



M E S S E N G E R

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

Remembering Jesus “Chuy” Navarro

By Felipe Hinojosa

Last June South Texas Mennonites lost one of our most important leaders. Jesus “Chuy” Navarro passed away in Corpus Christi at the age of 65. At the time of his passing, Chuy had been out of the Mennonite Church for more than 20 years, but his accomplishments, hard work, and dedication to the Mennonite Church have not been forgotten by the many who knew Chuy “*en esos dias*” (in those days). Back in 2007, I had the privilege of meeting and interviewing Chuy for a writing project on South Texas Mennonites. Already in failing health, Chuy was gracious enough to talk with me about his work in the Mennonite church, how he helped organize the South Texas Mennonite Church Council (STMCC, which is now UCIM), and how from the time he was a little boy in Premont, TX, he fell in love with the Mennonite Church.¹

Chuy started attending the Mennonite Brethren church in Premont in 1955 when he was 10 years old. The church, or “*la escuela*” (the school) as Chuy remembered it, was located on the east side of Premont—the “Mexican side.” Chuy remembered how on those hot and humid South Texas afternoons, “the minister would drive around and pick us up in his bus.” With little or no preaching by the missionary and with the promise of Kool-Aid and cookies, Chuy and his friends looked forward to going to *la escuela*. In a small town like Premont, steeped in racial prejudice and oppressive Texas heat, *la escuela* provided an option, something to do to pass the time, for Chuy and a good number of his friends.

Chuy remained engaged with that little church on the east side of Premont throughout his

teenage years. He witnessed, without much local fanfare, the transfer from Mennonite Brethren leadership to the (Old) Mennonite Church. As a teenager, Chuy recognized his church was different, not only because they did not decorate their sanctuaries with religious symbols, *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, and other saints but because the ones in charge were almost all Anglo. In those early days I don’t remember any Hispanic pastors, they were all *gringos*, every single one of them in South Texas.

In the mid-1960s as Chuy met and began hangin’ out with other youth in the nearby town of Mathis, the idea surfaced to organize a leadership council that was more representative of Mexican American leadership. The friends that Chuy made in Mathis were also committed to the church and many, including Samuel Hernandez and Lupe De León, Jr., had already taken on leadership roles as preachers in Mathis. They did this even though Chuy and his friends were mostly somewhere between 15 and 17 years old. They were still in high school. They decided, as Chuy told me back in 2007 when I visited him in Robstown: “we ought to get together not as a *gringo* group, but let’s get together as a Chicano group...” and so that was the beginning in South Texas of combining and bringing in Hispanics into a totally dominated Anglo American church in South Texas.

Some Anglos resisted this, but in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the Chicano Civil Rights Movement and other freedom movements were in full bloom, the desire and wishes of the missionaries no longer took center stage with a younger and bolder Chicano generation.

For Chuy the new leadership of young Mexican Americans was important for two

¹ Jesus “Chuy” Navarro, interview by author, January 21, 2007, Robstown, Texas, tape recording.

reasons: it opened the door for Mexican Americans to take on leadership roles in local churches and it encouraged them to attend South Central Conference meetings in order to familiarize themselves with broader church leadership and constituents. His idea worked and in 1971 the South Texas Mennonite Church Council (STMCC) was born with Chuy being named as its first chairman. With most young Mexican American Mennonites eyeing leadership opportunities in Elkhart, Puerto Rico, and Kansas, Chuy's desire to stay in South Texas made him the obvious choice for chairman. He committed to one year of service but ended up serving churches in South Texas for more than 12 years. During those years he managed to earn a Bachelor's degree from Texas A&I University in Kingsville and later a Master's degree in Social Work from Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio.

In his role as chairman, Chuy brought people together by organizing churches and leaders in a variety of activities ranging from spiritual care to church polity. He was most proud of his work to restructure the Voluntary Service (VS) program in a way that provided more input from the South Texas community. During our interview Chuy laughed as he remembered how critical he was of VSers that arrived in South Texas in the 1960s with "long hair and sandals, singing Bob Dylan songs... they were a complete contrast from the VSers I remember in the 1950s!"

