

# **Mennonite Creation Care Network Annual Report 2008**

## **Overview**

Caring for God's creation has been a part of the Mennonite Church's official agenda since 1977, when it passed a resolution on Christian Stewardship of Energy Resources. In 2005, MC Canada and MC USA appointed representatives to the Mennonite Creation Care Network.

The vision statement of MCCN is as follows: Christ, who created the world in peace and sustains all things, calls us to be stewards of the earth and to bring rest and renewal to the land and everything that lives on it. In response to this call, we will equip lay people and leaders with tools, resources and models that will educate, encourage, and inspire the church to care for creation, which is an expression of God's love.

MCCN is a network for Mennonite people and agencies actively engaged in the care and restoration of God's creation. Its goals are to encourage the Church to:

- Claim our biblical and theological foundation regarding the care of God's Creation.
- Discover the ties that link all created beings to each other and to God.
- Confess the harm we have caused the natural world and our neighbors.
- Act faithfully to restore the earth.

This bi-national council of volunteers meets twice per year. Staff from the Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College and from MMA (*Mennonite Mutual Aid*) provides continuity between meetings and manage a web-site for MCCN. With its stewardship emphasis, MMA is a natural partner. MC Canada and MCC Canada help defray travel costs of the two Canadian members.

The Mennonite Creation Care Network promotes environmental stewardship activities with regional grassroots groups and institutional agencies as a way of inspiring people to be agents of change at home and in the global context. MCCN's current activities include: developing communications materials, collecting stories of Mennonites who care about the environment, building a network among those in our constituency for whom the environment is an ongoing concern, and recognizing and encouraging faithful stewardship through an annual creation care award.

Canadian members – David Neufeld (Winnipeg, MB), Joanne Moyer (Winnipeg, MB)  
USA members – Greg Bowman (Bally, PA), Luke Gascho (Goshen, IN), Jennifer Halteman Schrock (Goshen, IN), Dave Hockman-Wert (Corvallis, OR), Jim Smith (Goshen, IN), Karla Stoltzfus, (Coralville, IA) and Nekeisha Alexis-Baker (Elkhart, IN).

To join the growing network or get more information: [www.mennoncreationcare.org](http://www.mennoncreationcare.org).

## Activities

- **Virtual meeting:** For the first couple of years, the Creation Care Council met face-to-face in Goshen twice per year. In recognition of the environmental and monetary costs of travelling for these meetings, for the fall 2008 meeting, we experimented with a virtual meeting, setting aside one day in our respective cities to work on MCCN projects. We connected face-to-face where possible, by conference call, Skype, e-mail and the “Go To Meeting” program.
- **Green Guidelines for Conference Planners:** In response to a resolution passed at the Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Abbotsford, July 2007, MCCN prepared the “Green Guidelines for Conference Planners.” These were used for the first time at Assembly and People’s Summit in Winnipeg, July 2008. MCCN members served as auditors for the conference planners, evaluating six categories in six areas: Transportation, Shelter, Food, Water, Communications and Worship/Teaching . Go to [http://www.mennocreationcare.org/Church\\_Agencies/Agencies--Resources](http://www.mennocreationcare.org/Church_Agencies/Agencies--Resources) for a copy of the green guidelines. (This is the location in the old website; it will change when the new website is online in mid-December). Results of the audit will be posted shortly.
- **Winnipeg Summit Workshops:** MCCN presented four workshops at the Promise and Peril Summit in Winnipeg, July 2008:

### **1. Anabaptist Creation Care Challenge**

- Attendance: 36 participants
- Notes: The workshop began with a brief introduction to MCCN: the group, its history, and its activities. The bulk of the workshop was spent in a group exercise in which the participants divided into small groups and were asked to reflect on a series of questions to help guide MCCN’s activities, particularly with respect to our visionary outcome for congregations.

### **2. Ecological Prayer Walk (presented twice)**

- Attendance: 11 participants (Wednesday); 26 participants (Thursday)
- Prepared and presented in collaboration with Lisa Enns-Bogoya, Associate Pastor of Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.
- Notes: The workshop began inside with two brief presentations explaining the concept of the ecological footprint and the spiritual practice of the labyrinth. Participants were then taken outside to walk to the Ecological Prayer Walk, a labyrinth mowed into a section of lawn with signs at intervals that repeated some of the ecological footprint information and with prayers and poems to inspire both confession and rejoicing and hope in God’s creation. On the second day, half the participants walked to outer boundary of CMU’s north campus (the size of a North American footprint) before entering the labyrinth.

### 3. Spiritual Significance of Land and Water

- Attendance: 30 participants
  - Prepared and presented in collaboration with Neill and Edith von Gunten, co-directors of Native Ministries for Mennonite Church Canada.
  - Notes: Norman Meade (a Metis elder originally from Manigotagan, MB, who is currently the Aboriginal Neighbours staff person for MCC Manitoba) provided an introduction. The first presentation was by Metis elder, Mae Louise Campbell, from St. Laurent, MB, who shared an Aboriginal woman's perspective on the spiritual significance of land and water. She emphasized the importance of relationships. Then Greg McIvor, a First Nation trapper and conservation advocate, originally from Waboden and Cross Lake, MB, shared about the effects of hydro dam diversions on the land and traditional lifestyle.
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- ***Website Redesign:*** In the fall of 2008, MCCN transferred its web site to new software, requiring a re-design of the site. The new site includes blogging software that enables us to easily archive creation care stories. This is a big step forward for us. Goals for 2009 include a web-searchable resource library by February and a web-searchable member directory by March.
  - ***Art and Jocele Meyer Award:*** The award program was cancelled because it has not succeeded in generating interest. We now have ways to tell creation care stories on the web that were not available when the award was originally conceived.
  - ***Anabaptist Creation Care Project:*** MCCN plans to invite Mennonite/Anabaptist authors to contribute articles for our web site on a variety of creation care topics. We are also attempting to catalog all that has already been written in our Creation Care Resource Library.
  - ***2009 Conference Planning:*** Preparations are being made for presenting workshops and implementing the green guidelines at the assemblies in Columbus and Saskatoon in 2009.