

Church Planting Commission (CPC)
Tonya Ramer Wenger, Chair
2022 Report

MISSION & VISION

The WDC Church Planting Commission (CPC) provides leadership and resources for church planting initiatives and fosters relationships with emerging Anabaptist/Mennonite groups. The Church Planting Commission helps emerging groups and their leaders connect with the congregations, resources, staff, and structure of Western District Conference.

CPC Members

Tonya Ramer Wenger (Chair), Karen Mascho, Caleb Yoder, Alberto Parchmont, Tim Amor, Simon Tlumang. Staff: Sandra Montes Martinez (Associate Conference Minister), Violeta Ajquejay Suastegui (Spanish translation)

Current Church Plants

Aposento Alto, Wichita, KS, pastored by Jaime Cazares. A recommendation for acceptance into WDC membership will be presented to the delegate body of the WDC Assembly July 29-31, 2022

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

Iglesia Menonita Fuente de Restauracion in Houston has been removed from our church plant and membership list, due to dissolution of the group.

We are committed to providing our church planters with missionary tools and spiritual support. Sandra Montes-Martinez and the WDC staff are attentive to the needs of congregations and pastors to provide this accompaniment through meeting on a regular basis, discerning strategies or action plans to respond to the challenges of church planting, facilitating Healthy Boundaries training, applications for the Hope fund, preparing the church plant to be received as an established congregation, and listening and praying together for the needs of the planters and their families as well as the churches in formation.

Church Plant Conversations

Associate Conference Minister Sandra Montes Martinez engaged in a variety of exploratory conversations with potential church planters/plants throughout the year, some of which are ongoing.

We ask for your prayers for two Church Planting projects:

- Houston TX, Casa de Restauracion (House of Restoration) led by Aurora Parchmont
- La Iglesia Peregrina (Pilgrim Church) in San Antonio TX led by Pastor John Garland from San Antonio Mennonite Church

Pray for us as we discern the certification of these projects by the CPC using the Church Planting Essential Procedures steps approved in 2021 by CPC and Executive Board of WDC.

Commission Work (August 2021-July 2022)

CPC Strategic Plan

Led by Sandra, the commission worked intensively in the fall of 2021 to create a Strategic Plan to guide the work of the commission. A subset of the commission met at least monthly to complete this task. In January 2022 the Church Planting Commission's completed Strategic Plan was presented to and affirmed by the WDC Executive Board.

The Strategic Plan, intended to carry out CPC's mission and vision, identifies 5 FOCUS AREAS, each with 4 categories: Hopes, Goals, Initiatives, and Evaluation.

FOCUS AREAS:

1. Plant churches.
2. Empower Anabaptist Church Planters development through training and on-going support.
3. Strengthen communication and partnerships with WDC congregations around the mission/vision of the Church Planting Commission.
4. Encourage all WDC congregations (established & new) to be alert to unique opportunities and assets supporting potential church planting projects in their own church or community.
5. Make connections with communities and individuals who would feel at home in Anabaptism.

A grant to help the CPC implement the Strategic Plan over the next 3 years was submitted to the Schowalter Foundation in March 2022 to help implement the CPC Strategic Plan. At our May meeting we celebrated with gratitude the news that the full grant was awarded by the Schowalter Foundation. A portion of the funds are intended for a church planting support person. This person is accountable to Sandra and a resource to the Church Planting Commission in implementing the CPC Strategic Plan. Nita Nikkel began March 1, 2022, as Church Planting Support Person on an initial one-year agreement.

Virtual Forums

As part of the CPC strategic plan, we will provide resources for WDC congregations in discipleship, evangelism, mission, and outreach in the form of webinars and open forums to share church planting stories and resources. CPC offered two virtual (Zoom) opportunities for WDC congregations and leaders to engage with church planting stories and resources. Recordings of both events are available to help continue conversation and learning within WDC and beyond.

- **December 8, 2021: *En El Camino – Church Replanting.*** Pastor (and CPC member) Tim Amor shared about the 'replanting' journey of Beatrice Mennonite (NE) becoming Summit Street Church.
- **May 11, 2022: *Sharing the Story.*** Tim Amor and Sandra Montes Martinez hosted this conversation exploring how we can share our faith stories with our neighbors.
 - How can we begin to have meaningful conversations with our neighbors?
 - How do we talk about our experiences with Jesus?
 - What unique perspectives might our faith community have to share?
 - After sharing the story, how can we invite others into the story?

CPC Members Engaged in Learning

Recognizing the benefit of ongoing learning and engagement beyond WDC, several members participated in:

- Hesston College’s workshop March 25-26, 2022, entitled *Where Have All the Pastor’s Gone?*
- Mennonite Mission Network’s April 23, 2022, SENT virtual event.
- IMH Anabaptist Missional leadership Academy (ALMA) virtual learning community.

Associate Conference Minister Sandra traveled to Nebraska to lead the Annual Study Series at Beatrice First Mennonite Church and the newly replanted Summit Street Church. The workshop “**Church that Responds**” included two in-person sessions closing with a virtual gathering where we had the opportunity to talk about what it means to take the pulse of the congregation, what power (behavior) is in the old and new church, and how our structures help or hinder God’s mission in our communities. We considered how to Listen, Connect, and Respond as a church.

Upcoming CPC Initiatives

The commission looks forward to these opportunities for engagement with you...

- ***To support Sister Church Ministry in a missional relationship***, we invite WDC congregations to a Youth Event during our annual assembly 2022. Our hope is to cultivate holistic relationships between sister churches and the emerging congregations to learn from each other as equals.
- ***To sustain the vitality of our congregation and encourage a culture of discipleship*** CPC will lead a workshop during 2022 WDC annual assembly: “Witness, Dwell, and Connect in Mission”
- ***To grow and boost local congregations***, we will be having conversations during the Fall of 2022 with WDC legacy congregations about how to image new emerging congregations in their communities. How do we become churches planting churches?
- We are preparing for our ***Church Planting Summit in the first trimester in 2023***. More information will be sent inviting your participation as partners in mission. Everyone is invited and encouraged to participate.

As members of Western District Conference, we urge you to join us in this missional movement! Participate in one or more of the opportunities described above, and others as they arise. Support and promote our monthly prayer requests, articles, and announcements in the WDC website under **Networking Church Planting Partnerships**. Invest in church planting with your financial support.

The Church Planting Commission is committed to forming new communities of disciples called and sent by God to bear witness to Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit as they share God’s grace and love. It is our desire to plant new congregations committed to God’s calling that will equip, train, and commission the saints, growing into disciple-making communities. New emerging congregations are a sign of the new creation in the local context and beyond. May it be so!