

The mission of South Central Conference is to produce healthy, missional congregations by resourcing, connecting, and empowering them to be Christ in the world.

Leadership Development Grant

The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC), located in Wichita, recently created a special grant opportunity for church-related organizations. Acting on an invitation from KLC staff, South Central Conference (SCC) and Western District Conference (WDC) submitted a joint application. Out of 17 proposals, we were one of 5 successful applicants, resulting in an award of \$50,000 worth of leadership training time, which will be divided 2/3 to WDC and 1/3 to SCC.

Purpose of the Kansas Leadership Center

The Kansas Leadership Center defines its purpose to “equip people with skills to make lasting, positive change for the common good. KLC is unique in the field of leadership development. Our goal is to assist and partner with Kansans to help them become more effective at exercising leadership, which will help make Kansas communities healthier, stronger and more prosperous.”

What does this grant mean for us?

In its application, SCC wrote that it “realizes that our local congregations have a unique opportunity to serve their communities and step into difficult community challenges. The leadership grant will equip pastors and congregational leaders to identify key issues in their communities, and assess required actions to bring about needed change for the common good. It will also give them tools to mobilize their congregations, helping their laity connect to the larger purposes. SCMC has set our focus to support transformational missional congregations, and realize our congregations will not be missional without strong leaders.”

“Our second initiative at South Central Mennonite Conference is church planting. Again, this requires strong and intuitive pastors and leaders. This training will help them manage risks and identify opportunities.”

Get Involved by attending educational sessions

Several members of the SCC Executive Committee have attended a one-day orientation session at KLC, with additional educational sessions to follow. The first of these, identified as the “Leadership for Adaptive Times” launch will be held on Thursday, January 29. 3:30-6:00 pm for pastors and 7:00-8:30 pm for pastors and lay leaders. The location will be First Mennonite Church in Halstead. Thane Chastain, Kansas Leadership Center coach, will introduce several key leadership concepts and the three seminars available to pastors and church leadership teams of South Central and Western District Conferences in 2015. The SCC share of the grant will make it possible for approximately 17 people to participate in one of the seminars to help church leaders move towards what they care about most deeply. Pastors will be receiving additional information soon about how they can be involved in this effort which is an unusually fruitful opportunity for us to engage in the missional and transformational leadership tasks that are sorely needed and highly valued.

“The Kansas Leadership Center equips people with the ability to make lasting change for the common good. KLC is different in the field of leadership development with its focus on leadership being an activity, not a role or position.”

-<http://kansasleadershipcenter.org/>



Kansas Leadership Center Building in Wichita (google.com/maps)

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MCC Annual Comforter Blitz (from hutchnews.com)

Annual Assembly Planning

A Program Planning Committee has been activated to plan for the annual assembly, scheduled for June 12-14 at Bethel Mennonite Church near Inman, KS. Committee members include Carolyn Rychener, Hesston Mennonite Church; Jim Ostlund, Journey@McPherson; Shirley Kroeker, Bethel Mennonite Church; and James Wenger, Whitestone Mennonite Church. Other participants from Bethel Mennonite Church include Pastor Bob Yates and Jerry Pankratz. Staff support will be provided by Becky King, Administrative Assistant, and Bill Zuercher, Ministry Coordinator.

An initial meeting was held on December 18 to begin the process of identifying a theme and possible speakers and other resources. The committee plans to meet monthly to continue the planning process, and will issue periodic updates to congregations to encourage attendance.

SCC Mennonite Women

By Dolores Banman, Vice President

The four-member Executive Committee has met for a second time and is working on planning for the year and going through the job descriptions of each office and committee. Members of the committee are Carolene Jackson, President; Dolores Banman, Vice President; Melissa Unruh, Secretary; and Myrna Cherry, Treasurer.

The committee is looking for ways to be a resource for women in local congregations, and is in the process of discerning the best way to do this. Be watching for more information regarding this item.

Some upcoming dates to keep in mind:

PREP March 6-7, 2015 - Sarasota, Florida

Comforter Blitz: Monday March 9, 2015, noon to 9:00 p.m.

Tuesday, March 10, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Spring Supper: March 26, 2015

Women and Girls' retreat: September 4-6, 2015 Camp Mennoscah

Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series

Hesston College will present its annual AVDS program on February 13 to 15, 2015, with the theme "Overcoming Evil: Ordinary People Making a Difference." A description of the program includes the following:

"Events such as violent conflicts in the Middle East, the shooting of an unarmed teen in Ferguson, MO, and countless examples of which we are all aware convince us there is evil in this world. Often it seems so overwhelming we feel powerless to find an effective response. Let's encourage each other to follow Jesus on the path of overcoming evil with good. Our path begins as we seek the peace of Jesus for the evil that is common to us all. Sometimes the path to peace creates conflict, requiring us to say, 'Enough is enough!' Internationally known voice for peace and Peace e Bene speaker John Dear will help us explore biblical foundations for justice and our own need for transformation. People from around the globe and in our local neighborhoods will share their peace stories. We will collectively brainstorm possible actions in which ordinary people can engage to help make a difference for ourselves, our families, our communities and the world."

