

South Central Mennonite Conference

MESSENGER

July-Sept. 2014



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

Whitestone Mennonite Church Celebrates 50 Years

Fifty years ago, the Whitestone Mennonite Church building was constructed in a wheat field on the north edge of Hesston. It began in 1886 as Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, many of whose founding members had immigrated from southeastern Pennsylvania and were instrumental in establishing Hesston College in 1909. One such immigrant, A.L. Hess, was the man after whom the town was named. A walk, run or bicycle ride will be organized over the approximate 4 miles between the two meeting sites, with tidbits of trivia and history along the way.

During the weekend of October 17-19, Whitestone will celebrate its 50th anniversary in its present location. It is no longer by itself in a wheat field, but rather is surrounded by residential neighborhoods and only a few blocks away from the town's largest employer, AGCO, which employs over 1,000 persons who manufacture a variety of agriculture-related equipment.

Former pastors and church members are especially invited to participate, but the events of the weekend are open to all interested persons. Historian John Sharp, former youth pastor at Whitestone and now on the faculty of Hesston College, will share some historical perspectives and many stories. Music, always an important part of Whitestone's worship history, will comprise a significant part of the schedule, with a men's ensemble and a mixed choir performing along with much congregational singing.

Food, fellowship, memories and stories will fill out the schedule, culminating in a Sunday morning worship service and fellowship meal. For more information, and to register in advance, call the church at 620-327-4123, or go to the website, www.whitestonemc.com.

Mennonite World Conference

In less than a year, the next Mennonite World Conference assembly will be held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, from July 21-26. This is the first time the assembly has been held in the U.S. since 1978, when Wichita was the location. Attendance projection is at least 5,000 North Americans and 1,000 international participants.

The principal feature of the event is the Assembly Gathered, when all participants will engage in times of worship, fellowship, studies, short tours in the vicinity, meals and other activities. As part of the last several assemblies, there has been a secondary feature called Assembly Scattered. For one to several days prior to or following Assembly Gathered, participants will have the opportunity to visit other parts of the host country, with an emphasis on Anabaptist sites of interest and importance.

We here in south central Kansas have submitted a proposal for such an Assembly Scattered opportunity, which is being advertised as follows:

Meet the rich variety of Anabaptist groups in south central Kansas, July 27-29, 2015

South central Kansas is home to a large variety of Anabaptist groups, including Old Order Amish, Amish Mennonites, Church of God in Christ Mennonite (Holdeman), Brethren in Christ, Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Church USA congregations.

We invite you to meet and interact with members of the various Anabaptist groups. Storytellers and historians will share stories of faith, practices, and cultures as participants visit Mennonite meeting houses and historic sites, as well as 3 Mennonite colleges. Depending upon the interests of the participants, the tour may include visitors' sites such as the Mid-America All Indian Center in Wichita; the Kansas Underground Salt Museum and Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center in Hutchinson; and the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Chase County. The experience will include home stays with local families and fellowship meals with local congregations.

Cost will include airfare to Wichita; three noon meals (\$15-25); local transportation (\$25-\$50 depending upon size of group); and admission fees to selected visitors' sites if scheduled.

A small planning group has met to do the initial visioning of a 3-day tour schedule that will be appealing to a varied audience. It will continue to do detailed planning once it becomes apparent that there will be persons interested and able to make the trip from eastern Pennsylvania to Kansas. This information is being shared at an early date because of the potential of significant involvement by church members from all the Anabaptist congregations in our area. We plan to offer home stays for up to four nights, primarily in the Hesston-Newton-Wichita area, and to organize fellowship meals each evening which all the area churches will be invited to attend in order to meet our expected international guests.

Registration for Assembly Gathered, "Pennsylvania 2015", is now open by going online to www.mwc-cmm.org/pa2015registration.

Executive Committee Meetings

The Executive Committee has met three times since the last Messenger was prepared. Major agenda items include the following:

- *Developed a plan for Grace Tijerina, current Hesston College student, to spend several weeks with the Argentine Mennonite Church congregation in Kansas City, conducting a community survey as part of the visioning process for the congregation following the retirement of long-term pastor Mervin Hershberger.
- *Authorized support for the summer day care program organized by the Rey de Gloria congregation in Brownsville that serves dozens of families without access to safe oversight for children of working parents.
- *Heard a report from persons who attended the Anabaptist Renewal Circles conference in Pennsylvania.
- *Continued to discern possible candidates to serve as moderator-elect.
- *Agreed to co-sponsor with Western District Conference a one-day event for pastors featuring Brad Brisco, a church planting strategist for a network of churches in Kansas City.
- *Considered the possibility of forming a traveling VS team by next summer to assist congregations, especially smaller and more isolated ones, with Vacation Bible School or other children-focused activities.

