

Discovery 20.21 Phase 1 Survey Responses

All Data summarized below was taken from the [Phase 1 survey](#) responses on the GOOGLE FORM (graphs/comments from the responses Summary tab) or [GOOGLE SPREADSHEET](#) created from the responses.

- 21 of our 33 congregations (64%) responded to the Phase 1 Survey with responses that could be put into the form (listed below along with their process and number of active participants in the congregation)
 - **Alice Mennonite Church**- General Group Discussion; 10
 - **Amani Community Church**- We had a consultative meeting with Amani leaders and discussed about the questions that are before us. We were 7 and each of us gave his/her views on this matter. We did agree how the process is being done to get the view of each congregation.; 50
 - **Argentine Mennonite Church**- We had two congregational representatives Katrina Depuru and Stephanie Green who came forward to help the congregation and the pastor with this Discovery. I explained the process to the congregation at our worship service after attending the SCC first meeting. We made an online form and paper forms available to all those willing to participate. In the end we had 16 people who responded. This represents about 80% of the regular attendees. Only one core member declined to participate.; 20
 - **At the Feet of Christ Church**- 3 participants. Through prayer ; 15
 - **Crystal Springs Mennonite Church**- 13 participants completed the survey. We had pastor conversations, elder conversations, and read the scriptures provided to us before we handed out the surveys. We studied the Confession of Faith "God's Story Our Story" within the last year. We had a congregational meeting discussing the present issues of SCMC and Mennonite USA.; 15-20
 - **Herold Mennonite Church**- No process completed.; 35
 - **Hesston Mennonite Church**- We surveyed church leadership, which included the pastors, council, and elders. Scores for each question are averages of the aggregate response. Comments are included from individuals for each question.; unknown.
 - **Hope for the Broken**- Zoom meetings and independent participation - 6 participants; 19
 - **Iglesia Menonita Buenas Nuevas**- Talked to members; 10
 - **Iglesia Menonita Nuevo Amanecer**- We sent a folder with a copy of the SCMC mission purpose & practices along with the Confession of faith & questions to 12 participating families. Pastor Nena met with each family individually to discuss and voice opinions. She gathered their thoughts, responses & survey and we compiled into one.; 35
 - **Inman Mennonite Church**- We gave every member and non member a copy of the survey to complete. We then compiled the answers into an average for the congregation.; 20 completed the survey.
 - **Journey Mennonite Church**- We invited 36 people to participate including staff, elders and additional people from each campus with a vested interest in SCMC; unknown.
 - **Kingman Mennonite Church**- Announcements were made in the bulletin and worship service concerning the phase 1 process evaluating the congregation's relationship with South Central Conference as requested. Surveys were distributed to the congregation for them to return for compilation.; 100
 - **Light of Life Mennonite Church**- The process, along with a bit of background information, was described during the Announcements section of a Sunday Morning Worship, and was referred to again a second week. A note was placed in the bulletin for three consecutive weeks. Eight individuals (about 25% of our regular attendees) were asked by email to engage in the process. Four people responded to the call and filled out the questionnaire; 30
 - **New Life Christian Center**- We gave each individual member a paper survey and gave time in our service to answer question/explain each question in detail. We had a total of 30 individuals; 25

- **Peace Mennonite Community Church**- We conducted a meeting over Google Meets and discussed the important documents, prayed, answered any questions, and then submitted responses to Pastor Kevin; 118
- **Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church**- The Elder team processed the request, then it was taken to the entire congregation for discussion and each member in attendance filled out the questionnaire. The results reported are a compilation.; 62
- **Pleasant View Mennonite Church**- We used a combination of group and individual discernment. A total of 24 individuals participated by completely surveys.; 24
- **Spring Valley Mennonite Church**- Surveys were given to each member/participant and then collected.; 30
- **Whitestone Mennonite Church**- Had a church meeting; a total of 87 congregational responses were tallied and averages submitted for the congregational response.; unknown.
- In addition to the above, **Bethel Mennonite Church** sent a letter about their engagement with the Discovery Process and Becky had a phone conversation with Pastor Bob Yates and submitted his response for where the congregational support or disagreement would fall for each of the 6 survey questions.