But while most remember Chuy for his important administrative work, what really stands out in people's memories are Chuy's infectious smile and the way he loved and cared for his people in South Texas. That love often manifested itself as a strident critique of Anglo racism and paternalism, but it also came through as a critique of Mexican Americans who thrived on blaming the "white man" for every bad thing that happened in their lives. In other words, Chuy was a complex man whose politics and theology ranged a broad spectrum, but there was no debate about how he felt about the Mennonite Church. As we sat in his hospital room in 2007, Chuy shared with me that even though he was becoming a Catholic again, rejoining the faith of his mother

who passed away when he was 9 years old, he would always be a Mennonite in his heart. Thank you, Chuy, for smiling and for showing us the way. "Well done, good and faithful servant." Amen.

SCC Mennonite Women

Twenty-Something

By Nancy Peachey

In August several members of the Conference Committee for Mennonite Women traveled to Henderson, Nebraska for a weekend meeting for MW committee members church wide. In September, the annual SCC Mennonite Women's Council Meeting was held to recognize the work of the women who have completed their terms of office, and to welcome those beginning terms of service. The major event was the annual Women and Girls Retreat, September 11 and 12 at Camp Mennoscah, held jointly with Western District Women in Mission. The keynote speaker was Florence Schloneger.



In welcoming the women who are serving currently, it is noted that there are 4 women who would be "twenty-something". They are Katie Best and Karissa Miller, both from the Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, KS, serving on the Retreat Committee; and Christy Pickerill from the Whitestone Church in Hesston, KS, serving as Treasurer of SCC MW. Jenny Warkentine from the Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, KS, is also appointed to the Retreat Committee.

Pastor and Church News

Jeremy Patterson, Associate Pastor of South Hutchinson Mennonite Church with primary responsibility at Journey @ Yoder, was approved by the Ministerial Commission for ordination, to be celebrated on October 3.

Ryan Kopper was licensed for ministry at Hesston Mennonite Church as Associate Pastor of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, with the celebration occurring on August 15.

Amy Claassen was licensed on July 18 for specialized ministry for chaplaincy work, requested by her home congregation, Whitestone Mennonite in Hesston. She is serving at Wesley Medical Center in Wichita.



Luann and Robert Yutzy, former pastors at Yoder Mennonite Church and Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, moved in July to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, where they have accepted a co-pastorate position (1 1/2 FTE) with East Petersburg Mennonite Church. The church is a Lancaster Conference congregation with an attendance of about 230. This move puts them closer to family in Ohio, Virginia and the Lancaster area.

Regional Conference Minister Updates

As we have been reporting, the pattern of using regional conference ministers to provide pastoral and congregational oversight is continuing with the assignments nearly complete with the additional of James Wenger and Marlin Birkey. James and his wife Faith (Landis) moved from Baltimore, MD to Hesston several months ago. Marlin and his wife Cherie moved from Sarasota, FL to Hays, KS—Cheris's home area. Continuing RCMs are Marion Bontrager, Grace Brunner, Heber Ramer and Amzie Yoder.

Grace accepted the role of RCM with the provision that it be limited in its duration, whenever a replacement could be found. Consequently, she and James are working toward a transition with Spring Valley and Pleasant Valley congregations. Grace will continue with Crystal Springs for the time being. James and Marion are working on a transition with Pleasant View Mennonite Church in rural Hydro, Oklahoma. James will also provide oversight for Calico Rock, AR, Mennonite Fellowship.

Marlin is now the RCM for Faith Mennonite Church in South Hutchinson, and Greensburg, KS, Mennonite Church.

Marion will continue with South Hutchinson Mennonite/Journey @ Yoder and Whitestone. Heber currently serves Hesston Mennonite. Amzie spends one week a month in south Texas, traveling from his home in Albuquerque, NM, serving the 8 churches there.

Youth Ministry Report

By Doug Krehbiel

South Central Conference shares a Youth Minister with Western District Conference on a marginal part-time basis, in the person of Doug Krehbiel, who also serves as Youth Pastor at Tabor Mennonite Church in rural Goessel, Kansas. Doug has provided a report of some of his more recent activities, of interest to our readers.

