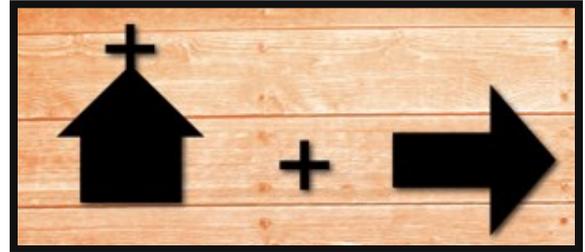


Planning for a Missional Future

During the past year, the South Central Conference Executive team, along with pastors and congregational leaders, has spent time assessing the past and working diligently to discern together a more articulate vision and mission for the conference and its congregations. This included two half-day workshops in which ideas were generated and recorded. The next step was to name a Strategic Planning Team (SPT) to evaluate the current leadership structure, identify gaps, and bring a recommendation on a suggested plan for the future. SPT members include Judy Miller, chair and pastoral team member at Journey@Yoder; Clarence Rempel, Regional Conference Minister; Tim Sweigart, Conference Moderator; Mitch Stutzman, lay leader at Hesston Mennonite Church; and Gabriel Pennington, associate pastor of Pleasant View Mennonite Church near Hydro, Oklahoma.



The Strategic Planning Team set as goal to identify what SCC is doing that is valuable; what may have outlived its usefulness; and what new initiatives would help keep pastors strong and encourage healthy, missional churches. A survey was created which the Moderator and Regional Conference Ministers have used in conversation with pastors and congregational leaders in the northern region, either in person or by phone. In south Texas, Tim Sweigart and Judy Miller attended the annual meeting in November of all the churches, and scheduled a group session to receive feedback from those leaders.

This process has generated a significant amount of valuable information, with most of the interviews and online surveys being completed by December 15. Between then and early January, the SPT will be processing the information, with the goal of sharing their findings with the Executive team, and formulating one or more recommendations that will give guidance to the future of the conference. Progress reports will be furnished to pastors and congregations as conclusions are reached, with the expectation that by the time of the annual assembly in July, a complete report and strategies for the future can be a central focus for discussion and implementation.

First Call for 2019 Annual Assembly

The annual assembly of pastors and congregational leaders has long been regarded as one of the most important opportunities for acquaintance and sharing across congregational and geographic lines. For 2019, the gathering will take place July 19-20, at Pleasant View Mennonite Church in rural Hydro, Oklahoma. Pleasant View has recently completed a spacious new sanctuary and ancillary space, which along with existing facilities will provide a welcoming location for this assembly.

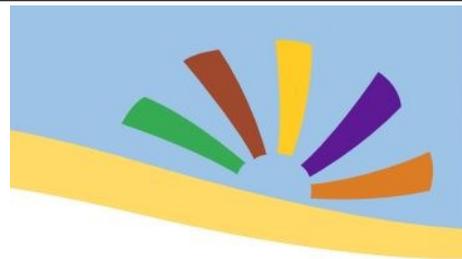
At its January 21 meeting, the Executive Committee will do preliminary planning on a focus for the input sessions, along with ideas about persons, both within and outside the conference, who are prime candidates for such leadership. Thereafter, a planning subcommittee will be organized to give attention to the multiple issues of logistics and facilitation.

SCC Creates IBA Subsidy Program

At a recent Executive Committee meeting, it was discussed that the Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA) program, already being used in some SCC congregations, is a valuable resource well worth our support as a conference. SCC congregations looking to do leadership development using Anabaptist biblical and theological education materials are served well by the IBA curriculum. In order to encourage and make these resources available to more SCC congregations and members, the committee has developed a program policy which welcomes SCC congregants wishing to begin or join an IBA study center to apply for tuition subsidies from SCC. More details about this program and the new SCC subsidy can be found by contacting your congregation's Regional Conference Minister.



SCC Pulpit Exchange BIG Success for a few



This year the SCC northern region has organized a conference-wide pulpit exchange event. After visioning meetings, SCC identified one conference purpose of SCC existing to encourage the networking of Christians across the conference. Regional Conference Minister Kurt Horst, heard that vision and encouraged conference leaders to give congregations the opportunity to be matched for a pulpit exchange. Six congregations in the northern region signed up for the exchange but due to scheduling difficulties, only four of those congregations ended up being able to do an exchange. There were a lot of positive experiences from this first exchange as well as learning about ways to improve the experience of participating congregations.

The overall experience by all who shared in evaluations was very positive. Some highlights included the start of relationship building within the conference that happened during Sunday School hour, informal greetings, and a potluck meal. Others found value in being able to share and listen to other congregational leaders and hear about organizational structures of both worship and congregations that were different from their own.