Participants this year will include students from all of the Anabaptist colleges who identify with the Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship. Hesston College will serve as host for this annual event, which rotates among the colleges.

Another feature of the weekend will be a presentation by popular actor/humorist Ted Swartz, in a presentation "I'd Like to Buy an Enemy."

Register by phoning the Alumni/Church Relations office at 620-327-8109 or toll-free, 866-437-7866 or visit www.hesston.edu/avds for online registration and lodging options.

South Central Congregation Members Attend AVDS for only \$35!

South Central Conference has become an institutional sponsor of AVDS, which means that members of SCC congregations qualify for a reduced registration fee. Claim the lower rate on your registration form. This would be an excellent opportunity for those new to the Mennonite Church to learn more of the historical and theological underpinnings of the church's commitment to peace and justice issues.





Introducing Moderator-Elect Candidate: Gary Wolfer

The SCC Executive Committee is excited to announce their recommendation for Moderator- elect/ Moderator. Gary Wolfer will act as Moderator-elect until June, when the Executive Committee will recommend him as Moderator at the annual assembly. At that time the delegates will have an opportunity to affirm him in that role. Gary has demonstrated a great love for the Mennonite Church and for Jesus Christ, and we believe he is well equipped to lead the Conference.

Gary Wolfer was born on the Navajo Reservation in March of 1959. His family moved to the Hutchinson area in 1961 and began attending Pershing Street Mennonite (which later became South Hutchinson Mennonite and finally, Journey Mennonite), becoming a member in 1970. Over the years,

Gary has served in many different capacities including Sunday School teacher, youth sponsor, chorister and worship leader. Over the past 15 years, Gary served Journey Mennonite as an elder for a total of 9 years and was elder chair for 4 of those years.

Gary and his wife Kay have been married 33 years and have 3 children with 2 currently remaining in the home while attending college.

Professionally, Gary has been a software engineer for 35 years, but has also served in many other capacities holding titles such as Director of IT, Director of Manufacturing and Director of Technology, Efficiency and Quality. Gary currently works out of his home office as a software consultant for an Ohio-based consulting firm and has his own software and internet business in the Hutchinson, KS Area.

Gary has a heart for pastors and he has led a push for pastoral accountability groups and pastoral sabbaticals at Journey Mennonite. He has been and is currently an active participant in accountability groups for 3 different pastors over the past 20 years. Gary says, "Pastors are special people that God has gifted uniquely. Their passion is to serve God in the way that He leads. Unfortunately, the daily grind of being a pastor can eventually crowd out that passion for the Ministry and "equipping the saints". This is not what God wants. My prayer is that God will restore the passion of ministry to all pastors and leaders of congregations in South Central Conference, to the glory of God, so that the body of Christ will be strengthened and that communities will be blessed by the presence of God's people. And this, not to glorify South Central Conference or the Mennonite Church, but so that all will see that God is real and present in today's world and that he loves all of his creation."

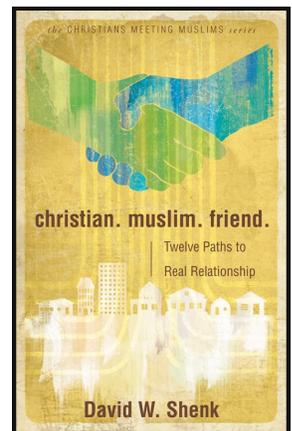
DO YOU KNOW?

By Joyce Zuercher, Conference Resource Advocate

The conflicts between Muslims and Jews, Christians and Jews, and different sects of Muslims continue to deepen and widen almost daily. As Anabaptist Christians, how can we respond? By building authentic relationships, says David W. Shenk, presently global consultant for Eastern Mennonite Missions. He has spent a lifetime living and working among Muslims, and in his latest book, *Christian, Muslim. Friend: Twelve Paths to a Real Relationship*, new at MennoMedia in late 2014, he shares many moving personal experiences from his years of building relationships with Muslims in Somalia, Kenya, and the United States.

Shenk is author or co-author of Herald Press' Christians Meeting Muslims series, of which this book is the fourth. In his other three books, he focuses on dialogue in the first, witness and invitation in the second, and peacemaking in the third, and felt compelled to focus on friendship in one more. These books are practical, not only for those who plan to work abroad among Muslims, but also within the United States, whether we have Muslim friends and neighbors or need guidance in how to pray. Find them at MennoMedia.org.

Several SCC churches have taken advantage of the weekend seminars on Christian/Muslim relations offered by Eastern Mennonite Missions, and are familiar with David Shenk as a member of the presenting team. Details about the seminars are at emm.org.



