

MCCN Virtual Meeting Notes
7-9 p.m. Tuesday, August 13, 2013

All Present: Janie Beck Kreider, Greg Bowman, Luke Gascho, Dave Hockman-Wert, Joanne Moyer, Jennifer Schrock, Jim Smith, Marlisa Yoder Bontrager

1. **Opening:** “To you even silence is praise.”

Luke read from Psalm 65 and opened with prayer. He noted that this Psalm contains almost no reference to people praising God; rather, the praise is coming from many different parts of creation.

2. **Caring for creation experiences:**

Jim: Working in raised bed gardens; grieving the abrupt demise of his zucchinis.

Dave HW: In June, did a teaching for his church on MCCN. Also invited to speak at Drift Creek camp annual meeting. Will focus on trees in the Bible.

Marlisa: Creation care committee at church has been able to move forward with the City of Lancaster on addressing combined sewer overflow issues. They looked at funding and what the city would recommend for their church property. She also observed that a simple life of gardening can take a lot of time and energy.

Janie: Enjoyed leading a Sabbath hike at Merry Lea with eight attenders.

Greg: Read two books with Native American themes on a cruise to Alaska: *The Owl Called my Name* and *The Temptations of Big Bear*. He saw salmon for the first time while reading about the loss of buffalo, salmon and their ecosystems. ecosystems.

Jennifer: Traveled in California where she saw new ecosystems and a great deal of industrial agriculture. Whale watching in Monterrey Bay was a highlight and gave her a new perspective on water quality.

Joanne: Visited an Arocha community in southwestern Manitoba where she reported on her research in Kenya. She found it meaningful to share her work with others.

Luke: Spoke at the Germantown Mennonite Church in Philadelphia and joined them for a potluck. He valued the direct contact with an urban congregation and also enjoyed the potluck, where every dish was labeled with where the food had come from. It was a delight for both mind and body.

3. **Update on the music project:** [Sound in the Land 2014](#)

- A collection of songs of place is underway at last! Program development is resting on Joanne and Bryan Moyer Suderman, but others are helping as well.
- The idea is to put on a one-day folk music show as part of Conrad Grebel University College’s annual Sound in the Land conference. This five-to-six day event is already happening and has an environmental theme. The folk music day will be June 5, 2014, the first day of the conference.

People will write & perform songs about local ecosystems and ecology. For example, Lake Winnipeg is one of the most polluted lakes in the world; it needs a song! Hopefully a CD & print materials will be created to accompany these “songs of place.”

Joanne would appreciate help connecting with songwriters who ought to be invited. She may also need people to write up the background information about each place featured in a song.

We can advertise this on our web site and newsletter.

Question: Can we free up travel \$ for people who should be there? People who are good spokespersons for a watershed, or a people group that is underrepresented?

4. Additional reporting from Canada:

Fat Calf Festival: Joanne reported on the two workshops she did at this gathering of 300 youth. Her objective was to give those who will inherit the older generation's messes a voice. She had her group write down one thing they appreciated about creation and one thing that worried them. In groups, they looked at scriptures and tried to discern what their verses said about creation. Based on these three inputs, they then wrote letters which she promised to give to Willard Metzger, head of MC Canada, and send to the *Canadian Mennonite*.

Creation Care Council Member: MCCCanada is still in process on appointing a second council member for MCCN. It would be nice if this person had skills that could engage with the retrofitting project mentioned at our April 2013 meeting.

5. MCUSA USA convention and passing of MCCN resolution:

Phoenix 2013 attenders reported on their experiences:

- Weighting of the issue was prudent. Climate change on being at the booth. Range of opinion on climate change which came by her made her think that the weighting of the issue in the resolution was prudent.
- Jim talked to delegates who were very appreciative of resolution; they realized this emphasis is not prominent in their own congregations and are eager to bring it back.
- Janie's delegate table group was affirming and positive. Majority of conversations she had stressed the sense of urgency around environmental issues.
- Dave HW was intrigued by the table group reports, especially the table calling for the resolution to be stronger, more urgent. Probably not representative of the whole church.
- Jim, Jennifer, Dave were in Climate change discussion room. No one in the room argued against the reality of climate change. Had good conversations about what we *can* do.
- Discussion of resolution with delegates did not allow for lots of time for conversation, but two concerns were raised:
- Give consideration to the fact that people involved in agribusiness and industrial farming may feel attacked.
 - Not all were convinced that creation care is "an essential part of the good news of Jesus Christ."
- Last speaker was Roy Kauffman from South Dakota, who spoke eloquently on behalf of creation care being a part of the Gospel, quoting John 3:16.
- The delegate body gave strong affirmation to accept the resolution.

