

**Mennonite Creation Care Network
Creation Care Council Minutes
March 9 to 10, 2012**

Friday Evening

1. Opening Reflections on Creation Care:

We welcomed Emily Dueck, our new member from Toronto. Emily is a street pastor working with homeless people under Mennonite Central Committee.

Luke read a devotional he had written for the GC Lenten series. It used compost as a metaphor for life coming out of death. What is seen as rubbish by many households is lifegiving "foolishness."

2. Sharing: We were each asked in advance to share a quote, an image, a seed that has inspired us in some way related to creation care.

Jim:

- A message received on a card from families with disabled children: "Think of every triumph, every challenge, every defeat as feathers on your wings and God will lift you up."
- A gateway to his grandparents' land.
- Seeds from birdfeeder. Represents a community of birds.

Emily:

- Offered quotes from *The Lorax* and a poem entitled, "Think Like a Tree."
- The movie, *Taking Root*, about Wangari Matthai
- An apple with seeds in it, representing her first introduction to country life and her grandparents' apple trees.

Joanne:

- From a poem in *Nothing Is Wasted*, by Dave Bookless, a founder of A Rocha.
- A flower growing in the desert.
- Imaginary prehistoric seeds from *Guns, Germs and Steel*, by Jared Diamond.

Annalisa:

- Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass; it's about learning to dance in the rain.
- Potted shoots that she saved from being thrown away.
- Iris bulb. Loves irises, seeing them in bins, people sharing their bulbs.

Jennifer:

- A quote from Clemente of Rome, 1st century on the peace of creation.
- A cross at a desert monastery.
- Native American white corn from a Miami friend.

Karla:

- “The field is tilled and left to grace that we may reap...great work is done while we’re asleep.”
- A bleeding heart flower.
- Amish crook-necked squash. From a friend who had these come up in his compost pile. He has kept saving these seeds ever since 2002 or 2003.

Dave HW:

- Splashing water on a fire with a teaspoon. This is what we must do.
- Played us a song by Daryl Snider
- Downsizing to a manageable garden.

Luke:

- Three generations digging potatoes.
- Little cones from a tamarack tree in sphagnum moss bog at Merry Lea.

Saturday Morning

- 1. Reflective meditation:** Karla shared a litany featuring God as a trinity of Creator, Sustainer, Renewer. She developed this resource for a worship service during a weekend exploring food and farming at Crooked Creek Camp. She also reported on this weekend.

Food and Farming Weekend: One of the goals of this gathering had been to attract a broader spectrum of people to the food and farming discussion. Some people felt judged and alienated by what they perceived as a critique of all conventional agriculture and a narrow definition of sustainability. This year, the planning committee included both an organic and conventional farmer, and they titled the conference, “The Myth of Sustainability.” The keynote speaker was Neil Eash, a soil scientist who proved to be a good neutral person and bridge builder. He emphasized soil protection and the fact that all farming is unsustainable to some extent. About 70 people attended, including a number of conventional farmers, and Karla was pleased with the dialogs that resulted.

2. Web Site Review: The committee had the following suggestions for the web site upgrade.

- a) **Everence:** MCCN web site should highlight relationship with Everence and also link to Everence's site. Jim also suggested we submit a story to Everence's web site, either for external or internal use.
- b) **Facebook:** One limitation of Facebook as a way to connect members is that it doesn't reveal professional commitments or enable searches for people in similar occupations. What about Linked In?
- c) **Newsletter:** A variety of comments suggested that with the new web site, the newsletter should morph into a blog. The email to members would consist mainly of links. Some of us did see value in creating a one-page sheet suitable for bulletin boards or a half paragraph blurb that could go directly into a church newsletter.
- d) **Membership Listing:** CCC members would like to receive an updated listing of MCCN members twice a year. Jennifer will shoot for January and July.

e) Suggestions for resource listings:

