

Comments from the Conference Minister

Heidi Regier Kreider



“We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.... Let love be genuine... love one another with mutual affection... Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. ...Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another.”

These instructions from chapter 12 of the apostle Paul’s letter to the church in Rome can also serve as encouragement to Western District Conference as a network of congregations – an expression of the body of Christ. Congregations in WDC connect with each other in numerous ways that demonstrate mutual affection, support “saints,” practice hospitality, share joys and burdens, and nurture relationships. Here are some of the connections between congregations that I have observed recently:

The Aposento Alto church plant meets in the facilities of Mennonite Church of the Servant (Wichita, KS). Casa Betania (Newton, KS) connects with a support group from Bethel College Mennonite, Shalom and First Mennonite (Newton) churches. Monte Horeb, Comunidad de Esperanza, Luz del Evangelio and Southern Hills Mennonite Church partnered to support the Camino Nuevo church plant in Dallas, TX. The FEWZ Youth Group (combined youth from First, Eden and West Zion churches in Moundridge, KS) is offering financial assistance for WDC youth from Texas to travel to MennoCon19 in Kansas City. First (Halstead) and Bethel College Mennonite Church recently held a church retreat together at Camp Mennoscah; other congregations jointly host vacation Bible school sessions together in summer.



Members of Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, KS, and Luz del Evangelio, Dallas, TX on a recent visit in Dallas.

WDC congregations often welcome one another at celebrations such as church anniversaries, ordination services, building dedications, concerts, and food-fundraisers such as sausage and venenike dinners, tamale sales, or chicken barbecues. They find insight and support in consulting together on how they are addressing issues such as immigration, church security, sexual abuse prevention, building projects, financial management, facility use, youth ministry, and more.

A special time to strengthen connections is WDC’s Annual Assembly, where we nurture long-standing friendships, celebrate new relationships, and explore future opportunities. I invite you to attend this year’s assembly (July 26-27 at Bethel College), and to reach out and build connections throughout the year. When we all share in God’s work together, individual congregations benefit. And when one congregation is built up, we are all enriched. As a network of congregations scattered across a wide geography, together we are an expression of the body of Christ!

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

Western District Conference

PO Box 306, 2517 N Main, North Newton, KS 67117



316-283-6300

wdc@mennowdc.org

www.mennowdc.org

Coming Events

July 26-27, 2019
WDC Annual Assembly
Bethel College
North Newton KS

September 14, 2019
WDC Reference Council
gathering of Executive Board
& Commissions

WDC Garden

Stories from Western District Conference
June/July/August 2019



Annual Assembly: We Are Witnesses!

July 26-27, 2019

Bethel College, North Newton, KS

Our **Assembly theme** is from Acts 10:34-43 when Peter witnesses that God shows no partiality between people. God blesses all who believe in Jesus with the gift of the Holy Spirit. **We are witnesses**, too, to God’s work in the world!

Come as a family. **Children and youth register for free.** Adult **registration of \$95** includes all meals and gives you access to great worship for all ages, creative workshops, significant fellowship and work together. Children and youth are invited to exciting faith formation and service fun. Hear about growing in Jesus through all generations. Housing is in a WDC home, a hotel, or in a Bethel dorm room—your choice! (A needs-based discount is available for those for whom the registration fee is prohibitive—see the online registration form.)

Come hear **Glen Guyton’s** (**Executive Director, Mennonite Church USA**)



testimony of how a military man became convinced that Jesus wants peace in our hearts and in our world and his perspective on a hopeful future for MC USA.

Come and **hear how God is at work in Liberal, Kansas**, through the ministry of Iglesia Camino de Santidad, a church plant whose application to become a member congregation of WDC will be acted on by delegates at the Assembly. Other delegate business will include elections for leadership roles in WDC, approval of the 2020 budget, and reports on WDC ministries.

Hear the stories of brave Mexican pastors, weary asylum-seeking parents and kids, and civil servants with a heart for the **plight of immigrants**. Hear the MCC South Texas Borderlands Tour participant perspectives.



South Texas Borderlands Tour: water along the way for migrants
Photo credit: Kathy Neufeld Dunn

Choose from a dozen workshops about Christian faith formation, Native American justice, adaptive congregational leadership, women in leadership in WDC, conversation about climate change, MC USA identity and priorities, immigration stories, and more.

Be part of an **“Imperfect Peace Witness Caravan”** hosted by historian Brian Stucky. Area locations important to the story of John J. Schrag, who experienced persecution for his faith, will be explored.

All women are invited to attend the **Women in Mission luncheon / annual meeting / program**, with speaker Erica Stoltzfus from Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, KS. (Note that any woman may register to attend this luncheon even if not attending the Annual Assembly.)

Help **celebrate over 40 years of women in ministry** in Western District Conference!

Assembly concludes Saturday evening with a **Community Family Festival** of fun for all ages!