We were pleased with a successful youth rally in Waxahachie, Texas, July 9-11, 2010. Jeremy Kempf and company were songleaders. Hugo Saucedo, MVS director was keynote speaker. Celestial Gravity, a Christian rock band from Pasadena, TX provided special music and a concert. Total youth and sponsors from Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas were approximately 100. A lot of elbow grease went into this event. It was a pleasure working on the planning end of things with Bill Zuercher.

In June and July, I wrote eleven new original musical compositions inspired by the Hesston College Bible Literature Class taught by Marion Bontrager and Michele Hershberger. This is the class that presents the *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation story). These songs were used in conjunction with teaching by Rosie Jantz and original dramas by Carol Duerksen during our 2010 summer Sunday School series for ages junior high and older at Tabor Mennonite Church. I met in August with Michele, Marion, Carol and Bill Zuercher to outline plans to create a new musical in the spirit of the *Upside Down King*. Hesston College is interested in being involved after this school year. We are planning on writing a grant to help fund the project, with the help of

Bill Zuercher in the spring of 2011. We would like to do several local presentations in 2012 and 2013 and then audition to perform at the Phoenix 2013 national convention.

I completed a basic *Upside Down King* lease package so that churches will be able to put on this program themselves. Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City is planning on doing this musical in the summer of 2011. Bluffton University also has interest in presenting the musical within the next couple of years.

I used the month of August as sabbatical and took a Theology of Youth Ministry correspondence course from Christian Leadership University. Four models of youth ministry were presented and critiqued. I will be sharing this information with youth pastors and also as part of a youth ministry class at Bethel College. My complete sabbatical outline for the fall and winter is available for those interested to review.

I provided counseling for three youth pastors regarding various congregational and ministry related issues. One of these is on a monthly check-in basis.

We checked schedules and made plans for a slighter later-than-usual date for the Junior High event, *Know Jesus* on the Hesston College campus. *Know Jesus* will take place January 29-30, 2011.

The SCC/WDC Youth Committee welcomed Jesse Blasdel, youth pastor at South Hutchinson Mennonite Church, as our newest member.

Fraternal Visit to Nepal

By Jeff Blackburn, Pastor

Greensburg Mennonite Church.

Jeff Blackburn, along with Paul and Shirley Unruh, will travel to Nepal in October on a Fellowship Tour. The trip is designed to give stateside supporters a picture of the work Dale and Bethsaba Nafziger do there. The Greensburg Mennonite Church trio will leave Wichita in the afternoon of October 12 and arrive in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, on October 14. They will

meet other tour participants in Hong Kong before going on to Nepal.

The itinerary includes visits to Patan Hospital, Butwal and Chitwan. Jeff has been invited to speak at Dale's church on Saturday, October 16 (their usual day of worship). The group will also sing together "How Great Thou Art" at both worship services scheduled. The purpose of the trip is to become better acquainted with the Nafzigers, our partners in ministry, and to become better acquainted with the people they serve—and to let them get to know us, too.

The weather is expected to be hot during the days and cool in the mornings and evenings. The itinerary includes lots of walking, sight-seeing, shopping and contact with the people of Nepal.



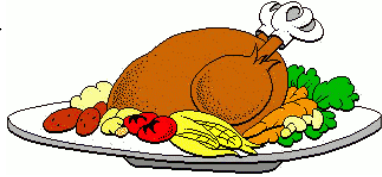
Please remember to pray for these travelers. Good health, energy and strength will be essential. Safety in traveling can be part of your request, as Asian traffic seems to be every man for himself. Pray for insight and overflowing love for brothers and sisters in Christ. The Nafzigers are excited about receiving their western visitors, as we are excited about seeing their part of the world.

Congregations Schedule Special Fundraiser Meals

On Sunday, October 3, Whitestone Mennonite Church will offer an Indian curry dinner, using recipes furnished by Irene Weaver, 100-year old retired missionary who spent many years in India. Proceeds will be used to pay for a new roof for a warehouse used to store items offered free twice a year, in an event known as the Free Grace Sale. Contact Rick Weaver, 620-327-4679.