- *Heard final plans for the annual Pastor/Leader/Spouse retreat, with the same resource person, Marvin Lorenzana, serving the southern region pastor/leader group on Sept. 12-13 in McAllen, Texas, and the northern region, Oct. 24-25 in Hesston.
- *Processed inquiries from two congregations in other area conferences about the possibility of affiliating with South Central, including meetings with congregational leaders.
- *Heard a report regarding the closure of Faith Mennonite Church in South Hutchinson, including the proposed disposition of assets.
- *Authorized conversations with Hesston College leaders about possible joint efforts at leadership training and development.
- *Offered financial subsidies to congregations to send persons to attend an event called Sentralized, which is organized as a missional community kingdom builder training opportunity.
- *Explored a variety of possible services that the conference could offer congregational leaders.
- *Began the process of naming a planning committee for the 2015 annual assembly, scheduled for June 12-14 at Bethel Mennonite Church near Inman, Kansas.
- *Named Linda Yutzy, Kurt Horst and Lupe Aguilar as South Central's representatives to the Mennonite Church USA Constituency Leaders Council meeting in Chicago, Oct. 6-8.
- *Viewed a DVD prepared by Gary Oyer and John Sharp for the Spring Valley congregation—the first in a series that will eventually feature a brief historical sketch of all congregations.
- *Identified churchwide issues that are framing widespread discussion across Mennonite Church USA, and how we see ourselves in relation to the issues.

The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 30.

Pastor/Congregation News

- ***J**ohn Murray, lead pastor of Hesston Mennonite Church, is on a two month sabbatical leave during September and October. John is serving on the Administrative Team of AMBS-Kansas Center which continues to provide theological education opportunities in our area.
- *Greensburg Mennonite Church held its annual fundraising pork supper on September 20, serving 432 meals and receiving close to \$8,000, with the primary beneficiary being Mennonite Disaster Service for the purchase of a new van.
- *Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Hydro, Oklahoma, has scheduled Myron Augsburg as a special speaker from October 26-28.
- *Progress continues on the construction of a church building for Fountain of Living Water in Los Fresnos, Texas. Final approvals are still pending for King of Glory church in Brownsville, Texas, in preparation for their construction. King of Glory congregation has been forced to vacate its present meeting space due to unsafe conditions in the building, meeting instead in a member's home.
- *Regional Conference Minister James Wenger has added Crystal Spring Mennonite Church near Harper, Kansas, to his list, and Marion Bontrager has begun serving Greensburg Mennonite Church as RCM.
- *Journey Mennonite Church is negotiating with the city of South Hutchinson about the possibility of locating a community wellness center on church property.
- *Philip Kauffman and Dale Kauffman have been licensed to serve on the pastoral team of Journey@Yoder Mennonite Church.
- *Whitestone Mennonite Church will celebrate its 50 years of existence in its current location the weekend of Oct. 17-19. Its predecessor, Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, was begun in 1886 in a rural location, where it remained for 78 years.

*Paul Brunner, former pastor of Whitestone Mennonite Church, died in Hesston on Sept. 14 at age 89.

*Spring Valley Mennonite Church, rural Canton, Kansas, hosted its annual area hymn sing on September 28.

*Journey@McPherson Mennonite Church is in process of purchasing a vacated Dillon's grocery store, to be developed as a worship center.

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.

On the Way in Kansas

In anticipation of the biennial Mennonite Church USA Youth Convention in Kansas City, June 30-July 5, 2015, an On the Way youth rally is scheduled for Saturday, November 1, 2014 at Hesston Mennonite Church from 1-7:30 pm.

This rally is open to all Kansas high school youth, their leaders and pastors. It is sponsored by Hesston and Bethel Colleges, and Mennonite Mission Network. It will include vibrant worship, time to hang out with friends, servant projects in the local community, a pizza party, a seminar on fundraising activities, a Get to Know Convention game, and more.

Featured musicians and speakers, both highly regarded and well received in youth events in the past, are Jeremy Kempf and Glen Guyton. Jeremy will be the music leader in Kansas City—his fifth Mennonite Church USA youth convention. He is director of worship at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Arizona. He will be offering a late night concert after worship. Glen lives in San Antonio, Texas, and serves as the Director of Convention Planning and Chief Operating Officer for Mennonite Church USA.

This event is free to all, but preregistration is requested so there will be enough pizza at the party! To register, go to www.mennocon.com; click on Get Connected, then On the Way Youth Rallies.

Discipleship Now Retreat

The Youth Ministry Network of South Central and Western District Conferences is sponsoring a retreat for high school students who want to grow as followers of Jesus. An every-other-year opportunity, youth are invited to “step out of life in the fast lane and see what’s coming in the other direction!” The dates are November 14-16, and the location is in Wichita. The weekend will feature service, Bible study, community, prayer and silence. More information is available at www.mennowdc.org/calendar.

Celebrate Missions in November!

Come with us and celebrate God’s transforming love—in our own lives and the lives of Christians around the world! Choose a Sunday in November that fits your worship schedule and join MMN in celebrating God’s mission.

Feel free to download these worship materials to plan your own mission Sunday. The sermon starter, children’s story, prayer, song and reading suggestions, Scripture passages, and bulletin inserts will make planning easy and hassle free. You can download these materials here: <http://bit.ly/10msBnE>

If you have any questions, contact Brady Peters, SCC’s Church Relations Associate for Mennonite Mission Network: bradyp@mennonitemission.net.

