



# 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.*

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## **Pastor-Congregation Relations Committees (PCRC)**

Conference leaders believe that both congregations and pastors are well served if they have a formalized and recognized mechanism in place for pastors (and spouses) to have a safe place to share concerns and issues that are a part of every congregation's life, and to hear voices from the congregation that identify affirmations, questions and concerns as well. South Central Conference and Mennonite Church USA promote the activation of a small group, commonly called a Pastor-Congregation Relations Committee (PCRC). With the coming of a new lead pastor last April, Whitestone Mennonite Church has appointed such committees that have been meeting regularly, and separately, with both the lead and associate pastors. When an Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults arrives in January, a PCRC will already be in place for him. Following is a review of this congregation's experience, from the viewpoint of an elder and the lead pastor.

### **PCRC at Whitestone**

By Mervin Bontrager, Elder

Recently Whitestone Mennonite Church made a concerted effort to implement the use of the Pastor-Congregation Relations Committee. The belief was that a strong commitment to use the PCRC would strengthen the relationship between the pastor and congregation, ensure the success of those relationships, and enhance the spiritual growth of all. Past attempts were not very successful due to the lack of follow through.

When Pastor Kurt Horst accepted the position as lead pastor, a committee of three was established before he began his pastoral duties. The first meeting occurred within a month after he began his pastoral duties. We met approximately every five-six weeks for the first six months. Pastor Horst requested that his wife, Elaine, also attend the meetings, which meant there were five in attendance.

The initial committee was made up of the Chairperson of the congregation, Gerald Leinbach, and two members of the elders, Nadine Voth and Merv Bontrager. The rationale for the composition of this committee was to ensure that Pastor Horst had members who knew the dynamics within the congregation and would be able to give counsel to him. The members were also open to his counsel.

After a six-month term of service the initial committee was disbanded and a new committee was formed with a commitment to serve for an indefinite term. The composition of the new committee would be more representative of the congregation: one member was chosen by the elders from their group; the pastor chose a representative from the congregation; and then the two chose a third member. This new committee has agreed to meet approximately once a quarter.

The PCRC offered assistance and understandings of the dynamics within the congregation. The function of the committee was to listen to the pastor and the congregation regarding their comments and observations. Trust, respect and a commitment to confidentiality are essential components within the committee in order for it to function well. Sensitive information can only be mutually shared if there is confidence in the confidentiality within the committee. The information shared covered a wide area of interests and concerns.

Two weeks prior to a PCRC meeting, an announcement is placed within the church bulletin so members of the congregation can express their views/concerns to a person of the committee prior to the meeting. The goal of the PCRC is to develop a positive and healthy relationship between the congregation and the pastor, and enhance the spiritual growth of all.

### **Why a Pastor Congregation Relations Committee?, from the Pastor's Perspective** by Kurt Horst

What's a pastor to do when something just isn't making sense? Where does a pastor's spouse go with concerns that the pastor is overcommitted and never available to family? Who helps healthy communication happen when there are

"rumblings" about the length of sermons, visitation patterns, the pastor's kids, etc.? How does a pastor know if an issue in the congregation is just a few persons' "hobby," an old and festering problem, or a new issue? Were they worked at in the past? How? How can a pastor and spouse be sensitively approached when a spouse might be "over-functioning" and getting involved in issues that it would be better to leave to someone else in the congregation? Who can give insight into how to deal with a person who monopolizes the pastor's time every Sunday after the service?

These are the "little foxes" that, if ignored, can ruin healthy relationships. With a safe place to talk and the wisdom of multiple voices (PCRC), issues of pastor and congregation relationships can be monitored, nurtured and maintained, contributing to long-term healthy pastoral relationships.

There is a variety of ways PCRC's are formed. There are some excellent resources at the Mennoniteusa.org website, specifically the PCRC Job Description found at: <http://www.mennoniteusa.org/Portals/0/WebDownloads/PCRC/PCRCJobDescription.pdf>

Whitestone Mennonite Church forms the PCRC by having the elders name one person; the pastor names one, and the two of them identify a third member. (Some would recommend that persons with congregational leadership assignments should not be members of the PCRC. Having an elder on the PCRC has not been a problem to this point.)

