

Report from the Moderator

Things have shifted considerably in Mountain States Conference over the past two years. As we move beyond the first decade of our life together we are learning that change is probably a permanent reality. Two years ago, we said goodbye to our first Conference Minister, Herm Weaver, and our Associate Conference Minister Jaime Lazaro. We soon welcomed Linford and Mary Etta King as transitional Conference Ministers.

Shortly after the 2016 MSMC annual assembly in early August, we learned that Annie Lengacher Browning needed to step out of her role as Acting Conference Minister. We renegotiated our arrangement with Linford and Mary Etta, who assumed both Transitional and Acting Conference Minister roles for us. We also learned that Moderator Karen Cox was planning to resign at the end of 2016.

At the end of October, I accepted the invitation to be the Conference Moderator and after a very short orientation stepped into the role this past January. The task seemed pretty daunting and yes it's felt a bit chaotic at times. Looming on the horizon was the task of finding a Conference Minister *or* a combination of Conference Minister and Area Pastors who could lead us successfully forward. We've worked hard at that.

As of this report we do not have a Conference Minister candidate to offer. Hopefully by the delegate assembly we will be able to present a leadership solution that will serve us well for the next few years. We would not be able to cast ballots at that time, but we would take a straw vote and have a subsequent affirmation vote by e-mail ballot.

Since last August

- Annie Lengacher Browning resigned on Sept. 1
- Linford and Mary Etta King assumed the Transitional/Acting Conference Minister roles
- In September, Neal Anderson and Nick King represented MSMC at the Mexico City Evangelical Anabaptist Mennonite Conference's retreat in Toluca, near Mexico City.
- In October Fernando Perez and Rebeca Torrez sponsored by SEED, returned to Mexico after a six-month stay at Casa de Paz. 30-month religious worker visa applications for them are currently in the hands of US Immigration. If they are granted Fernando and Rebeca will come back to Denver to help plant a multi-cultural church.
- A conference-wide consultation at Beth-El Mennonite in early December gave us a template for the reorganization of our conference leadership structures
- In December Theda Good was ordained at First Mennonite of Denver
- In January the Conference Moderator role passed from Karen Cox to Ken Gingerich
- Katie Cunningham and Brian Hanneken also joined the Leadership Board as Carlene Hill and Phil Rosenberger finished their terms. Ellen Fox resigned in March
- In February Matt Shedden, Steve Goering, Pam Duncan, Jenni Hiatt Umble and Matt Zimbelman joined the SEED committee
- In April Drew Hart was the guest keynote speaker at the spring Faith & Life Forum

- The Aspen Cluster, an affinity group concerned about Conference decision making processes, was formed during the spring
- The credentialing review committee gathered much information and compiled a report about the Conference's role in discerning leadership in local congregations
- Congregations experiencing transitions this past year include First Mennonite, Denver, Albuquerque, Beth-El, Boulder, Alamosa and Emmanuel.
- Mary Etta King and Ken Gingerich represented Mountain States Conference at Orlando 2017

I've gotten some feedback about the "turmoil" in the Conference and depending on one's perspective it may feel a bit unsteady at times. But, I'm a firm believer that times of transition are situations where—if we pay attention, we will find new creative ways to be more faithful, more loving and more transparent with one another in our journey of following Jesus together. We are a young conference and we are still learning how to live into the idea of "relational accountability" and mutual trust.

We've failed at some levels, and in other ways we are doing very well. We lament our failure to maintain fellowship with the former Greeley congregation and with Light of Life Mennonite Church. We also rejoice in the revitalization and rebirth of congregations in Glenwood Springs and Pueblo and we are very excited about welcoming Beloved Community Mennonite Church as our newest member congregation. Linford and Mary Etta have been very present to congregations that are experiencing pastoral transitions and we are grateful for their accompaniment.

We are extremely fortunate to have ministries like Rocky Mountain Camp, RAWTools, TiLT and Casa de Paz connected in some way to our conference. We have become a ministry incubator that is seen as an example across Mennonite Church USA.

I am grateful for ALL of the effort so many give on a voluntary basis to make this Conference function. Thanks to everyone who helps make this journey so rewarding.

In Christ,

Ken Gingerich
Moderator