn-Sebes, Steven Hochstetler, and Clarence Rempel, ex-officio.

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, 2013, the Revolving Loan Fund had four loans receivable totaling \$60,817.44

In 2012/13 the Trustees:

- Oversaw the management of 2500 Place.
- Lowered the interest rate of the Revolving Fund to a minimum of 4%

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

Camp Mennoscah Association - 2012 fiscal year report

Olivia Bartel, Camp Mennoscah executive director

Greetings from the Camp Mennoscah Board of Directors and staff! We send you heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for your support, encouragement, and prayers throughout this past year.

Incorporation and Master Plan: Though it may not have been visible to anyone visiting Camp Mennoscah, but we underwent a great change in 2012. Camp Mennoscah was incorporated, becoming a 501c3 nonprofit organization as the Camp Mennoscah Association. There continue to be details in this process to complete, but we hope to soon discover that everything has been completed. Incorporation does not affect our mission or programming, and our core constituents and churches remain the same. With incorporation, oversight of Camp Mennoscah switched from the Retreat Commission to the Camp Mennoscah board of directors, a group of 12 elected and assigned members of the Western District and South Central Conferences. Thank you to Western District Conference and the Camp Mennoscah Transition Team for their direction and numerous hours spent accomplishing this change.

A master plan for Camp Mennoscah, showing a vision for the future, was created with the aid of Cathcart Architects, LLC. Committees are already working on new bathhouses for both the boys' and girls' sides to be completed by the 2014 camping season. Kitchen remodeling is also scheduled to be completed in 2014, with work on the staff/bunk houses in 2015. The master plan can be found on the Camp Mennoscah website (www.campmennoscah.org).

Projects: Camp Mennoscah has a webpage! Flint Hills Design and Jesse Graber worked to create the website. We continue to work at adding and updating information. The septic system to the Main Camp staff/bunk houses was replaced/improved with a much larger lateral field and a pump in the spring of 2012. Labor and materials for the septic system were generously donated by Mike and Will Kaufman of Moundridge. There have been no further problems with this septic system.

The renovations on the Bluestem house continue, but we are happy to announce that the much-awaited completion is within sight. Two bathrooms have been added to the basement level, as have two small rooms with approximately 5-6 beds each. The first rental group is currently scheduled for October 2013, but the facility will be available to rent as soon as the basement renovations are finished.

Staff: Mike Albright completed his 2nd year as maintenance coordinator in March 2013 and Olivia Bartel began her sixth year as camp director in February. Olivia continues as a member of the Mennonite Camping Association board, attending the MCA bi-national gathering, board meetings, and Youth Ministry Council as part of her responsibilities.

Financial Report: Contributions in 2012 totaled \$67,518, an increase of 49% over giving in 2011. Net income was at approximately \$42,000 with expenses of \$204,129. The land debt and the maintenance office debt have been paid off. Approximately \$25,000 remains on the swimming pool debt. The Camp Mennoscah board of directors approved a 2013 budget of \$253,600, including increased staffing. The maintenance coordinator position changes to a full-time Campus and Facilities Director position in April 2013; a part-time office manager position will be added, too, bringing the number of staff to 2.5.

Rental groups and Retreats: Forty-four churches, families, and other groups visited Camp Mennoscah in 2012. Four churches held baptisms at the river and two families gathered in memoriam of family members who passed away. Six retreats were hosted by Camp Mennoscah from March to November: Scrapbooking, Retirees' Relaxation Retreat, Mental Health Spiritual Retreat, Work & Play Camp, Fall Scrapbooking, and Young Adult Retreat. The Sustainable Living Retreat of previous years was not scheduled; Dyck's Arboretum holds a similar (and larger) event. The Young Adult Retreat was cancelled due to low interest. A total of 141 people, including staff and presenters, attended these retreats. In addition to these rental groups and retreats, 3 individuals conducted research at Camp Mennoscah.

Graduate students from K-State studied fish in the Ninescah River and water flow (the dam was of particular interest). A third individual spent a day counting butterflies and the different kinds on camp grounds.

Summer Youth Camps: The 2012 summer copied the weather of 2011 a bit more closely than we would have liked, with high temperatures consistently ranging from 105-110 degrees for the latter half of the summer. Approximately 180 volunteers and staff contributed to the success of our eight summer youth camps. The total number of campers was up very marginally to 541 campers (with some campers attending more than one week). The average size of a youth camp was 63 campers (not including Senior High camp with an especially large camp of 103). No camp was smaller than 50 campers. First Camp (3rd & 4th grades) had 70 campers, PreJunior camps (4th & 5th grades) had 130 campers, Junior camps (6th & 7th grades) had 139 campers, Junior High (8th & 9th grades) had 103 campers, and Senior High (10th – 12th grades) had 103 campers. The summer theme was “Secrets of the Kingdom: The Parables of Jesus.”

Volunteers and Gifts: Our dedicated volunteers from First Mennonite Church in Beatrice, NE, generously put in an egress window at the Bluestem house in February 2012. Volunteer groups from 3 colleges gave 4 days of work. Bethel College students volunteered with their service days in April and October. Bluffton College’s ministry team spent a day with us on their March Spring Break tour, and the Hesston Disaster Management students continued their annual visits with a day in November. Along with our summer camp volunteers, numerous other volunteers helped with various maintenance tasks, custodial needs, hosting weekend groups, and working with the dam. Camp Mennoscah is always looking for volunteers, whether for one day or long-term.

Events: The second annual Camp Sing was held on May 6, 2012 at Faith Mennonite Church in Newton as a fundraiser for new mattresses for the cabins and Main Camp facilities. Approximately \$3750 was given by generous camp supporters. Camp Mennoscah Association’s first annual meeting was held on September 30th with nearly 70 people in attendance. Chris Kliever of Cathcart Architects presented the Master Plan and Book of JEBB entertained us with music. The celebration included a pig roast.

