



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

### EXPLORATION OF PEACE IN ISRAEL- PALESTINE COMING TO KANSAS

To encourage the pursuit of peace in Palestine and Israel, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S. has launched monthly gatherings in the United States this year for people who want to explore their beliefs, concerns and understanding of this conflict. One of these regional meetings is scheduled for south central Kansas, September 5-7.

If you are concerned about issues dividing Israel and Palestine and you are ready to think about your role as a Christian in influencing a peaceful resolution, plan to come to “Conversations for Peace in Palestine and Israel,” a Mennonite Central Committee U.S. and Peace and Justice Support Network (PJSN) of Mennonite Church USA event with J. Daryl Byler. Byler is a former MCC representative in Palestine and Israel, Iran, Iraq and Jordan and the current executive director for Eastern Mennonite University’s Center for Justice and Peacemaking.

“Agreeing on ways to love and encourage peace in the context of the Middle East is a challenge for Christians in the U.S., including MCC supporters, because many have different theological perspectives about the modern-day state of Israel,” Byler said. “As we explore these topics together, I hope our understanding of others’ perspectives and the needs of Palestinians and Israelis will grow.”

With sessions scheduled from Friday, September 5 through Sunday noon, September 7, the topics of conversation will include:

- paths to peace for everyone in the region
- theological understandings about the state of Israel
- fundamental justice issues in the region
- stories of Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians.

The tentative schedule, subject to expansion, includes the following:

Sept. 5

11:00 am- Forum at Hesston College

11:45 am- Lunch meeting for pastors and others interested, Hesston College cafeteria

7-9 pm- Area meeting at Journey Mennonite Church, South Hutchinson, KS. This event will focus on the theology of Israel-Palestine.

Sept. 6

9:30-11:30 am- Area meeting at Hesston Mennonite Church. This event will focus on paths to peace for everyone in the region, Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Both Daryl Byler and Jason Boone, Coordinating Minister for the PJSN, will be available for other meetings with interested groups and congregations, including Saturday afternoon, Saturday evening and Sunday morning. They are open to invitations for any of these times. A complete schedule will be made available to churches closer to the date.

In addition, MCC U.S. is working closely with Mennonite Church USA on learning tours for church leaders to Palestine and Israel during the next five years and welcomes the opportunity to develop similar plans with other supporting denominations. Participants will visit historical sites and observe how the Palestinian-Israeli conflict affects the people who live there today. Visits with MCC partners—Palestinian and Jewish organizations that work for peace and justice—will challenge participants to consider what role they play in the conflict and its resolution.

## ANNUAL MEETING HELD IN HARPER

The annual meeting of South Central Conference churches was hosted by Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, Harper, KS, June 13-15, with over 100 persons in attendance. The theme for the weekend was "Re-membering Jesus in his Biblical context," developed in three messages by Michele Hershberger and Marion Bontrager. Both are faculty members of Hesston College, serving in the Bible and Ministry Department. Marion taught for over 40 years and is newly retired, but still active in outside teaching assignments and as a Regional Conference Minister serving South Central Conference congregations.

Michele's message on Friday evening was entitled "Full Bodied Salvation: remembering the story of Exodus-Sinai"; Marion's on Saturday evening was entitled "Dismembering and Re-membering God"; and a joint message on Sunday morning was entitled "Re-membering our mission: Reliving Pentecost and the Jerusalem Council." The Sunday morning message was interspersed with numerous personal stories of challenge and restoration. The messages were recorded and can be made available on DVD (audio only). Requests for any or all of them should be sent to the conference office at [scc@sccmenno.org](mailto:scc@sccmenno.org).

A well-attended delegate session occupied Saturday morning. Forty-nine delegates from 15 congregations were present, along with an equal number of nondelegates, including a good representation from Mennonite Church USA and the churchwide agencies.

A Bible reading and listening exercise known as Dwelling in the Word opened the meeting, using Romans 12:1-4 as the text for meditation and table group sharing.

