

Church Planting Commission Shifts Focus

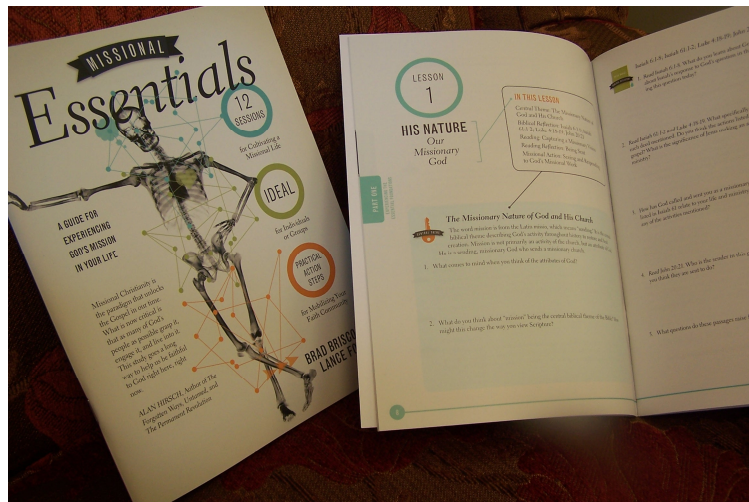
By Howard Garver and Marvin Zehr

We want to recognize the devotion of the members of this Commission. Marvin Zehr chairs a very capable and passionate team of Violeta Ajquejay, Nita Nikkel, Virgil Penner and Lee Suderman (in addition to Lici Roth, who served until recently). As a new commission much of the focus has been on providing support to the existing church planting projects and laying the foundation for church planting in the future. This team committed to monthly meetings for a 6-month period – which reflects their level of commitment.

Aposento Alto has developed a community-based, network of 'house church' groups in the north Wichita area. Byron and Hilda Pellecer are energetic and passionate about the work. Camino de Santidad (Liberal, KS) is at the point of being recognized as an established church, under the capable leadership of Moises and Teresa Romero. A personal highlight from the past few months was celebrating with them the baptism of 12 people! Grace (Gladewater, TX) has had a very positive impact on its community and seen evidence of changed lives. Karen and Steve Mascho are unsure of their future plans and the future of the project. Please join the Commission in praying for these church planters and the groups they lead!


Coming Events

Oct. 30-31
WDC Annual Assembly
Bethel College, North
Newton KS



The Commission has selected several congregations to be pilot congregations in using the study guide, "Missional Essentials: A Guide for Experiencing God's Mission in Your Life" during the fall months. We further hope to engage this study during the fall of 2016 during which we invite all congregations in the conference in this study. We see the need to shift the focus of church planting from the "conference planting churches" to "churches planting churches". This study will be an important step in this shift in our focus. We have invited Brad Brisco, co-author of this book, to lead a workshop at our annual conference in October.

We have appreciated the leadership Howard Garver has brought to the work of our commission even in the short time he has been with us. (Howard concluded his role as Associate Conference Minister, Director of Church Planting and Director of Hispanic Ministries on August 15.) We look forward to the call to a new Associate Conference Minister.

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

Western District Conference

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WDC Garden

Stories from Western District Conference
September/October 2015



Held Together in Christ
...in him all things hold together.
Colossians 1:17

by June Thomsen, Interim Assembly Planner

Western District Conference
Annual Assembly
October 30-31, 2015
Bethel College, North Newton, KS

Rainbow Mennonite Church at the 2014 Assembly and has been processed by the Discernment Task Force since then. You may access this resolution by going to the WDC website, www.mennowdc.org/annual-assembly/.

Plan now to attend the next Western District Conference Annual Assembly, on Friday evening, October 30 and all day Saturday, October 31, on the campus of Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas.

Besides inspiring worship, important delegate sessions and abundant learning opportunities, this year's Assembly includes the installation of our new Conference Minister, Heidi Regier Kreider. She and Mennonite Church USA Executive Director Ervin R. Stutzman will be our preachers.

Our Annual Assembly provides rich opportunities for fellowship and for discerning together where God's Spirit directs us now and for the future. Among other business, delegates will be asked to act on the resolution that was presented by



Prayer will be a special focus, with opportunities for both those who can attend and those who cannot, to spend set-apart time in prayer for the meetings. Childcare and appropriate activities will be provided for infants through fifth graders.

Register by October 16!

