Sandra Montes-Martínez Associate Conference Minister, Western District Conference Annual Report: August 2026

It has been a privilege to continue serving Western District Conference as Associate Conference Minister, accompanying pastors, congregations, emerging leaders, and church plants as they discern God's call within their communities. Throughout this year, my ministry has centered on strengthening relationships, equipping leaders, supporting congregations through seasons of transition, and expanding partnerships that reflect our shared Anabaptist commitment to follow Jesus in community.

A primary area of responsibility has been serving as conference liaison to congregations in Texas, Hispanic churches in Kansas and Guatemala. Through regular visits, pastoral conversations, leadership coaching, preaching, and consultation, I have accompanied congregations as they respond to opportunities and challenges unique to their contexts. This ministry has included supporting pastors, congregational leaders, and leadership teams through discernment, conflict navigation, pastoral transitions, and strategic planning while strengthening their connection to the broader life and mission of Western District Conference.

I continue to serve with the Church Planting Commission, providing leadership and accompaniment to emerging congregations and church planters. This work includes mentoring leaders, coordinating commission priorities, administering grants, and encouraging sustainable models of ministry. One of the most meaningful developments has been strengthening partnerships between established congregations and emerging faith communities. Relationships such as San Antonio Mennonite Church with Camino de Esperanza, Casa del Alfarero with Casa de Restauración, and Casa de Paz with Arca de Salvación in Guatemala have created opportunities for mutual encouragement, shared resources, prayer, and collaboration. These sister-congregation partnerships honor the gifts, culture, and leadership of each congregation while demonstrating that healthy church planting is rooted in mutual relationships rather than dependency.

Supporting intercultural conference aproache remains a central focus of my work. I continue to accompany Hispanic pastors and congregations through leadership development, theological reflection, mentoring, and pastoral care. This year I also continued overseeing the Hispanic Ministry Transitional Resource Initiative, which equips congregations experiencing pastoral transition with contextual, Anabaptist-centered resources for discernment, leadership development, and healthy congregational change. Through workshops, coaching, and resources, this initiative is helping congregations navigate transitions with greater confidence while strengthening their long-term leadership capacity.

The ministry of accompaniment is strengthened through collaboration. Working closely with Ministry Support Administrator Violeta Ajquejay Suastegui has enabled us to provide coordinated bilingual communication, administrative support, translation, event planning, and pastoral resources that improve accessibility and strengthen relationships across our conference.

An important dimension of my ministry is connecting congregations with the wider work of Western District Conference and Mennonite Church USA. I have encouraged participation in conference life, promoted leadership development opportunities, connected congregations with grants and educational resources, and interpreted conference initiatives in ways that help local churches engage more fully in our shared mission. These connections strengthen the sense that every congregation, regardless of size or language, is an essential part of the conference and the broader Mennonite Church.

Partnerships continue to be one of the greatest strengths of our ministry. Throughout the year I have collaborated with Mennonite Church USA agencies and organizations, including Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Mission Network, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Everence, MDS and regional conference partners. These relationships have expanded opportunities for leadership training, theological education, immigration advocacy, church planting, community engagement, and financial support for congregational ministries. By connecting local congregations with these broader resources, we are able to multiply our impact and encourage churches to participate more fully in God's mission.

Likewise, partnerships among congregations continue to demonstrate the value of mutual accompaniment within our conference. Established churches have offered mentorship, hospitality, financial support, and encouragement to newer congregations, while emerging churches have enriched the conference with new perspectives, cultural diversity, and renewed energy for ministry. These reciprocal relationships embody our Anabaptist values of community, shared leadership, and mutual aid, reminding us that we are stronger when we serve together.

As I reflect on this year, I am deeply grateful for the faithfulness of pastors, church planters, congregational leaders, volunteers, conference staff, and ministry partners who faithfully serve God's mission across Western District Conference. Together we continue to cultivate healthy congregations, equip leaders, strengthen relationships, and bear witness to the reconciling love of Christ in increasingly diverse communities.

I look forward to continuing this work in the coming year by deepening pastoral accompaniment, strengthening Hispanic leadership, supporting church planting, expanding collaborative partnerships, and helping congregations faithfully embody the hope and peace of Jesus Christ within their local contexts.