

**WDC Conference Minister**  
**Heidi Regier Kreider**

**I work with conference leadership to shape vision, implement WDC's mission, and care for the "whole" of the conference.** Last year much of this was done through my role as liaison with the Executive Board, Ministerial Leadership Commission, and Gifts Discernment Committee. I concluded a Review of WDC Culture and Responsibilities as directed by Executive Board, focusing on WDC's leadership culture and structure, and how we engage with ministers and congregations in response to complex challenges and crises. I highlighted specific concerns I believe are crucial within our mission of empowering congregations to Witness and invite others to faith in Jesus Christ, Dwell in just and loving relationships, and Connect to God's mission in the world. I wrote *Garden* and *Sprouts* articles on the topic of creation care, and hosted a gathering for church leaders to attend a webinar on "Caring for Climate: Beyond Denial and Despair." This Spring, WDC has focused considerable effort on resourcing leaders and congregations to "be the church" in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. I joined conference calls for faith leaders with the Kansas governor regarding COVID, and WDC received a CARES Act Payroll Protection Program loan to help with staff payroll costs. I am giving attention to the movement for racial justice, as congregations and leaders realize a renewed - or new - urgency to discern their role in dismantling racism, catalyzed by response to the violent death of George Floyd. I wrote a *Sprouts* article and a pastoral letter to congregations, attended a rally in Newton, KS, and am reading and joining online events and conversations about racial justice.

**I supervise and encourage WDC staff in doing the "hands on" work of WDC.** Staff Relations Committee assists me in this role. In January, staff had a mini-retreat to reflect on the theme of transition and change, and bid farewell to Associate Conference Minister (TX) Byron Pellecer who ended his term January 31. Since then Lee Lever (pastor at Austin Mennonite Church) has served as interim conference ministry liaison in Texas on a part-time volunteer basis, and I am interim staff liaison with Church Planting Commission. A search for a new Associate Conference Minister (TX) began in late April. In mid-March, the WDC offices in Kansas closed due to COVID, many events were cancelled or moved online, and staff began teleworking from home with weekly check-in meetings via zoom to coordinate our work and encourage each other. I am deeply grateful to staff for their resourcefulness and resilience in continuing WDC's important services and ministries in the challenges of this time. Staff have worked diligently to connect congregations with numerous online resources, financial grants, and spiritual and emotional support. In June, Kansas-based staff began to again work in the office, in alignment with our local county's reopening phases and recommended precautions.

**Together with the other conference minister liaisons, I support credentialed ministers and congregations in WDC.** In the past year, my ministry included the following:

- Concluded work with pastoral search processes at Alexanderwohl, Casa Betania and Faith, and continued support for ongoing pastoral transitions at Manhattan, Turpin, Southern Hills, Faith and First-Newton; received invitations to preach at Eden, Salina, Shalom, Faith, Southern Hills, Houston, Tabor (and Comunidad de Esperanza, unfortunately cancelled due to COVID); participated in facility dedication at Tabor, and also visited Manhattan, Casa Betania, Rainbow, Aposento Alto, Calvary and Camino de Santidad; led four ministerial credentialing services, three pastor-installation services, and a service of release for two pastors; attended memorial services or sent condolences to families on behalf of WDC, following the deaths of five retired ministers.

- Joined a Transitional Ministry Training hosted at Camp Mennoscah and sponsored by Amigo Centre - an opportunity to better understand the work of transitional pastors and the value of this important ministry in congregations.
- Met with WDC pastors and congregational leaders at #ChurchesToo, a gathering hosted by WDC for conversation about abuse by non-credentialed persons in congregations.
- Served as a consultant for a pastor-congregation review in a WDC congregation, and met periodically with other pastor-review consultants to strengthen best practices in this work.
- Connected through pastor peer groups, visits, zoom or phone calls with many ministers for conversations about ministry issues. In response to COVID, WDC hosted additional pastors' conversations via zoom in March and June, and I wrote a pastoral letter to congregations and leaders at Easter time in April and again in May (when states began "reopening"). It has been meaningful to connect in new ways with WDC leaders to share concerns, resources and opportunities for ministry and witness for justice during this unprecedented season in which we are living.

