

MODERATOR'S MESSAGE

By Tim Sweigart

Last year, I accepted the invitation to be the Moderator of SCC. I will admit that I had some reservations about my ability to effectively offer positive leadership to a network of 25 very unique Mennonite congregations. What I have come to realize is our conference is blessed with a group of passionate, dedicated folks who together are seeking what God would be calling us toward. It is truly a team journey with a variety of ideas and dreams. That's a good thing. Our conference is facing a defining moment. For that reason, I sense that we need to continue to plow into some tough questions like:

1. What is God's mission for our conference? Our congregations? How well do we continue to bring energy and focus to that mission?
2. What are some practical ways we can live out our collective purpose? Initiatives include planting (growing) churches; providing beneficial coaching to our pastors; providing valuable resources to our congregations; and providing more networking opportunities within our conference.
3. What are some venues for congregations to share stories of God at work? How can we build bridges of cooperation to encourage other congregations?
4. What about our role in our denomination, Mennonite Church USA?
5. What are ways that we can help resource congregations that are serious about revitalization?
6. Who will step forward to be our next moderator in 2019?
7. What is it that God desires most so that we can be relevant in our communities? What needs to stay the same? What do we need to let go of?

I believe that for any organization to flourish, we must not only keep asking tough questions, but celebrate the ways that God has already provided direction. Here are just a few items to celebrate:

- Our conference has experienced significant progress in developing a sense of collective purpose in our fall retreat. There was a great spirit of participation and a hunger for even more, which will happen in a follow-up session soon.
- The pastors have had great fellowship in the Pastor/Peer meetings.
- Our conference sent 10 people to Exponential to soak up new ideas toward church planting, discipleship, and growth.
- There is some interest in congregations partnering with other congregations.
- The Executive Committee has been working to identify practical goals that align with our collective purpose.
- The Ministerial Commission is fully functioning as they are reviewing various pastor credentials. Regional Conference Ministers continue to discern definition in their role in coaching pastors.
- Plans are emerging for a powerful annual assembly, July 20-21.

And so it goes. From my perspective, South Central Conference is on the move. It is an honor to be a part of the story.



HEALTHY BOUNDARIES TRAINING

South Central Conference desires that all pastors and credentialed persons serve well, honor God, and stay out of trouble. To that end SCC is requiring Healthy Boundaries training for all persons with active credentials. If you fit these requirements and have not yet attended a workshop, SCC has two upcoming training opportunities. The cost is \$55 for all SCC credentialed pastors and \$65 for non SCC pastors.

Tuesday, April 17, 2018 will be a Healthy Boundaries course in **Los Fresnos, TX** with Tonia Martin and Marissa Smucker. If you would like to attend please contact Lupe Aguilar at [956-346-4037](tel:956-346-4037).

Saturday May 19, 2018 is the last scheduled SCC sponsored training. It will be held at Journey@McPherson in **McPherson, KS** with Kevin Wilder. To Register for this training go to <https://goo.gl/forms/OkudyQEgZnyyeR1B3>

>To read the SCC policy go to <https://tinyurl.com/scchealthyboundariespolicyrev>

>To read the MC USA *Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure (2016)* from go to <http://tinyurl.com/MCUSASexualMisconductPolicy>

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Growing in Jesus Christ through
discipleship, shared fellowship,
worship, and service.

SCC Mennonite Women

A spring update from South Central Conference Mennonite Women!

Leadership would like to thank those churches who have given to the Women to Women Grant program. This quarter, we have received a total of \$495 for this grant. It is in place to serve as a financial resource to women in member congregations by making funds available to meet identified needs. Grants range from \$50-\$500. If you'd like to learn more, or know of someone in your congregation who could benefit from applying for this grant, please contact Myrna Cherry at cherry.blossom@cox.net.

The Comforter Blitz was held March 5-7, 2018. Attendees came from about 100 different churches with 326 quilts completed. From the organizers of the Comforter Blitz: "The Comforter Blitz Committee wants to extend a hearty 'thank you' to the men and 400+ ladies who came to the Comforter Blitz to help us complete 326 comforters for MCC. These comforters have all been delivered to the MCC Center in North Newton. We praise God for this accomplishment which will help many and for His travel protection and care for us. We were blessed with rich friendships, meaningful conversations and exchange of ideas from recipes to tips on folding a better corner!"

The annual Spring Supper for Mennonite Women was held on March 15, 2018 at Whitestone Mennonite Church. Executive Board members from South Central and Western District Conferences organized and hosted the dinner. There were 137 reservations, with an excellent meal prepared and served by the Whitestone MYF. Our entertainment for the evening was Sadie and the Prowlers from Hesston College and our speaker was Joanna Gerber Pinkerton. An offering was taken during the program and we are very excited to report that we were able to send more than \$2,000 to the women's literacy project in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Thank you to those who were in attendance, gave generously, helped plan and were involved in some way with making the evening an enjoyable time of fellowship and worship!

