

**Mennonite Creation Care Network
Creation Care Council
Minutes for February 12, 2011: Virtual Meeting**

Present: Luke Gascho, Jim Smith, Greg Bowman, Karla Stoltzfus-Detwiler, Dave Hockman-Wert, Jennifer Schrock

Unable to attend: Joanne Moyer, David Neufeld

1. Luke Gascho opened with prayer and invited Creation Care Council members to share creation happenings from their lives.

Luke continues to be a part of Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light. The group is planning to launch their Indiana program on March 5 in Indianapolis. Fourteen or fifteen faith traditions will be represented at the gathering. Challenges for this organization include the lack of staff and figuring out how to relate to a broad spectrum of people, both in terms of faith traditions and scientific and political views. They wrestle with how clearly to name the issue of climate change.

Greg was reminded of the risks inherent in harnessing fossil fuels when he witnessed a gas line explosion this week. He could see the sky lit up from his house even though the explosion was 30 miles away. Marcellus shale gas drilling using the fracking method is common in western PA near his home.

Greg's new job with Goodness Grows involves bringing local food to Youngstown, Ohio, a city with food desert areas. He's been busy encouraging community gardens in urban areas and working to make the Goodness Grows site more bio-philic and inviting. Next week, he'll share a workshop relating sustainable agriculture and peacemaking at Bluffton University.

Karla is participating in the Interfaith Power and Light challenge to preach on climate change this Sunday. She is working on the "Choose life!" admonition in Moses' closing discourse in Deuteronomy 30.

Karla's life with sustainable gardens continues to progress. Her church has launched a community garden in partnership with a community organization and they are working with a local design class to make the garden more inviting. She and a friend are beginning a CSA growing flowers and herbs this summer.

DAVE HW reported on several events in Oregon. A local interfaith network for earth concerns held an Earth Care Summit recently on the theme, food and faith. He also attended an environmental ethics lecture at the Oregon State University philosophy department and a dinner for a chapter of Engineers Without Borders focused on small-scale water systems. He and his wife, Cathy, have been updating the statistics in *Simply in Season* and reflecting on how to gather good information and sort reliable claims from half-truths.

Jennifer and her church have learned that recycling batteries is complicated. While some organizations will take alkaline batteries in order to sort out the more profitable lithium and button batteries, the alkalines usually get dumped in the landfill because companies can't turn a profit recycling them. Her congregation has found a company that does recycle alkaline batteries—for a price, of course.

Jennifer also just completed a web site for Merry Lea's new Sustainability Semester in Residence. This is an opportunity for undergraduates to live and study at Merry Lea for a semester, focusing on water from several interdisciplinary angles.

Jim noticed four intrepid robins in his front yard on a very cold day this week. His 22" raised garden beds are barely showing above the snow. Jim is keeping Everence employees informed about what MCCN is doing through a web site that Everence uses for internal communication.

2. Review of Minutes: Dave HW noted that Greg's 10-10-10 notes are mentioned on page 4 of the minutes, but seem to be missing. Luke suggested that we consistently post the minutes on the web. Several people mentioned the need for editing to remove mention of people considered for roles.

3. Internship position: Luke reported that MCCN now has a full time internship available and a candidate who will make a decision within two weeks. Jennifer would supervise this person. The stipend level is \$1,500 per month. The goal is to keep this role ongoing, with new interns rotating in every 6 - 12 months. The committee advised that we advertise broadly so that the opportunity becomes known and sought after. The stipend is generous enough to draw some competition.

4. Planning for Pittsburgh 2011

A. Activities currently planned:

- We will have a booth in the exhibit hall.
- Luke will offer three seminars on the following topics:
 - o The Church and climate change
 - o Sustainable living for people of faith
 - o Greening congregations
- Greg researched youth groups biking to Pittsburgh but backpedaled after talking to experienced bikers who said it really was a dicey thing for the inexperienced.
- Greg also talked with Dierdre Bias about the local food aspect of the gathering. She is in charge of communications at MC USA.
- MCUSA has been putting sustainable tips on their Pittsburgh Facebook page for this event. Jennifer will ask MCUSA to hotlink the bullet points on its sustainability page to our web site, to make it easier to get there.
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B. Additional ideas considered: Some of these were generated in a small group consisting of Dave HW, Luke and Greg.