**Tending institutional relationships is an important aspect of my work.** Last year I wrote a *Garden* article highlighting WDC's relationships with other institutions, and attended special events and activities at a number of them:

- Bethel College: Worship and Arts Symposium on *Many cultures, one worship*; Martin Luther King Jr. Day program; convocation featuring a Campus Conversation on Sexual Assault; and joining zoom interviews with Campus Pastor candidates preceding Bethel's hiring of Michael Unruh for this position.
- Camp Mennoscah: I brought greetings at the annual meeting in September.
- Prairie View: Pastors' educational lunch meetings sponsored by chaplains advisory group.
- Mennonite Central Committee-Central States: Presentations on Borderlands Learning Tour and anniversary tour to Ukraine; MCC 100th anniversary program at Tabor College.
- Mennonite Church USA: IBA (Instituto Biblico Anabautista) 30th anniversary celebration; MC USA Constituency Leadership Council meetings where I am serving as the worship facilitator; annual MC USA / MC Canada conference ministers retreat with sessions led by Betty Pries on transforming conflict and by Sue Park-Hur on intercultural conflict styles; and weekly MC USA conference ministers' zoom calls since COVID began - I grateful for strong leadership and resources from MC USA during this time..
- Western District Women in Mission: *Let's Talk: Women, Money and Faith* event, and the WDWM Spring dinner.
- Kansas Leadership Center: WDC received a training grant from KLC for 2020, as Phase 2 of a 3-phase partnership of WDC and South Central Conference with KLC. Our goals for 2020 were leadership training for WDC board and commission members, congregational youth leaders and new pastors; hosting a Youth Lead Now training event, and 5th-year anniversary celebration of WDC/SCC's partnership with KLC (unfortunately canceled due to COVID).

**In 2020, the conference minister job description was updated to include work with fundraising and donor development.** In addition to the annual fundraising letters to congregations and individual donors, I wrote newsletter articles inviting contributions to support WDC's mission and highlighting bequest giving; continued conversations with Stewardship Commission on fundraising, faith and finances in the post-modern context; and attended a variety of Everence seminars/webinars on topics of charitable giving

and fundraising. In the face of COVID, WDC established the Hope Fund to receive contributions and support congregations in financial need. Generous gifts have supported grants to four WDC congregations as of June, with resources available for more in the future. I wrote a *Garden* article with stories from recipient congregations and donors, reflecting their sense of shared support across the conference and a call for the church to model compassionate response. I also encourage ongoing financial support for WDC's regular budget, to allow us to continue these important ministries.

**Professional growth:** The Executive Board conducted a term-review for me, and I accepted their call for a second 5-year term as Conference Minister beginning August 15, 2020. I entered a year-long partnership with a leadership coach from KLC, and have been enriched by reading, including: *Leadership on the line* by Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky; *How to lead when you don't know where you are going* by Susan Beaumont; *Peaceful at heart: Anabaptist reflections on healthy masculinity* edited by Don Neufeld and Steve Thomas; *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism* by Robin DiAngelo; and *American harvest: God, country and farming in the heartland* by Marie Mutsuki Mockett. I gained knowledge and new perspectives through attending special events such as *Carbon, culture and change: From the ground up*, the Prairie Festival at the Land Institute (Salina, KS) on the topic of the climate crisis; *In the name of Christ: Missiological reflections on Mennonite Central Committee's past, present, and future*, the Menno Simons lectures at Bethel College by Alain Epp Weaver; and *Recognition of trauma exposure and resilience in the face of compassion fatigue*, a webinar with Melissa Hofstetter.

I give thanks for God's care for WDC this past year, and the ways that the Holy Spirit is moving us toward greater faithfulness and vitality as the church in today's world.