Leadership of SCC Mennonite Women continues to be of great concern. The Executive Committee has been in search of a President and Vice President since June of 2017. SCC is also short three individuals to serve on the planning committee for the Women and Girls Retreat that happens this fall. We ask for your prayerful consideration to become an active member of the SCC Mennonite Women group. If interested in finding out more or to help fill one of these positions, please contact the following:

Ariana Kauffman, SCCMW Secretary
anaunruh@hotmail.com

Myrna Cherry, SCCMW Treasurer
cherry.blossom@cox.net

PULPIT & PEW EXCHANGE

A specific goal identified by conference leadership is to nurture congregation-to-congregation relationships, encouragement, understanding and wisdom. One initiative to give substance to this goal is to designate a Sunday when the maximum number of congregations would participate in a pulpit exchange that would also include a number of parishioners who would join their pastor in a visit. The date being proposed is **Sunday, October 21**.

In exploring the merits of such an exchange, the belief is that by having congregations share their life, ministries, insight and vision with each other, they will gain new ideas for ministry and acquaintance with and appreciation for the work of other congregations in our conference. It is also the expectation that when we articulate our ministry for others, we also refine our own work and ministry.

In addition to having the visiting pastor deliver the sermon, a lay leader in the host congregation will facilitate conversation during the Sunday School hour, describing the vision and ministries of the host congregation and inviting a similar response from the visitors. A fellowship meal following the service is recommended as an additional means of promoting sharing and mutual exchange.

The traveling group would provide their own transportation, and no honoraria would be expected. Logistical details will need to be addressed, including a mechanism to determine the number of participants and a means to assign locations. For this initial effort, we will make assignments within the two geographical regions, recognizing that even within the regions, some considerable travel time and distance could be involved.

A proposed timetable includes initial promotion from May to July, culminating at the annual assembly on July 20-21. By the time of the assembly, we will anticipate having a complete list of congregations willing and able to participate. By September, the assignments will be made, along with more information on the mutual expectations. We recognize that some congregations may find October 21 to be an unsuitable date, but they have interest in participation, in which case every effort will be made to negotiate another date.

Pastor/Congregation News

> Eden Life Church in Kansas City, led by Omot and Hanna Aganya, officially launched their congregation in a recently-purchased building on March 25. Bob Yates, lead pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church in Inman, KS, provided the sermon. He was accompanied by a group of youth and adult members from Bethel, which is serving in a partnership relationship with Eden Life. The plan is to offer three worship services on Sundays in as many different languages, given the diverse ethnic make-up of the congregation.

> Whitestone Mennonite Church dedicated its recently-constructed Columbarium on March 25, which was largely funded by a memorial gift from the family of a member who died in 2017. Her remains will be the first to occupy a niche. Another of the 40 niches will be occupied by messages of commitment and hopes for the future of the congregation, written by members. These messages are to be read in 2043 when the congregation observes its 75th anniversary in its present location, or earlier if all the niches are filled and the space is needed.

> Dale Kauffman will be ordained in a service on April 8 at Journey@Yoder, recognizing his current role as a member of the pastoral team.

> Jill Schmidt Weaver will be ordained in a service on April 15 at Whitestone, recognizing her previous service as Visitation Pastor at Whitestone and her current role as Chaplain for Independent Living at Schowalter Villa.

> Regional Conference Minister Clarence Rempel and his wife Amanda served as hosts at Menno Hof Mennonite/Amish Information Center in Shipshewana, Indiana during the month of March.

> Kenzie Intemann, pastor of Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, Kansas, has been named to the board of Camp Mennoscah.

> Journey@McPherson, led by pastor James Ostlund, recently celebrated their fifth anniversary, now occupying a former Dillons supermarket that has undergone major renovation.

> A team from Whitestone Mennonite Church spent spring vacation week (March 18-24) in Brownsville, Texas, installing the wiring and electrical service for the Rey de Gloria congregation's new building. Lupe Aguilar serves as the senior pastor.

> Kurt Horst, lead pastor of Whitestone Mennonite Church, has finished writing a chapter for a new book being commissioned by Mennonite Men of MC USA. The book's title is *Peaceful at Heart: Embracing Healthy Masculinity*; Kurt's chapter is tentatively entitled "Experiencing Masculinity: A Traditional Perspective in the Church Past and Present". The book deals with issues related to men's spirituality and leadership in family and church settings.

> Rusty Smoker, long-time lay leader in the Crystal Springs Mennonite Church, rural Harper, Kansas, died in February. The congregation is currently being led by Pastor Josh Patterson.

> Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Hydro, Oklahoma, is nearing the completion of its new sanctuary, with plans to begin using the new space by summer. Current pastors are Jeff Selzer and Gabriel Pennington.

> Gordon Scoville ended his one-year assignment in early February as interim pastor of Hesston Mennonite Church. The congregation has completed an extended review of its pastoral staffing and related job descriptions, and is currently in a search process for an additional member of the pastoral team. Current pastors are Amy Nissley Stauffer and Clayton Gladish.

