

**Mennonite Creation Care Network
Creation Care Council
Meeting Minutes
April 12-13, 2013, Goshen, IN**

Friday, April 12

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

1. Introductions and personal sharing: I have grouped all of our sharing interspersed throughout the weekend together in a chart. See landscape sheet.

2. Opening Reflections:

Luke led us in a reflection on a phrase from Colossians 1:20, "Christ reconciled all things to himself." God's mission is creation-encompassing; the Bible's Grand Narrative is to see the whole creation restored as a place where justice is at home. This involves both natural processes and costly human effort. How do our actions point toward the healing of creation and the reconciliation of all things?

Luke also referred to two books he has read lately: *Reading the Bible After Christendom*, by Lloyd Peterson of Great Britain, and *Worship and Mission After Christendom*, Alan & Eleanor Kreider. The latter book is quoted in our resolution for MC USA Phoenix. The former works with the words, *prophetic, subversive, sustaining*. How can MCCN embody these things?

We reviewed and prioritized agenda items as laid out below. Comments related to the resolution or other topics are integrated in Saturday's minutes.

Saturday, April 13, 2013

3. Spiritual input:

Luke began with a reading from the Seasons of Creation web site. (See attached document, Rainbow Covenant or <http://seasonofcreation.com/>) Season of Creation provides liturgies for worship services on themes such as forests, skies, climate change, blessing of animals, etc. The Rainbow covenant is based on God's making promises to the Earth in Genesis 9.

A discussion ensued on the human role as partners, as depicted in the liturgy, versus as stewards of creation. What does it mean if we are in partnership with the Earth? What does stewardship really mean? Is it a movement from solidarity to charity?

We agreed that this would be a good topic to cover in curriculum we might create if the resolution passes.

4. Reports and Reviews: Jennifer and Janie reported on A through E. Jim reported on F.

A. Website:

- New site in the past year

- Congregational pages working. Passwords are out. Congregations can update their own page. About 5 have contributed to their sites. Results are accessible to all internet users. About 20 distinct users visit our web site per day.

B. Facebook:

-Janie has developed a new site and it is working well. It has 85 likes.

How can we broaden the scope of what we include on the page? Others' stuff is not showing up on the newsfeed and quickly gets buried.

-Janie will add additional administrators

C. Newsletters:

-Still aiming for every two months. Want to include encouragement to organize regional structures and relationships.

D. 100 Shades of Green: Still at 61 congregations. Need to do a major push for more congregations between now and July. Make phone calls.

E. Advertising:

-MWR online ad will run in May

-Tmail ad from The Mennonite will run soon

- Still working on ads for *The Mennonite*, *The Canadian Mennonite*

F. Finances and Budget: Jim reported that Everence provides a budget of loosely \$12,800 to cover travel, conference-going and advertising., and Merry Lea provides about \$15-20,000 in salaries. This year, we received a donation from MC Canada and another from a congregation.

We need to talk about long-term sustainability. And, we need to ask for donations.

5. Creation Care Resolution for MC USA, July 2013:

Luke reviewed the organization of the resolution and the process that created it.

- Dick Thomas encouraged us to prepare a resolution in time for the Phoenix Convention
- Luke, Jennifer, Janie worked on crafting the resolution
- Generally, MC USA resolutions should serve the purpose of expounding upon the Purposeful Plan adopted in Pittsburgh. This is why so much attention is given to these connections in the first part of the resolution.
- Climate Change is addressed in the Purposeful Plan, so we worked to give the church its own words to make these sorts of controversial points.
- The strategy of the core part of the resolution is a set of questions that have no implied answer, to hopefully better engage congregations and get people talking about these issues.
- The resolution serves as an agreement to study this theme, and offers a kind of preliminary curriculum.
- The last portion of the resolution was added two days before the due date. We found out the resolution must be connected with a congregational process of affirmation and support.
- Waterford's creation care team took on this process, and officially approved the resolution in time for submission

- The resolution was well received by the Constituency Leadership Council and has recently been approved for distribution to the delegates.

5A. How will the Church be different if this resolution is passed and acted on? We took turns responding to this question and then categorized ideas as either action-oriented or eco-theo-philosophical changes.