Two of the participating congregations decided to exchange on two different Sundays so that the hosting congregation's pastor could be present to host the visiting congregation. They saw this as a very positive change and made provision for this method by finding pulpit fill for the pastor who was traveling to the host congregation.

The Executive Committee plans to continue this exchange program in 2019 and encourages all congregations to plan to participate. Not only does a pulpit exchange give a chance to hear from and meet friends from around the conference, it also allows host congregations to articulate their vision and mission in order to share that with the visiting leaders. Exchange suggestions will be made midway through 2019 and are flexible. Format suggestions include hosting some sort of question and answer time either during a Sunday School hour or over a shared meal. A possible theme scripture and topic are also suggested for those who desire that guidance. This theme can also be set aside by leaders who wish to focus on another theme. Schedules and dates are also flexible and can be arranged by leaders once congregations are paired. We look forward to expanding this opportunity for networking in 2019.

Pastors' Financial Assistance grant

Everence has been awarded a second \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment to address financial needs of pastors. Similar to the previous grant, which benefited a number of SCC pastors, this program will provide direct financial assistance grants to pastors to help alleviate debt burdens such as education, medical and credit card debt. (Grants will be available to pastors who have not previously received direct financial assistance grants as part of the program).

The grant will also assist pastors with financial planning subsidies toward the cost of a first-year Everence comprehensive financial plan, and support educational events on topics such as retirement planning, debt reduction, financial



Everence®

planning, clergy taxes, etc. Applications and related information will be made available in January 2019.

For background, see <https://www.everence.com/everence-articles/congregational-articles/pastor-resources/20181212-everence-received-1-million-lilly-endowment-grant-to-assist-pastors>

Administrative Assistant's Notes

Donate Online!

We've recently added the ability to contribute to the mission of South Central Conference online. To access this resource go to sccmenno.org and click **Donate**. Follow easy online instructions from there!



Where is God Working in SCC?

Want to keep hearing about God's mission throughout SCC? Sign up to receive our online communications in your inbox. Below are the communications you could receive regularly. **E-mail Becky at scc@sccmenno.org and ask her to add you to any of the following lists!**

- **Weekly Word**— a short story highlighting the ministry in a particular congregation
- **Weekly Announcements**— announcements from SCC and Affiliated Organizations for upcoming opportunities and events.
- **Messenger**— receive this quarterly newsletter in your inbox.

Pastor/Congregation News

- > Jerry Acosta, pastor of At the Feet of Christ church in Wichita, is organizing to offer the Bible training program through the Anabaptist Biblical Institute (IBA) to members of his congregation.
- > Calico Rock (Arkansas) Mennonite Fellowship has called Al Powers to serve as their pastor, after a few years without a regular shepherd.
- > Isaac Landis, Pastor of Youth and Faith Formation at Whitestone Mennonite Church, is serving as a member of the seminar and workshop planning committee for the MC USA Convention in Kansas City, July 2-6.
- > Clayton Gladish, Associate Pastor at Hesston Mennonite Church, is serving on the worship planning team for Kansas City 2019.
- > Todd Lehman, campus pastor at Hesston College and a member of Hesston Mennonite Church, has announced his plans to complete that assignment at the end of the current school year.
- > Tim Davis, pastor of Peace Mennonite Community Church in Aurora, Colorado, has announced his plan to conclude his ministry on May 15th.

KLC Leadership Development Opportunity

South Central Conference, in partnership with Western District Conference, has received a 2019 Leadership Transformation Grant from the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC). With this grant, we will be able to offer 10-12 slots to pastors and church leaders from Kansas. The grant provides tuition for all sessions and lunches on the days of the programs. The purposes of the training for our organizations is as follows:

- A greater sense of belonging and leadership by senior high youth in SCC and WDC. This is part of a year-long effort leadership development initiative called Youth Lead Now. This is led by Isaac Landis and colleagues from SCC and WDC.
- Regular use of KLC leadership competencies by conference leaders.
- Increased number of pastors and congregational leaders who understand KLC “language” and are experimenting with adaptive leadership competencies.



We are grateful for this opportunity and look forward to reporting on the results when the training has been completed.

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me...”

Matthew 25:35, NRSV

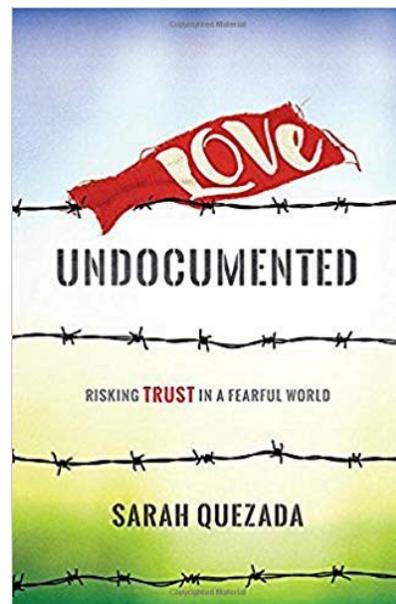
DO YOU KNOW?

