

Annual Report - June 2022
Heidi Regier Kreider, WDC Conference Minister

Highlights from this past year, in my primary areas of ministry:

Attending to WDC's vision and the "big picture" through board, commission and committee work:

- At the Annual Assembly last year, my responsibilities included a State of the Conference report, leading a service of installation for Sandra Montes-Martinez, Associate Conference Minister (TX-based) who had started her role in December 2020, and leading a seminar on *One Small Step: Conversation in Christ's Presence*.
- WDC elected leaders and staff gathered for Reference Council on September 25, 2021, to connect with each other and focus on one of WDC's mission priorities, "Connect to God's Mission in the World." We reflected on the question, How is WDC being a sign of and proclaiming the reign of God?
- I served as staff liaison supporting the work of the Executive Board (EB), Ministerial Leadership Commission (MLC), Gifts Discernment Committee and Staff Relations Committee. Last year the EB completed a revision of the WDC Policy Manual (with Governance, Financial, Personnel, Ministerial Leadership and other policies) and the MLC and EB discerned response to the request for credentialing of LGBTQ+ ministers. In February we sent a pastoral letter to WDC congregations and leaders communicating MLC's decision to grant ordination credentials to qualified candidates called by their candidates, regardless of sexual orientation or marital status. I worked with the MLC to sponsor a pastors' resourcing event Nov 13 presented by Sara Wenger Shjenk on her book *Tongue-Tied: Learning the Lost Art of Talking About Faith*. Other new initiatives I worked with this past year included an Anti-Racism Audit Team appointed by EB, and a Facilities Assessment Team appointed by EB to discern long term plans for 2500 Place (North Newton, KS) in light of WDC's mission; these projects are currently in process.
- Staff completed a renovation of the WDC website as the primary platform for WDC communications, with a weekly email to constituency providing links to news, articles and announcements on the website (replacing the former *Sprouts* newsletter). We value feedback to shape ongoing improvements. I wrote monthly articles for the website, sharing thoughts on conference priorities and mission, current events, congregational issues, leadership concerns, and personal faith experiences.

Supervising and supporting staff:

- In August 2021 Administrative Assistant Nancy Funk retired, and we welcomed Michelle Schrag as Administrative Assistant in the North Newton, KS, office. Violeta Ajquejay Suastegui began in February 2022 as part-time Administrative Assistant supporting church planting, churches in Texas and Hispanic congregations.
- At a retreat on March 25 at Camp Mennoscah, WDC staff members participated in a camp service project, shared meals together, reflected on the past 2 years of COVID, reviewed updated personnel policies including a new Harassment and Abuse Prevention and Response policy, and discussed intercultural competency.

Supporting credentialed ministers and congregations

- This past year I worked with 11 congregations in pastoral transition, which included connecting with congregational leadership groups, pastoral search committees, outgoing pastors and ministerial candidates. I visited approximately 12 different congregations on 22 occasions to lead services of ministerial credentialing, pastoral installation or release, preach, speak in Sunday school or at a congregational meeting. Each WDC conference minister also pre-recorded a video sermon for congregations to use during the Easter season. We conference ministers met regularly with the Interim/Transitional Pastors peer group, and with a group of Pastor Review Advisors who supported pastor review processes in five congregations this past year.
- I worked with the Executive Board and other staff relating to congregations discerning their membership in WDC: Turpin (OK) Mennonite Church voted to withdraw from membership in WDC and MC USA; Iglesia Cristiana Anabautista Casa de Paz (Guatemala City, Guatemala) applied for congregational membership in WDC; and Iglesia Menonita Aposento Alto (Wichita, KS), a certified church plant in WDC, applied to become a member congregation.
- WDC acknowledged with gratitude the lives and legacy of credentialed ministers and former staff who died this past year: Pastors Stan Bohn, James Gingerich, and Lawrence Hart, and former WDC secretary Esther Rinner.

Nurturing institutional relationships:

- Served on the planning team for Bethel College's Worship and Arts Symposium, *Joining Voices Together*, postponed from 2021 to November 12, 2022; attended BC corporation meeting; and participated in a strategic planning input for Kauffman Museum at BC.
- Served as representative to MC USA Constituency Leadership Council meetings in October 2021 and May 2022; served as a WDC delegate to MC USA assembly in July 2021 and special assembly in May 2022; attended monthly zoom meetings with MC USA conference ministers.
- Participated in an AMBS consultation on congregational training initiatives.
- Brought greetings at the South Central Mennonite Church 2021 annual assembly opening worship.
- Responded to Mennonite Disaster Service seeking feedback from conference ministers.
- Brought greetings from WDC at Camp Mennoscah annual meeting
- WDC again received, jointly with South Central Mennonite Conference, a Leadership Transformation Grant from Kansas Leadership Center for adaptive leadership training in 2022. Our WDC/SCMC core team submitted this statement in response to questions: What is our purpose for the Leadership Transformation Grant? *To equip and empower pastors, church members and conference leaders to center their work on an authentic relationship with God and relevant ways to follow Jesus in today's world; and on healthy, authentic relationships with one another within the church.* What are our collective adaptive challenges? *Polarization, systemic inequities, and exhaustion from stress, trauma, loss and uncertainty.* What would progress on our adaptive challenges look like? *Conversations and discernment together across our differences; working toward greater inter-cultural*

competency and systemic racial equity in our structures and programs; embracing new vision for how to “be church” together, and the ability to see new forms and embrace new concepts of church.

Supporting stewardship and donor relations:

- Working with Stewardship Commission (SC), I drafted a WDC Ministry Stewardship Plan, based on resource materials from Everence and Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, to identify year-round fundraising and development priorities and practices. I joined several members of SC and WDC congregations at Cultivating Generous Congregations workshop.
- I worked with the Business Manager to write annual fundraising letters and thank-you notes, and to process Schowalter Foundation grants for implementation of the Church Planting Commission strategic plan and the Anti-Racism Audit Team process. I serve as staff liaison for the Hope Fund Task Force, which since April 2020 has approved over \$56,000 in grants to support congregations and ministers impacted by the pandemic and other disasters. We give thanks for the generosity of congregations, individual members and institutional partners who support our shared ministry!

Nurturing professional growth:

- Topics for reading and professional growth last year have included faith-sharing, church vitality, immigration, sexualized violence and the Bible, structural violence and peace theology, decolonization, dismantling the doctrine of discovery and indigenous concerns.
- I took a sabbatical leave Nov 15 - Dec 31, 2021, which allowed me to participate in an 8-session online study of *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization* by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers, as a basis for personal family research and reflections on implications for WDC. For more information see my article posted at <https://mennowdc.org/haunted-histories-and-hope-for-healing/>. I am grateful to members of EB, commissions and staff who helped to make this sabbatical possible and covered responsibilities during that time.