Pastors credentialed since the 2013 annual meeting were recognized. In addition, retiring pastor Mervin Hershberger from Argentine Mennonite Church in Kansas City was recognized. Mervin has served for over 20 years while working essentially full-time as a radiologic technologist. Current plans call for a part-time interim pastor who currently lives in Kansas City, with some demographic survey of the neighborhood to help

inform vision and opportunities for longer-term ministry.

Former administrative assistant Emily Miller terminated the end of March, and has been replaced by Becky King, who moved with her husband Derek and daughter Sarah from Harrisonburg, Virginia early in the year in order for Derek to serve as Associate Pastor of Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS.

Reports were received from two congregations in south Texas which have recently begun building projects: Rey de Gloria in Brownsville and Fuente de Agua Viva in Los Fresnos. Both are ready to receive volunteers from the north to assist with the building, with an immediate need for block layers.

Terry Diener, lead pastor of Clinton Frame Mennonite Church in rural Goshen, Indiana was present as a visitor, as an expression of interest in exploring possible affiliation with South Central Conference. That congregation has voted to leave Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference as of June 30. While South Central does not initiate conversations with congregations considering new area conference affiliations, its leadership has been and continues to be open to engage in conversation with others who wish to remain connected to Mennonite Church USA once a decision has been made to change area conference affiliation.

Howard Wagler and James Wenger reported for the Church Growth and Visioning Team, reinforcing the idea that healthy existing congregations are the most effective at planting new communities of worship and outreach. We learn how to be missionaries in our home communities when we are able to articulate and live out mission, vision, modeling, program and story. The role of the area conference is to provide support for local efforts, and is in the process of developing some guidelines for church planting and growth. A missing link in many congregations is the identification of persons who have a sense of calling and vision for outreach.

In response to a request from a number of pastors several months ago, the conference leaders brought a proposed Statement of Position to clarify where we see ourselves in relation to denominational statements and guidelines. After discussion, it was agreed that the proposal would

be termed a Statement of Affirmation, which reads as follows:

*South Central Mennonite Conference will continue to uphold the teaching of the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (1995) and expect credentialed leadership in SCMC to teach and practice ministry consistent with our common confession.*

Several changes in the constitution and bylaws were approved, most of them amounting to updates that align the documents with existing practice.

Reports were received from the Conference Resource Advocate with primary attention to a new children's curriculum called *Shine*; Camp Mennoscah which has just announced a new Executive Director, John Stoesz; Mennonite Disaster Service; Mennonite Church USA and churchwide agencies, including some attention to volunteer opportunities at the Kansas City 2015 biennial convention (see separate article); Hesston College; and Bethel College.

A two-year long effort to find a moderator-elect has been unsuccessful to date. Moderator Linda Yutzy has agreed to serve an additional year while the search continues.

Additional features of the weekend included workshops, Mennonite Women's lunch, pastor/spouse supper, and a coffeehouse. Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church provided or arranged for attractive and appealing meals and facilities that served the needs of attendees with great satisfaction.

## SCC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

**T**he SCC Executive Committee has met three times since the last newsletter. Attention was given to the following agenda:

- \*No progress has been made in finding a moderator-elect.
- \*Darwin Hartman has agreed to serve as Regional Conference Minister for Oklahoma.
- \*Iglesia Menonite Fuente de Agua Viva (Fountain of Living Water) broke ground on April 12.

\*Iglesia Menonita Rey de Gloria (King of Glory) broke ground on May 31.

\*Discernment of response to congregations from other area conferences exploring possible affiliation with South Central.

\*Initial review of participation in Kansas City 2015 biennial MC USA convention.

\*Continuing assessment of church planting opportunities, including new opportunities with Argentine Mennonite Church in Kansas City. Approved funding for Gracie Tijerina to do some demographic research in the Argentine community as a preliminary step in creating a new vision for the congregation.

\*Review of applications for Administrative Assistant position.

\*Report from the March meeting of the MC USA Constituency Leaders Council.

\*Review of planning for the annual meeting in Harper, with particular attention to the delegate session and a draft of a Statement of Position (subsequently renamed Statement of Affirmation), plus some amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws.