Congregations we have had no response from are:

- Calico Rock Mennonite Fellowship
- Eden Life Church
- Greensburg Mennonite Church
- Iglesia Alfa y Omega
- Iglesia Menonita Calvario
- Iglesia Menonita del Cordero
- Iglesia Menonita Fuente de Agua Viva
- Iglesia Menonita Príncipe de Paz
- Iglesia Menonita Rey de Gloria
- Metro Mennonite Church
- Mt. Pisgah Mennonite Church
- New Hope Fellowship

QUESTION 1

1. We affirm SCMC's Vision to produce healthy missional congregations by resourcing, connecting and empowering them to be Christ in the world. (Af...ctarlas y empoderarlas a ser Cristo en el mundo.)

21 responses



- 13 SA and 3 A (Argentine)
- We were unanimous on this question. (Pleasant Valley)
- In general we affirm this statement. Christ must remain the center. (Light of Life)
- Strongly Agree: 59.3% Agree:27.9% Neither agree or disagree: 9.3% Disagree: 0 Strongly disagree: 3.5%
Summary statement: The overall vision statement was affirmed. There were statements of affirmation for the leadership of SCMC and its support of conference churches. There were more statements of concern regarding the vagueness of the survey question and the lack of definitions to describe what was included. I.e. What does a healthy church look like? One respondent stated this "I would expect this of any conference whether it be SSC or not". One respondent indicated that while they affirmed the mission statement, they identified that they have not seen the vision statement in action. Approximately a quarter of the written comments (4 of 18) indicated that the lack of a statement of inclusion (or at least a Forbearance in the Midst of Difference type of statement) was concerning to them and that affiliation with MCUSA was important to them. (Whitestone)
- 6 strongly agree, 7 agree (Crystal Springs)
- Comments were evenly split between strongly agree and agree. (Spring Valley)
- 2 - Strongly Agreed; 3 - Agreed (Peace)
- 100% agree or strongly agree. Almost 90% strongly agreed. Individuals from Journey have and still are being called to invest significant time into SCMC. How does SCMC's vision impact Journey's vision? (Journey)
- SCMC Vision in helping produce missional and supporting congregations is a great idea that has not been put into active practice and support from our conference in South Texas congregations in missional work. (New Life Christian Center)
- The training events (resourcing) for church leaders could be more than the AVDS series in connection with HC. Would there not be some benefit for each congregation, as well as the conference to have a conference workshop session for volunteers who have committed to serve in the positions for which they have been called? There is value in connecting and resourcing among each other. (Although I am not sure of the details of the vision) (Hesston)

QUESTION 2

2. We support using the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective for teaching and practice. (Apoyamos el uso de la Confesión de Fé en una Perspectiva Menonita para la enseñanza y la práctica.)

21 responses



- We value the 1995 Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective as an instrument of guidance as it affirms the Holy Scriptures. (Kingman)
- 11 SA, 3 A, 2 N (Argentine)
- We were unanimous on this question. (Pleasant Valley)
- While the majority agreed, 28% disagreed (Pleasant View)
- In general we strongly affirm this statement, but some only agree (not strongly).
While there is general agreement with the Confession of faith, there is a concern that we must not let any human document replace God's Word. (Light of Life)
- There were a couple responses here which showed some of our members have not read the Confession of Faith. Something for us to work on. (Inman)
- Strongly Agree: 46.5% Agree: 40.7% Neither agree or disagree: 8.1% Disagree: 3.5% Strongly disagree: 1.2%
Summary statement: A significant majority of written comments indicated that while the Confession of Faith is a valuable guiding document for Mennonite churches, it is in need of revision and updating, and is a guide more than a rule book. Most of the statements surrounded the definition of marriage as well as the lack of inclusion who are LGBTQA+. There were statements indicating that the COF should be a document of inclusion, not exclusion. There were a minority of statements that spoke to the COF as needing to conform to Biblical teaching. (Whitestone)
- 3 strongly agree, 7 agree, 1 neither agree or disagree, 2 agree and disagree The consensus of our congregation is that we support the use of the Confession of Faith as a guide realizing that not all issues are black and white in life. There are many gray issues in life. We all agree that anyone is welcome to attend our church and be able to participate in all levels of the church. We believe that the church should be welcoming and should not exclude people because of sin in their lives or because of cultural interpretations such as sexual orientation. We believe that issues of members and leadership in the church need to be dealt with individually and based on, is the individual helping further the Kingdom of God or their own issues. Article 4 of the Confession of Faith has some issues that suggest a flat-bible or poor biblical literacy, and we are seeing this in some congregations. Biblical inerrancy is only a tool used to harm and justify cultural beliefs vs biblical misunderstandings. (Crystal Springs)
- Comment was made that support of the Confession of Faith depends on it remaining in the original form with no changes. If it is changed to reflect unbiblical values, we would not be able to use it. (Spring Valley)

