

Comments from the Conference Minister

Heidi Regier Kreider



What do a leaky toilet and a congregational visioning process have in common? They are both issues that we might face in a typical week at the WDC office! The toilet down the hall is leaking, and needs to be fixed. Then a pastor calls asking for resources for a visioning process in her congregation. Both are important needs that require response.

So, what is the difference between a leaky toilet and a congregational visioning process? The leaky toilet is a technical challenge: It can be fixed quickly by a skilled plumber with the right tools! Congregational visioning is an adaptive challenge - a complex process involving many people with different perspectives working together for a common purpose. It requires leaders who listen to multiple viewpoints, face uncertainty and conflict, experiment, inspire hope and engage people effectively in the process. There is no quick technical solution to the question of what direction God is leading a congregation. Such discernment requires adaptive leadership.

Adaptive leadership training is the focus of the Kansas Leadership Center in Wichita, KS. For the third year in a row Western District Conference and South Central Mennonite Conference have jointly received a grant from KLC for leadership training. In 2015 and 2016, approximately 45 WDC pastors and congregation members attended KLC programs, and so far in 2017, 20 people from WDC plan to attend training.

KLC defines leadership as “mobilizing others to do difficult work for the common good.” Its programs are based on five principles: Leadership is an activity, not a position; anyone can lead, anytime, anywhere; it starts with you and must engage others; your purpose must be clear; and it’s risky! Through presentations, case studies, small group interaction and other activities, KLC programs equip people in four areas of leadership competency: Diagnosing the situation, energizing others, intervening skillfully, and managing yourself. Each of these areas includes practices that provide creative and effective ways to offer leadership. For example, “energizing others” requires us to listen to a variety of voices, work across factions of difference and disagreement, acknowledge the loss that people may feel, inspire a collective purpose, and create a trustworthy process. To read more about KLC’s leadership competencies, see www.kansasleadershipcenter.org.

KLC’s wholistic approach to leadership can be applied to personal and family life, work, community involvement, and congregational ministry; it helps congregations and leaders more effectively meet the complex challenges, conflicts and opportunities we face in today’s world. To support this, WDC is hosting monthly “leadership lunches” for people who are interested in discussing adaptive leadership. Each session focuses on one leadership competency, with practical examples, scriptural examples and connections to Anabaptist theology and practice.

I invite you to join this conversation! If you want to expand your leadership skills by attending a training program at KLC, contact WDC for more information. Additional training spots from WDC’s 2017 grant are still available, but sessions are filling up fast!



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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Coming Events

April 29
Congregational Ministry in the Face of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence, First Mennonite Church, Hutchinson, KS

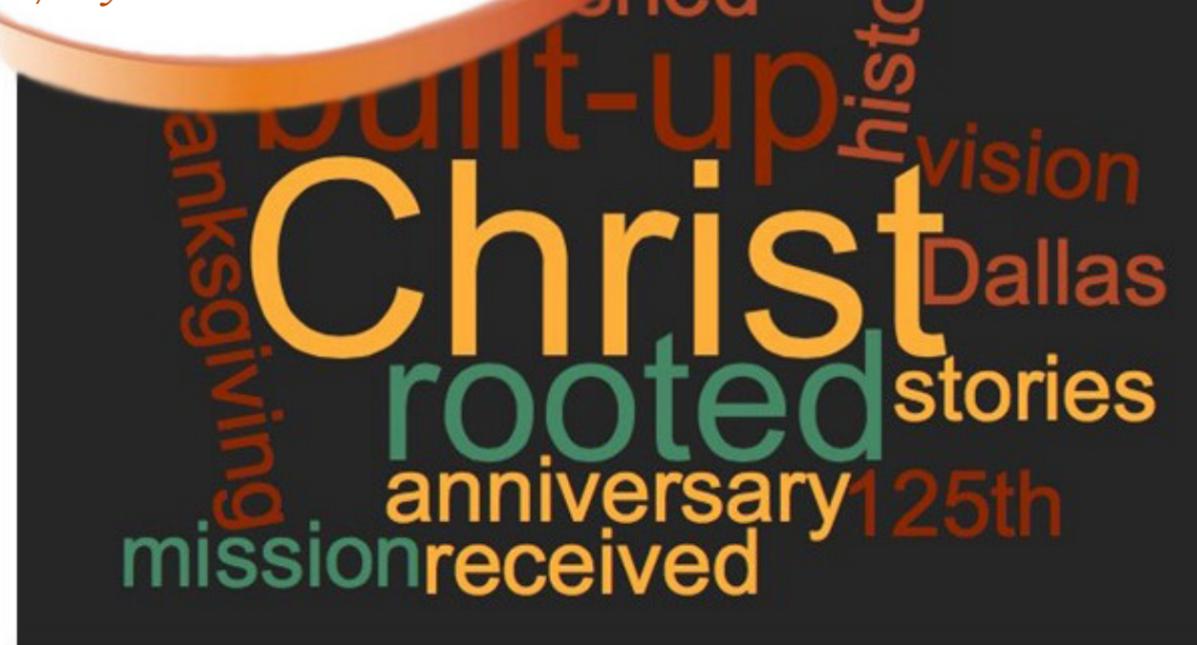
August 4-6
WDC Annual Assembly Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Arlington, DFW South, TX

October 28
WDC Reference Council Location TBD

WDC Garden

Stories from Western District Conference

April/May 2017



Rooted and Built up in Christ: Assembly 2017

WDC Annual Assembly will take place August 4-6, 2017.

Worship services, workshops, delegate sessions, lodging and meals will be at the Doubletree Hotel Arlington DFW South, 1507 North Watson Road, Arlington, TX.

Assembly begins with Friday evening dinner and worship, and concludes with Sunday morning worship.