SCC Mennonite Women

By Veronica Sauder, President

The 2014 Women and Girls’ Retreat began Friday evening, Sept. 5 at Camp Mennoscah with a little pampering at Menno Spa. We were able to enjoy a homemade foot soaking mix, foot massages, hand wax and nail polish as well as mixing our own brown sugar facial scrub and hand sugar scrub, with recipes to take home. Retreat continued with approximately 150 women and girls enjoying girls’ activities, seminars for women and special speaker, Norma Duerksen. Norma shared her knowledge and experiences on the theme, “How Can I Forgive?” Norma gave a very meaningful presentation on what forgiveness is and what it is not, how and why to forgive.

The first event of 2015 will be the Comforter Blitz, a Friends of MCC activity, March 9 and 10, on the campus of Journey at Yoder. Come, knot comforters for MCC and fellowship with women from many different churches.

The Spring Supper in 2015 will be held on Thursday, March 26 at 6:00 pm. The location and speaker will be announced later.

Information on upcoming events can be found on the South Central Conference website, under Mennonite Women. Information regarding Mennonite Women USA can be found at www.mennonitewomenusa.org.

Current organization of SCC MW includes the following:

Executive Committee:

President: Carolene Jackson, Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Hydro, OK
Vice President: Dolores Banman, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, KS
Secretary: Melissa Unruh, Hesston Mennonite Church
Treasurer: Myrna Cherry, Whitestone Mennonite Church

Retreat Committee:

Pam Morris, Journey@South Hutchinson, KS
Adrianna Stucky, Journey@McPherson Mennonite Church, McPherson, KS

Mary Unruh, Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, KS
Kelli Reimer, Whitestone Mennonite Church

Gifts Discernment Committee:

Susan Lamb, Hesston Mennonite Church
Nancy Peachey Bontrager, Whitestone Mennonite Church
Annie Gerber, Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, Harper, KS

Friends of MCC:

Lois Leinbach, Whitestone Mennonite Church
Twyla White, Whitestone Mennonite Church

Women In Conversation Retreat Committee:

Phyllis Weaver, Whitestone Mennonite Church

Sister Churches Project:

SCC MW Executive Committee

MC USA MW Co- Directors:

Rhoda Keener, Shippensburg, PA
Ruth Lapp Guengerich, Goshen, IN

MW Administrative Assistant:

Berni Kaufman, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS

DO YOU KNOW?

By Joyce Zuercher, Conference Resource Advocate

Fascination with the Amish and their way of life is an interesting phenomenon in America today, where some say the plethora of Amish romances has made them a genre of their own. The popularity of Amish documentaries, movies, and supposedly reality TV shows continues also.

As Mennonites we claim a historic kinship as well as ties of family and friendship, and we desire a truthful picture of our family, friends and neighbors. To fill that need, our church press continues to offer an array of titles, both non-fiction and fiction, that present a true picture of Amish people.

Ervin Stutzman, executive director of MC USA, is from Amish background, and is the author of three Amish novels. The first two, *Tobias* (2001) and *Emma* (2007), are fictionalized accounts of the lives of his parents, while *Jacob's Choice* (2014), planned as the first of a trilogy of historical fiction, takes place in the 1700s in frontier Pennsylvania. It is based on historical events in the life of a hero of faith among the Amish.

On the non-fiction side, *Bonnet Strings* (2014) by Saloma Miller Furlong, a personal memoir and autobiography, joins other classic explanations of Amish life and beliefs.

Now the editors at Herald Press are planning to launch the **Plainspoken** series, books written by the Amish themselves, sharing their daily lives, their values and beliefs, joys and struggles. I was able to read an advance copy of the first one, *Chasing the Amish Dream, my life as a young Amish bachelor* by Loren Beachy, who is in his early 20s, and lives in northern Indiana, teaches in an Amish school and is a budding auctioneer. Although I'm not a fan of Amish novels, I do enjoy the historical fiction of Ervin Stutzman, and I also found Beachy's voice very appealing. I particularly enjoyed his interesting portrayals of Amish auctions and the accounts of several trips to the west coast by groups of Amish young people via Amtrak. This book is slated for a fall, 2014 release, and a second in the series should come out in early 2015.

On another subject, the SHINE Sunday School curriculum has been in place for a month now. If you are using it, I would like to hear how it is going so far!

Calendar

October

- 6-8 MC USA Constituency Leaders Council, Chicago
- 17-19 Whitestone Mennonite Church 50th Anniversary celebration
- 24-25 SCC Pastor/Leader/Spouse retreat, Hesston
- 26-28 Myron Augsburger at Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Hydro, OK
- 30 WDC/SCC Pastors Day Apart, Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, KS
- 30 SCC Executive Committee meeting in McPherson, KS

November

- 1 On The Way Youth Rally, Hesston Mennonite Church, Hesston, KS
- 11 Kansas/Oklahoma Pastor/Peer meeting, Whitestone Mennonite Church
- 14-16 Discipleship Now Retreat, Wichita

December

- 3-6 MC USA and MC Canada Conference Ministers annual meeting, San Antonio, TX

2015

January

- 24 Rural Ministry Seminar, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston
- 31-Feb 1 Know Jesus, Hesston College

March

- 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)