Camp Mennoscah is launching into a new era as a nonprofit organization. We need your continued involvement in our camping ministry as we move into the future. Your prayers are valued gifts to us as is financial support from churches and individuals. This ministry is for you, our constituents, and we invite you to join in our outreach and mission.

Board of Directors (alphabetical order): Greg Bauer, Arlin Buller, Kent Erb, Jay Goering, Darrin Hiebert, Valerie Klaassen, Kara Klingenberg, Miriam Krehbiel, Weldon Martens, Kent Peters, Jill Robb, Ben Schmidt, and Galen Waltner (term ended Sept. 2012). Staff: Mike Albright, maintenance coordinator, and Olivia Bartel, executive director.

Agri-Urban Alan Entz

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 well attended again this year. Everyone enjoyed all the different animals and activities we had for them. The Day on the Farm is scheduled for August 10, 2013 so mark your calendars.

Thank you to all participants for your donations of time, money and energy in 2012 that helped us give \$23,669.09 to Bethel College, Western District and Mennonite Church USA.

Mennonite Central Committee Central States John Stoesz, MCC Central States Executive Director

Introduction The MCC Central States region covers 16 states. The region is bounded by the Canadian border on the north, the Mexican border on the south, the Rocky Mountains on the west, and the Mississippi River on the east, plus the state of Mississippi. Eighteen people constitute the Board of Directors.

Transition of Executive Director As I (John Stoesz) write this, I am getting ready to embark on my farewell bike tour to visit 50 churches in Kansas to thank them for supporting MCC, and to invite

them to have a Bike to Church Sunday to raise sponsorships for MCC's Global Family education program. We are inviting all Mennonite, MB and Brethren in Christ churches in the region to sponsor community based education in the following five countries – Tanzania, Bangladesh, Serbia, Honduras and Syria.

My last day as Executive Director is June 27. There is a Transition Team and Hiring Committee hard at work to find a Transitional Executive Director. By the time you read this the new person may be in place. My spirit is good as I move on to other things I wish to do, and I believe the spirit of the Staff and Board is good as well. I have very much appreciated the opportunity to work for MCC Central States, and I have nothing but best wishes for the organization I love so dearly.

Unity of Purpose Both the Staff and Board have agreed to six Unity of Purpose principles to guide the decisions and the work. These principles are under six headings: Christ Centered, Dismantling Intersecting Oppressive Systems, Emerging Realities, Justice Focused, Memory Oriented and Relationship Based. Especially in a time of transition, it is vitally important for the MCC Central States organization to agree on unifying principles

Programs The programs of MCC Central States focus on building power in African American, Hispanic and Native American communities, developing leadership among young people, and educating the mostly white constituency on dismantling racism and sharing power equitably.

International Work MCC Central States is a part of the larger MCC system. Donors from the region contributed more than \$6.5 million during the fiscal year that ended March 31, with about \$5.2 million supporting the international work in more than 50 countries. As of February, there were 32 long term international service workers and eight SALT (Serving and Learning Together) workers from the Central States region. MCC Central States processed thousands of school kits, relief kits, health kits, blankets, comforters and cans of meat.

Volunteers Thousands of volunteers contributed to the work of MCC Central States with 11 Thrift Shops, 12 Relief Sales, and Meat Canning in various locations. People wrote letters to elected officials and participated in marches. Many rode bicycles and motorcycles to raise funds and awareness. Thank You!

Mennonite Men of the Plains

No report available.

Mennonite Disaster Service Condensed from Annual Meeting Minutes, February 3, 2013 Submitted by Jordan Miller

Al Kroeker, Region III Director shared about MDS projects throughout Region III during the last year, including: Harveyville and Reading, KS; Oklahoma (hail storm, tornado); New Mexico (wildfires); Fort Collins and Wetmore, Colorado; Montana (wildfires); Berryville, Arkansas (tornado); Minot, North Dakota; Joplin, Missouri; Bastrop, TX (wildfires).

Gordon Unruh, Kansas Coordinator says that people tend to come right after a disaster, but quickly forget after the first few days. At first there are too many workers, and in a couple of weeks, they need more help.

Jeff Koller was introduced as the new Region II and IV Disaster Response Coordinator, replacing Jerry Klassen who is retiring. Larry Stoner covers Region I and II and Janet Plenert covers Region V. The Disaster Response Coordinator's job is to arrive after a storm and determine whether it is a local, state, regional, or bi-national project. The job also includes training and laying the ground work with church contact people to respond when there is a disaster.

The Hesston College Disaster Management Program is in its 8th year. Through the program, students are taught not only about MDS but how they can touch the lives of people after a disaster.

Western District Women in Mission Lois Loflin, president

Women in Mission used the Sister Care theme of Mennonite Women USA for their luncheon at the last annual conference with Ruth Buller as the guest speaker. Ann Dunn provided the music. In

September Western District and South Central women had their annual Women's and Girls' Retreat at Camp Mennochah. Tammy Duvanel Unruh was the keynote speaker.

The joint WDC/SCC Spring Supper was March 22 at Whitestone Mennonite Church. Ruth Guengerich, co-director of Mennonite Women USA, spoke on "The gospel according to Ruth." The Villa Ladies' Ensemble entertained us with music. This year's annual conference luncheon speaker is Joan Boyer.



*mental health, addictions treatment and integration services
changing lives since 1954*

We hope that you will reach out to Prairie View to meet needs in your community of faith.

- We now have the ability to offer **Mental Health First Aid** training for your clergy and lay leadership.
- We can design unique opportunities for volunteer service.
- We have speakers who will educate and inspire during your worship service or educational events.
- We can match our needs for charitable support with the philanthropic interests and capacity of individuals and groups.
- Our adventure course and labyrinth are available to you. Please make arrangements in advance.

Please contact us to access any of these resources.