\*Initial review of budget for the year beginning September 1, looking at new outreach opportunities, with acknowledgment of the favorable operation position for the current year.

\*Received a notification of a grant from The Schowalter Foundation for a demographic assessment of the Haven, Kansas community with a view toward future outreach.

\*Gave attention to the process of nominating persons for leadership positions.

\*Received updated information on leadership issues in south Texas, including a replacement for Regional Conference Minister Amzie Yoder.

\*Confirmed the date of Oct. 24-25 for the Pastor/Leader/Spouse retreat, with location to be determined. Marvin Lorenzana has been confirmed as the principal speaker (see separate article).

The Committee will meet next on July 16.

## PASTOR/CONGREGATION NEWS

**F**aith Mennonite Church, South Hutchinson, KS, had a final worship service on June 1. Interim Pastor Orlan Koehn returned to his home in Greeley, Colorado.

Darwin Hartman, lead pastor of Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Hydro, Oklahoma, has agreed to serve as Regional Conference Minister for Oklahoma churches.

Mervin Hershberger, long-time pastor of Argentine Mennonite Church in Kansas City, will retire at the end of summer. Sandeep Thomas, currently serving in youth ministry in the Kansas City area, will serve as half-time interim pastor for 6-9 months. Gracie Tijerina, Hesston College student, will spend about six weeks doing demographic surveys in the Argentine community as part of a process of developing a new mission and ministry for the congregation.

Alan Stucky ended his pastoral ministry at Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, KS on May 11, and has moved to Wichita where he is serving as pastor of a Church of the Brethren congregation.

Weldon Martens, pastor of Pleasant Valley during the 1990s, will return on a one-year interim pastor assignment beginning July 6.

Greensburg Mennonite Church hosted a motorcycle riders' worship service with over 70 persons present.

Whitestone Mennonite Church began using its renovated sanctuary on Easter Sunday. The church will celebrate 50 years in its present location October 17-19.

Iglesia Menonita Fuente de Agua Viva, Los Fresnos, Texas, had a groundbreaking service on April 12, and a concrete foundation has been poured.

Iglesia Menonita Rey de Gloria, Brownsville, Texas, had a groundbreaking service on May 31. The congregation is again providing a free summer daycare service for neighborhood children, many of whose parents are undocumented but have jobs with no ability to pay for such service.

John C. Murray, lead pastor of Hesston Mennonite Church, repeated his annual participation in the Council on Foreign Relations,

an invitation-only event in New York City, on June 24-26, and will give a report of his participation on Sunday afternoon, July 13, at 4 pm in the Hesston Mennonite Church Community Center.

## SCC MENNONITE WOMEN

By Veronica Sauder

**F**orty-two women met at the Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, KS, for our annual luncheon on June 14, 2014, as part of the annual South Central Conference meetings. We were treated to a delicious luncheon, followed by a very energetic and passionate presentation by Pam Gerber and Annie Gerber. Pam shared on the history of the youth program of Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, which serves the youth of their church as well as many un-churched youth in their community. Annie shared experiences, challenges and rewards of the program as well as information on their youth's upcoming trip to Bolivia in late June to work with their sister church. The passion for the program and love for these youth radiated in their voices, in their eyes and in the energy they brought to the presentation. We all were blessed. Blessings to all involved as they continue to minister to the youth of their church and community.

Prior to the luncheon, information was sent out to all women's groups regarding an opportunity to give to the Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church for their youth program. If you have not done that and would still like to contribute, please send a monetary gift or a gift card from Sam's Club to the Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, c/o Pam Gerber, 1020 East 14<sup>th</sup>, Harper, KS 67058. Your support is much appreciated. Thank you.

Save the dates of September 5 – 7, 2014, for our annual Women and Girls' Retreat at Camp Mennoscah. Join us beginning Friday evening with "Menno Spa". Norma Duerksen will be speaking on the theme of "How Can I Forgive? – Seeing the Inner Beauty of the Heart." Come enjoy a variety of sessions on Saturday afternoon, singing at the campfire, swimming and lots of good fellowship. Watch for registration forms coming to your church in July.

