



WMSC and Leadership

by Jocele Meyer

My six years as a member of the executive committee of the churchwide Women's Missionary and Service Committee (WMSC) were learning and growing experiences. The committee was made up of women from rural and urban areas with a variety of congregations and of different cultural backgrounds. As a commission, we worked alongside the other denominational commissions. We became acquainted on a first-name basis with those leading the Mennonite Church (most of whom were men). New opportunities and responsibilities, sometimes frightening, challenged and stretched the women of WMSC.

During the regular executive committee meetings, we shared about our personal lives. We sang, prayed and worshiped together while considering agenda items. The support of the committee members gave each of us courage to lead where we were planted. Through our trust in God, we had the courage to move into broader areas.

Committee members were introduced to a variety of spiritual disciplines such as silence, Bible study, meditation and journaling. These often were a part of our retreats, and we would then share these disciplines with women who were our counterparts in the various conferences in the U.S. and Canada. Recognizing individual gifts and affirming the gifts of each committee member were important as we worked together.

We learned by chairing committees, speaking to a variety of groups, leading retreats and Bible study groups and by writing for VOICE, the WMSC publication.

Members of the church agencies became acquainted with women who could work and lead in various ways, and they called on these women to serve in various roles. After my six-year term, first as vice president then as president, I served on several boards of directors and worked with Mennonite Central Committee in leadership roles.

A highlight of my term on the WMSC executive committee came when I was one of two delegates appointed to represent WMSC at the first All India Mennonite Women's Conference. About 500 women from the Mennonite-related conferences in India assembled for a weeklong conference.

We were met with gracious hospitality in homes and churches as we assembled to worship in celebration of our common oneness as Christians. The song, "I have decided to follow Jesus,"

took on new meaning when I learned that some people had left their family and friends when they became Christians. We regularly ate delicious curries cooked in huge pots over open fires while we sat on mats on the ground. Hearing vibrant testimonies in several languages gave new insights. A highlight of the conference was the communion service where we were served local bread and juice made from boiled raisins. Foot washing was meaningful when we washed the dusty feet of one another.

I brought back to the United States a new awareness of and appreciation for Christian brothers and sisters in another culture. Having experienced a different culture, I led with greater humility realizing my North American ways were not the only ways.

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