

The Post-Resurrection Reversal

By Howard & Cathy Wagler and Becky King

In this post Easter season I (Cathy) find myself wondering how similar our current situation is to the way the post-crucifixion biblical characters wrestled with the resurrection's reversal of their understanding of the Messiah. In John 20:11-16 we read about Mary, encountering Jesus but not knowing him until he said her name. She was unable to understand because of her expectations of what the Messiah would be and do.

When Jesus' disciples, whose expectations of a Messiah had been quite literally crucified with Christ, were together they were likely disoriented and despairing but continued to gather together and process all that Jesus had taught them. To these biblical characters, Jesus appeared and spoke, continuing to encourage and teach them a new understanding of himself as the crucified and resurrected King. The disciples thus received peace in recognizing Jesus, who they knew and loved.

Are we, similarly, disoriented in a time when our lives and expectations have been upended? We can also seek to encounter Jesus personally and gather together as Jesus' followers so that we know him intimately and recognize his voice calling our names when he shows up in the midst of our disorientation. And we will receive peace from Jesus when he appears and speaks to us, encouraging us in a new understanding of his way of peace and life.

What has Jesus taught you in this time of disorientation and upended expectations? I (Becky) have had the opportunity to teach our God's Big Story primary Sunday school curriculum on zoom throughout this winter. What a surprise it was to me when this new necessary framework had me not just planning a lesson but dwelling on God's story of love for me and every one of us. At many times throughout the days of reading and discussing the scriptures with my family and my zoom class I found myself overcome by my own new understanding of God's deep and wide love for all God's people. God had reversed my role from teacher planning a lesson to beloved child being taught again of his great love for me. As our children go back to their in-person classes and I transition out of my role as teacher, I have been challenged to keep up with the weekly lessons our children are studying, having fallen in love again with sitting at the feet of my teacher.

We encourage you as pastors, teachers, parents, and beloved children of God to continue to seek Jesus and know his voice so that you will recognize your teacher and see the ways he is reversing your understanding of what he can and will do. May we each find hope in Jesus' words of comfort, *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."* John 14:27.



Becky's daughters attending zoom Sunday School in their "boats" immersed in the story of Peter walking on water

Pastor & Congregation News

GOD IS GOOD! I, Becky, have taken over writing all articles for the Messenger and this is the first issue in which I have read and summarized the updates from our Network Directors and their team of regional ministry coaches for the past three months. I wish all of you could read every one of the incredible things these pastors of our pastors report God is doing in our communities and congregations! It is quite a task to summarize them into one short article of snapshots. This is one reason I strongly encourage you to plan to attend Assembly (in person or online) as it is the time when our pastors and congregation members get to gather and testify to the work of our God. Come and hear, learn, and be encouraged!

One theme that has come out of a year of living in a global pandemic is that many of our congregations have adopted a hybrid gathering model where live services are attended in person and also streamed online across one or multiple platforms. Pastors have been both encouraged and challenged by seeing that while in-person totals of people gathering are significantly lower than they were, when including the number of people worshipping together online and in person, there are more people attending than pre-pandemic. Many pastors and congregations are experimenting with how to connect deeply and get to know the new individuals who are joining their worshipping communities digitally.

> On February 12, with aid from MDS and support from other SCMC congregations, Eden Life Church in Kansas City, MO, installed 30-R insulation and new ceiling tiles above their sanctuary. They have also begun a partnership with the leaders of a Congolese group that has been using their building for worship, including beginning an English service on Sunday mornings.

> Pastor Jerry Acosta will be Ordained for pastoral ministry with At the Feet of Christ Church, Wichita, KS on Sunday April 11.



Assembly 2021

Please plan to join the SCMC Annual Assembly online or in person at Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston, KS on July 23-25, 2021. This weekend will be centered on the theme “Formed to be Sent” and we will study Isaiah 6:1-8, led by pastors and speakers from within SCMC congregations. Register and find more information at sccmenno.org/annual-assembly. All reports and delegate documents will be added to the assembly webpage as they are available. While everyone is encouraged and invited to attend the assembly worship and delegate sessions, congregations have been given their updated number of official voting delegates and should now begin selecting and registering them on the assembly website.