Western District Women in Mission have created an opportunity to give to Camp Mennoscah which we have joined in on. An information sheet was given to those who attended the luncheon during our annual meeting and information will be sent out to our women's contact persons at each church in the near future. The project consists of a Gift Registry set up at Bed Bath and Beyond and at Walmart especially for the needs of Camp Mennoscah. Also a list of valued gift cards is included. Please watch for details coming to your church.

## KANSAS CITY 2015

The biennial convention of Mennonite Church USA is only a year away—scheduled for June 30-July 5, 2015 in Kansas City, Missouri. South Central and Western District will serve as the host area conferences, with multiple opportunities for volunteer assignments. There is a range of types of opportunities available. People could choose to serve as full-time volunteers, which entails 40 hours of work during the convention week, or as part-time volunteers. There are different types of “perks” depending on how many hours you put in. You can read more about the guidelines for volunteer work here: <http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/registration/volunteer/>

The list of volunteer needs will keep evolving as we get closer, but these are some general categories of volunteers that we KNOW we will need:

- \*Volunteers for the Children's and Junior Youth Programming, from infant through junior high
- \*Ushers
- \*Servant Project Volunteers
- \*“On call” volunteers as needed should an emergency arise.
- \*Transportation volunteers
- \*Prayer Team volunteers
- \*Interpretation volunteers, primarily Spanish and sign language

For those of you who like to plan well ahead, you can feel free to fill out and submit our volunteer interest form.

[http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Form\\_VolunteerInterest\\_Form\\_2015.pdf](http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Form_VolunteerInterest_Form_2015.pdf)

## AMBS-KANSAS CENTER

The Great Plains extension of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, located in North Newton, Kansas, terminated its operation as an extension site on June 30, after years of declining enrollment and the increasing availability of online classes. It will continue as a site for seminary-level education, offering one course per term. In this new configuration, it has been renamed AMBS-Kansas Center, with an office in the Western District Conference building in North Newton. Catherine Goerzen will serve as the part-time coordinator of this new arrangement. Catherine and her husband Peter have been serving as co-pastors of Grace Hill Mennonite Church, rural Whitewater, KS. Peter has become the Campus Pastor and Director of Church Relations at Bethel College.

ANABAPTIST HISTORY AND THEOLOGY, taught by Lois Barrett, will meet on four weekends (Sept. 5-6; Oct. 10-11, Nov. 7-8 and Dec. 5-6 with Fridays: 6:30 - 9:30 pm and Saturdays: 8:30 am- 4:00 pm). This is a three hour course available for either credit or audit. This course is required for any seminary degree, and is recommended for all persons seeking ordination. If enrollment is 18 or fewer, the class will meet in the classroom at the Western District Conference offices in North Newton. If there are more than 18, an alternate location will be announced. All registration is done through [admissions@ambs.edu](mailto:admissions@ambs.edu). Early registration deadline is July 28--which also means a \$100 discount.

RURAL MINISTRY with S. Roy Kaufman, the week of January 20-24, 2015 in North Newton. This is available for one hour of credit. The plan is to schedule the Saturday a.m. session as a "continuing education" option for the public with something like "The mission of the rural congregation" as the topic. The class will meet

Tuesday (20th) and Thursday (22nd) plus all day on Saturday (24<sup>th</sup>) from 8:30 - 4:30, with the embedded Saturday a.m. conference as a stand-alone option. More detailed information about planning and schedule details will be available closer to the date; note the date now as a calendar item if this subject is of interest.

## DO YOU KNOW?

by Joyce Zuercher, Conference Resource Advocate

**S**hine: *Living in God's Light*, our new children's Sunday school curriculum for ages 3 through grade 8, is here! Sunday afternoon, June 22, at Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, around 60 Sunday school representatives from SCC and Western District gathered for a *Shine* launch, spearheaded by Marlene Bogard, assisted by MennoMedia and a committee from both conferences.