Please also know that while many of our services are provided in south central Kansas, we have a number of programs that meet the needs of a larger geographic region. Persons who can benefit from addictions treatment (adults and youth), residential treatment (adolescents), non-medication treatment for depression (adults) and comprehensive diagnostic and treatment services (consisting of an internal medicine specialist, psychologist, psychiatrist, clinician/therapist and others) can learn more from our website: www.prairieview.org or by calling: 800.362.0180. For patients from a distance, suitable referrals to follow-up providers in the patients' home area are made in order for care to continue after discharge from inpatient services.

One of the most exciting activities underway in all of healthcare and certainly in Kansas is the continuing development of our integrated community health collaboration. Prairie View has purchased and is raising money to renovate a former medical office building in Newton. This location will soon house the county health department, primary care safety net clinic and some of Prairie View's outpatient services. Together, these three entities will provide behavioral health services, primary medical care, dental services, laboratory and x-ray services, health education, wellness and prevention services and general public health functions. You can support the advancement of this initiative by making a gift to the Pine Street Renovation Project.

Prairie View continues to develop our new Covenant Relationship with Western District Conference. 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.

We are delighted 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. Karen Andres will also assist in coordinating clergy volunteers. 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.

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



**An invitation to Western District Conference
from the executive director of Mennonite Church USA**

"There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears."—Philippians 1:6, The Message

For more than ten years, God has been at work in Mennonite Church USA, leading us toward a greater sense of mission and purpose. It's been my distinct privilege to visit each of our 21 area conferences, including yours in July 2010. I have been inspired to see the signs of God at work, and I empathize with you in the challenges that you face.

I invite you to consider the way that you speak of God in your conference assembly, both in the worship services and business sessions. More specifically, **I invite you to speak of God as the subject of an active verb, particularly as you give reports and testimonies.** I witnessed the dynamic difference this made in Central Plains Mennonite Conference's annual meeting in 2012. By paying specific attention to what God was doing (and leading others to do), people saw God do a work in the delegate session that brought tears to many eyes.

In her research regarding the missional church, Lois Barrett discovered that many Christians—including Mennonites—find it difficult to speak of God as the subject of an active verb. She says that this is true even when people are invited to respond to a direct question such as, "What has God been doing in your life?" We are more likely to say things such as:

- "Our church started a new outreach to homeless people in the neighborhood."
- "I've been attending a Bible study."
- "We had a great worship service last Sunday."
- "I work as a volunteer for the MCC sale. We set a new record last Saturday."

Consider instead the wording of these responses:

- "Last week, God was with me during a very difficult transition at work."
- "When I was 20 years old, Jesus rescued me from a destructive lifestyle. I've been walking with him ever since."
- "At the time I was at a loss for words, but the Holy Spirit gave me the words to say."
- "God surprised us by bringing a group of Hmong immigrants to our church who have helped us develop a new outreach."
- "The Spirit convicted me about the need for a Sabbath, so I took a day off just to relax."

Do you notice the subtle difference between the two sets of responses? The former puts humans in the driver's seat, whereas the latter depicts God as the actor or initiator in a situation. I'm grateful to Lois for sensitizing me to the difference between these two ways of speaking.

Each month this year, I'm giving an example of this kind of testimony in a column in *The Mennonite*. I take my cues from the writers of Scripture, who freely gave credit to God where credit was due. When I read verses like Philippians 1:6 or Romans 8:28, Paul's testimony of God's action leaps off the page.

I'm eager to hear whether or not you take up this challenge in your conference sessions. And if you have a story you'd like for me to share with the whole church, please let me know. Blessings as you meet in God's name.

Ervin R. Stutzman, executive director, Mennonite Church USA

www.mennoniteusa.org
866-866-2872



Report to Western District Mennonite Conference August 2013

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

Mennonite Education Agency partners with the church, member schools of Mennonite Schools Council, five colleges/universities, two seminaries, and educational programs to *strengthen Mennonite Church USA through education*. MEA staff coordinates events for educators and boards, provides support for leadership programs such as Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA) and Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano (SeBAH), and works with leaders to discern educational needs and trends. To learn more, visit www.MennoniteEducation.org.

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

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

Giving* from Western District Mennonite Conference congregations:

February 1, 2012 – January 31, 2013 - \$78,338.39

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

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

- **AMBS:** Sara Dick, Shalom
- **AMBS-Great Plains Extension:** 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

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

Anabaptist Learning Institute (ALI)

ALI is offered through a collaborative effort between Mennonite colleges/universities, the Mennonite Schools Council and MEA. The four courses have been offered onsite for teachers and other leaders since 2005. Beginning in 2013, ALI courses will be offered online through the Mennonite Learning Network, an MEA initiative. The first course, “Learning the Language of Community,” will begin in February; to learn more: www.MennoniteEducation.org/ALI.

Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA)

IBA collaborates with WDC’s Hispanic churches by training new leaders in local congregations. In 2012, a total of 23 students and four volunteer tutors met weekly at three congregations in Dallas and Pasadena, Texas. Two courses were taught: “The Life of Christ 2” (with 12 and 19 enrolled) and “Church History” (with four enrolled). Three students participated in the annual IBA Student Retreat, and one tutor participated in the annual IBA Tutor Retreat. Four students completed the IBA program at the Casa del Alfarero study center in Pasadena, and they received their diplomas in July 2012. IBA plans to continue to work with WDC in leadership development and help equip the WDC Hispanic Mennonite churches with trained leaders who will contribute to the expansion of God’s kingdom.

Education Leaders Gathering (ELG) 2013

ELG, a professional development opportunity from an Anabaptist perspective for administrators and boards, is coordinated by MEA and planned in collaboration with Mennonite educational institutions. ELG 2013, February 14-16, in Orlando, Fla., was held in conjunction with MHS Alliance’s Mennonite Health Assembly for the first time.