- 2 - Strongly Agreed; 3 - Agreed (Peace)
- 100% Agree or strongly agree. The idea of using the Confession of Faith for Teaching AND Practice both is very important to Journey - you can't separate them. With that Journey understands there will be some variations on the details and interpretations particularly in matters of the sacraments: baptism, communion/observation of the Lord's Supper, and foot washing. There is hope for grace among congregations and that the Confession of Faith doesn't shift from a guide to follow Jesus to a tool of finger pointing and subtle coercion. There is some concern that the Confession summary statement article 19 should include, "We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life." Just as the COF does. (Journey)
- We agree that we should embody fully the Confession of Faith as a congregation and conference. (New Life Christian Center)
- -I support the use of the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective as a guide for teaching and practice, a starting point for conversation, and a way to connect our common hopes and values. I agree with how the confession itself speaks of its role: "This confession of faith guides the faith and life of the Mennonite Church and the General Conference of Mennonite Church." In that light, I agree that it be used as a descriptive document, not a prescriptive one. I would also be in favor of updating this document.
-I need to review the Confession of Faith again...but I think I agree with much of it. However, I don't think it is necessarily the basis for teaching; I think it is more important to look at the life and teachings of Jesus as a guide. The C of F likely reflects a time and a place in peoples' understanding and experience. (Hesston)

QUESTION 3

3. We support SCMC's vision for and engagement in revitalizing congregations in their mission and purpose. (Apoyamos a SCMC en su visión y su comp...lizar congregaciones en su misión y propósito.)

21 responses



- 11 SA, 4 A, 1 N (Argentine)
- We had one response as "agree" (Pleasant Valley)
- There was general agreement that SCMC is doing a lot to help congregations focus on the most important things and to encourage and equip them to fulfil that calling. (Light of Life)
- Several people did not know how SCMS does this. (Inman)
- Strongly Agree: 54.7% Agree:31.4% Neither agree or disagree:11.6% Disagree: 0 Strongly disagree: 2.3%
Summary Statement: 3. The comments in this section varied from acknowledging that SCMC wants to grow congregations, to an understanding that the conference is working with churches to support their missions and purpose, to not being clear how this statement is being accomplished. Some written comments indicated that they would like to see more support for congregations. 3 (of 18) written comments indicated that while they felt that SCMC's mission statement was fine, it is important for Whitestone to remain a member of MCUSA, and that homosexuality needs to be addressed, not simply acknowledged, by SCMC (Whitestone)
- 6 strongly agree, 6 agree, 1 neither agree or disagree (Crystal Springs)
- Comments split evenly between strongly agree and agree. One comment made was that if this vision requires cooperation with MCUSA, we would not agree. (Spring Valley)
- 2 - Strongly Agreed; 3 - Agreed (Peace)
- Over 94% agree or strongly agree. There is some concern that over the years the differences among sister churches in SCMC has led to a lack of carrying out the vision of SCMC. Sometimes we seem "stuck in the muck". How much actual "revitalization" is happening within the congregations? Journey could really get behind that if it is happening and made known. (Journey)
- What does this vision look like - has this been shared with our congregations? Does Conference have a plan on what the vision & engagement of revitalizing congregations that are struggling in the midst of Covid-19 & that had been struggling prior to the pandemic? (New Life Christian Center)
- -I do not believe that SCMC has the personnel or resources to do this well.
-Is this part of #2 in the Conference Purpose and Practices? And in the vision for and engagement in revitalizing congregations in their (SCMS?) mission and purpose It is not clear whether the mission and purpose is that of the conference or of the individual congregations, or both?
-I don't know enough specifics about the conference's vision. Revitalizing congregations always sounds good!
(Hesston)