- 1.) *Simple Living* we assume will include how-tos, practical tips.
- 2.) *Theology:* include seminary programs, conferences, Anabaptist perspectives in particular. Note that Karla's cross and creation piece written for Pittsburgh 2011 could fit here.
- 3.) *Sermon library* is off to a promising start, with 8 to 10 submissions.
- 4.) *Worship resources:* Seasons of creation materials, make banner sharing possible.
- 5.) *Curriculum* might include a few of Luke's powerpoints, Joanne's presentation last fall, a Norman Mead resource, Note that recent MennoMedia Bible School curricula has been on food and water. Also see Mennonite Church Canada's Resource Center. Link to Mennonite camps, especially Wilderness Wind.
- 6.) *Books:* We could include a cover shot of the book like Amazon.com does. Themed issues of journals should also go here.
- 7.) *Issues:* Must be kept updated. Might we want to open this section of our web site for comments? At least make the Facebook link prominent here. Suggest internet search words to help people find more information.
- 8.) It would be helpful to have written guidelines, spelling out what we do and do not put on our web site.

3. Budget and Increasing Giving

- a) Our budget was cut back this year. A need for belt-tightening and the fact that we did not spend all of our budget last year both played a role. Travel expenses for 2012 are very tight.

- b) Our budget does not reflect all of the hidden “soft costs” that Everence shoulders on our behalf. For example, booth costs at Pittsburgh never were lodged under MCCN.
- c) Ideas for increasing giving: Note that for 2011, almost half of our budget was donated with minimal effort on our part.
 - 1.) Suggest to congregations that if they have a special series, they include a donation to MCCN.
 - 2.) Do an annual fundraising letter.
 - 3.) Invite congregational liaison to encourage congregation to create a budget line item.
 - 4.) Suggest a special funding project.
 - 5.) Ask people to sponsor a story that needs to be told.
 - 6.) Why raise money if it only replaces what is already provided? Doesn't it just “backfill” what Everence provides anyway?
Answer: People's dollars show where their hearts are, their network is. We raise funds in order to nurture relationship with supporters.

4. 100 Shades of Green:

- a) Karla suggested that when a congregation signs on, it would be ideal if we could send a person to help them work through the Green Congregation Score Sheet.
- b) We discussed ways to make the score sheet more effective, since this is difficult for many congregations to get done. Suggestions included:
 - a. Help liaisons figure out how to use the score sheet, possibly by providing a series of short clips to walk viewers through it.
 - b. Reframe language away from scoring, to make it more invitational and less threatening.
 - c. Broaden to include other settings such as households, agencies.
 - d. Emphasize that this tool is best used in connection with the *Keepers of the Earth* curriculum.
 - e. Make modules on separate pages so that congregations can work through the discussion guides one step at a time.

5. Music Project:

Bryan Moyer Suderman has not had time to proceed any further on the music project. He still plans to work on it in the future.

6. Growing the Network:

- Joanne reported that she has two area reps lined up (Jason Rempel, Manitoba; Mark Bigland Pritchard, Saskatchewan) and has people in mind for the other provinces as well. See about putting their names on our web site.
- Willard Metzger, the new general secretary for MC Canada is deeply concerned about climate change and attended the 2011 UN Conference in Durban, South Africa.

- Joanne has a meeting. scheduled with him in May. She says he would appreciate help connecting with scientific experts, since he is a “church guy,” not a scientist.
- Karla asked about conference-based creation care reps for the U.S. Doesn’t every conference have an annual mtg w/ booths where MCCN could be represented?
- Emily pointed out that MC USA and Canada should have links to MCCN on their web sites.

7. MCCN Liaison Survey: Laurina Graber, a graduate student in environmental education at Merry Lea, is surveying liaisons for her research project. We reviewed a draft of the survey she plans to use and made various edits.

8. Looking ahead to church-wide assemblies

MC Canada: The next assembly is entitled, Dusting Off the Bible, and will meet in Vancouver, July 12 to 15. Neither Joanne nor Emily will be there. They will ask one of the new provincial reps to take the display and apply the Green Conference Guidelines to the event. This feedback is then shared with the committee who planned the conference.

Every year, MC Canada chooses one organization to receive 5 minutes to present their work to the entire assembly. MCCN was invited to do this at Vancouver, but declined in order to wait for a time when Creation Care Council members can attend.