On Friday evening, October 29, from 5-7 o'clock, Faith Mennonite Church will feature its annual pork barbecue supper. Proceeds will be divided between a local mission project and one at the churchwide level. Contact Pastor Jim Unruh, 620-921-0314 (cell) or 669-8901 (home).

On Saturday, November 6, South Hutchinson Mennonite Church/Journey @ Yoder will offer its traditional turkey meal, serving from 11 am to 7 pm. The location will be the activities building on the Journey @ Yoder campus. Proceeds will be used for local mission outreach projects, including the children's emergency shelter in Hutchinson. Contact the SHMC office at 620-663-4244.



Kansas Native Chosen for MC USA Leadership Role

Terry Shue, a native of Harper, Kansas and current resident of Kidron, Ohio, has been named as Director of Leadership Development for Mennonite Church USA. In this position, Terry will seek to invigorate the Culture of Call which seeks to identify persons, especially younger ones, who have potential for pastoral ministry; and develop connections with ministry training programs as well as business leaders. He also will oversee the ministerial calling system and supervise a denominational ministry team.

Terry graduated from Hesston and Bethel Colleges, and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. He has served as a pastor of Pine Grove Mennonite Church in Stryker, Ohio, and most recently as lead pastor of Kidron Mennonite Church. He is currently serving as a member of the MC USA Executive Board and Executive Committee, and of the Goshen College Board. He will work from an office of Central Christian School in Kidron.

In his new role, Terry will be part of the MC USA leadership cabinet, being led by Executive Director Ervin Stutzman who also has Kansas roots. The other cabinet members and their areas of responsibility that correspond with the four churchwide priorities (witness, anti-racism, leadership development and global connections) are Shelley Buller, Executive Assistant; Glen Guyton, Associate Executive

Director for constituent resources; Marty Lehman, Associate Executive Director for churchwide operations; and André Gingerich Stoner, director of holistic witness and interchurch relations.

Terry was in the Hesston-Newton area on September 29 and 30, meeting with a variety of local and regional leaders, including those from our conference.

College News

Hesston College students from South Central churches receiving the President's Scholarship for the 2010-11 academic year include:

Whitestone: Zach Baumgartner, Alex Roth, Adam Weaver and Eliot Wilder

Hesston Mennonite: Joel Murray

This scholarship is based on high school grade point average and standardized test scores. To renew the scholarship, President's Scholars must maintain at least a 3.5 grade point average.

A new scholarship, awarded to 4 students for the first time during the current school year, is the Bill Mason Business Scholarship. Mason has taught business courses at the college for many years, well past a "normal" retirement age. He and his wife Ruth are members of Hesston Mennonite Church. One recipient of this \$2,500 award available to sophomores is John Oyer, a member of Whitestone Mennonite Church.

Washington Monthly magazine released its national College Guide and Rankings on Monday, August 23. Hesston College is ranked number two on the list of two-year colleges in terms of the overall service provided to the local community and student success rate. The schools ranked in the category are comprised of both private and public two-year institutions. The purpose of the rankings is to highlight colleges that have a history of spending energy and resources on encouraging students to give back to the community and nation, not just themselves.

We're grateful for this recognition," said president Howard Keim. "This is a tribute to the fine work our faculty and staff do day in and day out to create a positive learning experience for our students." The benchmark measures are active

and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction and support for learners. Hesston College ranked at the 97th and 98th percentile in every area except student effort, where it ranked in the 67th percentile. All benchmarks increased from the last time the survey was conducted in 2007.

In response to the ranking, faculty members Nelson Kilmer and Bonnie Sowers, who analyze and interpret Hesston College's survey data, released the following statement. "The survey results were a tremendous affirmation that the Hesston College academic environment is doing exactly what we intend it to do: challenging students while ensuring that the learning comes alive by engaging students with each subject they are studying, encouraging students through positive relationships with faculty, and offering active and effective academic support."

Bethel College will inaugurate its 14th president, Perry White, on Sunday morning, October 12, as the conclusion of its annual Fall Festival celebration.

Last Call for Hesston College's AVDS Weekend

Hesston College will host its annual Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series conference Oct. 29 to 31. The theme for 2010 will be 3-D Jesus.

