

WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE Ballot, August 2024

NUMBER OF VOTES _____

(* = 1st full term; **= 2nd term; +=filling an unexpired term)

I affirm the whole ballot _____

YES NO

Moderator-Elect (2 year term)

(2026) *Katherine Goerzen (Tabor Mennonite, Newton, KS)

Secretary (2 year term)

(2026) **Wendy Funk Schrag (First Mennonite, Newton, KS)

Executive Board (3 year term)

(2027) *Gabe Pennington (Southern Hills Mennonite, Topeka, KS)

(2027) *Dan Kunzman (First Mennonite, Beatrice, NE)

Continuing members: Eric Buller, Moderator (Hoffnungsaus Mennonite, Inman, KS); Aurora Parchmont (Iglesia Menonita Casa de Restauración, Houston, TX); Lee Lever (Houston Mennonite, Houston, TX); Caleb Gingerich (First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge, KS); Dave Wiebe (First Mennonite, Newton, KS); Berni Kaufman (Eden Mennonite, Moundridge, KS); Chris Becker (Austin Mennonite, Austin, TX)

Gifts Discernment Committee (3 year term) -To Be Determined...

(2027) * _____

(2027) * _____

(2026) + _____

Continuing members: Eric Jantzen (Rainbow Mennonite, Kansas City, KS); Dwight Mueller (First Mennonite, Halstead, KS); Linda Goering (Eden Mennonite, Moundridge, KS)

Church Planting Commission (3 year term)

(2027) *Adela Gutiérrez (Iglesia Luz del Evangelio, Dallas, TX)

(2027) *Larry Dixon (Shalom Mennonite, Newton, KS)

Continuing members: Alberto Parchmont (Iglesia Menonita Casa del Alfarero, Pasadena, TX); Jim Unruh (First Mennonite, Hutchinson, KS); Marlene McKittrick (San Antonio Mennonite, San Antonio, TX); Katherine Graber (Peace Mennonite, Dallas, TX)

Ministerial Leadership Commission (3 year term)

(2027) **Cynthia Neufeld Smith (Southern Hills Mennonite, Topeka, KS)

(2027) *Linda Ewert (First Mennonite, Newton, KS)

Continuing members: Samuel Voth Schrag (Peace Mennonite, Dallas, TX); Gilberto Flores (Iglesia Cristiana Anabautista Casa de Paz, Guatemala); Todd Schlosser (Tabor Mennonite, Newton, KS); Elizabeth Melendez (Houston Mennonite, Houston, TX)

Resource Commission (3 year term)

(2027) *Kris Balzer (Buhler Mennonite, Buhler, KS)

(2027) *Megan Turley (Houston Mennonite, Houston, TX)

(2026) +Adam Robb (Bethel College Mennonite, North Newton, KS)

Continuing members: Debbie Goossen (First Mennonite, Beatrice, NE); Stephen Wilcox (First Mennonite, Halstead, KS); Norma Duerksen (First Mennonite, Hillsboro, KS)

Stewardship Commission (3 year term)

(2027) **Cleo Koop (Tabor Mennonite, Newton, KS)

(2027) *Vern Jantzen (First Mennonite, Beatrice, NE)

Other members: Sarah Balzer (Buhler Mennonite, Buhler, KS); Dick Koontz (Bethel College Mennonite, North Newton, KS); Karl Swartz (Lorraine Avenue Mennonite, Wichita, KS); Jeanette Stucky (Mennonite Church of the Servant, Wichita, KS)

DESCRIPTION OF NOMINEES

MODERATOR ELECT

Katherine Goerzen, Pastor of Tabor Mennonite Church, Newton, KS. *I have 17 years pastoral ministry experience, am a lifelong member of WDC congregations and care for WDC, and I am of the millennial generation.*

SECRETARY

Wendy Funk Schrag, Vice President State Government Affairs, Fresenius Medical Care. *I have enjoyed serving as secretary these last three years, and especially my time on the listening tour planning team. It's been a joy to get to know more congregations.*

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Gabriel Pennington, Pastor. *Gabriel serves as pastor at Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka, KS, where he and his wife Christa and their family have lived since 2020. He previously was a pastor in Oklahoma, has served as a chaplain in county jails, and coached sports and taught high school and middle school English. Gabe has a degree in English Education from Oklahoma State University, and his Master of Divinity from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. His hobbies include fishing, hiking, camping, reading, and cheering for the Oklahoma State Cowboys.*

Dan Kunzman, Retired Nonprofit Executive. *I call myself a theological mutt. Raised Catholic with 12 years of Catholic school. Twenty years a member of a UCC congregation. Shorter stints in an AME and a Presbyterian congregation. Focused on equality for marginal groups. New Testament follower. Several decades of leadership level experience in private higher education and a technology focused nonprofit. I ask a lot of questions.*

GIFTS DISCERNMENT

To Be Determined...