QUESTION 4

4. We support SCMC's vision for and engagement in networking Anabaptist church planting.
(Apoyamos a SCMC en su visión y su compromiso en ...nes con la plantación de iglesias Anabautistas.)

21 responses



- 13 SA, 3 A (Argentine)
- We had one omission on the question. (Pleasant Valley)
- We have appreciated SCMC's focus on Church Planting. (Light of Life)
- This one was real close between, strongly agree, agree, and neither. "Agree" had one more vote than the others. I think our congregation agrees with this statement, however I do not think they know what the vision is. (Inman)
- Strongly Agree: 52.3% Agree: 33.7% Neither agree or disagree: 10.5% Disagree: 1.2% Strongly disagree: 2.3%
Summary Statement: 4. Church planting and networking was affirmed by the majority of written comments. Concern was voiced about whether church plants were being effectively resourced, how church planting can happen when the church as a whole is diminishing in numbers and whether recent church plants are actually reaching the unchurched, or simply moving current church members around to different locations. (Whitestone)
- 2 people- " It depends on what is being engaged in" (Hope for the Broken)
- 5 strongly agree, 8 agree (Crystal Springs)
- As a church we have been committed to financially and prayerfully supporting church plants and will continue to do so, contingent upon future developments regarding the MCUSA affiliation. (Spring Valley)
- 1 - Strongly Agreed; 4 - Agreed; - but not at the expense of short changing other programs that help support existing SCMC congregations (Peace)
- Over 94% agree or strongly agree. Church planting is tough work. Journey believes that for church plants to have a chance to grow they need to be supported by healthy churches/conferences with a clear vision. Does SCMC have that vision now?? Any way that the Kingdom expands is great and needs to be supported. It can happen within and outside of traditional churches and church plants. Is there training and coaching for church planters from SCMC? (Journey)
- We support church plant vision but believe that in the midst of so many of our churches in South Texas struggling and being so small that there should be a shift of restructuring and supporting our smaller churches rather than focusing on new church plants. (New Life Christian Center)
- -I agree in principle but would like there to be more information and standards connected to this as to what SCMC does to support such congregations and not try to control them.
-Same as above (Question 3)
(Hesston)

QUESTION 5

5. We value the resourcing for pastors and the pastor peer relationships in SCMC. (Valoramos los recursos para los pastores y las relaciones entre pastores en SCMC.)