Conference participants will explore questions on individual perceptions of Jesus, such as "Do we emphasize certain aspects of Jesus and neglect other aspects in ways that distort who Jesus really is?" and "In our negligence, do we make Jesus into our own image instead of the other way around?"

"The goal of 3-D Jesus is to discover the whole of the story of Jesus," said Michele Hershberger, Hesston College faculty member and conference coordinator. "We'll look at his life, death, resurrection and ongoing work and presence in the church and the world as a continuous narrative, allowing that story to change us."

Conference speakers are Dr. Steve

Dintaman, professor of theology at LCC International University in Klaipeda, Lithuania, and Meghan Good, pastor of Albany (Ore.) Mennonite Church. They will help participants explore the consequences of what happens when Christians focus primarily on a single dimension of Jesus, such as his death or his role as a social critic.



A special feature of 3-D Jesus will be the use of teaching vignettes. Instead of workshops, participants will struggle with the challenging stories about Jesus through drama, modern-day parables, interactive teaching techniques, and small- and large-group discussions. Leaders for these vignettes will be Dr. Rev. Kevass Harding of Dellrose Methodist Church, Wichita, Kan., Pastor John Murray of Hesston Mennonite Church, and Hershberger and Marion Bontrager, both faculty members at Hesston College. Other features of 3-D Jesus include a dramatic presentation of the Sermon on the Mount and a banquet.

The Anabaptist Vision and Discipleship Series was started at Hesston College to help Christians from the Anabaptist tradition and others interested in Anabaptism more fully understand their faith. The conference is designed for any interested person, not just pastors.

A complete schedule, registration information and speaker information are available at www.hesston.edu/AVDS. Cost for registration before Oct. 1 is \$100 for individuals or \$75 per person if registered in groups of three or more. After Oct. 1, individual registration is \$120, and the group rate is \$85 per person. To receive regular updates, "like" the "3D Jesus" page on Facebook. For more information, contact Elaine Schmidt at 620-327-8290.

Changes at MC USA Offices in Newton
Mennonite Church USA recently signed an agreement to sell part of its Newton office facility on Main Street to the RiverPoint Church, a congregation affiliated with the Evangelical Free

Church. Through a realtor, the growing congregation first inquired about renting or buying the area vacated by Faith and Life Bookstore. In addition, they offered to purchase 50 feet of the adjoining space. Terry Graber led the building management team at Newton, which agreed it would be good stewardship to sell that part of the facility and to move the 30+ staff into the remaining space. They plan to use some of the proceeds to reconfigure the office spaces and upgrade the entrance. The move will save considerable maintenance cost, make more efficient use of the space, and solidify the offices' place on Main Street.

Students Receive MMA Scholarships

Two students in our churches have received scholarships from Mennonite Mutual Aid to attend a Mennonite college: Kaedi LeFevre from Hesston Mennonite Church who is a first-year student at Hesston College; and Jessica Mason from Whitestone, a second year student at Goshen College. These scholarships are part of a program that encourages young people to explore the integration of finances and faith, while helping them on their educational journey.

To be considered for the awards, 135 students from across the country submitted essays on faith and finances; 36 were selected to receive scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$2,500. Those eligible are persons whose family participates in some MMA product or Mennonite Financial Credit Union. MMA Scholarship Manager Phyllis Mishler commented, "Students' essays showed an acute awareness of consumerism's impact on our society. They want to make a difference in people's lives, but they also understand the strong pull of our consumer-driven society.



Eligible young persons may submit entries between January 1 and February 28. Details are available from local MMA/Everence congregational advocates or by contacting their local or regional MMA office, which for our

conference is in Hesston. Information is also available online at www.MMA-online.org. The website also includes a complete listing of scholarship recipients.

Zuerchers to Receive Stewardship Award

Mennonite Mutual Aid, soon to be known as Everence, each year selects an individual or couple to receive its annual Journey award. Recipients are chosen as a result of their belief in and practice of holistic stewardship as a lifetime goal and expression. For 2010, the award will be given to Bill and Joyce Zuercher of Hesston. Bill serves as Ministry Coordinator and Conference Planner for South Central Conference; Joyce is the Conference Resource Advocate and Secretary of SCC Mennonite Women. Both are retired from gainful employment but continue to serve in a variety of volunteer assignments in addition to those mentioned.