The afternoon began with pastor Tom Harder and family leading songs from *Shine*. Tom produced the *Shine* CD, and it includes a songbook with both notes and lyrics. The program continued with an introduction and overview of *Shine*, including a MennoMedia power point, after which the group broke into age-level interest groups to observe lesson enactments and take a closer look at the features at each level.

*Shine's* theme texts are Isaiah 9:2 (The people who walked in darkness...), Matt.5:14-16 (You are the light...), and Romans 12:2 (Do not be conformed...). It continues in the footsteps of previous series--Biblically based from an Anabaptist perspective, nurturing children and youth in faith and following Jesus in the Christian community. In *Shine*, peace teaching is overtly included in each lesson, as "peace connections", as are "spiritual practices", or ways to make awareness of God and communicating with Him part of daily life for even the youngest children.

The centerpiece of *Shine* is *Shine On, a Story Bible*. This colorfully illustrated book includes all the stories used in the first 3-year rotation of *Shine*, for grades K-6. It takes the place of the story pictures in current use, and should be in every classroom as well as every home, as a Sunday school and home connection. (Grandparents purchased copies from me at

conference!) As another home-Sunday school connection, leaflets to use and take home will replace the current workbooks for Early Childhood through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students.

Although *Shine* curriculum does not include youth, the good news is that *Generation Y* youth studies are available again, with five choices for the coming quarter, as well as YouthGuide, which can be downloaded from the MennoMedia website. Information about this has gone out to youth leaders across the conference; if you have not received it please let me know!

And remember, if you missed the conference workshop, the Launch, or still want to know more, I am available to help. Call or email and we'll see what we can arrange! Phone [620-327-2808](tel:620-327-2808) or email [zuercherj@embarqmail.com](mailto:zuercherj@embarqmail.com).

## PASTOR / LEADER / SPOUSE RETREAT

"Creating a Congregational Culture of Disciple Making -- Beginning with Leadership"

Mark your calendars: **October 24-25, 2014**

Location: **Crosswind Conference Center**, Hesston, Kansas

Who should attend: **Pastor and Congregational Leaders** (Elders, Overseers, Council Members, Etc.)

Resource Person: **Marvin Lorenzana**

**M**arvin Lorenzana was born in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. In 1994 he felt called by God to become a missionary to the country in the world with the third most Hispanics, the United States! In the US, he has served as a Youth Pastor, Associate Pastor, Senior Pastor and Church Planter with assignments in New Orleans, El Paso, Miami, and Harrisonburg. He is a licensed minister with Mennonite Church USA and lives in Harrisonburg, VA, along with his wife Mariana and two teenagers Pablo (16) and Alexa (14). Marvin currently works for Mennonite Mission Network as Coordinator for New Initiatives in the areas of *Discipleship and Leadership Development* and with Virginia Mennonite Missions as a Coach for Racial-ethnic Ministries in *Missional Church Thinking and Practice*. Marvin is also founder and director of

the Mennonite Hispanic Initiative (MHI) which seeks to plant new Missional Communities, develop leaders with a missional mindset and provide foundational theological education for Latino leaders in Virginia and surrounding areas.

Marvin has a BS in Management & Organizational Development from Eastern Mennonite University, a Masters of Divinity (MDiv) from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, and is currently

working on a Doctorate in Ministry as a Beeson Scholar at Asbury Theological Seminary where his Ministry Transformational Project (thesis) is on *Missional Discipleship and Leadership Development*.

## CALENDAR

### 2014

Aug. 19 Kansas Oklahoma Pastor/Peer Meeting, Inman KS

Sept. 5-7 Israel-Palestine Conversations, various locations

Sept. 5-7 Women and Girls' Retreat at Camp Mennoscah

Sept. 25-28 Hesston College Homecoming

Oct. 6-8 Mennonite Church USA Constituency Leaders Council, Chicago IL

Oct. 24-25 Pastor/Leader/Spouse Retreat at Crosswinds Conference Center Hesston, KS

### 2015

Jan. 20-24 AMBS-Kansas Center course on Rural Ministry, North Newton

June 30-July 5 Mennonite Church USA Convention in Kansas City

July 21-26 Mennonite World Conference in Harrisburg, PA