



Report to Mountain States Mennonite Conference - August 2009

Greetings from Carlos Romero, executive director

Our educational institutions contribute to the building of a strong church foundation—from helping to shape and build Mennonite identity to providing pastors and other church leaders. Past research and anecdotal evidence have been helpful in understanding the significant role of education. There is a higher probability for Mennonites who attend our schools to stay in the church. There is a correlation between the Mennonite education experience and those who later spend time in service.

Students who receive an education shaped by the Anabaptist-Mennonite understandings go on to serve in multiple capacities around the world—making an impact in their fields, communities, and countries. My own journey has led me to serve the church; I would not be here today if not for my Mennonite education experience. It is because of my awareness of what Mennonite education has done and is doing in the lives of so many that I accepted the call to serve as executive director.

Special Events

Education Leaders Gathering (ELG)— This conference brings together board members, churchwide leaders and representatives from Mennonite conferences. The most recent ELG was held January 30-February 1, 2009, in Pittsburgh, Pa. The theme was “Growing as trees of righteousness” based on Isaiah. Speakers included Curtis Bechler, alumnus of Goshen College; Bob Bontrager, current Goshen College board member and former vice-president of enrollment at Eastern Mennonite University; and Gregory Boyd, pastor of the growing Woodland Hills Church in Saint Paul, Minn.

Convention 2009— The education presence at Convention in Columbus, Ohio, was planned by representatives from all higher education institutions, Mennonite Schools Council (MSC), and MEA. They collaborated on the exhibit, seminars, meetings, and publicity to help people discover that Mennonite educational institutions are viable options. This year, a “Mennonite education changed my life!” pin was distributed to students, alumni and supporters of Mennonite education.

Mennonite World Conference (MWC)— The Mennonite education presence was part of the MWC assembly held in Asunción, Paraguay, July 14-19. MEA, in partnership with MSC, worked with the association of Mennonite schools in Paraguay and the coordinators of MWC to have an education encounter during the conference. Over 200 people participated.

Church Education Sunday

Having a Church Education Sunday at your congregation does matter! Focusing on church education is one way your congregation can partner with MEA to work towards the mission “to strengthen the life, witness and identity of Mennonite Church USA through education.” The 2009 Church Education Sunday materials were expanded into a booklet form to include more options—including the option to have a designated Sunday on a Sunday *other than* or *in addition* to February 1. Thanks to the congregations who have had a Church Education Sunday! For those who haven’t, we encourage you to do so.

The booklet of worship planning materials and other resources, distributed through *Equipping*, is also available at www.MennoniteEducation.org/Sunday. Many of the resources can be used throughout the year such as the bulletin inserts and options for children’s time. Some items are available in Spanish. A Sunday school discussion focusing on the education articles of the January 20, 2009, issue of *The Mennonite* is an additional option.

MEA strategic planning

Various groups were surveyed and gave feedback on MEA’s strategic plan. There was strong positive feedback from all groups for the three strategic areas of access, advocacy and accountability. Staff is currently using feedback from the survey and input from the MEA Board to further the plan and identify initiatives within the context of the strategic vision. Discover more about MEA on our Web site, www.MennoniteEducation.org.

MEA has authorized a study to research the options of delivering Mennonite education at a distance and the benefits and limitations of each option. The results of this study will be available later in 2009.

Meet some of the MEA staff

In October, Tim Burkholder began working at MEA part-time as the associate director focusing on church relations and development while carrying out his interim work as executive conference minister for Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. He became full-time in January 2009. Tim has years of experience working for the church and church-related organizations.

In January, Marc Yoder began serving as the director of the Faculty Calling Project (FCP). FCP is a collaborative effort of Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Church USA, and the Mennonite colleges, universities and seminaries, to establish and maintain a database of candidates who are interested in teaching at a Mennonite college, university or seminary. Marc is an alumnus of Bethel College and Hesston College and a former MBE board member. He was the executive vice president for academic affairs of Hesston College until he retired in 2006.

Ongoing prayer concerns

Pray for the organizations that are part of the **Mennonite Early Childhood Network** as they minister to Mennonite and community children. Also remember parents of preschool children.

Pray for the primary and secondary schools that are part of **Mennonite Schools Council** as they incorporate faith into a quality education.

Pray for **Mennonite colleges/universities** as their staffs reach out to potential students. Encourage your congregation to have a Mennonite education bulletin board.

Pray for **Mennonite seminaries** as their professors help students of all ages to discover God's will for their lives.

Pray for the Racial/Ethnic students who receive scholarships from the **Racial/Ethnic Leadership Education programs**.

Pray for the **Instituto Bíblico Anabautista** program, the study centers, tutors and students.

Pray for **administrators, presidents and board members** of all the Mennonite institutions who work to make their institutions financially viable during these challenging economic times. Please support them with your gifts, as God leads.

Pray for **MEA staff** as they work to make connections between Mennonite education and Mennonite Church USA .

Consider calling MEA toll-free at 866-866-2872 or e-mail info@MennoniteEducation.org for a free subscription to *Prayers for Faith and Learning*.

Mountain States Mennonite Conference intersects with Mennonite education in many ways:

Church relations:

Congratulations on the appointment of the first representative from Mountain States on the Bethel College board, a position made available from the several appointments made by Western District. Donovan Nickel is in this position and serves the board with excellent financial expertise.

Members serving on Mennonite education boards and committees:

Bethel College: Brett Birky, First Mennonite, Denver; Donovan Nickel, Greeley

We regret any omissions or errors. Please send corrections to info@MennoniteEducation.org.

Giving to Mennonite education from Mountain States Mennonite Conference congregations*,

Feb. 1, 2008 – Jan. 31, 2009

\$14,474.01

Thank you for your generous support!

**Includes gifts for higher education, Racial/Ethnic Leadership Education and Mennonite Education Agency*

Mennonite Education Agency, strengthening Mennonite Church USA through education

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