

Get to Know MSMC Leadership Board

Meet Eldon Mast: “A spiritual commitment to doing the next right thing”

By Rev. Amy S. Zimbelman



Eldon Mast’s professional life has been rich and varied. He’s worked as a paperboy, an auto mechanic, a firefighter, a paramedic, a weatherman, and a programmer of a system that allows people to text 911 to get help. He now works as a director for Sierra Wireless from his remote location in Longmont, using his training as a computer scientist and mathematician.

But as interesting as his career has been, his volunteer life in service to the church might be even richer.

“It was always demonstrated to me growing up that it’s important to be involved,” Eldon says. “With regard to doing church, I learned: *Just say yes*. I have a spiritual commitment to doing the next right thing in service.”

And so, from his youth, Eldon has served the church in many capacities.

It began in his hometown of Lancaster, a conservative Mennonite community where his father was a social worker and his mother was a homemaker and administrative assistant.

“My congregation asked younger people to be involved in church leadership so I was able to observe how those meetings were held and given an opportunity to provide insight,” he says.

As a young man, Eldon moved to Washington, D.C. to spread his wings. There he began working in telecommunications and met and married his wife Terry, a writer and editor who now works as a master nutrition therapist. Eldon connected with a Mennonite church in Fairfax, Virginia and soon became their church chair.

When his company needed to open an office out West, Eldon and Terry jumped at the opportunity, as they were drawn to the area and had various family members in Colorado. Once they moved in early 1995, they became committed to deep relationships within Mountain States Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. The first year, they visited many of the churches in the conference and before joining Boulder Mennonite Church (BMC).

Unsurprisingly, Eldon again found himself in church leadership. As his family settled here and he and Terry raised their three daughters, Eldon has served as church chair of BMC and board chair for Mennonite Urban Ministries in Denver. He currently serves on the Leadership Board of Mountain States Mennonite Conference and the nominating committee at BMC.

But what is it about the Mennonite Church that makes him want to give up so much of his precious free time?

“Being a bit different from the dominant culture and dominant Christianity has always been important to me,” he says. “I am an ethnic Mennonite and I no longer call myself a Christian; I call myself a follower of Jesus. I ask myself: *What am I doing to make a difference? To be distinctive? To follow an upside-down kingdom?*”

He continues: “It’s not like I planned my life to be in church leadership/service/volunteering, but when I’m invited, I take a look, pray the serenity prayer, and say yes if it’s the right thing.”

And Eldon’s witness to a peculiar upside-down kingdom extends beyond his congregation. Uncharacteristic of many progressive Mennonites, Eldon likes the word *evangelism*. “I gravitate to evangelism: I latch onto good ideas very quickly,” he says. “In my work life, that means getting excited about a new product or project. But it’s also led to sharing my faith perspective with other people. When people at work or in the community find out

that I'm Mennonite, they're taken aback and they're curious. I talk about what makes me a peculiar Anabaptist follower of Jesus...it's a fun message to share."

When asked what he hopes for Mountain States Mennonite Conference, he talks about visioning for the future with the next generation of Anabaptists.

"As Anabaptists, we ask: 'How is God speaking to us now?'" Eldon says. "We're at that stage in our conference where we can ask: Where do we want to go? What is our confession of faith right now as a conference? What work is God already doing that we want to support?"

"Some things that we could speak to include inequality and injustices in our society. But I also want to offer the keys to the younger generation to see what they think are the most important topics to address. I think it's important for me to sit back to listen and examine what I'm hearing younger folks say about what's really important to the future of the church and conference. Maybe we'll come up with a 3- to 5-year plan, or maybe just the next right thing."