

Annual Report by Heidi Regier Kreider, Conference Minister - June 2026

My term as Conference Minister was renewed in August 2025, adjusted from 1.0 to .80 FTE (at my request in light of family commitments) with several tasks reduced or delegated. Areas of focus in my work this past year included:

Follow-up to the WDC Listening Process: Based on common themes emerging from congregational visits the past two years, I have worked with staff to plan for Leader Forums on zoom to host conversation and resourcing on the topics of worship/music resources, alternative pastoral models, church financial practices and tools, and congregational communications.

Support for congregations, pastors and pastoral transitions: Associate conferences ministers and I work with pastoral search committees at congregations where we serve as liaisons. We sought potential ministerial candidates through MC USA's Ministerial Leadership Information registry, suggestions from church members, and candidates' inquiries. We reached out to colleges and seminaries to share WDC's pastoral openings with students interested in exploring ministry, and are grateful for a new endowment fund established by a generous WDC member to support seminary scholarships. This past year I installed settled pastors at 3 congregations and interim pastors at 2 congregations, celebrated credentialing for 4 ministers, and supported ongoing pastoral search processes at 3 congregations. As staff liaison for the Ministerial Leadership Commission (MLC), I facilitated an orientation session for 8 new ministers, wrote a pastoral letter to congregations about increases in pastor salary guidelines and insurance expenses, coordinated WDC Pastor Review Advisors to facilitate reviews in several congregations, and helped plan the Spring ministers' retreat co-sponsored by Kids Meet Christ.

Stewardship initiatives: Last year WDC shifted the fiscal year to begin in October instead of February, and transitioned financial reporting schedules, audit process, fundraising communications, and staff contracts to the new schedule. Meanwhile, we continue working energetically to provide support and accountability for ministers, to respond to congregations' needs, and to accompany church planters and emerging faith communities - all in ways that strive to be equitable and relevant for diverse contexts, and to manage financial resources in sustainable ways. I am working with Executive Board, staff and commissions to collaborate as we discern priorities for WDC's work, enhance communications and grow contributions, and support effective financial investment and management practices to serve well into the future. I consulted with the WDC Fund Development Worker and Business Manager to implement the Stewardship Commission's vision for a member-owned giving model energized by a spirit of mutual aid, involvement and investment by all WDC members. We are also inviting each WDC congregation to appoint a WDC Advocate to promote WDC's resources for congregations and inspire giving to support these ministries.

Abuse prevention: I introduced MC USA's new Prevention and Accountability Resource to the MLC (<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/prevention-accountability/>), attended informational webinars hosted by MC-USA, updated abuse/misconduct reporting information on the WDC website, and coordinated MLC and Executive Board's updates of

ministerial leadership policies to align with the Resource. The Executive Board appointed Kathy Neufeld Dunn as Conference Safety Liaison for the first year as we began to implement and learn more about the Resource. To strengthen understanding and gain resources to assist congregations in developing a safe church culture, I took a Safe Church training course on Abuse Prevention and Response led by GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in a Christian Environment).

Staff support and oversight: This past year several new staff were hired part-time for special projects: Absalon Calix as Event and Social Media Coordinator (TX-based) for the Kids Meet Christ program, Fernando Perez and Rebeca Gonzalez as Hispanic Transitional Ministry Resource Facilitators, and Sarah Bryan as a short-term Fund Development Worker for the past year. Last year we initiated recognition of WDC employment anniversaries in 5-year increments, and again gathered for an annual staff retreat. I give thanks for Lori Joliff and Jane Wagler who provided temporary coverage for staff members who took some family leave time.

Justice and peace work: Resourcing congregations for immigration justice continues to be a priority this past year. I helped facilitate communications from MC USA to WDC congregations regarding advocacy on immigration concerns; attended a Lunch & Learn with Becky Teiwes, Borderlands Program Coordinator for MCC-Central States; promoted training by Abraham Diaz Alonso, Immigration Program Coordinator at MCC-Central States, on congregational preparedness, rapid response to ICE and Know Your Rights; attended an immigration justice symposium sponsored by Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution at Bethel College; and met with an ecumenical group to plan for an immigration solidarity gathering for congregations in Texas this fall.

At the invitation of pastor Susan Peak Hart of Koinonia Indian Mennonite Church, Associate Conference Minister Kathy Neufeld Dunn and I attended a wake service in Oklahoma marking the homecoming of remains of Cheyenne and Arapaho students who had died at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in the late 1800s. It was a sacred and somber occasion, calling for ongoing healing, repair, and solidarity with indigenous communities.

I met with leaders from DART (Direct Action and Research Training) to offer WDC congregations in central Kansas the opportunity to join ecumenical DART affiliate groups working on justice issues in their local communities. Approximately 10 WDC congregations are involved or considering participation in these initiatives.

Nurturing connections with Mennonite Church USA: I attended MC USA convention and Mennonite Women's Summit; Constituency Leaders' Council; MC USA Conference Ministers' annual retreat with facilitators from Parish Collective offering resources to equip local congregations to thrive in their unique contexts (<https://www.parishcollective.org/>); retirement receptions for WDC members Linda Shelly (MMN director for Latin America) and Robin Schrag (MC USA Controller); and served on the MC USA structure review committee (<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/reimagining-mennonite-church-usa/#team>).

I offer thanks to God for all WDC congregations, members, leaders, staff and donors who have participated in WDC ministries this past year!