

Church Planting Commission **Tonya Ramer Wenger, Chair**

Introduction

The Church Planting Commission's work grows out of and is inspired by **WDC's Mission:**

- Witness & invite others to faith in Jesus Christ,
- Dwell in just & loving relationships,
- Connect to God's mission in the world.

And **WDC's Core Tasks:**

- Sustaining Transformational Pastors
- Resourcing Healthy, Missional Churches
- Networking Anabaptist Church Planting Partnerships

Specifically, the commission provides leadership and resources for church planting initiatives and fosters relationships with emerging Anabaptist/Mennonite groups. We also help emerging groups and their leaders connect with the congregations, resources, staff and structures of Western District Conference.

Church Planting Commission (CPC) members are: Tonya Ramer Wenger (Chair), Karen Mascho, Caleb Yoder, John Garland, Alberto Parchmont, Tim Amor. During the Associate Conference Minister search process, Conference Minister Heidi Regier Kreider participated with the CPC, providing much needed guidance and support.

Current Church Plants

Aposento Alto, Wichita, KS, pastored by Jaime Cazares. A process has begun (as of May 23) to transition to an established congregation in the coming year.

Palabra Viva, Liberal, KS, pastored by Jaime Rocha.

Church Plant Conversations

While initially the CPC had been in conversation with Casa de Paz in Guatemala, we now recognize their status is more appropriate for application for established church membership status which is overseen by the WDC Executive Board.

Very preliminary church planting conversations with Dr. DeAunderia Bowens (a professor at UT-Austin) in Austin, TX.

Commission Work (August 2020-July 2021)

In the fall of 2020, as the WDC Associate Conference Minister search continued, the CPC's work focused on:

- staying connected to our church planters (many thanks to the commission members who stepped up to make these connections!)
- gaining clarity, with the help of Doug Penner, on the current status of partner church and sister church partnerships within WDC
- training for some of our committee members with Mennonite Mission Network's SENT program
- considering a question from WDC Assembly about providing resources and support for legacy churches thinking about 'replanting' themselves in their communities

In February 2021 the CPC was extremely grateful to welcome Associate Conference Minister Sandra Montes-Martinez, and to begin to receive her guidance for the ongoing work of the CPC. Since Sandra's arrival, our work has focused on:

- articulating our hopes for the work of the commission

- receiving updates on our current church plants, as well as exploratory and emerging conversations with potential church plants
- receiving and approving a proposal from Sandra for “Church Planting Essential Procedures,” which builds on and simplifies work previously done in the CPC on “Church Planting Guidelines.” The “Essential Procedures” offer a concise and general roadmap to follow with potential church planters and provides clarity about various roles along the way.
- budget planning for 2022 to support 2 new church plants
- planning for and hosting a ZOOM event on April 21 at 11:00am: *Church Replanting – Discerning God’s Call to Change*. Planned and hosted by Tim Amor, Tonya Ramer Wenger and Sandra Montes-Martinez, the purpose of the event was to create space to begin to discern God’s call to change in our churches to better embody our Jesus-given mission.
- discerning the role of the Church Planting Commission in ongoing conversations about church revitalization in WDC

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to affect us all, and we recognize our church plants are particularly vulnerable. We are grateful for WDC’s Hope Fund providing a source of help and support for congregations across WDC. We continue to be thankful for the prayer and financial support of WDC congregations as we discern the movement of the Spirit toward church planting in the future.