By Joyce Zuercher; Conference Resource Advocate

IMMIGRATION. News about immigration is constantly in front of us, from the border wall to anticipated resettlements sponsored by our churches. To learn more about this timely topic from a Christian perspective, watch for a book MennoMedia is publishing in January, 2019--*Love Undocumented, risking trust in a fearful world*, by Sarah Quezada, a young writer and non-profit professional whose husband is an immigrant from Guatemala.

Quezada organizes her book around their love story, from the time they met, she, a naïve Kentucky college graduate moving to Los Angeles for a job at a Christian university, and he, an undocumented immigrant who had failed to keep his paperwork current. Around their personal experiences with the current immigration system, she shares Biblical accounts of immigrants, from Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, Mordecai and Esther, to Mary, Joseph and Jesus, plus Biblical teachings. This is all accompanied by well-researched facts and statistics about immigration in the United States in the 21st century.

As our churches become aware of immigrant families moving into our midst, this book will help us begin to understand what is involved—and how to pray.



“A probing and personal debut.”

—Publishers Weekly

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Executive Committee Activity

The Conference Executive Committee has met twice since the last issue of the Messenger. Here is an account of principal agenda items addressed by the committee:

- > Received information that the Conference Mennonite Women's organization would discontinue formal activity, but would continue to welcome Myrna Cherry, a representative of Mennonite Women, as an active participant on the Executive Committee.
- > Confirmed continuing financial support for persons in northern Mexico who are enrolled in Bible training courses offered through the Anabaptist Biblical Institute (IBA).
- > Renewed an annual Memo of Understanding with Camp Mennoscah, on whose board two persons from South Central congregations are serving.
- > Created a Strategic Planning Committee, with Judy Miller as chair, to continue working on new initiatives and ministries that are part of a new visioning process that could result in some new organizational arrangements. Preliminary information was shared based on the responses from pastors to a questionnaire administered primarily by the Regional Conference Ministers, with a more complete report due from the planning committee in early 2019.
- > Commissioned Moderator Tim Sweigart, Ministerial Leadership chair Judy Miller, and former moderator Linda Yutzy, to attend the annual meeting of the south Texas churches (UCIM) in early November.
- > Heard a report from the semi-annual meeting of the MC USA Constituency Leaders Council meeting.
- > Received a report from moderator Tim Sweigart on his recent visits with a number of pastors and congregational leaders.
- > Heard stories arising from the pulpit exchange in which several congregations participated, with ideas shared about continuing the effort in 2019 with some possible variations
- > Explored the possibility of creating a list of pastors, retired or otherwise, who are available for pulpit supply when congregations have a need.
- > Began a preliminary discussion of locations for the 2019 annual assembly, and possible resource persons.
- > Identified the need for a review process for Regional Conference Ministers, for which a standardized outline will be the first step in moving forward.
- > Learned from committee member Howard Wagler that two SCC congregations have joined a cohort for the REVIVE project: Eden Life congregation in Kansas City, and Peace Mennonite Community Church in Aurora, Colorado.
- > Received a request from Administrative Assistant Becky King to be given leave for the months of June through August, enabling her to join her husband, Derek King, lead pastor of Eden Mennonite Church in rural Moundridge, Kansas on his sabbatical in Virginia. Suggestions for interim replacement will be followed up to ensure adequate attention to essential administrative details.

The committee will meet next on January 21, 2019.

Calendar

2019

January

15 Pastor Peer
Hesston Menn.
Hesston, KS

February

9-10 Know Jesus
Hesston, KS

28– Mar. 2 CLC
Hesston, KS

March

19 Pastor Peer
Location TBD

July

2-6 MC USA
Biennial
Convention
Kansas City,
MO

19-20 SCC Annual
Assembly
Pleasant View
Menn. Church
Hydro, OK

Missional Leadership Course Open to the Community

The Hesston College Bible and Ministry department is offering an opportunity for members of the local community to take a Spring 2019 semester class that will allow them to consider their faith and "mission" alongside college students.

The Missional Leadership class, led by professor Michele Hershberger, is a seminar-style class that will explore the theology and leadership strategies of missional Christian congregations and help participants empower themselves, their congregations and those with whom they worship to be missionaries in their own right.

"Many congregations don't know how to share the good news of Jesus in a way that feels authentic or that others can hear the good news," said Hershberger. "We need to practice making disciples. And in a paradoxical way, when we help the Spirit make disciples, we become more transformed ourselves."

To learn more about this course visit <https://www.hesston.edu/2018/12/course-on-missional-leadership-open-to-the-community/>

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