CHURCH PLANTING COMMISSION

Adela Gutiérrez, Deaconess of the Church and House Cleaner. *Adela has witnessed the growth of the church. Evidencing the need that people have for God and for a place to congregate. Adela is committed to support church planting in places where we have not yet reached out.*

Larry Dixon, Retired. *At Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka, KS, I served on a Sister Church Committee with Iglesia Menonita Monte Horeb, Dallas, TX. There was much meaningful interaction between the two congregations. Besides meeting annually in person, I sent monthly church newsletters with personal notes to the pastors.*

MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP COMMISSION

Cynthia Neufeld Smith, Retired Pastor, part time Organist and Choral Accompanist. *I come to the work of this commission with a desire to follow Jesus, a lifetime of participation and leadership in the Mennonite Church, and a commitment to supporting ministers in their service. In this time of divisiveness and decline inside and outside the church, the dedication and resilience of our pastors gives me hope. With the help of our conference ministers and the commission members, I seek to promote healthy congregations and leaders.*

Linda Ewert, Retired Pastor, part-time Hospice Chaplain. *I have served as a pastor in congregational ministry for twenty-two years, followed by five years as a hospice chaplain. I have a Masters in Church Leadership from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, including one unit of CPE training at Wesley Medical Center in Wichita. Shifting from congregational ministry to chaplaincy was a challenging new opportunity for me, one that was uniquely different than serving in a congregation. I believe the experiences and perspectives of being both a pastor and a chaplain, will help me to bring a unique contribution to the Ministerial Leadership Commission, in its responsibilities for caring for both pastors serving in our churches and chaplains serving in the broader community.*

RESOURCE COMMISSION

Kris Balzer, School Paraprofessional. *I have always attended Mennonite churches and deeply value the strong music tradition. I am an organist, pianist and choir member. Children are a vital part of our churches and I have helped with Bible School, Midweek, Youth trips and College Student Services. These themes are mirrored in my professional life, where I work as an elementary school (PreK-6) librarian and as pianist for our school music department. I hope these experiences will help me as I enter and learn as a new Commission member.*

Megan Turley, Immigration paralegal. *Experience working with Anabaptist youth/young adults in Latin America with MCC (4 years) experience as high school English teacher in bilingual school in Honduras (4 years), multimedia media consultant for non-profits (3 years). Bilingual English/Spanish.*

Adam Robb, Teacher. *I served on the original Resource Commission, and have good memories of the important work done at that time. As a teacher, camp director, and parent, I recognize the values of available resources - which must be practical, useful, and accessible to all who need them.*

STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION

Cleo Koop, Retired Pastor. *I have been a self-employed farmer and carpenter for 12 years. These experiences have helped shape an understanding of the importance of laying out a budget for each of the businesses. The experiences of ups and downs in market volatility and in the weather have shaped my understanding of dealing with uncertainty. I have been a pastor for 25 years working with three congregations. These experiences have shaped my understanding of working cooperatively with congregational leadership in carrying out the ministry of the congregation. Working with trustee groups in addressing financial challenges the congregations have faced gives me insight into a variety of leadership styles and objectives to reach our goals. I have been a college professor for 5 years working with a variety of leaders in carrying out the specific program I was directing. These experiences have helped me work jointly with other leaders in carrying out the goals of the program at the college. In retirement I am very involved with Mennonite Disaster Service as the Project Director of The MDS Cabinet Shop. I manage and lead a group of approximately 30 volunteers in building cabinets and managing the oversight of the cabinet shop. These experiences have shaped how I relate to volunteers giving of their time and talents to carry out the specific ministry of the cabinet shop.*

Vern Jantzen, Farmer. *I am the owner/operator along with my wife of our farming operation. I currently serve as the Everence Advocate for our congregation. I have served/am serving on governing boards for our church, agricultural policy groups and agricultural support groups.*