Connecting with Mennonite education

www.MennoniteEducation.org/PRAYERS

Pray for Mennonite education using prayer requests in **Prayers for Faith and Learning**.

www.MennoniteEducation.org/Sunday

Distribute the **Christian Formation Sunday** bulletin insert. Invite alumni/students to share about the impact of Mennonite education.

www.MennoniteEducation.org/MECN

Encourage parents and teachers working with preschoolers to join the **Mennonite Early Childhood Network** to access Anabaptist-related and age-appropriate resources.



AMBS

Report to Western District Conference

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary; Sara Wenger Shenk, president

New name: AMBS became **Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary** on August 28, replacing “Associated” with a signal that we are ready to collaborate with new and global Anabaptists.

Faculty and administrator notes: AMBS welcomed three new faculty members in fall: **Rachel Miller Jacobs**, Christian spirituality and congregational formation; **Jamie Pitts**, Anabaptist studies; and **Andy Brubacher Kaethler**, faith formation and culture. **Jocelyn Graber** is a new development officer connecting donors in the Great Plains area with the seminary.

Students: Students from the conference studying at AMBS–Great Plains this year are **Gail Graber, Hope Greiser Graber, Laurie Hessed, Susan Jantzen, Leia Lawrence, Ron Moyo, Caley Ortman, Justin Osborn, Caleb Regehr, Joel Schroeder, Kay Schroeder and Angela Smith**. Studying on the AMBS campus are **Katherine Goerzen and Peter Goerzen**. Participating in Pastoral Studies Distance Education are **Karen Mascho and Steve Mascho**. **Jocelyn Graber** graduated in May 2012.

AMBS Board member from the conference is **Sara Dick**. Serving on the AMBS–Great Plains board from the conference are **Brett Dewey, Sara Dick, Kathy Neufeld Dunn, Tom Harder, Mark Jantzen, Clarence Rempel and Alice Suderman**.

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

In fall, we anticipate launching Master of Divinity Campus, which will foster greater community life as part of the campus-based program, and Master of Divinity Connect, which will serve students who cannot move to Elkhart: www.ambs.edu/academics/New-Master-of-Divinity.cfm.

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

Resources for all in the church

Anabaptist Short Courses, online and non-credit, for people wanting to explore topics of Anabaptist faith and theology. Visit www.ambs.edu and select *Lifelong Learning*.

Webinars and workshops: www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter/index.cfm

Journey and Pastoral Studies Distance Education for people without bachelor’s degrees who are exploring ministry and wish to study while in their own congregations.

Vision: *A Journal for Church and Theology*, copublished with Canadian Mennonite University: Fall 2012 focuses on Rethinking Discipleship. Read selected articles at www.mennovision.org.

New books from the **Institute of Mennonite Studies** (www.ambs.edu/IMS) include:

- ***The Jesus Tribe: Grace Stories of Congo’s Mennonites*** marks the centennial of Mennonite witness in the Democratic Republic of Congo with stories by Congolese and former missionaries about people who became witnesses to God’s grace in their lives.

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.

May 2013

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

I have just recently returned from another spring break tour with the Bethel College Concert Choir visiting churches in the Central District Conference, with brief forays into Illinois Mennonite Conference, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, and Western District Conference. Once again, the tour was absolutely fabulous, characterized by outstanding music, exemplary behavior, and profoundly meaningful worship.

I am inclined to say that the Bethel College Concert Choir exemplifies Bethel College at its absolute best. In making that claim, I am referring to much more than the quality of musicianship, the precision of rhythm and harmony, the beauty of the sound, or even the depth of emotion that it stirs in the hearts of listeners. I am referring to the very essence of Bethel College—the central values upon which the institution rests. From the Bethel College mission statement:

Bethel's programs are informed by four central values:

- *an ethic of discipleship, that recognizes Jesus Christ as Messiah and model for the Christian life and prizes a high level of commitment and free conviction;*
- *an ethic of scholarship, that believes academic achievement to be a logical outcome of intellectual stewardship and esteems both discipline and creativity;*
- *an ethic of service, that deems concern for the powerless to be intrinsic to the Christian gospel and stresses peacemaking and voluntary service;*
- *an ethic of integrity, that celebrates the fundamental connections between spirit and mind, faith and learning, individual and community and fosters personal development through participation in a range of activities.*

When I listen to the Concert Choir, I see all four of these values exemplified.

- Singing primarily sacred repertoire, the entire evening is devoted to honoring and praising that Messiah and model;
- The complexity of the music sung is a brilliant testimony to scholarship in both the composition and the performance of that music;
- The evening itself is an exercise in service, as the choir shares its musical gifts with the audience;
- Finally, the act of choral singing of sacred music epitomizes integrity—the connection between faith and learning, spirit and mind, individual and community.

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

- A year-long celebration of Bethel's 125th year;
- The dedication of the James A. Will Family Academic Center during Fall Festival in October.
- Other facilities improvements including a remodeled campus entry, a remodeled cafeteria and student center, air conditioning for Memorial Hall and Thresher Gymnasium;;
- Another year of positive and well-attended worship experiences in weekly chapels, as well as the addition of some creative, student-led Bible studies and prayer groups.

But just a few 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

U N I V E R S I T Y

Report to Western District Conference 2013

Bluffton students take world to Botswana

In May 2012, Kathryn Spike traveled to Botswana to nurture a longstanding Bluffton University relationship with the village of Pitseng while working on a language-related research project.

The assistant professor of English returned with a challenge that she and eight Bluffton students met this May.

The Bluffton contingent raised more than \$3,000 to purchase computers and related technology to deliver to Pitseng, their host community for a three-week, cross-cultural experience in Botswana. The students' goal was to provide Internet access and training, an undertaking with which the village chief and other leaders had asked Spike for Bluffton's help.

The pilot Pitseng Internet Project will allow villagers to access more information and materials with which to develop English literacy, Spike says. That's important, she explains, because only about 35 percent of the population of Botswana has any knowledge of English, which is the language of commerce and government and must be used by teachers in instruction beginning in about third grade.

