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Ellen Fox representing the Development Committee and Ken Gingerich representing the SEED Project met recently to develop a rationale for financial support of MSMC.

"We developed a quick list of values on a piece of scrap paper that began to make the case for our conference. It soon morphed into an extensive list of noteworthy "assets". There are lots of good things happening in our midst. We can see that MSMC is deep and multi-dimensional—and serious about letting God's love flow through us.

We're sure there's much more. We invite your additions to the list. We invite your prayers for the health of our conference and we also invite your financial support."

Ellen Fox
Ken Gingerich



- 1. Relational accountability.** We are a mosaic of congregations that are uniquely responding and ministering in a local context. We are also interdependent—supporting and praying for one another, providing both counsel and grace in our differences.
- 2. SEED** (Seek, Explore, Encourage and work to Develop vital churches). SEED has been able to foster and encourage new growth in the conference—from support for Anabaptist Fellowship of Alamosa and Sojourn Mennonite Church, to creative projects like the Anabaptist Songwriter's Challenge, to nurturing and encouraging the connection with the Mexico City Mennonite Conference (CIEAMM). SEED works at identifying and nurturing new expressions of life and vitality across the conference.
- 3. The Dialogue Resource Team.** The DRT consists of Mennonite professionals within Mountain States Conference called to the ministry of reconciliation as it relates to conference and congregational life. The hope is to expand the resources available through the DRT. Currently seven persons have been affirmed by conference leadership as part of the team.
- 4. "Western friendly"**. Many of us who are transplants from other parts of the U.S. notice the difference in the way folks in the west interact and have adopted a more informal and open style of relating—probably because the great distances that separate us foster a need for a friendly and honest way of connecting. Watch for that smile of recognition and a knowing hug at a conference gathering or the annual MCC relief sale.
- 5. A family**—even though most of us are actually NOT related! It may be the openness and influence of the region, but MSMC has one of the higher percentages of "convinced" Anabaptists among regional Mennonite conferences. And while there are a number of actual cousins scattered throughout our congregations, we try to practice being a family because of our common call to follow Jesus as Anabaptist Christians first—not necessarily because of cultural connections.
- 6. Engaged younger adults.** We recognize that the future shape of the church will be very different—and that the needs of families and younger adults may more likely be met in non-traditional ways, outside

the walls of our meeting houses. MSMC is exploring ways of connecting and supporting new expressions of faith and community by recognizing the value of house fellowships and other gatherings that nurture faith.

- 7. In a partnership with CIEAMM** (Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas Anabautistas Menonitas de Mexico)—an urban conference of Mennonites concentrated mostly in Mexico City. The SEED committee is working to bring former CIEAMM conference moderators (ministers) Fernando Perez and Rebeca G. Torres to our conference. SEED is working with Beloved Community Mennonite Church to sponsor Fernando and Rebeca in a multi-cultural church-plant. MSMC sent a small delegation to CIEAMM's annual retreat/conference in last fall. CIEAMM has much to teach us about developing vibrant ministry with very limited resources.
- 8. Becoming virtually connected.** We know there are many Mennonites scattered across our vast region who are unable to be a regular part of a congregation. The Leadership Board is working with SEED on a plan to help connect widely dispersed Mennos in a virtual community through social media, traveling "circuit riders" and other attempts to sew our conference quilt together.
- 9. Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp!** What else can we say? This wonderful piece of real estate on the slopes of Pikes Peak is a gem that provides camping programs, family camp, retreat and conference facilities to MSMC and far beyond. We know that life-changing discernment and inspiration often takes place in the midst of the vistas and glens of the surrounding forests. Operated in cooperation with South Central Conference, RMMC is a value and point of pride and service that we think is nearly unmatched in any other region of the Mennonite Church.
- 10. Widely scattered.** We are traditional rural congregations located in the Arkansas, Pecos and San Juan River watersheds that continue to find innovative ways of ministering to their communities and the unique challenges of dropping populations, under-employment and poverty. We are smaller-town congregations in the Rio Grande, Colorado and South Platte River watersheds that are rising to the challenges of homelessness,

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family violence, hunger and other issues. We are urban congregations in mile-high cities (Yes there are two of them!) that encourage newly-released prisoners, work with immigrants and community-police relations. We are in the trenches!

11. Blessed by innovative ministries. In recent years we've recognized "outside the box" passion ministries like Casa de Paz, a transitional program for immigrants as they are released from Denver's GEO detention center; RAWTools, a creative and prophetic voice that is addressing violence by melting guns into garden tools; and TiLT (Taos Initiative for Life Together) which is developing a transformational experience for people interested in life-change that honors creation. Each contributes to MSMC's identity.

12. Benefitting from service partnerships with Mennonite Mission Network. With the presence of Service Adventure units in Albuquerque and Colorado Springs and a Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) unit in Alamosa, our conference benefits from the presence of young adults from other parts of the US and beyond. Service continues to be a vital part of MSMC's identity. In addition, the DOOR Network started and headquartered in Denver as a vision developed by MCC volunteers is now sponsored by Mennonite Mission Network's Christian Service department. DOOR is an ecumenical program that partners with numerous other denominations.

13. Recipients of transformative congregational vision. Renovated congregations like Defiance Church (formerly Glenwood Mennonite), Living Light of Peace (formerly Arvada Mennonite) and Alive with Grace in Pueblo are examples of new life and energy arising in congregations that were struggling or even disbanded. Being a conference that is willing to let old things pass away so new life can emerge is a sign of a healthy, risk-taking and vital community.

14. Receiving new congregations. Even as several con-

gregations have disbanded or withdrawn from MSMC, new congregations have emerged. Anabaptist Fellowship of Alamosa, Iglesia El Centro, Sojourn Mennonite and Beloved Community—a Mennonite Congregation, are examples of creative new ways of expressing Anabaptist Christianity in the context of our diverse region. New gathering points are emerging in other parts of the conference.

15. Experiencing pastoral transitions. Three of our larger churches are undergoing changes in leadership. Each congregational process is unique. Pray for Albuquerque Mennonite, First Mennonite of Denver and Beth El Mennonite as they revisit structures, vision and ministries and adapt to new leadership styles and staffing.

16. Blessed by the leadership of many gifted pastors. One of the advantages of being a smaller conference is the sense of comradery and friendship of our pastors—despite some diversity. We are also attracting some younger and very talented leaders who are helping congregations transition to the reality of being communities of Christ-followers in a decidedly post-Christian culture.

17. Experiencing conference transition. We've said good-bye to Herm Weaver, Jaime Lazaro and more recently Annie Lengacher Browning. Transitional pastors, Linford and Mary Etta King are listening to congregations and individuals, collecting data and working with **Leadership Board** on an updated organizational model as we prepare to hire permanent staff whose gifts will fit the shape of our future. **The Ministerial Council** continues to work with congregational calls for guidance and counsel in leadership transitions. A new **Leadership Discernment Committee** is working to identify the gifts of people who can fill leadership positions and the **Development Committee** is looking at new ways of creating resources that will support conference ministries.