The award will be given as part of the worship services of the Zuerchers' home congregation, Whitestone Mennonite, on October 10. Included in the recognition is a gift of \$5,000 which can go to any eligible charity of the Zuerchers' choosing. They have chosen South Central Conference to receive \$2,500, designated for the purchase of Mennonite curriculum (Sunday School, Bible School, church libraries) by smaller churches that have limited budgets. The other half will be given to Hopi Mission School, where the Zuerchers spent 5 years (1999-2004) as full-time volunteers through Mennonite Voluntary Service, and where Bill continues to contribute time on a more limited basis.

Calendar

- October 3 Indian Curry dinner at Whitestone Mennonite Church
- October 10 Inauguration of Bethel College President Perry White
- October 24 Inauguration of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary President Sara Wenger Shenk.

October 29 Annual pork barbecue, Faith Mennonite Church, So. Hutchinson
 October 29-31 AVDS Program at Hesston College
 November 5-7 UCIM Annual Convention, San Benito (Harlingen), Texas
 November 6 Annual turkey meal, Journey @ Yoder

2011

January 25 Registration for MC USA convention opens at 8 am EST
 January 28-29 SCC Pastor/Leader Retreat, Cross Wind Conference Center
 June 10-12 South Central Conference Family Festival, Hesston
 July 4-9 MC USA Biennial Convention, Pittsburgh, PA

Do You Know?

Joyce Zuercher, Conference Resource Advocate

Fall has arrived, and it is high time to plan for the Advent worship season. A good place to begin is with the fall *Leader* magazine. It is also time to order bulletins for Advent and Epiphany, if you plan to use them. MPN offers them “first come, first serve”, so don’t wait too long!

Other Advent resources available to us are offered by Marlene Bogard at the Conference Resource Library, www.mennowdc/library.html. The library has a subscription to *The Thoughtful Christian*, an on-line resource, which can be visited at www.thoughtfulchristian.org. Marlene says: “email me your choices. Then I will send you the curriculum via email. Look through the lists below for suggestions, or hunt for yourself! I look forward to hearing from you.” For Advent she suggests:

- * Held in God’s Grace: An Advent Study Pack (NEW for adults!)
- * Advent Through the Eyes of Those Who Waited
- * Pausing on the Road to Bethlehem: A Spiritual Journey through Advent
- * Rejoice! Reflections on Four Seasonal Hymns

- * Repentance, Faith, Holiness and Love: An Advent Study
- * Stories and Symbols of the Nativity: A Christmas Study Pack for Advent (NEW for youth!)
- * Preparing the Way: An Advent Study for Youth

The resource library has other Advent resources available, which can be viewed at their web site.

The book with the catchy title, *The Naked Anabaptist, The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* by Great Britain’s Stuart Murray, is proving popular for study groups and individual readers who want to explore Anabaptism, its core convictions and what it means to be an Anabaptist in today’s world. If you have read and studied the book, I invite you to comment on it to me at the conference email.

Laurelville Mennonite Church Center is partnering with the Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADNet) to sponsor a free online conference for church interested in designing more accessible, inclusive worship for people with disabilities. Entitled “Envision Access: 20 ideas for accessible worship”, this free audio conference is scheduled for 12 pm EST on Wednesday, December 1. This source will provide 20 great ideas driven by 20 passionate individuals—pastors, thinkers, professionals and parents—whose experiences will help participants rethink how they welcome people with disabilities into worship. More details are available at www.Laurelville.org/envision_access.html.

The annual Music & Worship Leaders’ Retreat is scheduled for January 7-9, 2011 at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center. There you can join a community of worship leaders for a weekend rich with resources, fellowship and inspiration. This year, explore the significant role of rituals—Eucharist, footwashing, baptism, and other meaningful practices—in worship. For more information, visit www.Laurelville.org or call 800-839-1021.