- New CD could include sermons such as Karla's on climate change, plus updated version of what is on old CD.
- Dave HW is considering pursuing an offsite MCCN fundraiser with a musician friend, but this has a number of complications.
- Make sure we have enough staffing scheduled for the booth. Dave HW and Jennifer are both available without other responsibilities.
- A green paper quilt with a square from each congregation in the 100 Shades of Green, or a scrapbook, if there is not enough room.
- Dave HW is willing to make a map that could be used both to track where people came from and how they traveled, and mark sites of 100 shades congregations.
- Make this map an interactive experience using a laptop.
- Can we use the floor? Have people write about something they are doing.
- Create a green scavenger hunt for youth or intergenerational groups. Hunt could highlight sustainable aspects of the building, with participants answering questions you couldn't answer without visiting a given site.
- Build on the convention center's bottle cap program, where people receive a bottle cap for committing a green act. This could be a friendly competition for youth groups with recognition or a reward for the group with the most caps.
- Have a competition or raffle related to percentage of churches in a given state that have joined the 100 Shades campaign.
- Have live flowers at the booth or examples of live native plants that ground people in the sense of what a wholesome Pennsylvania landscape looks like.

5. Review of the MCCN brochure:

A. Are our goals still resonating? "Yes" was the forceful consensus.

B. Which goal deserves priority attention from MCCN?

Mennonite Creation Care Network will encourage the Church to:

1. CLAIM our biblical and theological foundations regarding care of God's Creation.
2. DISCOVER the ties that link all created beings to each other and to God.

- Greg

3. CONFESS the harm our habits have caused the natural world.

- Karla

4. ACT faithfully to restore the earth.

- Luke

- Jennifer: We understand the problems, but how do we respond effectively? What are the actions we are pushing?

- Jim: Provide good, practical suggestions.

- Dave HW: *Connecting people across* these four goals, mining the strength of being networked.

Suggestion from Greg: Part of the intern's agenda should be to celebrate the impact of one of these goals on a person or place. Promote and celebrate when people take some of these steps.

C. Planning for a new brochure: *Karla, Jim and Jennifer, with help from responses people had turned in before the meeting.*

- **Purpose:** There was consensus that the purpose of the brochure was to get people to the MCCN web site, and that the primary audience was Mennonite church-goers.
- **Format:** Jim suggested a slim 1/3 page in cardstock.
- **Ways to use the brochure:** Enclose it with receipts for donations, make it available at denominational conventions, make it available in literature racks at every conference office, ditto camps and supporting organizations, use liaisons to put it in church mailboxes or literature racks; display it on bulletin boards in the pocket of a poster, have liaisons take them to regional church meetings, put on fridge, use as bookmark.
- **Design:** Jim has ideas for a designer
- **Contents:**
 - logo, contact information, WEB SITE prominent
 - goals
 - graphic of a congregational creation care action. (We have a request for a distinctly Canadian graphic...☺)
 - *Practical action teasers:* We liked the idea of making concrete suggestions of things people can do. We also wanted to avoid hackneyed ideas. We hit upon including fun, interesting factoids that may be new for people but strengthen the motivation to act. They could then look on the web site to get the answer to the teaser.
 - *Examples:* How many plastic bags require the same amount of oil that it takes to drive a car a mile? How many trees would a paperless bulletin at a church of 200 save in a year's time? What percentage of insects can only eat native plants?

- *Web teasers:* Invite people to find a church that... or an agency that has... on our web site.
- *Reward* people who respond to these teasers.

6. Final question: How can we help the broader church make clearer statements about their commitment to creation care and climate change in 2011, 12, 13?

Karla: A book of worship resources would be more meaningful to me as a pastor than a resolution passed. Can we work on that? It would reach more people than a resolution.

- Resources for an Earth Day Sunday?
- Jennifer mentioned the Season of Creation approach, designing materials for a creation season just as Lent and Advent have worship materials provided.

Jim: Work with the Mennonite Church to designate a creation care Sunday.

Luke: Get ourselves on MC USA's list of church-related organizations on their About page.

DaveHW: Rather than making statements or resolutions ourselves, go to executive board and have denominational offices make a statement. Others outside of the Mennonite Church then know of our support.

Jennifer: Could the Mennonite Church take a position on climate change?

Dave HW: Is there an interfaith effort out there we could sign on to?

A brisk email round robin regarding a position on climate change followed this meeting.

7. Our next meeting is scheduled for June 10 & 11 in person in Goshen, Indiana.

- Minutes submitted by Jennifer Halteman Schrock