Most of the people speak some form of Setswana, the "everyday" language spoken in families and churches, she adds. The uneven distribution between the two languages creates limited opportunities for economic mobility in poor, rural areas like Pitseng, says Spike, who has researched how the situation impacts development of literacy and educational attainment.

Going to Africa wasn't a new experience for Sara Yoder, who, between second grade and her freshman year in high school, traveled there four times with her family to visit missionaries from their church, Clinton Frame Mennonite near Goshen, Ind.

Those trips—to Ghana and Togo, in West Africa, and to South Africa, which borders Botswana to the south—made Africa "like a second home," Yoder says. Majoring in pre-medicine and chemistry, she thinks she might want to live on the continent someday, either as a doctor with a nonprofit organization or as a missionary.

The Internet project made the prospect of this African experience even better, the New Paris, Ind., resident says. "It's always nice to give back to a community."

Pitseng has hosted Bluffton students led by Tim Lind of Mennonite Central Committee several times in recent years, and MCC's relationship with the village goes back even further, Spike notes. The village's chief visited Bluffton in February 2011 and, when she was in Pitseng in May 2012 interviewing residents for her language research, he and other village leaders wanted to talk to her.

The roughly 15 people with whom she met said that because of Pitseng's longtime friendship with Bluffton, "we know that you care about us and helping us improve," Spike recalls. After they went on to request help with acquiring Internet access, she brought the idea back to Bluffton's administration, which supported the university's participation.

If the project proves sustainable, Spike says she hopes it can be expanded in two years, during the university's next likely cross-cultural experience in Botswana.

Thank you, Western District Conference!

Three students from the Western District Conference attended Bluffton in 2012-13—**Mary Schrag**, a sophomore from Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kan.; **Bethanie Wedel**, a first-year student from First Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.; and **Alison Janzen**, a senior from Zion Mennonite Church, Elbing, Kan. Support for these students through the Church Matching Scholarship Program was \$2,925 for the year.

In 2012-13, Schrag was a hall chaplain and a member of Bluffton's **Shining Through** music ministry team and the chapel band. Wedel was active in chapel and Janzen, in the Sunday Night Worship program.

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

Enrollment – Official fall 2012 numbers showed a total enrollment of 447, including 225 first-year students. Spring semester enrollment remained steady with 32 new students and the best fall to spring retention in the past 10 years. North American students represent 29 states, while 50 international students represent 17 countries and 10 percent of the student population.

Fiscal year ends in the black –Hesston College met the Annual Fund goal for the 2011-12 year for the fifth consecutive year. About 800 households from 40 states and three countries are members of the Partner program and are a primary reason for the success, as 80 percent of the \$1.24 million goal came from Partner gifts. All of the money raised for the Annual Fund provides institutional scholarships for students.

Survey results reflect exceptional academics – Hesston's results from the 2012 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) were above the average scores of the top ten percent of all 2012 CCSSE participants in all five areas of measured student perceptions of their engagement in academic work – active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction and support for learners. The results surpass the 2009 data which earned the college a number two national ranking among other two-year colleges from *Washington Monthly* magazine in 2010.

Nursing program signs articulation agreements – During the 2012-13 year, the Hesston College nursing program established articulation agreements with two four-year institutions, University of Kansas School of Nursing (Lawrence) and Bethel College (North Newton, Kan.) to streamline the transfer process for Hesston nursing graduates to earn their BSN degree in each school's RN-to-BSN online program.

*2012-13 Campus Theme Verse—Rather, seek you the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.
-Luke 12:31, King James adapted*

Aviation receives full-motion simulator – As part of Hesston's Delivering the Promise capital campaign, the aviation program received a generous anonymous gift in honor of alumnus Wilbur Bontrager, which helped fund a Redbird MCX C182 GFC700 flight simulator. The simulator is a full-motion device geared toward Crew Resource Management and two-pilot cockpit training with single and multi-engine configurations. It provides real-world situational experiences as students learn to operate in the pilot/copilot environment most common in the aviation industry.

Hesston College Pastoral Ministries meets crucial needs for those considering ministry – a two-year course of study for the non-traditional student for whom seminary is not an option and the ability for pastors to consider a bi-vocational ministry – while offering practical pastoral training. If there are people in your congregation with a gift for ministry and who may benefit from ministry training contact Hesston College Pastoral Ministries for more information at 620-327-8295 or TimL@hesston.edu.

A new look at immigration – Spearheaded by the First-Year Experience seminar, the campus-wide focus for the 2012-13 year is immigration and the experiences of migrants. Several events and discussions related to the topic were held throughout the fall semester, including a visit by Sonia Nazario, the author of the First-Year common read book *Enrique's Journey*.

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA STATISTICS AND CONNECTIONS

2012-2013 Academic Year Students—20

Congregational Student Aid— 11 congregations provided \$22,000 in tuition assistance for 18 students as of April 1, 2013.

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.

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

Pastoral Ministries Students—Kenzie Intemann, First Mennonite Church, Clinton, Okla.; Courtney Becker, Goessel (Kan.) Mennonite Church

Howard Keim, President

Dallas Stutzman, Director of Alumni and Church Relations

Phyllis Weaver, Kris White, Derek Yoder, Development Officers

Michael Armstrong, Brent Brockmueller, David Horst, Charles

Hostetler, Annali Murray, Carson Stutzman, Admissions

Representatives

For Hesston speakers or student groups, please contact

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

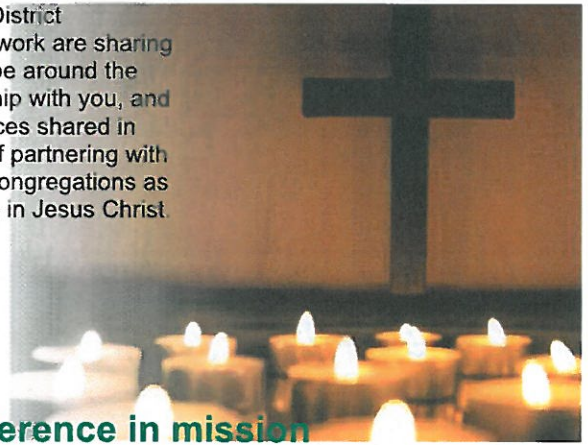
Sharing the **good news** together



Together, the congregations of Western District Conference and Mennonite Mission Network are sharing the good news of God's healing and hope around the world. We are deeply grateful for our partnership with you, and thank you for your prayers, people and resources shared in God's mission. We give thanks for the honor of partnering with you to extend the reach of Western District Conference and its congregations as we engage the world with the message of God's reconciling love in Jesus Christ.