On Saturday evening, assembly participants will have free time to attend a family-friendly festival of food, music and fellowship hosted by Dallas-area congregations at Iglesia Luz del Evangelio, or to visit other area attractions.

The Assembly focus is *Rooted And Built Up In Christ* (Colossians 2:6-7), also the theme for WDC’s

125th anniversary which will be celebrated at Assembly with a readers’ theater presentation and a timeline of WDC historical highlights. In preparation for Assembly, WDC congregations are also invited to share stories of their own origins, using an on-line form at <http://mennowdc.org/wdcs-125-year-anniversary-is-in-2017/>. Stories will be posted on the WDC website at <http://mennowdc.org/congregation-history-stories/>.

Plan now to attend WDC Annual Assembly, as we gather to build relationships, share in our common mission, and give thanks for God’s faithfulness as we are “rooted and built up in Christ!”

(Registration information will be available in June.)

Congregational Ministry in the Face of Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence

On April 29, congregational leaders and pastors are invited to First Mennonite Church, Hutchinson, KS for a day-long workshop sponsored by WDC on how congregational leaders can respond when abuse takes place that affects the broader congregation. **Kathryn**



Goering Reid, a credentialed minister and Executive Director of Family Abuse Center, Waco, TX, will be our seminar leader.

We will explore scenarios where the abuse takes place beyond or within the context of your congregation. We will consider how to respond when both the perpetrator and victim are mem-

bers of the same congregation, neither are minors, and neither is a credentialed pastoral leader. There will be other scenarios when only the victim or perpetrator is a church member, but the ministry implications are still complicated for all involved.

For example, what can a deacon do when he or she learns that a church member is abusing another adult? How can the church board respond if a board member's spouse suddenly goes to a domestic violence shelter? What can or can't we say publicly in times of crisis? How do we balance the needs of victims and survivors of abuse, and still be a place for sinners in need of repentance and restoration? What if the abuser is not repentant?

We will look at theological responses and explore possible models and appropriate actions. Together we will look at models that have worked in some congregations and suggest actions that will help a congregation work through these complex situations.

Each congregation is encouraged to register your attendees together for the group rate of \$100. You may also register individually for \$30 per person. Online registration is available at: www.mennowdc.org/congregational-ministry-in-the-face-of-sexual-abuse-and-domestic-violence/

--Kathy Neufeld Dunn, Associate Conference Minister (Kansas-Based)



Summer Reading for All Ages in All Places!

Grow in your faith this summer by signing up for the Summer Reading Program at the Conference Resource Library. Reading Program will run June 1-August 7.

- Adults: Earn tickets for a drawing and grow by reading fiction or non-fiction books in our adult collection (we mail books to Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and all corners of Kansas).
- Kids: Record every book you read (or someone reads to you)!
- Prizes for all ages.
- All ages: Sign up at <http://mennowdc.org/library/>, contact the library (316-283-6300), crlib@mennowdc.org, or stop by the library.



Summer Story Hour: The Wonderful World of Books

Children ages 3-8 are invited for stories, activities, and more celebrating the wonderful world of books.

- Wednesdays at the Conference Resource Library in North Newton, KS
- June 14 - July 26 (not July 5) at 10 am
- Led by Marjie Warkentin
- Sign up at <https://goo.gl/forms/kQwNSz19Bw8rr1q03> or contact the library

Loving the Stranger

WDC asked for brief stories of what congregations are doing to minister with immigrants and refugees. These accounts are some responses of how you are “loving the stranger” in your congregational and community contexts. And we know that a great amount of loving service is being provided by many more congregations in our conference!



San Antonio Mennonite Church

Serving the Strangers Among Us

Shalom Mennonite Church (Newton, KS) was concerned about refugees moving into Central Kansas with little or no resources. The congregation decided to partner with Episcopal Migration Ministries of Wichita. For over a year, congregation members have provided household items to assist refugee families arriving in the U.S. legally in setting up their new households. One family has made close connections with the church. They wanted to move from Wichita to the Newton/Hesston area because the father has a job with Excel. Someone from Shalom donated a car. Others helped them look for local housing, while still others helped them get out of their Wichita lease. They began attending Shalom because church members near their new home reached out to them in Christian love. Pastor Rachel Ringenberg Miller encourages others who might consider this ministry to “move forward with the gifts God has given you. It may or may not result in deeper relationships, but be open to whatever comes.”

Community Engagement

Mennonite Church of the Servant (Wichita, KS) has a long history of involvement with their neighbors on the margins. They have a member who helped form Sunflower Action, a community organizing group, serving the needs of immigrants and refugees. Another member of the congregation is currently being trained as a paralegal, so in his spare time he can offer legal advice to immigrants. Enough people are concerned about justice for immigrant neighbors that their congregation has formed an Immigration Servant Group to help coordinate the congregation's ministries in this area.

Loving the Stranger One Family at a Time

Another WDC congregation ministers to the needs of an undocumented family. The former minister reached out to the family through local community activities. They started attending worship, felt welcomed, and ultimately became church members. The present pastor and a support team of church members has helped the family become even more integrated into the congregation and the community. Because of this family, the congregation has a deeper understanding of the broken immigration system in our country. There have been many milestones to celebrate with them, too—a baptism, a coming-of-age Quinceañera party, a baby shower, and other special events. One of the sons is now interested in exploring ministry. They bring “unexpected sources of life for our congregation,” reflected the pastor.

Education

Eden Mennonite Church (Moundridge, KS) has studied the book, *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love*. It has spurred them to consider new ways they might welcome the stranger. This and many other resources are available in the WDC Resource Library. If your congregation is at a distance from the library, contact Jennie Wintermote, Library Director, and she'll be happy to box up adult and children's books and DVDs on refugee and migrant issues and mail them to you.

“For the Lord your God...defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:17-19).