Since coming to Whitestone in April Elaine and I have met with our PCRC every four to six weeks. This has been especially important in understanding structures and some things that "didn't always make sense." They ask how I'm doing personally and also make sure Elaine has time and place for input. They hold me accountable for time given to the congregation and make sure that I am taking time off for personal health. They have given significant wisdom in understanding structures, responsibilities and in reflecting on where I should give priority ministry time, both "inside" and "outside" the congregation.

## **PASTOR/LEADERSHIP TEAM/SPOUSE RETREAT**

**A**n important opportunity for inter-congregational sharing and fellowship is coming up, January 28-29, 2011. From 6 pm Friday, January 28 through 3:40 pm Saturday, January 29, pastors and lay leaders, plus spouses, of congregations in the northern region will gather at Cross Wind Conference Center outside Hesston. This retreat, with the theme "Beyond Sustainable Teams",

will include times of worship, recreation, informal fellowship, input and response, and good food! Ideally, the entire membership of congregational leadership teams will come apart for an opportunity to share with and learn from counterparts in other congregations. Time will also be provided for congregational teams to spend time together by themselves, reflecting on what they are hearing and how that can strengthen their spiritual leadership back home.

The cost is \$60 per person, but only half that amount, \$30, is asked of individual participants. The other half will be supplied by South Central Conference, in affirmation of the time, dedication and leadership invested by each person attending. Detailed registration information has been sent to every congregation. Any follow-up questions can be addressed to [scc@sccmenno.org](mailto:scc@sccmenno.org)

### **Investing in Hope**

**A**fter nearly a year in office, Mennonite Church USA Executive Director Ervin Stutzman has proposed a denomination-wide effort he has entitled "Investing in Hope: Planning Together for a Christ-Centered Future." A group of his colleagues from Executive Leadership, Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Education Agency has been meeting since July to give some substance to such a plan. The overarching focus is our missional intent to be a church that seeks to understand what God is doing in the world and join in those efforts.

Ervin's plan is to be present in as many areas of MC USA as he can during all of 2011 and at least part of 2012, sharing his message that the time has come for moving beyond the organizational issues that have preoccupied us as the two Mennonite bodies have come together to form Mennonite Church USA. To quote Ervin, "I sincerely believe that God is saying that it is time for our church to focus outward, investing in hope for people beyond ourselves."

Through a series of regional meetings, Ervin and occasionally others from MC USA, including his wife Bonnie, intend to share the vision for "Investing in Hope," with a fourfold purpose:

1. share what we have been "hearing" from that region over the last few years.

2. Present the vision and purposeful plan that is being developed for the whole church in response to God's call. We will "invest in hope" for the world around us.
3. Gather feedback on the vision and plan, including suggestions for new or different goals, through various means. Throughout the year, the plan will evolve and grow.
4. Listen for unique ways that people in the region are investing in hope. These ideas will be shared with the broader church through various media such as a column in *The Mennonite*, the Mennonite Church USA website, and others.

*Ervin will be in South Central Conference as the principal speaker and resource person for the Family Festival, June 10-12 in Hesston.*

## Pastor/Congregation News

**W**hitestone Mennonite Church anticipates the arrival of Isaac Landis, beginning January 3 as Associate Pastor of Youth and Young Adults. He, his wife Melissa and their young son Owen are in the process of moving to their new home in Hesston, coming from Souderton, Pennsylvania, where Isaac served as junior high youth minister at Souderton Mennonite Church.



Dennie Jantzi, interim Associate Pastor at **Whitestone**, will begin a ¼-time position as Pastor of Visitation, beginning January 3, after having served as interim associate and interim lead pastor during an extended time of transition.

John C. Murray, lead pastor at **Hesston Mennonite Church**, is spending two weeks in India in early January on behalf of a medical clinic with which he has been associated in past years. He will be accompanied by his daughter, who is a native of India. His son, John N. Murray, was licensed for youth ministry at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Arizona, on December 26.

James Wengerd, a Pastoral Ministries student at Hesston College, is filling the pulpit at **Crystal Springs Mennonite Church** in rural Harper, Kansas, preaching twice a month through May.

Some members of **Mt. Pisgah Mennonite Church**, Leonard, Missouri joined with other farmers in their community to harvest 60 acres (2500 bushels) of soybeans as a source of financial support for the Foods Resource Bank, an international food support program.