> New appointees to the Ministerial Commission are Todd Lehman, campus pastor at Hesston College, and Kenzie Intemann, pastor of Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, Kansas. Continuing members are Judy Miller (chair), pastoral team member at Journey@Yoder; Bob Yates, lead pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, Kansas; and Delvin Mast, member of Pleasant View Mennonite Church, Hydro, Oklahoma.

Resonate

JOIN THE EVERLASTING SONG

MENNONITE WORSHIP & SONG COLLECTION

DO YOU KNOW?

By Joyce Zuercher; Conference Resource Advocate

Resonate, the name chosen for the Mennonite hymnal project, continues to progress towards the goal of distribution by 2020. The January Music and Worship Leaders Retreat at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center focused on "Sing a New World into Being" with the Resonate team leading worship and various sessions.

The question is raised—why do we need a new hymnal? We love the one we have! An immediate practical answer comes when we look at the tattered and worn books we are using. They are nearly thirty years old, and even their special slipcovers do not disguise the fact that they will soon fall apart!

But more importantly, music, and certainly church music, is a living creative entity. New music continues to be born, grow and join the familiar, and there is a place for both in our hearts and souls. Pray for the 13 members of the Resonate committee as they put together the elements of our next song collection! It is a monumental task.

Besides your prayers, you can recommend songs for consideration at MennoMedia.org/Resonate, and donate at hymnalproject606.com. Donations will help keep the purchase costs of hymnals, etc., within congregational budgets.

"I finally caught on to why we need a new collection of music for today's Mennos. It's not just a collection of hymns and songs; rather, it's a statement about who we are and who we want to be," said my daughter Andrea, who attended the Laurelville retreat. And we are and want to be the people of God.

Executive Committee Activity

The Executive Committee has met three times since the last issue of the Messenger, including a joint session with Regional Conference Ministers in January. Following are the principal agenda items for discussion and decision:

- > Reviewed details related to RCM services to pastors and congregations.
- > Reviewed the results of the visioning retreat held in October, and did further processing of the affirmed goals of providing congregational resourcing and coaching; promoting networking among congregations; and planting churches.
- > Set a date for a follow-up conference-wide visioning session for March 17 at Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church [which had to be postponed because of schedule conflicts caused by two unanticipated funeral services]. In preparation for the session they authorized a survey for individual and congregational attitudes regarding the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective.
- > Agreed to set a date later in the year for a pulpit exchange among member congregations (see separate article).
- > Agreed to provide subsidy support for attendance by up to 10 persons at the annual Exponential conference organized to benefit current and potential church planters.
- > Prepared a format for proposals that are brought to the committee for review, and in some cases funding support.
- > Continued to identify possible candidates willing and able to serve as Moderator-elect.
- > Gave continuing attention to planning details for the annual assembly on July 20-21, to be hosted by Journey@Yoder.
- > Agreed to continue to serve as one of several sponsors of Hesston College's annual Anabaptist Visioning and Discipleship Series.
- > Heard progress reports on church plants in Kansas City and Corpus Christi, Texas.
- > Shared stories on ways that God has been present in individuals' lives.
- > Decided not to organize VBS on the Road in 2018, but expressed openness to repeat the project in 2019 if adequate leadership and qualified participants are available.
- > Encouraged congregations to give financial support to Rey de Gloria for the repeat of its summer daycare program for children of working parents unable to afford such service.
- > Learned of the interest of one or more congregations in exploring the possibility of affiliating with South Central.
- > Renewed a Memo of Understanding with Western District Conference for joint support of a Youth Ministry Network that serves both conferences' congregations.
- > Heard a request from the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College to move SCC archival materials into a new location in Hesston, and considered possible sites.
- > Affirmed the strong relationship between the south Texas (UCIM) leadership and SCC Executive Committee, expressing interest in expanding opportunities of fellowship between the two geographical regions.
- > Received regular reports from the conference Mennonite Women's organization, including a request for assistance in finding leadership for the group.
- > Received an invitation from the moderator to give comments on agenda that will be included in the MC USA Constituency Leaders Council meeting in Pennsylvania on April 11-14.

2018 Calendar

April

11-14 CLC
Lansdale, PA

17 Healthy
Boundaries
Training
Los Fresnos, TX

May

15 Pastor Peer
Harper, KS

19 Healthy
Boundaries
Training
McPherson, KS

July

20-21 SCC Annual
Meeting
Journey@Yoder
Yoder, KS

October

21 Proposed Pulpit
and Pew Exchange
Day

November

2-3 UCIM Annual
Meeting



Discerning the Values of SCC: What is our foundation?

A retreat held in October of 2017 helped define some collective purposes for the conference. We will continue this conversation with a follow-up gathering this June.

Please plan to join in the conversation and discernment. All SCC pastors and a lay leader from each member congregation are invited to join this one day retreat on either June 2nd or 16th. If you're a pastor or lay leader hoping to attend; tell us your availability by visiting <https://doodle.com/poll/6kira9fpwm6i5hye>

Be on the lookout for more details to come!

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