21 responses



- The congregation does not fully understand the resources offered by the conference as far as equipping pastors but are in favor of having pastors having support and encouragement. Possibly this would be a good area to make the congregations aware of resources available. (Kingman)
- 13 SA, 3 A (Argentine)
- We were unanimous on this question. (Pleasant Valley)
- Not all of the participants were familiar with the efforts of the conference in this regard, but we all agree about the importance of this aspect of the conference responsibilities. (Light of Life)
- This was almost unanimous agreement with the congregation. Only 2 people had different answers and this was because they did not know about this. (Inman)
- Strongly Agree: 53.5% Agree: 31.4% Neither agree or disagree: 11.6% Disagree: 0 Strongly disagree: 3.5%
Summary Statement: 5. Many respondents voiced concern that SCMC can limit who pastoral search committees can talk to. They were disturbed by the experience of our current search committee not being able to seek out potential leaders who would not be "approved" (credentialed) by SCMC. There was widespread affirmation that pastors need support and peer connections, but many are uncertain how SCMC accomplishes or facilitates this process. Unless one is a pastor, the congregation really does not have a means for understanding or valuing this process. (Whitestone)
- 2 people- "It depends on what resourcing is given" (Hope for the Broken)
- 8 strongly agree, 5 agree We very much value the pastor peer relationship our pastors have had with SCMC (Crystal Springs)
- 2 - Strongly Agreed; 3 - Agreed (Peace)
- Was the question with the most varied answers. Still over 88% agree or strongly agree. Some Journey pastors have felt pastor peer relationships as very beneficial and life giving and others have not experienced that. Possibly due to the larger size and specialization of the Journey pastoral staff? Maybe some Journey staff get those types of relationships within the Journey staff and aren't looking for them from outside? There was some confusion in the question, possibly due to not understanding what resources are provided and what pastor peer relationships entail. Does this mean resourcing our pastors or our pastors resourcing others? (Journey)
- The congregation's pastor sees this as a strong value and believes the congregation would agree if they were able to hear and understand what their pastor gains (and therefore the congregation also gains) from conference resourcing for the pastor. (Bethel)

- We have seen in the past 3 years an increase in resourcing and supporting healthy pastoral peer relationships. This has been a healing space for our pastors as we see how much these activities and support give life to our pastors when they return from retreats or educational classes. (New Life Christian Center)
- -I only have comments to go on for this response, no direct knowledge.
 - I have not felt the conference to be helpful in this regard for some time. Again, I do not think SCMC has the personnel or resources to do this well.
 - As an Elder, and considering what the pastors share in regard to the resourcing and peer relationships, it does not appear to be as resourceful or valued as it could be.
 - Not sure what resourcing you're referring to. Most of what I hear from pastors is that there are meetings that end up in disagreements about various policies/procedures/theological interpretation (Hesston)

QUESTION 6

6. We are committed to SCMC continuing as a mutually supportive network of churches. (Estamos comprometidos a que SCMC siga como una red de iglesias de apoyo mutuo.)

21 responses



- Kingman Mennonite Church realizes the value of being connected to a network of churches to provide accountability and support. We would hope to reciprocate encouragement and support to other congregations as the opportunity presents itself. (Kingman)
- 6 SA, 4 A, 1 N (Argentine)
- We were unanimous on this question. (Pleasant Valley)
- The majority agreed, however 21% either agreed or disagreed and 17% disagreed (Pleasant View)
- We affirm the conference, and desire to remain in relationship with the conference provided that the conference remains faithful to God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) as revealed in His Word. (Light of Life)
- Strongly Agree: 44.2% Agree: 29.1% Neither agree or disagree: 22.1% Disagree: 2.3% Strongly disagree: 2.3%
Summary Statement: 6. The idea of being a part of a supportive network of churches was affirmed. However, the vast majority of respondents indicated that Whitestone needs to remain affiliated with MCUSA. If SCMC chooses to leave MCUSA, most of the respondents indicated that they would want Whitestone to leave SCMC and affiliate with another conference. (Whitestone)
- 5 strongly agree, 8 agree We want to help embolden the ministries that contain people we disagree with theologically (Crystal Springs)
- As a congregation we are strongly committed to the inspiration of Scriptures, the abandonment of which we feel underlies the issues facing our future affiliation. We are committed to being part of a network of churches which hold unwaveringly to the Holy Scripture. (Spring Valley)
- 1 - Strongly Agreed; 4 - Agreed (Peace)
- 100% agree or strongly agree. Overall at this time SCMC's mission and values seem to line up with Journey's but time will tell. More discernment will be critical during this process. Can SCMC focus on God's Call to build God's Kingdom? How does SCMC's discernment of MCUSA's position of sexuality and gender influence this? (Journey)
- We are committed to being a part of this mutually supportive network of churches ONLY if this network of congregations does NOT remain a member conference of MC USA. (Bethel)
- -I am not committed to remaining with SCMC if there is a decision to leave MC USA.
-I see more benefit seeking affiliation with another conference that wants to remain connected to Mennonite Church USA and that is open to more diversity in theological interpretations within the network or conference.