**South Hutchinson Mennonite Church** has raised over \$65,000 during their so-called Advent Conspiracy. These funds are being used to relocate and renovate a home for a deserving family in their community.

## SCC Mennonite Women

### SAVE the DATE

*by Nancy Peachey*

**S**outh Central Mennonite Women are encouraged to note the following dates and events for 2011.

\*MARCH 8 & 9 Friends of MCC COMFORTER BLITZ, Journey@Yoder Activity Center, Yoder, KS

\*MARCH 17, 6 PM, SPRING SUPPER, Journey@Yoder Activity Center

\*JUNE 11 SCC Mennonite Women's LUNCHEON, at SCC Family Festival, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, KS

\*JULY 4-9 MC USA CONVENTION, Pittsburgh, PA, includes a Luncheon with Mennonite Women USA

\*SEPTEMBER 9-11 Women and Girls FALL RETREAT (with Western District Conference Women in Mission) at Camp Mennoscah

\*NOVEMBER (date tba) SISTER CARE TRAINING (with Western District Conference MW), Conference area. (see following article)

## SISTER CARE COMING TO SCC MW and WD MW

**“T**he Mission of Mennonite Women USA is to empower women and women's groups as we: nurture our life in Christ, study the Bible, use our gifts, hear each other, and engage in mission and service.

The Vision of Mennonite Women USA invites women across generations, cultures, and places to share and honor our stories, care for each other, and express our prophetic voice boldly as we seek to follow Christ."

One specific way that Mennonite Women USA is working to empower women and women's groups, is to offer 3-day weekend training sessions in church

conference areas around the country to implement Sister Care in the congregations. Such a Conference is scheduled for South Central Conference and Western District Conference women in November 2011. The time and place are yet to be announced. SAVE THE DATE. ALL ARE WELCOME!

*Editor's Note: The following two articles are reprinted with permission from the November issue of the Mennonite Mission Network publication, Beyond Ourselves.*

## They Agreed to Pray

That was all. When leaders of Crystal Springs and Pleasant Valley congregations in Kansas and eight congregations in and around Santa Cruz, Bolivia, agreed to an initial partnership through Mennonite Mission Network in 2004, there were no elaborate financial arrangements, no specific plans for fraternal visits, no detailed lists of ways they would strengthen one another.

They agreed to pray.

The Santa Cruz churches would gather prayer needs from one another and from the surrounding rural churches and send them north. The Kansas churches would send their own requests south.

The arrangement was simple.

The results have been amazing.

In Bolivia, the act of collecting prayer requests from city and country churches has led to leadership development classes, increased relationships, collaboration, and a computer center.

In Kansas, the partnership has expanded as South Hutchinson Mennonite Church has joined. Four times, the Kansas congregations have sent youth to Santa Cruz. From those delegations, three participants are studying for pastoral ministry, six have returned to Latin America for volunteer service or mission work, and three more have participated in service work domestically.

Bolivian youth have traded mission visits with churches in and around Choele Choel, Argentina, and have expanded their circle of prayer.

They continue to pray.

Where might God take them next?

## Extending Mission

by Doug and Lidia Zehr, former pastoral couple at Crystal Springs

The last Sunday of each month at Crystal Springs we take a collection called Bucks for Bolivia. During that time, we give updates from Bolivia or the churches there. People in our congregation now know names of the Bolivian Mennonite churches and some of the leaders, and we pray for them.

Crystal Springs, of Harper, Kan., has always had a heart for mission. The partnership,

however, has helped people to share more closely in the joys and concerns of our brothers and sisters in Bolivia. The partnership allows us to feel engaged in God's mission in the world on a front where needs are significant and growth is tangible.

In Bolivia, we can see that our efforts make a difference and are appreciated. Sometimes it's harder to feel that "at home," though the needs are great. However, when people see what a small donation can do, they are more inclined to reflect on how to renew local efforts for outreach. Lidia, for example, has been instrumental in organizing the summer food program. There are many Latino families that have moved to Harper in recent years, and she has included them in this local effort.

Lidia has invited many of the local Latino families to church, but their language and culture are significantly different from most of the people at Crystal Springs. We are happy that a group of people from Mexico and Guatemala are gathering in Harper with intentions of starting a church, and we are glad to support their endeavor however we can. Any amount of interchange on the spiritual level gives people a better understanding of their neighbor, and the partnership gives us this window, too.

