



## Reflections on the first few months as Network Directors

By Howard & Cathy Wagler



We began our new role Sept 1, 2020. We have each been involved in SCMC over the past 25 years: Cathy as Chair of the Ministerial Leadership Team, and Howard as an Exec Team Member (now Network Leadership Team) as well as leadership in resourcing churches. Our unique individual gifts complement each other and contribute to the whole of leadership.

We have felt a warm welcome from SCMC churches. We would love to be visiting churches more, but due to the surprise setback of Covid we have had to be more careful with travel. We are hopeful that we can visit more churches in late spring and summer 2021. The congregations are what make SCMC what it is.

We have some creative church Pastors/Leaders who are staying engaged with folks in their congregations and in their communities in non-traditional ways. Some examples of this creativity include:

1. Baptisms with just a few family members of those being baptized gathered in person and the rest of the congregation engaged through Zoom.
2. Christmas caroling at a retirement center from outside, having a church member who works at the retirement center inside and connecting the folks caroling with those inside by phone.
3. Creating a calling team to stay with families and to offer pastoral care in appropriate ways.

We have felt encouragement and support from the Network Leadership Team, the Regional Ministry Coaches, and the Discovery Process Team as we have managed various challenges.

SCMC has been redefining Vision and Mission over the past two years. During the 20-21 season we have engaged in a Congregational Discovery Process to further clarify SCMC's Mission/Ministry focus. We are extremely grateful for the participation from our member churches.

In 2020 and now into 2021, there are plenty of distracting voices. We hold Jesus' words closely in this season.

-John 8:12, *Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."*

-John 10:14-15, *"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep."*

-John 14:6, *Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."*

Gabe Lyons wrote that Christ-followers can live in the messy tension as "restorers" which he defines as: Living as creators, not critics; Grounded, but not distracted; In community and not alone. These have been good thoughts for us to struggle with in these times.

We want to leave you with part of Jesus prayer from John 17:13-19  
*"Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup> I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They do not belong to this world any more than I do. <sup>17</sup> Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. <sup>18</sup> Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth."* NLT

## Pastor & Congregation News

> Many of our congregations which suspended in-person worship services in mid-March when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, have either returned to in-person worship, or live streaming, or both. This is an opportunity to "visit" other churches by accessing their websites and connecting to their services, either live or at a later time.

> At Journey Mennonite Church, Howard and Cathy Wagler have ended their leadership roles and are now serving as Network Team Leaders for South Central Conference. Eric Miller at South Hutchinson and Jim Ostlund at McPherson have assumed other leadership roles, so there are active pastor searches underway for those two campuses, plus the Yoder campus. Joel Schroeder has ended his interim assignment at Yoder, and is now serving in a similar capacity in McPherson, with pastoral ministry being shared with Zach Batson.

> Steve Schmidt ended his assignment as interim lead pastor at Whitestone Mennonite Church on December 20 after serving for 18 months. Kevin Wilder is now the interim lead pastor on a 1/3 time basis until May, while he completes his teaching assignment at Hesston College.

> Eden Life Church in Kansas City has recently included a Congolese group into its membership, now offering worship services in 4 languages. Pastor Omot Aganya continues as the lead pastor.

> Amani Community Church in Wichita (Masemo Waki-bogo, pastor) celebrated its first anniversary on December 6 (see separate article).

> Pastors engaging in sabbatical leaves during the past several months include David Norris at Spring Valley Mennonite Church, Clayton Gladish at Hesston Mennonite Church, and Kenzie Intemann at Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church.

> John Stainbrook was licensed toward ordination at Crystal Springs Mennonite Church, where he now shares pastoral duties with Josh Patterson.

> At Calico Rock Mennonite Fellowship in Arkansas, a pastor from the community, Johnny Young, has begun a preaching ministry and is considering the possibility of an expanded pastoral role.

> Jeff Selzer, pastor of Pleasant View Mennonite Church, and his wife Dana have begun a personal ministry of providing a home for foster children, with the result of adopting a 2-year old boy.

> Cathy Wagler, co-director of the SCC Network Leadership Team, was licensed for specific ministry.

# Amani Celebrates One Year

By Clarence Rempel

It was with expressions of thankfulness, amazement, and joy that Amani Community Church celebrated its one year anniversary on December 6, 2020. Over one hundred members and guests crowded into the chapel at Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church in southeast Wichita for joyful worship led by Pastor Masemo Wakibogo, the Paradizo Choir and the Strong Music Band. Clarence Rempel, Regional Ministry Coach for this church plant, brought the message which was translated into Swahili and then Kinyarwanda, two prominent African languages. There were guests from other African churches in Wichita including two pastors and a pastor's wife. The celebration concluded with a grand fellowship meal. The Paradizo Choir posted two more songs in December on YouTube.