Pastor/Congregation News:

- Marion Bontrager has begun serving Mt. Pisgah Mennonite Church, Cherry Box, MO, as Regional Conference Minister.
- Kara Swartzendruber has begun serving part-time as Family and Children Coordinator at Whitestone Mennonite Church.
- Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, Harper, KS, will hold its annual Pancake Day for the community on Saturday, January 31.
- David Norris, pastor of Spring Valley Mennonite Church, will begin a Bible study group in January, to be located on Main Street in Canton, with an invitation to Canton area residents.
- Hesston Mennonite Church has made space available in its education wing for Hesston College faculty, staff and students in the music and drama departments from December 9, 2014, through July, 2015, while Northlawn, the performing arts building, undergoes extension renovation.
- Three churches in south Texas (Rey de Gloria, Good News and Fountain of Living Water), and possibly others, are beginning a missional discipleship process under the guidance of Marvin Lorenzana, staff person with Mennonite Mission Network. Marvin was the resource person for the Pastor/Leader/ Spouse retreats both in south Texas and in Hesston.
- Chester Slagell, retired pastor of Pleasant View Mennonite Church near Hydro, OK, died on December 22 at age 87.
- Darwin Hartman has spent the past 11 years as pastor of Pleasant View Mennonite Church in Hydro, OK. He is concluding his service at the end of December, 2014. His future plans are still pending.

Executive Committee Meetings

The Executive Committee has met once since the last Messenger was prepared, with an additional Christmas gathering with spouses for a time of fellowship. The meeting was held in McPherson, Kansas, to enable committee members to visit an old, vacated Dillons' supermarket building which has been purchased by Journey Mennonite Church as a worship and ministry center for Journey @ McPherson, once extensive remodeling is completed. Major agenda items include the following:

*Met with Thomas Stanley from the Kansas Leadership Center to learn about a grant being offered to church groups in support of leadership development training opportunities in 2015 (see separate article for details).

*Continued discussion on the possibility of a summer 2015 VS opportunity, providing resources to small congregations for Bible school programs.

*Scheduled a visit by several members to the Perryton (TX) Mennonite Church which has expressed interest in seeking affiliation with South Central Conference.

*Confirmed plans to send a pastor/congregation review team to south Texas to assist a congregation asking for such assistance.

*Received an update on the appointment of a Program Planning Committee to develop plans for the 2015 assembly scheduled for June 12-14 at Bethel Mennonite Church near Inman, KS (see separate article for details).

*Considered the possibility of expanding Executive Committee membership to include one or more members at large, to broaden the representation.

*Heard a report from the Mennonite Church USA Constituency Leaders Council meeting held near Chicago in mid-October. The next meeting of CLC is scheduled for March 26-28 at Bethel College.

*Spent time in conversation with Gary Wolfer, member of Journey@South Hutchinson, as a prospect for moderator-elect.

*Received a report on the Pastor/Leader/Spouse retreat held on October 24-25, including some possible follow-up related to missional discipleship training by individual congregations.

*Agreed to relate to Hesston College as an institutional sponsor for the Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series, as a means of adding encouragement to SCC pastors and congregations to participate in the next event, scheduled for Feb. 13-15, 2015 (see separate article).

*Set a regular meeting schedule for the second Thursday each month; the next meeting is scheduled for January 8, 2015.

Graduate Student Scholarship

Graduate Students in Healthcare Professions: Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF) offers scholarship funding for Anabaptist students to learn and serve in cross-cultural mission/service settings in developing countries. Deadline for 2015-16 academic year is May 15, 2015. For details and application form, see <http://mennohealth.org/SET>, email info@mennohealth.org, or call 1-888-406-3643.

Rural Ministry Seminar: The Mission of a Rural Congregation:

Western District Conference, in conjunction with Central Plains Mennonite Conference and AMBS-Kansas Center will host a Rural Ministry Seminar on Saturday, January 24, 2015 from 8 – noon at Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston, KS. This seminar is presented by expert S. Roy Kaufman and will explore the unique mission of the church in a rural context. This seminar will include lecture, case studies, discussion groups, and a catered lunch. Cost is \$39 per individual and \$100 per congregation to bring an unlimited number of congregation members. This seminar will be held in conjunction with a one-hour AMBS seminary course taught by S. Roy Kaufman. This course will meet January 20 and 22 from 6:30 – 9:30pm and January 24 from 8 – 4:30. In addition to discussing the mission of a rural congregation, the course will also explore preaching and pastoral care in a rural setting, as well as the prophetic calling of rural ministry. This course is designed especially for pastors and congregational leaders in a rural context. This course is available for credit or audit. Please see www.ambs.edu/ruralministry or contact kccordinator@ambs.edu for more information.

2015 Calendar

January

24 Rural Ministry Seminar, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, KS

29 Leadership for Adaptive Times launch, First Mennonite Church, Halstead, KS

February

13-15 AVDS, Hesston College

March

6-7 Mennonite Women USA PREP, Sarasota, Florida

9-10 Comforter Blitz, Journey @ Yoder

26 Mennonite Women Spring Supper; location and speaker to be announced

June

12-14 SCC Annual Assembly, Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, KS

30-July 5 MC USA Biennial Assembly, Kansas City, MO

July

21-26 Mennonite World Conference Assembly Gathered, Harrisburg, PA

27-29 MWC Assembled Scattered, south central Kansas (tentative)

September

4-6 Women and Girls' retreat, Camp Mennoscah