Friday

6:30-7:00 pm **Registration & Fellowship**

7:00-8:30 pm **Worship: “Formed”**

Saturday

9:00-10:30 am **Worship: “Sent”**

10:30-12:00am **Delegate Meeting**

12:00-1:00 pm **Lunch**

1:00-2:30 pm **Delegate Meeting**

2:30- 3:00 pm **Fellowship Snack Break**

3:00- 3:30 pm **Blessing & Communion Service**

3:30-4:30 pm **Delegate Wrap-Up**

Sunday

Pre Recorded Video OR Live at Whitestone/ live streamed online

Worship: “Formed to be Sent”

Network Leadership Updates

SCMC’s Network Leadership Team (NLT) meets monthly, and has been addressing the following issues and actions:

- > Appointed Amy Claassen to the Ministerial Leadership Team
 - > Affirmed the recommendation of Phil Rosenberger to delegates as Network Chair candidate at assembly
 - > Asked congregations and pastors to join in a month of prayer for leaders in discerning future conference affiliation
 - > Upon request from UCIM, affirmed the appointment of Tim Sweigart as interim Regional Ministry Coach for south Texas
 - > Affirmed Amani Community Church’s efforts to contact conference congregations and raise financial support for the second year of the church plant ministry
 - > Heard a report about planning a Bib Lit class for UCIM pastors. Suggested congregants be allowed to attend the keynote presentations
 - > Continued to work out needed constitutional changes to match the new structure approved by delegates in 2020
 - > Planned for a hybrid assembly in Hesston, KS at Whitestone Menn. Church July 23-25, 2021
 - > Worked on document establishing all roles and responsibilities of SCMC Network Directors including an accountability framework
 - > Heard report from conference representatives at MC USA’s Constituency Leaders Council (CLC)
 - > Agreed on the need for additional members on NLT, requiring an update to the structure first approved by delegates in July 2020
- The Network Leadership Team is scheduled to meet next on April 19

Pastor & Congregation News (Continued)

- > Pastor John Stainbrook’s license toward ordination was celebrated in a virtual licensing service on February 21. John is serving as pastor alongside Josh Patterson at Crystal Springs Mennonite Church in Harper, KS.
- > Winfred Curley was commissioned at Light of Life Mennonite Church in Farmington, NM, for his outreach ministry of leading and hosting community bible studies both in person and on facebook. He also helps fill a portion of the pastoral role when pastor Phil Rosenberger is away. This influence in the congregation and community has been a positive development over the past year.
- > Journey Mennonite Church, of South Hutchinson, KS, has launched a new vision; Formed - Centered - Sent and is moving forward with restructuring and pastoral resourcing for the multi-campus congregation. Joel Schroeder began as interim pastor at Journey@McPherson on Jan. 10 and Zach Batson was installed as the campus pastor of Journey@Yoder on February 28. Directional Pastor, Jim Ostlund, will be taking a sabbatical this summer.
- > Kevin Wilder began as interim pastor at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, KS, on January 1 and will work with the other pastoral staff to reimagine the church and pastoral staffing for a new era. The pastoral search committee is taking a six month break.
- > Pastor Jeff Blackburn of Greensburg Mennonite Church in Greensburg, KS, is regularly meeting with several persons seeking a deeper relationship with Christ. His long-term steady presence in the community has allowed him to build abiding trusting relationships with individuals.
- > Pastor Kenzie Intemann has begun a class with young persons who are preparing for baptism at Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, KS.
- > Amani Community Church has reached a new two-year rental agreement for a Chapel in Wichita, KS, giving them expanded full-time access to the space and an additional fellowship hall that has been much needed by this growing community. They have been welcoming new families and members and have a full congregational ministry team in place. They are currently raising funds to support their second financial year’s externally resourced budget (in addition to an internally resourced budget funded by offerings) which begins May 1. \$27,700 has been committed and an additional \$13,178 is currently being raised.
- > Hesston Mennonite Church, Hesston, KS officially implemented a new constitution on February 11. Pastor Clayton Gladish, one of three pastoral team members, has announced his resignation effective this summer.
- > Inman Mennonite Church, Inman, KS, resumed in-person gathering on January 24 with two services. They now worship in a contemporary style at 9 AM and traditional service at 10:30 AM.
- > Ulises Arenas, pastor of Iglesia Buenas Nuevas in San Juan, Texas, is also serving as the interim Executive Director of Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church).
- > Kay Schroeder, pastor at Hesston Mennonite Church, will be serving as one of the worship leaders at Menno-Con 21—the Mennonite Church USA Convention in Cincinnati, July 6-10.
- > Ana Alicia Hinojosa, member of New Life Christian Center San Benito, Texas, will be one of the worship speaker at the convention.