



*Rooted and  
Built Up in Christ*

*Colossians 2:6-7*

## Assembly Reflections

I was not one of Tabor's delegates at the Assembly but rather attended as Western District Staff which I have done for the last 22 years. Assemblies that are held at a distance as this one was are always more challenging than when they take place here in central Kansas. However the WDC Texas churches were very hospitable and worked hard to make the time memorable and meaningful. I appreciated their enthusiasm and joy to be able to host this Assembly in their state. The mini festival that they sponsored on Saturday evening was a blast with games and a huge amount of ethnic food, all provided at no cost to the conference.

Another highlight for me was meeting a couple from Rainbow Mennonite Church who were new to the Mennonite faith. They were former Baptist missionaries in Japan and learned to know some Mennonites there. After retiring to Kansas City, they sought out a Mennonite Church to become part of. They were so excited to meet new Mennonite people, learn more about Western District and to worship with the group that it was inspiring to me and I looked at things that I had done at Assembly year after year in a new light. During the weekend as I watched these two people make new connections with long-time Assembly attendees I was struck that this is what Assembly is all about: forming friendships and relationships between people from different churches who are also striving to live lives that are positive and life affirming in their churches, communities and the world. I feel that it is hard for a church to go it alone, but when we can join with other churches and look for ways that we can work together, we can become a positive force to the people around us. Good things happen when we focus on areas of connection with each other and dwell on our similarities and not on how we are different.

*~ Phyllis Regier*

This was the 14th year in a row that I have been at WDC Annual Assembly! Guess that has something to do with the fact that I work for WDC and I'm required to be there!

As WDC Administrative Assistant, I am an integral part of many, many details that make Annual Assembly happen. After months of planning and meetings, phone calls, emails, and attending to details, it is always a relief when the weekend finally arrives, and we pray that all the hard work will come together as planned and that things will run smoothly. A behind-the-scenes incident happened this year at the Women's Lunch on Saturday. As Aurora Parchmont (Iglesia Menonita Casa del Alfarero, Pasadena, TX) was sharing her testimony, some hotel staff were in the room attending to the lunch and were moved to tears by her testimony. My understanding is that, as a result of Aurora's testimony, one of the staff persons gave her life to Christ! God works in incredible ways!

One of my main responsibilities at Annual Assembly is to welcome and register people as they arrive. So, I get to see and talk to everyone who comes! When a man from Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Esperanza in Dallas walked up to the registration table, I greeted him by his first name since I knew him from previous years. He was so impressed that I remembered him, and commented on this to me several times during the weekend. But that's how it is... you meet people and get to know them and then it's so great to see them again another year!

For me, the WDC Annual Assembly does mean a lot of work! But I also see people coming together, friendships being nurtured, and new relationships being formed. I see times of moving worship, where faith is fed and people are challenged in their Christian walk. It is always a full weekend where many memories are made!

*~Nancy Funk*

I represented Camp Mennoscah at the WDC annual assembly, and since this was my first year attending, I was excited to make new connections with many congregations and reconnect with those I have known already. Overall, I experienced strong support for Camp Mennoscah and its ministry. One of our goals at camp has been to find ways to connect in greater capacity to the congregations in Texas, so meeting more people from these areas helped develop possibilities we will explore in the near future.

The worship times during the assembly reflected a diversity we don't often experience at Tabor, with Friday's opening worship music being led by Evangelical Garifuna Church of Houston, one of the WDC church plants in Houston. We sang songs in Spanish, English, and Garifuna languages. For the delegate session, I chose to sit at a table that included several members/leaders of Hispanic Mennonite Churches. I did not catch everything that was said in Spanish, but I was happy to listen, trying not to pressure anyone to translate into English for my sake. Violeta was at my table and helped fill in some of the gaps.

During the delegate session open mic time, one woman expressed an interest in churches bringing/sending young people (20's – 40's) to the next WDC assembly, training them to be involved as delegates because they are the future of our church. Marty Troyer of Houston Mennonite Church challenged other congregations to celebrate the strengths of a small congregation rather than seeing smaller member numbers as a hindrance or something to be avoided.

~Michael Unruh

WDC Assembly was a great time for us to connect with old friends—like Maynard's neighbor when he was growing up!—and to make new friends. It was fun to see how many young pastors and women are a part of leadership in the WDC! We also connected with Jeff Franzen because he lives very close to where the conference was held, and we happened to be eating supper with him when he heard that his grandma had passed. It was fun for Carol to be able to share a seminar about the Upside Down King bible study, and we both enjoyed the worship services. We noted that Tabor probably had the highest number of people in attendance from any church—of course it helped to have Phyllis Regier, Nancy Funk, Peter and Katherine Goerzen, and Michael Unruh there in leadership positions. Phyllis got a standing ovation for her work at WDC, and that was real cool. The Doubletree chocolate chip cookies were exceptional as always!

~Carol Duerksen and Maynard Knepp

For the WDC assembly, we brought our children to a church conference for the first time. They had a wonderful experience with the children's activities, and at the festival at Luz del Evangelio.

It was special to be present for the celebration of WDC's 125th anniversary, remembering the many connections our congregation has had to the life and mission of WDC over the years. Our worship services reflected the ways in which our conference continues to change and grow.

~Peter Goerzen

This was my first time attending the Western District Conference, but I enjoyed the experience overall. The worship service on Friday night included music that is not typical in most Mennonite churches. While I appreciate hymns and like singing them, I also appreciated the change because I enjoy a wide variety of music styles. The worship band led songs that I had never heard before and it included a keyboard, a guitarist, and singers. The rest of this worship time was very interesting, as was the worship service on Sunday morning – which included a fantastic sermon that addressed issues of immigration.

On Saturday, the meeting took place in the morning and workshops were offered in the afternoon. All of the workshops I chose were very interesting, but one of my highlights was attending one on the topic of immigration. Living in Kansas for my entire life so far has largely disconnected me from immigration issues. I hear stories from friends or online but tend to brush them off with the belief that the full story is not being shared. However, after hearing some personal accounts of injustice that our Government puts people who appear to be an immigrant through, I am saddened to think that many stories I have heard in the past were probably truer than I elected to believe. I appreciated the awareness the conference brought to people who attended the gathering.

Overall, attending the conference was a positive experience and I am glad I had the opportunity to go.

~Jayce Yoder

### *Katherine's Candor*

I am always grateful for the opportunity to gather together with sisters and brothers in Christ from around WDC, to worship together, to fellowship together, and to hear stories from churches around the Conference. Some highlights for me included the Festival of Booths at Iglesia Luz del Evangelio and the meal they provided, the Executive Board calling for justice for our Hispanic-Latino/a brothers and sisters in response to the passing of Texas SB-4, and the fact that our children were able to go with us and experience what it means to be church in a larger context. I am also grateful for the experience to attend Ana Alicia Hinojosa's workshop on Immigration. She is the Immigration Education Coordinator for MCC Central States and it is her workshop that largely inspired my sermon on immigration. I once again encourage all of you to go to [mcc.org/immigration](http://mcc.org/immigration) to learn more and seek additional action steps that we can take on behalf of our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ. Thanks be to the God whose love knows no borders!

~Pastor Katherine