Stanley W. Green

Stanley W. Green
Executive Director
Mennonite Mission Network



"Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.' So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish."

—John 21:10-13 (NRSV)

Western District Conference in mission

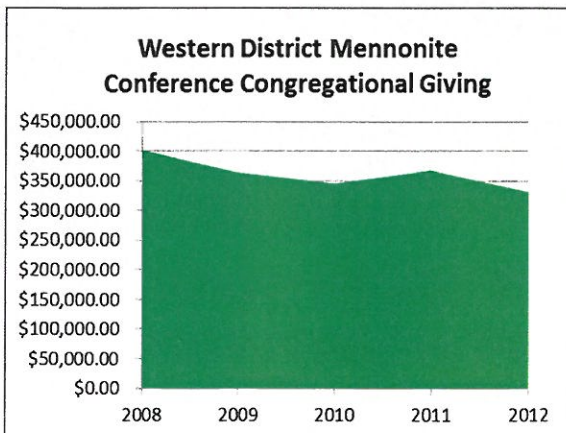
Mennonite Mission Network celebrates the ways that we and Western District Conference worked together to share the good news of Christ this past year. Thank you for your faithful participation in mission.

Program participation

- Sarah Hofkamp, Zion Mennonite, Elbing, Kan. is serving with Radical Journey in Paraguay.
- Individuals participating in Mennonite Voluntary Service include: Ryan Goertzen of Alexanderwohl Mennonite, Anna Woelk of Goessel Mennonite, Kristeen Goering and Alyssa Schrag of Eden Mennonite, Katie Jantzen of First Mennonite (Beatrice), Taylor McCabe-Juhnke of Shalom Mennonite (Newton), Cara Smith of Southern Hills Mennonite, Sarah Unruh and Allison Schrag of Faith Mennonite (Newton).
- Three individuals from Western District served with SOOP this past year.
- Thirty-six individuals from Western District Conference are committed Prayer Partners, receiving monthly prayer requests for Mission Network workers and ministries.

International Ministries

- Nineteen congregations support 13 international worker families, with several congregations supporting more than one family.
- Don and Marie Gaeddert (Bergthal Mennonite Church, Pawnee Rock, KS) are serving in China; Janet Stucky (Bethel College Mennonite Church, N. Newton, KS), will soon begin serving in Africa; Wes and Deb Bergen (New Creation Fellowship Church, Newton, KS), preparing for an assignment at Good News Theological College and Seminary in Ghana.
- Last year, the children of Western District Conference churches contributed \$1,712. to Mission Network's globe mission bank projects.



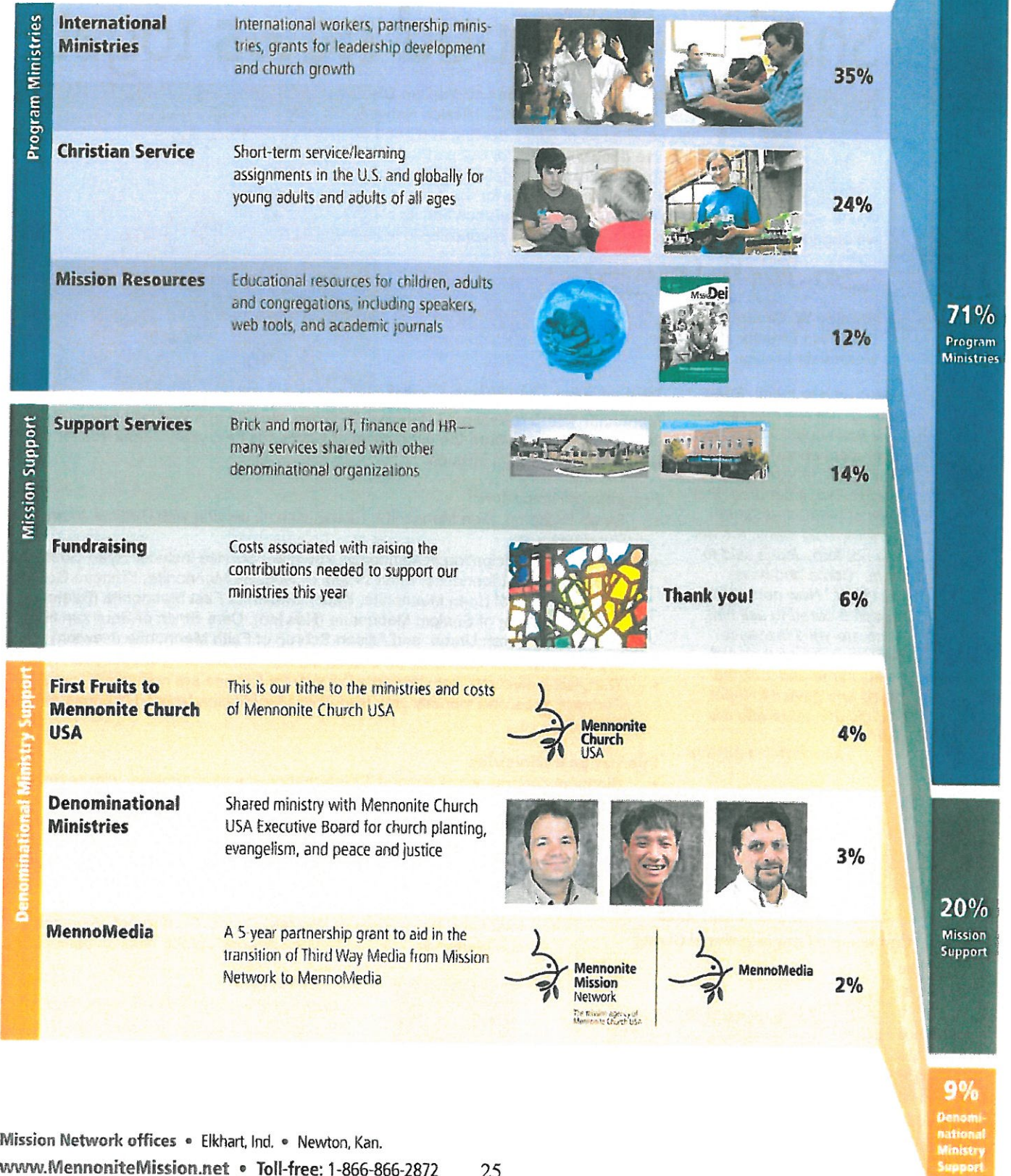
Kevin Goertzen
Western District
Conference Liaison