6. Next steps for a curriculum based on the resolution:

- The curriculum will be prepared by the end of December.
- The curriculum will be web-based.
- The curriculum will need to be translated into Spanish.

Luke reported on feedback he received from Ervin Stutzman, executive director for MCUSA and his executive team during an August 6 meeting he attended.

- This group has appointed Andre Gingerich Stoner as the staff person to relate to MCCN.
- Pointed out that in our structure, congregations are autonomous. There is no way to insure that people comply with the resolution.
- Are considering making creation care a prominent theme at Kansas City.
 - Service projects could concentrate on environmental issues.
 - Interested in making linkages to the local watershed in this city.
 - Pushed us to think carefully about what we mean by simple living. How does this have relevance beyond the white middle class portion of the Church? Pay attention to racism and the way that ties in to environmental issues.
 - Noticed that the photos on the MCCN web site do not have minority representation.

Council member comments:

- It would be great if people come to KS City having already done watershed work, so they could bring that lens to KS City. Do something at home that can then be done in a bigger, better, parallel way at KS City.
- *Joanne* has done a Christian ed session on the theme of local connections. Get people to see how much they know about the place where they live. Watershed, indigenous plants. Include a piece challenging people to find answers to knowing their place. Joanne will send a sample exercise.
- Raise curiosity. Help people ask the right questions about their own locale.
- The 25-mile question is a key part of the curriculum.
- *Marlisa* recommended the Second Mile Curriculum, which includes creation care, economic issues, first people, peace and conflict. Different study modules, combined with action suggestions. How can we reuse good work that has already been done? Some are downloadable on Menno Media web site.

7. Curriculum exercise: We listed ways we would like the Church to be different in 5 years as a result of this curriculum, and then rated how much change we hoped for (from 1 little to 10 much). We all said 4, 5 or 6. See attached sheet for a summary of hopes.

8. Discussion of an emerging leadership training node for MCCN. See additional document, Where do we go after Phoenix?, written by Todd Wynward.

Luke reported on a group he met with at Phoenix who are feeling a sense of urgency on climate change and other issues and long for more forceful steps to be taken. Some asked if an amendment to the resolution would be possible that would encourage divestment of fossil fuels. The resolution process was not conducive to amendments, so this was expressed via table groups and open mike instead.

Informal leaders of this group include Todd Wynward, Albuquerque Mennonite Church, and Ched Myers and Elaine Enns of Pasadena Mennonite. Bioregionalism is important to this group. They affirmed the 25-mile component and watershed idea. They also see the need to train leaders to work locally and have written a proposal with two main objectives.

Responses from council members:

- Sounds like the kind of work we've been hoping people would step up and do, and plug into the network.
- Would be great to have them join MCCN. Write a welcome/invitation explaining our infrastructure and how it can assist with their goals.
- Would their vision for super-hero environmental disciples alienate some in the Church?
- We need to make sure we're connecting with our conference leadership. They are the ones that know the congregations, including variations in theology, race and socioeconomics. Conference leadership can help us provide appropriate leadership to varied groups.
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- How will they accomplish this vision? Where will the time and energy come from?
- How can we encourage this passion over time and space?
- MCCN needs to stay focused on curriculum piece first. Need to create a market, audience for the trainings that the proposal describes.

9. To-do Review:

- Spend time on your own with the grid Luke sent for the curriculum. Fill in your ideas for key concepts, resources and action ideas. Send to Luke, Jennifer and Janie, along with any additional feedback on the leadership training node idea.
- Think about song writers who should be invited to attend the Sound in the Land and/or submit a song.

9. Other Issues:

- Joanne continues to receive requests from people wanting to join the OLD Facebook page. She will shut that page down and send folks to the new page.
- We plan to send out a donation request to our members. We will need resources for translation work and possibly also web support.

Next meeting: March 28 to 29. May have another virtual meeting before the end of the year.