South Central Mennonite Conference, some of its churches and individuals pledged \$36,000 for year one of this church plant with plans to equal that for years two and three. An Elder Support Team was assembled with representation from Amani and the supporting congregations – Hesston Mennonite Church, Spring Valley Mennonite Church, and Whitestone Mennonite Church. Light of Life Mennonite Church also made a commitment for three years of support. Journey Mennonite Church paid for 55 Swahili language Bibles that were imported from Tanzania. Pleasant View Mennonite Church contributed a fifteen passenger van that picks up people for choir rehearsals, Bible studies, and Sunday worship. Individuals also contributed for choir uniforms, tables, a computer, and family relief needs.

The congregation is feeling the squeeze of their present rental facility in both space and time availability. Currently, there are no rooms available for children's or youth ministry. There are no kitchen facilities. Pastor Masemo dreams of seven day church, but currently they only have access Thursday through Saturday after 4 PM and Sunday. The Ministry Team of Amani is praying for suitable facilities and have committed to giving \$500 per month to a Building Fund with a dream of having their own building some day soon. They are planning for a church for generations to come. Designated contributions for the Amani Church Plant Support or the Amani Building Fund can be made through South Central Mennonite Conference, Box 564, Hesston, KS 67062.

Pray for the health and safety of church member families. Many work in places of higher COVID exposure risks. There have been two vehicle accidents and an apartment fire in the past month. Students who are new to the English language have had a hard time with online schooling. There are many challenges in adapting to a new culture and country. Government sponsored support services for new immigrants stop after six months, but many needs continue. Pastor Masemo gives much time and energy to helping persons and families navigate the nitty gritty of surviving in a new world.

## Leadership Changes & Updates

Following the annual assembly in July, leadership titles and appointments have changed. Replacing the former Executive Committee is the Network Leadership Team. The new position of Network Team Leaders is now filled jointly by Howard and Cathy Wagler. Other team members are Gary Wolfer, network chair; Phil Rosenberger, network chair-elect; Jim Diller, Conference treasurer; Kurt Horst, Ministerial Leadership Team chair; and Rod Schmucker, UCIM moderator. Becky King, administrative assistant, provides staff support.

The team meets monthly, and has been addressing the following issues and actions:

- > Acknowledged the need for revisions of the constitution to reflect the changes in titles and responsibilities, asking Kurt Horst to chair a committee to undertake this assignment.
  - > Approved the appointment of Linda Yutzy, former conference moderator, to the Gifts Discernment Team.
  - > Identified big-picture prayer concerns, and spent time at each meeting addressing those.
  - > Approved a change of title from Regional Conference Minister to Regional Ministry Coach, affirming the ongoing work of Howard Keim, Clarence Rempel, and James Wenger.
  - > Affirmed a policy that anyone called into a ministry assignment within the conference should be qualified for credentialing for specific ministry. Acting on that policy, Cathy Wagler, network team co-leader, was subsequently credentialed.
  - > Acted on a number of applications for assistance to individuals to engage in qualified educational programs.
  - > Chose July 23-25, 2021 for the annual assembly in a hybrid format that will include in-person activities if deemed safe related to COVID-19 restrictions. Whitestone Mennonite Church has agreed to host the assembly.
  - > Received reports from the pastor/peer meetings which are being scheduled monthly via Zoom.
  - > Affirmed the plans of the network team leaders to visit as many churches as feasible during pandemic-related travel restrictions.
  - > Monitored the work of a leadership group to organize and facilitate the year of Discovery, which is designed to learn from congregations their current and future relationships to both South Central Conference and Mennonite Church USA, with the goal of clarifying the conference's affiliation with MC USA at the annual assembly in July 2021. There was extended discussion about responses from congregations and how best to consolidate and communicate the results before preparing for Phase 3.
- The Network Leadership Team is scheduled to meet next on February 15.

## 2020-2021 Budget Update

By Jim Diller—SCMC Treasurer

Thank you to everyone who has played a part in the generous contributions to SCMC during the first part of the current fiscal year. At the end of December, we are 1/3 of the way through the new year. Contributions are about \$12K ahead of the budget, and expenses so far are favorable to the budget. This positive start puts us in an excellent position as we progress through the rest of the year. I look forward to your continued support.

	Budget Thru Dec	Dec YTD Actual	Better (Worse)
Revenue	\$ 34,900	\$ 47,204	\$ 12,304
Expense	47,363	34,914	12,449
Net Income	\$ (12,463)	\$ 12,290	\$ 24,753