Register online OR complete a registration form (available at your church or printed from the website)

www.mennowdc.org/annual-assembly/



Schedule

Friday, October 30

- 4:00 pm Registration Opens
- 5:30 Pastor/Spouse Dinner
- 7:00 Worship, Heidi Regier Kreider, Preacher, Installation, Communion
- 9:00 Alumni Gatherings

Saturday, October 31

- 8:30 am—12 pm Delegate Session 1
- 10:30 Break
- 12:00 pm Lunch, or Mennonite Women Lunch
- 1:15 Delegate Session 2
- 3:00 Snack Break
- 3:15 Breakout Session I
- 4:20 Breakout Session 2
- 5:30 Dinner
- 7:00 Worship, Ervin R. Stutzman, Preacher
- 9:00 Fellowship

Breakout Sessions

- **Anabaptist Faith Formation** (WDC Resource Commission)
- **Conversations with MC USA leaders** (Ervin R. Stutzman and Patricia Shelly)
- **Missional Essentials** (Church Planting Commission, Brad Brisco)
- **People of the Land: Mennonites and the Doctrine of Discovery** (MCC Central States, Michelle Armster, Erica Littlewolf, Karin Kauffman Wall)
- **Teaching Children About Money and Values** (Everence staff, Mitch Stutzman, Robert Wall)
- **Leadership Transformation Grants** (Pastors & congregational leaders who trained with the Kansas Leadership Center; more grants available in 2016)
- **Mass Incarceration and Racism** (Offender Victim Ministries, Jerrell Williams, Libby Schrag, Leia Lawrence)

Preachers



Heidi Regier Kreider began her service as conference minister on August 17. Prior to this, Heidi served 15 years as lead pastor of Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS, and before that nine years as pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Gainesville, FL. Heidi is married to David Kreider, who is employed at Kauffman Museum, North Newton, KS.

Their son Ben is in a Mennonite Central Committee SALT assignment in Honduras; and son Mark is at Goshen College.



Ervin R. Stutzman is Executive Director for Mennonite Church USA. Before taking on this role in January 2010, he served as Dean and Professor of Church Ministries at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, VA. He has also served the Mennonite Church in the roles of pastor, district overseer, missions administrator, conference moderator, and from 2001-03, as moderator for Mennonite Church USA.



Part of Ervin's Life Purpose Statement reads: In response to God's love expressed in Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I purpose to follow after God with all my heart ... so that God may be glorified in my life at all times and in every way.

He and his wife Bonita live in Harrisonburg, VA, and are members of Park View Mennonite Church.

New Conference Minister's to-do list: leverage tensions, build relationships

by Laurie Oswald Robinson for Western District Conference

NORTH NEWTON, Kan. -- Heidi Regier Kreider begins her role as conference minister for Western District Conference (WDC) with many items on her list of priorities and goals, including:

- build relationships with pastors
- support creative faith formation and discipleship initiatives in today's context
- help WDC grow as a multiethnic community by sharing power and voice.

Not on that list is to "fix" the tensions surrounding responses to same-gender relationships.

In an early August interview, Kreider said she knows she is called to help guide WDC's discernment on those issues in October. However, she believes it will be healthier to acknowledge and learn from tension than to try to alleviate the tension altogether.

"I think our most important goal is to leverage conflict to grow to be a more authentic community," said Kreider, who began her new job Aug. 17.

"We aren't necessarily going to resolve differences. But we can learn to live with less fear and anxiety in the midst of ambiguity. ... We can learn better how to listen and relate to one another and seek God's presence together. I want to help provide leadership in the midst of that."

Leadership at the congregational level is something Kreider knows well. Her two pastorates total 24 years. She served for nine years in a small congregation, Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Gainesville, FL. From 2000 until the end of July, she served as lead pastor at a much larger congregation, Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, KS. Kreider received her master of divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, where she also studied church music.

"The shift from being the pastor of a congregation to being a pastor to pastors requires lifting the vision to another level," said Kreider, who lives in North Newton with her husband, David, with whom she raised two young adult sons, Ben and Mark.

"But I welcome the challenge. I had been sensing a readiness for a new experience when some shoulder tapping began. I had both an inner and an outer sense of call."

One of her first priorities in this vocational shift is establishing relationships with pastors as soon as possible, "though this will be a continuing process," Kreider said.

Other priorities include supporting creative initiatives around faith formation, building on WDC's "Anabaptist Faith Formation Launch" in June. "We need to think about the context and culture in which we are shaping disciples – which includes dealing with the opportunities and cautions that come with our use of technology and social media," she said.

Kreider's growing up years were spent overseas as a child of mission workers Sara and the late Fremont Regier. That formation primes her to help empower the expression of diverse voices and gifts in a multiethnic conference that includes Anglos, Hispanics and a Chin congregation.

In many contexts and situations, she has observed over a lifetime that "God is faithful to provide in the many situations that seem beyond my ability to manage as I grapple with my weaknesses," she said. "In times of uncertainty, God does provide for the church. I believe we can trust God to lead us into an unknown future and to provide the people and the resources that we need."

The items on her list are yet unrealized, Kreider said. And yet, she believes that with God's provision and WDC's positive spirit, they can be moved out of the "dream" category into reality.

"People's responses of affirmation for me have represented a really deep love and care for WDC, and that makes me excited to see what is ahead for our conference," she said.



WDC Staff (L-R): Nancy Funk (Administrative Assistant), Phyllis Regier (Business Manager), Heidi Regier Kreider (Conference Minister)