



What does Christ want from His Church?

By Tim Sweigart

Over the last several years many one-on-one conversations and group meetings about the ongoing vision and ministry of South Central Conference have surfaced a fundamental question, “What does Jesus really want from His church?” This has drawn me to Ephesians 4 :11-13.

I love the clear focus for the mission of the church found in these verses. We, as the church of Jesus Christ, are to be actively joining other Christ-followers in finding opportunities to be in relationship with those both inside and outside the walls of the places in which we worship. Christ demonstrated this by transforming lives, hanging out with even the outcasts of society. We often have strayed from transformative relationships, settling for a more subdued version of church. What would it look like if all the time spent on church business was invested in meeting the neighbors surrounding our places of worship?

My personal story of wrestling with this conviction begins a couple of years ago with a reevaluation of my daily priorities after reading a short book by Michael Frost, *Surprise the World*. Frost shares some basic life habits that reflect the message of Ephesians 4 (pictured below). To make them easy to remember,

Ephesians 4:11-13

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Christians throughout the world have found renewed enthusiasm to share their faith using Michael Frost's BELLS model.

- We **BLESS** people, both inside and outside the church.
- We **EAT** together, sharing meals with believers and nonbelievers alike.
- We **LISTEN** to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit as we engage with those around us.
- We intimately **LEARN** Christ as our leader and model for making disciples.
- We see ourselves as **SENT** by God to everywhere life takes us.

these habits form the word BELLS. In many ways, God is transforming the way I interact with those around me. Though not perfected, these simple and profound activities have become daily habits for me.

I confess that as moderator there are times I wonder if investing energies into the conference will really make a difference but I am not the one who measures that. I can, however, testify

that my commitment to build stronger relationships with others and reflect on God’s word has brought me much joy!

Learn more about the Five Habits of Highly Missional People at <http://www.forgeamerica.com/videos>.

Pastor/Congregation News

- > Josh Patterson, pastor of Crystal Springs (KS) Mennonite Church, was married on August 28 to Adrienne Hock.
- > Zach Batson, associate campus pastor at Journey@McPherson, was approved for licensure toward ordination by the Ministerial Commission on December 16.
- > Kay Schroeder began as Pastor of Congregational Life at Hesston Mennonite Church on December 18. She previously served on the pastoral team of First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas.
- > Steve Schmidt, interim pastor at Whitestone Mennonite Church, has agreed to continue through June 30, 2020.
- > Howard and Cathy Wagler were recognized for 27 years of ministry at Journey Mennonite Church in a festive celebration on November 9. Howard will step down from his role as senior pastor at Journey. The ongoing leadership responsibilities will be shared by Eric Miller, campus pastor at Journey@South Hutchinson, and Jim Ostlund, campus pastor at Journey@McPherson.
- > Members of Spring Valley Mennonite Church in Canton, Kansas, traveled as a group to Greensburg Mennonite Church on October 27 to share in the worship service and fellowship meal. Miriam Huebert Stauffer, member at Spring Valley, planned and organized the visit, informing her fellow parishioners only that they were taking a 2-hour trip to an unnamed destination, revealed only after they were on the road.
- > Jeff Selzer, pastor of Pleasant View Mennonite Church in rural Hydro, Oklahoma, has concluded his service as Regional Conference Minister for South Central Conference, effective August 12.
- > Lupe Aguilar, pastor at Rey de Gloria in Brownsville, Texas, has concluded his service as Regional Conference Minister for South Texas Congregations, effective October 31.



SCC in SERVICE

A number of members of conference-related congregations are serving or have recently served, in short - or long-term assignments.

These include:

Mennonite Central Committee

- * Elisabeth Wilder, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Cochabamba, Brazil
- * Megan Baumgartner, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Ololulunga, Kenya

Mennonite Mission Network

- * Michael Oyer (above left), Whitestone Mennonite Church, Service Adventure unit leader in Anchorage, Alaska
- * Kendra & Larissa Selzer, Spring Valley Mennonite Church, Service Opportunities for Our Partners (SOOP), in Aibonito, Puerto Rico
- * Del & Michele Hershberger, Hesston Mennonite Church, Youth Venture co-team leaders in Japan
- * Eli Ladd, Jesse Magill, and Andrew Schmidt, Hesston Mennonite Church, Youth Venture in Japan
- * Leigha Gomez and Alyssa Nisly, Journey@South Hutchinson Mennonite Church, Youth Venture in Peru
- * Mark, DeeDee, Kason, Taylor and Kellen Landes, Whitestone Mennonite Church, La Mesa, Colombia
- * Faith Manickam, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Kodaikanal, India

Executive Committee Activity

The conference Executive Committee has met three times since the last issue of the Messenger. Discussion and decisions have addressed the following:

- > Devoted an entire meeting to a joint session with Regional Conference Ministers, looking at structure and staffing options that can undergird the services provided to pastors and congregations
- > Received a report from a group known as Luke 5, looking at new areas of outreach and disciple making activities, including:
 - *Encourage pastors and leaders to take the APEST (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, Teacher) test to identify leadership gifts and how they can best be used in local contexts;
 - *Create a list of disciple making options to guide congregational ministry and outreach;
 - *Make maximum use of social media to share our stories.
- > Worked with possible organizational structure and staffing options to make the best use of available financial resources, including the expansion of the Administrative Assistant's time to provide the needed support services
- > Continued to relate to the leaders of the southern group of churches in south Texas (UCIM) in an effort to understand more fully what the pastors and lay leaders need to work effectively in border communities serving the needs of migrant populations
- > Provided financial support for the pastor/spouse retreat offered to the south Texas churches
- > Began the process of identifying participants in the annual assembly, scheduled for July 17-18 at a location yet to be determined
- > Received confirmation that the Kansas Leadership Center has awarded a grant jointly to South Central and Western District Conference pastors and others, for the fifth consecutive year.