A blessing

Our prayer is that God will bless Western District Conference as we seek together to accomplish a vision shaped and led by the Holy Spirit. May the Lord richly bless the many WDC members and congregations as we faithfully join our hands with God's hands on this journey.

Spending Plan 2012-2013

\$8,830,998



Doing better together

Everence 2013 report

Western District Conference
Mennonite Church USA
August 2-3, 2013

"... And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken."

- Ecclesiastes 4:12

When you and your congregation turn to Everence for help with your stewardship and financial decisions, you also support programs that make a difference in the world. You strengthen our faith community that believes in giving back. There are many ways we're doing better together, and you'll see some of them in this report.

Funding your vision

Has your congregation or ministry outgrown its space? Does your church need upgrades or repairs? Is your ministry or organization dreaming of ways to impact your community? Would more funding help your congregation continue its vital community outreach?



Maybe it's time to consider a church loan from Everence. Everence is making a difference in five congregations with more than \$1.4 million in new loans for the purchase and improvement of facilities. To learn more visit www.everence.com/banking.

Pastors encouraged to plan for retirement

Like people in many other vocations, pastors and church organization employees often find it challenging to save for retirement. Everence and the church are promoting tools and education to make the saving process easier. As its administrator, Everence promotes Mennonite Retirement Trust, the retirement plan of Mennonite Church USA, and encourages other retirement plan choices for pastors and staff of other denominations.

Health insurance changes coming for 2014

Everence has been reviewing the impact of health care reform on its members. As universal access to insurance is available, two Everence health plans no longer will be offered, starting in 2014. Our individual plans (for people under age 65) and health plans for small groups will be discontinued on Dec. 31, 2013.



"We are committed to helping all members affected by these changes," said Larry D. Miller, President and CEO. "Our staff will help them make the transition to other health plans for 2014. The remaining health plans – Medicare supplement plans for seniors and group plans for pastors, denominations and organizations – are not changing. We plan to offer these products for many years to come."

Ministry and Money

The *Ministry and Money* workshop can help congregations promote Christian stewardship. Information is designed especially for pastors, church treasurers, stewardship committee members and other church leaders. Sessions can be presented as several stand-alone seminars or combined into a weekend retreat. Topics include congregational budgets and preparing for retirement. Details are available at www.everence.com.

Churches and Everence partner to help people in need

The Everence Sharing Fund continues to help thousands of people every year with basic needs such as food and shelter. In recent years, Everence has distributed nearly \$2,500 per day, or about \$900,000 each year. The matching grants are combined with money from churches to aid people with financial needs.

Visa card use leads to money for missions

Everence Federal Credit Union donated \$13,300 from its Rebate for Missions™ program in 2012 to Mennonite Central Committee and Eastern

Mennonite Missions. Rebate for Missions™ is supported by the credit union's 10 percent tithe of income generated when people use their Visa credit cards. Credit union branches also distribute money in their communities, giving \$12,200 to local groups last year. Our members vote to determine where the money goes.

Child labor and chocolate

Tens of thousands of children are forced to work in West African cocoa plantations, where 70 percent of the world's cocoa is grown. Thanks in part to shareholder advocacy efforts by Praxis Mutual Funds, Hershey recently announced it will source 100 percent certified cocoa for all of its global chocolate products by 2020, as well as strengthen programs to eradicate child labor in the industry. Visit www.praxismutualfunds.com to learn more.



Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity

Everence and Lake Institute on Faith & Giving formed a partnership to offer the *Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity* seminar to congregations at an affordable cost. The seminar helped a number of pastors and church leaders in 2012 to awaken a spirit of generosity. Talk to your Everence church relations representative for more information.

Everence can help

You may contact your church relations representative about information in this report or for help with stewardship ministries. You can reach your representative at 620-327-4043 or toll free 877-467-7294. 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 credit union services that are federally insured by NCUA. Investments and other products are not NCUA or otherwise federally insured, may involve loss of principal and have no credit union guarantee. All products are not available in all states.

As of Sept. 30, 2012, the Praxis Growth Index Fund had invested 0.20 percent of its assets in The Hershey Corporation. Fund holdings are subject to change. Visit www.praxismutualfunds.com to obtain holdings of the most previous quarter.

You should consider the fund's investment objectives, risks and charges and expenses carefully before you invest. The fund's summary prospectus and prospectus contains this and other information. For a prospectus, which you should read carefully before you invest, visit www.praxismutualfunds.com or call (800) 977-2947. Praxis Mutual Funds are advised by Everence Capital Management and distributed through FINRA member BHIL Distributors Inc.