See complete information and **please register by July 12** at: mennowdc.org/annual-assembly/#2019annualAssembly.

(Front page graphic: Lindsay Anderson)



WDC Commissions: Joining in Mission

WDC's four commissions provide leadership and resources to carry out the priorities and ministries of the conference. Each issue of the Garden in 2019 will feature a glimpse of one commission's work.

Resource Commission

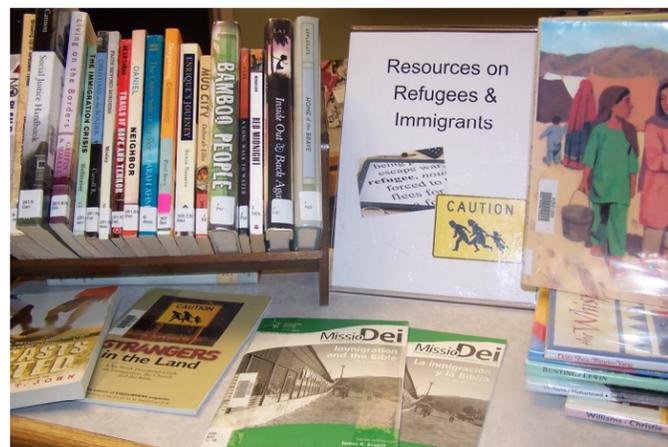
If you check out the Western District Conference website, you can read this description: “The Resource Commission empowers Western District Conference congregations as they witness to Jesus Christ in the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition, connect with God’s mission in the world and provide faith formation resources for all ages. The Resource Commission encourages use of the Conference Resource Library and supports and

promotes training events for congregations and their leaders. The Resource Commission has a broad agenda that requires careful allocation of resources and discernment according to WDC priorities.”



Marvin Lorenzana leads a workshop during WDC's 2018 “Year of Evangelism”.

In a nutshell, the Resource Commission serves to help people and congregations with faith formation. It works with Associate Conference Minister Kathy Neufeld Dunn to oversee not only the Resource Library but such areas as youth ministry, history, music, Israel/Palestine and support for Low German and Spanish-speaking migrants. The Commission has sponsored year-long emphases on the Bible, faith formation and evangelism. It has provided grants (Loaves and Fishes, Mustard Seed) for congregations to pursue special ministries related to these emphases. In the last year it has helped support the formation of a new curriculum (Detectives of Divinity).



The Resource Commission is all about resources. You may be surprised at how much is available to help you and your congregation as you pursue living a life of faithfulness as disciples of Jesus Christ.

- Gordon Houser, Resource Commission member

Congregational snapshot: Iglesia Camino de Santidad

Second in a series featuring congregations in WDC



Iglesia Camino de Santidad after worship service, May 2019
Photo credit: Moises Romero

Iglesia Camino de Santidad in Liberal, KS, began in the basement of the Romeros’ house in March of 2011. Moises and Teresa went door to door around their neighborhood, connecting, building relationships and inviting people to a Bible study at their home.

As they met and invited neighbors, they noticed people searching for a glimpse of hope for some type of good news. Within three weeks, the number of attendees to this gathering grew to 15 people.

Numerical growth made them face a new challenge; they found themselves in need of a bigger place to accommodate their new friends. “Since I believe in a mighty God who likes for us to dream in big ways, we bent knees before the Lord and prayed,” said Pastor Moises.

After praying and while reciting “One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple” (Psalms 27:4 NRSV), the search for a building began, and not just any building. “We prayed for a church building,” Pastor Moises Romero said.

“This is how the Holy Spirit led us to Calvary Mennonite Church, to whom we are eternally grateful for their hospitality. They opened their doors, supported our ministry and welcomed us.”

Since Iglesia Camino de Santidad opened its doors, many people have experienced newness of life as Christ’s followers. “We have baptized 30-40 new

believers and our vision for the next eight years is to double it. It is about the kingdom of God, the wellbeing of the community and not “just” the numerical growth; we are interested in a holistic salvation experienced from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective.”

Byron Pellecer

WDC Associate Conference Minister, (Texas-Based)

Notes from the WDC Resource Library

Summer Reading Program

Everyone Everywhere is invited!

Take the summer to explore what it means to follow Christ and find some new favorite books. You’re invited to participate in the summer reading program! Everyone in every congregation in WDC is invited to take part. Children can sign up at <https://forms.gle/tZooHWMz76YPEzDj6> and will earn prizes for every 15 books (or chapters) they read. Adults sign up at <https://forms.gle/LWZZyUhx5G396q6Z9>; adult prizes include books and giftcards.

Down on the Farm!

All children ages 3-8 are invited to come “Down on the Farm” for a farm-tastic summer story hour. Mondays at 9:30, June 17-July 22 at 2517 N Main in North Newton, KS. Stories, crafts, and more led by Marjie Warkentine. Sign up at <https://forms.gle/AnSemnebkM8xr8gg6>.

