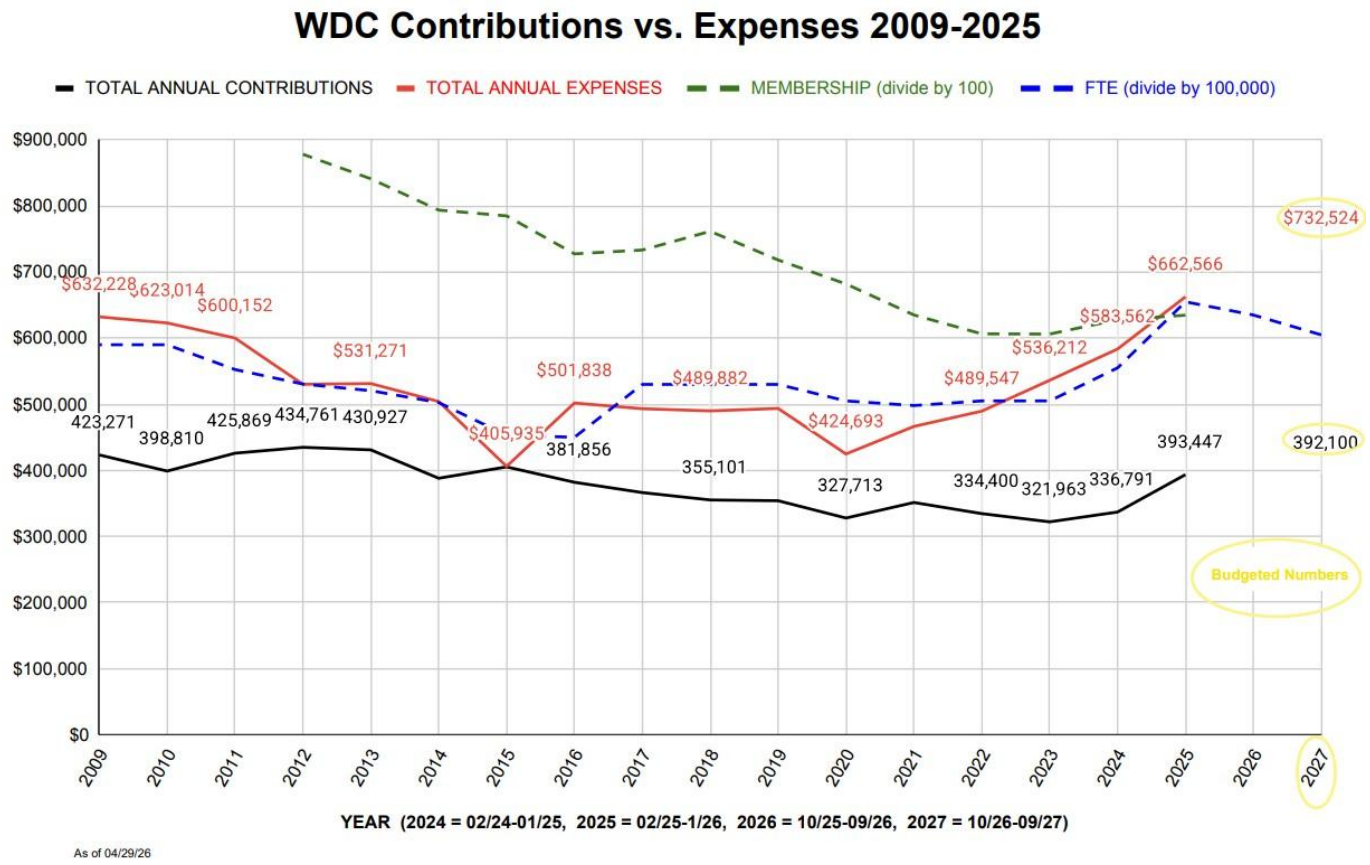
Stewardship Commission 2026 Assembly Report
Prepared by Cleo Koop Chair

We began the year welcoming new board members Tim Hodge, Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton KS, and Renetta Gooden, Hope Mennonite Church, Wichita KS, to our Commission. Dick Koontz, Bethel College Mennonite Church of North Newton, KS, completed two terms on the Commission. We thank him for his years of involvement on the Commission.

We began our year reviewing our role as the Stewardship Commission.

"The Stewardship Commission gives oversight to the Western District Conference legal, financial, personnel and property matters and promotes and encourages participation in the ministries of the conference through communication, prayer, volunteerism and financial support with an emphasis on first fruits giving."

Oversight involves stepping back and looking at the big picture over time. Please see the graph below revealing the contributions and expenses of the Conference from 2009-2025. Notice historically each year we have overspent our income and needed to subsidize the annual budget from reserve funds. In the most recent years there has been a dramatic increase in expenditures, while we have seen a slight decrease in the income received.



Here is an overarching question the Stewardship Commission has been reflecting on the past two years.

Has the vision set out by each of the WDC Commissions
outpaced our capacity to fund these visions?

Purpose: "Our Conference is grappling with a challenging financial and demographic picture. As the Stewardship Commission, it is our responsibility to create a plan to sustain the mission of our organization."

Growing out of a retreat in 2025 the Stewardship Commission introduced:

A Vision
Together we Tend
Rooted in Giving
Seeds of Sustenance

Together we Tend: Invite each WDC congregation to appoint a Congregational Advocate to promote the work and ministry of the WDC.

Rooted in Giving: Rather than focusing on a big fund-raising campaign we invite Everyone to invest in the WDC.

Seeds of Sustenance: Inviting WDC members to give on a regular basis through their local congregation or directly to the WDC ministry.

WDC Fund Development Coordinator, Mike Lamb, resigned in August of 2025. In order to continue progressing with communication and implementation of new practices supporting the above vision of the Stewardship Commission, Sarah (Balzer) Bryan temporarily stepped down from her position on Stewardship Commission and has been contracting with WDC on a part time basis as a Fund Development Worker. Sarah works closely with the Stewardship Commission and attends our meetings to report on her activities, offer consultation and advice, but is not a voting member. She has been visiting congregations and meeting with congregational leadership persons sharing the vision of WDC. At Assembly 2026, Sarah will assist the Stewardship Commission to introduce the concept of Congregational Advocates and a proposed structure for implementation.

The Stewardship Commission approved a building loan to Manhattan Mennonite church.

Commission members have been addressing various legal issues related to conference properties.

Other members on the Stewardship Commission: Vern Jantzen secretary, Karl Swartz, Renetta Gooden, Tim Hodge, Cleo Koop Chair.

Cleo Koop Chairperson
WDC Stewardship Commission