Note: Since this article was written, the Zehrs have moved to central Illinois to take up life and ministry on Doug's family farm.

## Thoughts from Young Adults

by Mark Horst

*Editor's note: From November 19 to 21, the Young Adult Fellowship, which is a bi-national committee representing both Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, hosted a "Think Tank" in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This Think Tank was designed to help reshape the way young adult ministry is done from a denominational level. Denominational leaders know that young adults are doing some exciting things across the church. They know that some area conferences struggle to know how to embrace young adults and their passions. This event was designed with the hope that MC USA and MC Canada would find creative and substantive ways of bringing these two things together.*

*Meeting planners identified young adults across the church who should be invited to participate, based upon their awareness of the interests, passions and commitments of those persons. One of those prospects was Mark Horst, a member of South Hutchinson Mennonite Church and active in the Journey@Yoder campus. Mark agreed to attend, and has submitted the following observations arising from his participation, along with 13 others.*



The schedule was basically made up of 3 parts:

### **1. The history of Young Adult Fellowship (YAF).**

The YAF was started in early 2000 by a denominational staff person to unite young adults across both MC USA and Canada, as well as to be the voice of young adults to the denominations. Somewhere around 2003 that staff position was eliminated. Since then the Fellowship has struggled to maintain support from the denomination, but has organized annual retreats for young adults with varied success. The retreat for 2010 was skipped in order to make time for the Think Tank.

### **2. Brainstorming how young adults do/don't fit into the church.**

Young adults who are involved in the church are mostly those who have significantly connected with a mentor who has gotten them involved. This is the greatest strength churches have to offer: older adults who initiate interaction and intentional connection with younger adults. There are also some young adults who are self-motivated to get involved.

As a generalization most young adults aren't connected for one or more of the following reasons:

- We are transient and don't want to/don't feel welcomed to get involved for an unknown, but usually short, period of time.
- We are invited, but not told to get involved... open invitations aren't helpful, they just allow us to choose something else. We need someone to tell us that we need to be involved in specific ways... make us say "no".
- There's too much red tape... we want to make a difference, but it's easier to start a grass roots movement/house church than try to work within an existing church because we don't have to jump through all "their" hoops.
- Church doesn't fit... Churches have to match the population they are trying to reach. This is an area where we can learn from the business and marketing world. If we're trying to reach urban people we need to make the environment feel like Panera or Starbucks... but if we're trying to relate to a rural crowd then maybe our worship style should be bluegrass. This is very evident when I look at reaching men. Most churches are decorated with flowers, candles, and Thomas Kinkade. We need to be more gender neutral with decor. Also in this realm is the idea that less is more. The [google.com](http://google.com) homepage is a good example of this idea.
- Relationships are very shallow. This also relates to the point that we are transient. Just because we might not be here long doesn't

mean that we don't need friends and mentors while we are here. Older adults need to be OK with investing time and resources to mentor and train young adults who might just leave and go do God's work somewhere else... this shouldn't be considered wasted time; in fact it's something that needs to happen.

- Church people aren't real. We're tired of everything being peachy on Sunday morning when we know that life isn't going well.

Reflecting on these issues, my analysis is that they aren't that big of a deal and can definitely be remedied... but it has to happen on the congregational level, with a focus on one-on-one connections in real relationships where our gifts are used. Not just used to perpetuate our church's social club, but used to make a difference in our communities and world. South Hutchinson Mennonite Church is doing a phenomenal job connecting with young people right now, especially young men, through their HOPE project.

### **3. Where do we go from here?**

By the end of the weekend we were ready to answer the question, What's next? As a result of the discussion we were excited to call our denominations to a more congregational focus. We are currently drafting a letter to both MC USA and MC Canada offices that basically states that we believe God is calling our churches to renew their commitment to young adults by connecting and resourcing churches to **use young adults in their churches.** This is important because young adults have passion and energy, and just need someone to connect the gifts that they have to what God is already doing. We're still trying to flesh out what this will look like. Possibilities are that the Young Adult Fellowship will continue and take on this role; or there might be denominational and conference level staff time designated to this; or something else yet to be identified.

