

Moderator and Leadership Board Report
Annual Assembly, Mountain States Mennonite Conference, 2016

“Pursuing God's dreams, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the way of Jesus Christ...”

This is the Vision Statement that Leadership Board (LB) holds in our hearts as we seek to discern and deal with the work of Mountain States Mennonite Conference. Goals include serving this network of Colorado and New Mexico Anabaptists by encouraging spiritual growth, developing leadership, supporting passion ministries, honoring relational accountability, and paying attention to diversity in the Conference. Leadership Board members include Carlene Hill (First MC Denver), Ellen Fox (Peace Mennonite Community), Wilmer Villacorta (Iglesia El Centro), Nelda Thelin (Emmanuel MC), Mike Martin (Beth-El MC), Phil Rosenberger (Light of Life MC) and Karen Cox, Moderator (Boulder MC). Conference Ministers Annie Lengacher Browning and Mary Etta and Linford King and Conference Administrator Karen Martin also attend LB meetings. Along with Leadership Board, Conference Staff and Committees are so important in the work that takes place towards fulfilling the Conference goals.

An Overview of the LB Work from the year...

MSMC's Transitional Period. Some of you will recall that at this time last year, Herm & Jaime had resigned, and LB was in the process of looking for staffing for a 1-2 year transitional period where MSMC would seek God's leading for our Conference priorities for the next 10 years or so. On Sept. 1, 2015, Annie moved from a ½ time position to a full time position as Acting Conference Minister. Her work has primarily centered on keeping our normal routines going. On Nov. 1, 2015, Linford & Mary Etta King began sharing a ¾ time position as Transitional Conference Ministers. Their work has centered on getting to know us and inviting us to be open to God's dreams for us. With Annie's recent resignation (that will be effective Aug. 31, 2016), LB is proposing to move Kings to 1.5 FTE work (with their gracious consent!). In addition to the Transitional work they are already doing, they will be picking up most of the tasks that Annie has been doing for us. If Delegates approve the proposed budget, they will begin in this capacity starting Sept. 1.

A timeline forward... LB, in the coming months and with leadership from the Kings, will be collating priorities that will shape the Conference (thanks to so many who have joined in the discernment and dreaming work). We anticipate creating Conference Minister job description(s) by the end of the year. Search process will take place in the spring, with the hope of inviting new Conference Ministry leadership to begin by fall of 2017.

Faith and Life Forum. The May 2016 Faith & Life Forum offered an opportunity for Kings to present their observations and learnings to date about life and dreams of MSMCers that they'd met so far. Forum participants continued that dreaming. Participants helped clarify understandings of God's leadings for us as a conference.

MSMC Historians share perspectives. One of the most fun sessions during our Transitional dreaming work was a meeting (in May 2016) where MSMC historians were invited to share with LB about what dreams have shaped good works that have been done in our past. These inspiring stories are forming the way we think about what upcoming priorities and focus might lead to continued discipleship in MSMC.

MSMC Leaders share perspectives. Another fun session during our Transitional dreaming work was a calling together of 20 leaders from across MSMC in Nov. 2015 to 'orient' the Kings to life in MSMC and to collect the wisdom of those currently serving and caring for an Anabaptist vision of Christianity in Colorado and New Mexico.

Developing a Development Team. We are keenly aware that funds are needed to do the work of supporting congregations and developing avenues for relationships that promote an Anabaptist Jesus-following witness. To that end, we are building a Development Team. Six folks have committed

to serve – Preston Hofer, Steve Stutzman, Ken Gingerich, Dennis LeFevre, Ellen Fox & Carlene Hill. Ideas for normal fundraising and for ‘outside of the box’ revenue generation sought (end of life arrangements, thrift store or coffee house or some other profit-generating ministry, what else??).

Working with Ministerial Council. Ministerial Council has received First Mennonite’s request for the ordination of Theda Good. Ministerial Council members are Marilyn Miller, Merv Birky, Duncan Smith, Tom Kauffman. Annie meets with Ministerial Council also. Leadership Board has stayed in contact with Ministerial Council, asking the Council to bring a recommendation for a way forward. Ministerial Council, after prayerful work and review of much counsel received, has made a proposal which LB is considering. We know that many await the outcome of these conversations; we ask for your continued prayers and patience as we allow productive time for the Spirit to work among us. It is our goal to find what we believe to be the most faithful way forward in a reasonable time period (assuming that all will not be in agreement with whatever that way forward might be).

Leadership Discernment. Paula Brunk Kuhns continues to give leadership to this committee with the task of identifying volunteers to serve on LB and other MSMC committees. This past year, members of the Conference have had opportunities to nominate people for the various roles. LBer Nelda Thelin, Annie and I have supported this work. Work is ongoing for finding our next Moderator and 2 LB members (as Carlene, Phil, and Karen C. will conclude their service at the end of 2016). Please watch for and respond to an email ballot in the coming weeks.

Relationship with Mexico City Mennonites. SEED has been exploring a relationship at the request of Mennonites from Mexico City. MSMCers, led by Nick King, traveled to Mexico City. Fernando Perez and Rebeca Gonzales are here for several months (serving at Casa De Paz, interacting with various congregations in the Conference). LB has affirmed interest in a partnering relationship with the Mexico City Conference.

Preparing for Annual Assembly. LB carries responsibility to prepare for the Delegate session, working with Treasurer to bring a proposed spending plan, and setting the agenda for that session.

I hope you'll read the reports from staff and committees. These folks give of themselves in the work they do, serving MSMC in powerful ways. Especially our SEED group has brought much goodness to our midst. Join me in giving thanks for our committees and their ministries. I also hope you'll read the reports from our congregations! Good God-stuff is happening!

I count it a privilege to serve on LB. I think other members feel the same way. It takes time, commitment, energy, work. Yet the work feels meaningful. And serving alongside of such committed disciples of Jesus is quite wonderful and inspiring. We are trying to implement practices that open us to God's leading for the Conference. We have drawn close to each other; our meetings are a combination of spiritual deepening, growing in love for each other, and growing in love for those in the Conference. We invite LB members to show up with their whole selves, bringing their gifts to share. And we are enriched as our members step forward. And the Conference and Congregations are blessed as well. I'm certain that we don't get it right all the time; I ask for your grace and forgiveness.

And God is good. Very, very good. Thanks and praise be to God!

May the Peace of Christ be with us each and all,
Karen Cox, Moderator
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on behalf of Leadership Board