Luke suggested that we find out what aspect of the Bible they are dusting off. What about creation care? It might be appropriate for the Canadian reps to write a letter stressing that creation care issues are key in the 21st century.

MCUSA: The next convention is in Phoenix, AZ, July 1 to 6 and is entitled, Citizens of God’s Kingdom: Healed in Hope. Jim reported that workshop slots will be filled differently this year. A committee is developing the ideas they want to cover and then soliciting requests from groups they want to feature. Marty Lehman is the relevant staffer.

Ideas still percolated:

- Karla suggested a workshop entitled, Tracking the Trail of the Tomato: Immigrants and Food Justice. She thought it should be offered twice, shaped both for youth and adults.
- Joanne suggested connecting with Jodi Reed.
- Overturning tables: Peace & Justice had an idea to scatter overturned tables about, with quotes from or information about immigrants posted on bottom.

Saturday Afternoon:

9. Creating MCCN goals and looking ahead.

We discussed the contrast between the peace position and Mennonites' Commitment to creation care. We have inherited the peace position. These two focal points are not yet regarded as equally central to faith. Why? What do we have to do to make it move to the core level, along with peace?

Peace had an initiation ritual: refusing the military draft.

Another way to evaluate: What if energy costs 15-20x as much 15 years from now?

- Much of our work will be done
- Will need to strengthen regional leaders
- We will have the "good news" perspective. This is life-giving!
- Our role will be helping people adjust to this new reality.
- Environmental justice becomes more key; watching out for the marginalized.
- Theological goals, theological resources become even more important.
- Are we Noah building the ark?
- Dave HW says, we have a lot of ingenuity, and people will adapt. Has some hope in that.

How would this look if we sat down with Anabaptists from Zaire? How would they view our list?

- might point out the importance of personal spiritual salvation

What should we be doing in the next five years?

- Note that Merry Lea's SSR was in process in one way or another for 10 years.
- Should all Menno churches get our newsletter? Should people in key roles receive it by virtue of their roles.
- Could be linked onto the MC Canada Facebook page.
- Does MC USA have a Facebook page? Is it active?
- Area reps going and active within the next 5 years.
- Hosting gatherings at our conventions
- Working with conferences so that the conference leadership has this connect.
- Need intern focused on recruiting congregations
- Strengthen web-based tool resources in ways that build the network.
- Beef up welcome packet.
- Orientation webinar...have one once a quarter.
- Refine congregational scorecard process to be more useable.
- Annual leadership clinic conference, continuing ed through conferences would be possible to have a creation care topic. Conference ministers are the organizers.
- Pastor/spouse retreat
- Emily Dueck will be helpful in getting Facebook going

10. Overarching questions for congregations: framing questions for dealing with issues.

- Who are the stakeholders when a given energy source is adopted or a new technology is embraced?
- How does a course of action affect nonhuman species and ecosystems?
- How does a course of action affect the poor?
- What resources does our particular congregation bring to this issue? Why does it have our name on it?
- Who has charge of the policies that govern this area of life? Are they managed at the city, state, county, federal level?
- What would Jesus do? Is there anything in the Sermon on the Mount that speaks to this issue?
- Who might have special insights into this issue? (an elderly farmer...a theologian...a Native American...)

Idea: Post answers to some of these questions for at least the technical parts of the questions above on an issue such as the Keystone Pipeline. Pose the other questions...Ask, "Does this build the reign of God?" We could play with these kinds of issues on our Facebook page.

11. MCCN Introductory Resource: Annalisa presented a powerpoint introduction to MCCN that she created. The committee response was positive. It will be possible to post this resource on our new web site. People could download it and add slides about their own church, if they wished. The group liked the history section, so it will stay in.

12. Next MCCN Council meetings:

- inclination was to meet more frequently, for 2-3 hour meetings.
- Saturdays still the best option.
- What if we had some of these connections scheduled as workdays?

Next virtual mtg.

Tuesday, May 15, 7 to 9 p.m.

Face-to-face date for 2013

April 12th and 13th

More...