Anyone interested in being in conversation with Mark about these ideas and projections, is invited to contact him by email at [mghorst@gmail.com](mailto:mghorst@gmail.com).

## **RESOURCING DAY FOR PASTORS AND WORSHIP PLANNERS**

**O**n Friday, January 21, an important event for pastors and worship planners will be held at Faith Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas. An afternoon session, entitled "Tending the Garden: The Pastor's Role in Congregational Christian

Formation”, will provide an opportunity to step back and view the entire garden (congregation), equipping pastors to assess the health and vitality of each part as well as the whole. An evening session, entitled “Discover Purpose and Creativity for Worship Planning”, will use Lent as a framework to explore ways to plan worship with vision and imagination that will refresh and renew the congregation and its leaders.

The primary resource person will be Marlene Kropf from Elkhart, Indiana, who has just ended an assignment as denominational minister of worship for MC USA. She continues to teach at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in the areas of Christian formation and Christian spirituality.

Registration is possible for either or both of the sessions, plus a supper meal, with group discounts available when more than one person from a congregation attends. Registration and payment are due by January 14. As one of the sponsors of the event, Western District Conference is handling registration. A brochure with registration form is available from their website: [www.mennowdc.org](http://www.mennowdc.org), or from the WDC office in North Newton.

## CHORAL FESTIVAL

The Western District Conference Music and Worship Task Force is planning a Choral Festival and Service for Saturday, January 22 at Eden Mennonite Church, rural Moundridge. The Festival clinician is Dr. Mark Suderman, Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities, at Bluffton University. Choral rehearsal will be from 2:00-5:00, followed by a meal at the church. Reservations for the meal are strongly encouraged; cost is \$5. The Festival Service will follow at 6:30 pm. For a list of repertoire and to make meal reservations, please contact the Western District office at [wdc@mennowdc.org](mailto:wdc@mennowdc.org) or 316.283.6300. We offer this as an exciting opportunity for all who love to sing to join in a large choir experience.

## Do You Know?

**From the Conference Resource Advocate  
Joyce Zuercher**

Anabaptist books in the Spanish language are available from Central and South America, being published under the auspices of Mennonite seminaries there. Ediciones SEMILLA, a department of the Anabaptist Seminary of Latin America in Guatemala, publishes a significant number of titles. These books include works by Hispanic Anabaptist theologians as well as translations of writings by North American Mennonites such as John Howard Yoder, John Driver, John Paul Lederach, Walter Klaassen, and a number of others. Many translations have been done by missionaries.

SEMILLA is appropriately named, for it is the Spanish word for “seed”, and books are a very important way to plant or scatter spiritual seed!

Amzie Yoder, Regional Conference Minister for UCIM, the South Texas district of SCC, has a good collection of titles in Spanish. Many of these books may be ordered from MPN by a special agreement between the two publishers. If you want to know more, contact Amzie.

As was reported in the last issue of the Messenger, South Central Conference has received a gift of \$2,500 designated for the purchase of materials published or distributed by Mennonite Publishing Network. This is available primarily for small congregations that have little or no budget for the purchase of Mennonite/Anabaptist materials. Conference Resource Advocate Joyce Zuercher has processed a number of inquiries from congregations, and welcomes others who may be thinking about curriculum for Summer Bible School or Sunday School, or for other resources. She can be reached at [zuercherj@embarqmail.com](mailto:zuercherj@embarqmail.com) or (620) 327-2808.

## Calendar

2011

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|-------------|---|
| January 22, | 2pm Choral Festival, Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, KS                                  |
| 25          | Registration for MC USA convention opens at 8 am EST  |
| 29          | SCC Pastor/Leader/Spouse Retreat, Cross Wind Conference Center                              |
| 29          | 6am-7pm Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church Pancake Day Fundraiser, Blue Fair Barn, Harper, KS |
| March 8-9   | Friends of MCC Comforter Blitz, Journey@Yoder Activity Center, Yoder, KS                    |
| March 17    | 6 pm, Mennonite Women Spring Supper, Journey@Yoder Activity Center                          |
| April 8-9   | Kansas MCC Relief Sale  |
| June 10-12  | SCC Family Festival, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston                                   |
| July 4-9    | MC USA Biennial Convention, Pittsburgh, PA  |

