Western District Conference Church Planting Commission 2026 Annual Report

The Church Planting Commission (CPC) continues to live into Western District Conference's commitment to networking church planting partnerships by nurturing new Anabaptist communities, equipping church planters, and fostering relationships between emerging congregations and the broader conference. Throughout this year, we have witnessed God's faithfulness as new communities have taken important steps toward sustainability, leadership development, and deeper participation in the life of WDC.

Our Mission

The Church Planting Commission provides leadership and resources for church planting initiatives and fosters relationships with emerging Anabaptist/Mennonite communities. We seek to help emerging congregations and their leaders connect with the congregations, staff, resources, and ministries of Western District Conference while encouraging healthy, contextual, and mission-focused Anabaptist witness.

Current Church Plants

During the 2025–2026 year, the Commission continued accompanying the following church plants:

- Camino de Esperanza, San Antonio, Texas
- Casa de Restauración, Houston, Texas
- Palabra Viva, Liberal, Kansas (pending status)
- Cristo La Roca, Lamesa, Texas
- Arca de Salvación, Uspantán, Guatemala

Each congregation reflects the diversity of God's kingdom and the growing witness of Anabaptist faith within its unique cultural and community context.

Celebrating Growth

One of the highlights of this year was the certification of Camino de Esperanza in San Antonio as a new church plant of Western District Conference, approved by the Executive Board. This milestone celebrates a faithful ministry, leadership development, and congregational discernment, collaboration with SAMC and marks another significant step in strengthening Anabaptist witness in San Antonio Texas.

Accompaniment and Leadership Development

The members of the Church Planting Commission remain deeply committed to the life and ministry of each church plant. Throughout the year, Commission members intentionally invested time in getting to know each congregation more deeply about their context, strengths, challenges, and vision for ministry.

This close accompaniment enabled the Commission to provide meaningful encouragement, and strategic support while discerning opportunities for growth.

One tangible outcome of this commitment was the preparation and submission of three Thrive Church Planting Grant applications. These applications reflected the Commission's collaborative work with church planters to identify ministry goals, develop sustainable plans, and secure resources that will strengthen local ministry.

In addition to regular coaching and congregational visits, the Commission worked alongside church planters and WDC staff in leadership development, organizational planning, and discernment for long-term sustainability. Special attention was given to strengthening leadership through contextual coaching and resources rooted in Anabaptist theology and practice.

Partnerships Bearing Fruit

This year has demonstrated the importance of collaboration. Partnerships with Mennonite organizations and established congregations have produced meaningful opportunities that strengthen our church plants and expand their ministry.

A significant partnership between Western District Conference, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS), and Cristo La Roca in Lamesa, Texas, is making possible the construction of a new church building. This project represents much more than a worship space. The new facility will become a center for ministry, discipleship, and community engagement, allowing Cristo La Roca to continue serving the underserved families of Lamesa with hospitality, hope, and the love of Christ.

Another exciting partnership with Hispanic Ministries of Mennonite Church USA has made it possible to establish a virtual and in person Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA) learning center. This initiative will initially serve four of our church plants by providing accessible theological education, leadership development, and faith formation opportunities for pastors, emerging leaders, and congregational members. Through this partnership, local leaders in Uspantan Guatemala, Newton KS, Lanesa TX, San Antonio TX and Houston TX are being equipped to strengthen the ministry and mission of their congregations.

The Commission also celebrates a partnership with Kids Meet Christ (KMC), which awarded scholarships to two of our church plants through its children's ministry grant initiative. These resources will help congregations develop meaningful opportunities for children to participate more fully in worship, faith formation, and the life of the church, nurturing the next generation of disciples.

Another important partnership is the one that connects our emerging congregations with established WDC congregations. Examples include San Antonio Mennonite Church partnering with Camino de Esperanza, Casa del Alfarero partnering with Casa de Restauración, and Casa de Paz partnering with Arca de Salvación in Guatemala. These sister-congregation partnerships strengthen both communities as they learn from one another, share resources, offer mutual encouragement, and walk together in ministry. They also model the beauty of the body of Christ by honoring the unique culture, gifts, and context of each

congregation and fostering relationships rooted in mutual respect, reciprocity, and equality rather than dependency.

These partnerships illustrate what is possible when congregations, conference ministries, denominational resources and Mennonite institutions work together in God's mission.

Strategic Priorities

The Commission continued implementing its strategic vision by focusing on:

- Supporting and strengthening existing church plants.
- Equipping Anabaptist church planters and emerging leaders.
- Building stronger relationships between church plants and established WDC congregations.
- Encouraging congregations to identify opportunities for new ministries within their own communities.
- Expanding awareness of Anabaptist theology among people seeking a faith community centered on Jesus, peace, justice, and discipleship.

Stewardship and Looking Ahead

The Commission continues to steward designated church planting funds responsibly while actively seeking grants and partnerships that support church planting, leadership development, and congregational vitality.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to:

- Strengthening existing church plants toward long-term sustainability.
- Accompanying emerging Anabaptist communities.
- Expanding leadership development opportunities among multicultural congregations.
- Cultivating new partnerships that multiply resources and opportunities for ministry.
- Encouraging every WDC congregation to participate in God's mission of planting and nurturing new faith communities.

Gratitude

The Church Planting Commission is grateful for the dedication of our church planters, Commission members, conference staff, supporting congregations, and ministry partners. We especially recognize the commitment of the Commission members, who generously give their time, wisdom, and presence to accompany our church plants. Their investment extends beyond meetings, they build relationships, celebrate milestones, walk alongside leaders during challenges, and help connect congregations with the resources they need to flourish.

Together, we celebrate what God has accomplished this year and look forward with hope to the continued growth of new Anabaptist communities across Western District Conference.

"Now to him who is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." — Ephesians 3:20–21