MennoMedia

An agency of Mennonite Church USA
and Mennonite Church Canada

MennoMedia is developing a new children's curriculum, *Shine* which will succeed *Gather 'Round*, which is in its next-to-last year. This new project will continue in partnership with Brethren Press (and Church of the Brethren.) We feel encouraged to develop our new curriculum, not only by our own Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada congregations, but also by the many

participants from other mainline Christian denominations who deeply appreciate the emphasis of our children and youth curricula. We heard this last year:

Many of us have lamented the fact that some of the flashiest and most widely marketed curricula teach children about God, the Bible, and the Christian life in ways that students will need to unlearn when they reach adolescence and adulthood. We've hoped and prayed for curricula that would lay a foundation in childhood that will still serve as students come of age. I'm grateful that *Gather 'Round* is a creative leader in this needed approach. I'm so glad to have finally discovered them.

An original and new multimedia project of MennoMedia last year was the documentary *Weaving Life* and its companion book, *Making Friends among the Taliban*. The film was aired on ABC starting October 21 and the book was launched October 27. Created by students at EMU, the documentary traces the life and impact of Dan Terry, a humanitarian aid worker killed in August of 2010, along with Glen Lapp of MCC. Besides being an excellent documentary, the project hopefully pilots a new way of partnering with college students at Mennonite colleges, one of the dreams we had when MennoMedia was formed. The project itself profoundly touched and transformed the students who worked on it. The book, written by Jonathan Larson, deepens and expands the story and we see it selling already in wider markets.

Herald Press, the book imprint of MennoMedia saw a 2 percent increase in sales this past year, after several years of slow decline. This increase was largely due to the bestselling *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*, a book which continues the tradition of bestselling cookbooks. This book combines hospitality and deeply grounded personal faith stories. Why is it important that we do cookbooks? Besides the fact that they provide good income, many of our cookbooks are what I call "tangentially theological." I came across the following quote in an article about David Swartz's new book on the influence of Mennonites on progressive Evangelicals in the U.S.: "... in Doris Janzen Longacre's *More with Less Cookbook*, [Evangelicals] learned that kitchens were moral places where a theology of simple living could be practiced."

Herald Press also brought to the U.S. market several thought-provoking books in the **After Christendom series**, in partnership with Paternoster Press in the UK. Post-Christendom is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence. Continuing in that vein is the new and thought-provoking *The Power of All*, by Sian and Stuart Murray Williams, a book which emphasizes the gifts and responsibilities of the whole church, instead of just the few:

Multi-voiced church is an alternative to the dominant tradition in which large numbers of the Christian community are passive consumers instead of active participants ... an expectation that the whole community is gifted, called, empowered, and expected to be involved in all aspects of church life.

MennoMedia also caught up on new **digital technology**: at the end of 2012 we had most of our printed books available in ebook format, including many of the scholarly books on Anabaptist theology and history (some of which had gone out of print).

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

Russ Eanes, Executive Director, MennoMedia, Harrisonburg, Virginia

REPORT TO WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE 2013

We continue to carry out our mission to strengthen and extend Anabaptist-affiliated health and human services organizations.

Within Western District Conference, the following organizations are part of MHS Alliance. We invite you to get involved 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.

- ADNet, Goshen, Indiana
- Mennonite Friendship Communities, South Hutchinson, Kansas
- Prairie View, Newton, Kansas
- Bluestem Communities - Kidron Bethel Village, N. Newton and Schowalter Villa, Hesston, Kansas

MHS Alliance offers a community where staff and board leaders can share ideas and serve as a resource to each other. Our membership programs and services support leadership and operations that are faithful and effective.

- Education and tools for board members
- Group purchasing
- Employee health benefits and other insurance products
- Executive Circle and Values-based Leadership Program
- Mennonite Health Assembly

CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Engaging in a journey to become an agency of Mennonite Church USA.
- Concluding a study of practices that sustain an organization's mission and church affiliation, such as name, board composition and values.
- Expanding our team to provide a broader range of consulting services.
- Co-sponsoring with Mennonite Partners in China a consultation with Chinese pastors to explore creating church-sponsored retirement centers.
- Creating an orientation and education program for senior staff leaders of member organizations on Anabaptist values, beliefs and practices and how those practices can be carried out in their organizations.

Submitted by Rick Stiffney, President/CEO

MutualAid eXchange & Mutual Aid Ministries Report to Western District Conference August 2-3, 2013

We are excited to share with you that in 2012 MAX Mutual Aid Ministries (MAM) distributed 31 MAX Share Fund Grants through the Mennonite Church USA congregations, including 4 grants through the Western District Conference. Our Mutual Aid Ministries staff is ready to be a part of your church community team. Let us know how we can partner with you through:

Walking with Others—This ministry is available when members or constituents experience a traumatic event or loss resulting in financial hardship. MAX, through MAM, will be available to walk with you in your time of need—in partnership with your local congregation—to help address emotional, spiritual and financial needs.

Financial Support Ministry—is provided through the MAX Share Fund, a 501(C)(3) organization which provides one time financial grants, compatible with and to accompany your congregation's compassion ministry, to assist people in difficult financial hardships caused by losses, health crises, and loss of employment or when sudden disabilities occur not covered by insurance.

Prayer Support Network—is a ministry bringing awareness and prayer support to urgent needs and tragedies, as well as special events and occasions worthy of celebration.



Our Vision MAX[®] has an ambitious vision: "Creating and sustaining wholeness through preserving and restoring property, lives and communities." MAX lives out its vision by providing property and casualty insurance* (home, farm, church, business, rental, and auto) combined with an assertive Mutual Aid Ministries program that is faith-based and church-related.

*Insurance products provided by MutualAid eXchange and MAX Insurance Agency, Inc.

We welcome you to contact us today!

Telephone: (877) 971-6300

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