-This response is based on the assumption that the commitment would also include either a continued or discontinued relationship with Mennonite Church USA; this should have been included into the question in order to give an appropriate response.

-Not if it means breaking ties with MC USA

-Yes...but not if SCC leaves MCUSA. SCC is a branch; the trunk is where the branch's nutrients come from. Cut off the branch and it won't last long. And there is no other trunk I want to be grafted onto other than MCUSA. Therefore, I'm as committed to SCC as SCC is to MCUSA.

(Hesston)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- **Kingman-** We realize the process is necessary. Several years ago we went through an 18 month discernment process to arrive at our decision to terminate our membership MC USA. As a result, we did not get a large number of survey's back.
- **Herold-** Although my husband and I are interested in SCMC, we only know of one other person in our group who cares about conference. The three of us do want to know the outcome of this project. It seems well planned and thoughtful. We are concerned about the conference--and our congregation. Thank you for your work.
- **Argentine-** This Phase was not a challenge for our congregation but many felt that it was indirect and vague as the trigger for the Discovery process was the whole LGBTQ issue but that issue did not come up in this survey. However I explained that the Phase 1 was to discovery our relationship to the SCC on its own merits. Phase 2 will get into the question of SCC's associations and also examine the direction of influences. This was understood and accepted by those who responded.
- **Pleasant Valley-** As a church leadership team, we are concerned that any decision coming out of the Discovery 20.21 plan is inherently biased against South Central Conference's continued participation in Mennonite Church USA. One question concerns the role of congregations who are members of SCMC but not of MC USA. Providing a differentiation in the role of non MC USA member churches seems necessary to make the process fair. The non member Churches have already chosen to not be members of MC USA. Without recusal they effectively have a say without any ownership in the process.
Registered by Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church Elders,
Submitted by Heber Ramer, congregational chairperson.
- **Light of Life-** We have not engaged too thoroughly on this topic at this time because we spent quite a bit of time on it a few years ago and we are generally resistant to going back to it now.
- **Inman-** On about 1/3rd of our forms, people's comments showed a concern for the Direction MCUSA is heading and also a desire to stay true to scripture in the things we do.
- **Whitestone-** Summary Statement: There were numerous statements regarding the order of the surveys. They wished that the discussion regarding relationship with MCUSA would have occurred first. They also stated that the survey itself was biased towards positive responses towards SCC. There was some affirmation for the Discovery 20.21 process, but more frustration voiced about the lack of discussion regarding homosexuality. Acknowledging that is divisive and then summarily ignoring it is not helpful!
- **Hope for the Broken-** I do support and value the visions of what is stated here, but I have not personally seen it implemented. I have not seen the value in belonging or remaining in this organization in a significant or impacting manner.
- **Crystal Springs-** We very much would like to stay with SCMC and continue our current relationship with Mennonite USA
- **Journey-** There was affirmation of making the survey personal for Journey. There was a question of how does SCMC relate with Hesston College and Camp Mennoscah? Are they becoming more "liberal" than SCMC? If so, what does that mean for SCMC? It seems all who participated feel that being a part of a conference is beneficial for Journey. But some are not sure how much Journey receives from SCMC compared to how much Journey supports SCMC? Is that ok if it is not balanced? Maybe some of this is due to the differences in the way Journey is structured and Journey's need (or lack thereof) for support/resources.
- **Bethel-** We at Bethel Mennonite Church are thankful a decision was made by SCC Leaders to start the Discovery Process 20.21 to encourage churches to discuss and discern direction for congregations and the Conference regarding involvement with MC USA... The Leadership at Bethel believes that our church has been clear about our intention to not be connected in any way with MC USA. If the churches of SCC decide that it is best to remain as members of the denomination, we will withdraw from South Central Conference due to the strong disagreement we have with the direction of MC USA. At this point we will

respect the effort and time needed for other member churches go through their own processes to see where their churches stand. We've been through the difficult process of getting to this point and now we'll join with you in prayer for everyone involved and to trust that God is working among our churches and His people.