Changes at the ideas level:

- Resolution will lead congregations to make a more defined and unified statement about what we do believe, moving beyond conversation to consensus.
- Congregations will be able to let go of their New Age fears and accept a new baseline that Earth and its beings are loved by God.
- Will see peacemaking as including peace with creation.
- Resolution will provide an opportunity for moral imagination.
- People will connect earth-keeping, outdoor interests they may have had previously with their faith.
- Creation care will be incorporated as a missional mandate.
- View of death

Actions:

- Creation care is incorporated into all aspects of church life.
- Awareness will provide people with a lens for decision-making about issues such as what kind of roof is best for a building.
- Additional creation care actions and responses will happen at the 2015 assembly.
- Congregations will be centers of action.
- Stories will be collected and shared.
- Congregations and individuals will change their lifestyles.
- Creation care becomes integral to expressions of Menno faith.
- Our questions become a strong, clear voice that speaks to congregations and their communities.

Greg shared a matrix on how people move from a new consideration to action.:

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Foundation | Paradigm for context and comprehension for The Concept |
| Concept understood | Data awareness resides - neutral or even skeptical toward content |
| Concept accepted | The Concept makes sense, even if held in tension w/ existing beliefs and behaviors |
| Concept becomes action | Behavior follows conviction |
| Communication follows action | Person who first heard The Concept and wrestled with it, now lives it and communicates it with conviction to others. |

5B. Resource categories: What types of material would aid in study, discernment and response to the resolution? Assuming the resolution passes, MCCN will need to provide leadership in developing curriculum and other resources.

- printed curriculum
- pod casts
- itineraries: places to visit
- texts: sound byte bits
- portable events Ecohulapolusa?
- academic symposia
- Menno TED talks
- Web sites: more development
- Video recordings
- devotionals, sermon series
- SS class curriculum, children's materials.

5C Ideas that might be part of the curriculum:

Exploring Biblical and Theological Foundations (Point A in resolution)

Question 1A

- A study of Jesus and creation care, followed by a study of the New Testament and creation care, followed by a study of the Old Testament and creation care. (Uses Jesus as central lens. Luke referred to *Reading the Bible after Christendom*.)
- Teaching about Christ regarding peace.

Question 2A

- Study of Christ and the reconciliation of all things
- Eschatology and creation care
- How does theology influence values and ethics?
- How does creation inform our theological understanding?
- Include relationships between organisms.

Question 3A

- Sabbath-keeping from a Jesus perspective
- Study and examples of worship practices, prayer practices, spirituality practices.

Question 4A

- What is the meaning of beauty in creation? Beauty leads me toward an understanding of God and Christ.
- Eco-theological understanding of leadership and responsibilities in congregations.
- Equipping congregations theologically and spiritually to practice points B and C.

Choosing a simple lifestyle (Point B in resolution)

Question 1B:

- Guides/resources for audits and retrofitting in homes and churches
- Household purge party (event)
- Evaluating expectations of a comfortable life
- Worship resource: Blessing of bicycles

Question 2B:

- Template for a goods, skills, services directory
- Swap/yard sale
- Provide space for a CSA

Question 3B:

- Identify examples of empire around us
- Articulate biblical values for the economy
- Address view of death

Question 4B:

- Learn from creative ideas in other places
- Articulate message of simplicity in ways that aren't alienating to the poor.
- Emphasize health and nutrition gains

Pursuing Justice and Peace (point C in resolution)

Question C1:

- Reports/ words from the Global South, likely via Mennonite World Conference.
- Collate ideas from *Living More With Less*, *TREK*, *Extending the Table*, *Simply in Season*
- Collaborate with *Extending the Table II* (project in process)

Question C2:

- List of presentations? Things you could think about--print & youtube
- Checklist of things to look for in your neighborhood. Stories of local work people have done. What is God already doing? What can we join?
- What is God already doing in our communities? Join in! Develop missional identity

Question C3:

- What are Menno mission and development groups already doing? Have a logo related to this resolution to post on their own sites highlighting what they are doing. Encourage creation-focused nodes on their own sites.
- Help people explore where their stuff comes from: lifecycle analysis for dummies
- Ask questions--seek answers. Examine models.

Question C4:

- How does political advocacy function? Study this.
- Seven Mountain Mandate--teaching movement. How can we put Christians in a leverage position to change policies?

- Reflect on what it means to be subversive: if we really live our theology, there will be people who are not happy with us. Example: Funding loss in Canada for climate change advocacy and mining justice.

6. Ideas for Dave Hockman-Wert's creation care blog for assembly:

- Convention theme is *Citizens of God's Kingdom: Healed in Hope*. Psalm 24:1 is one of the key verses.
- Reflect on Earth, God and ownership: If we are not the owners what is our role? Steward, partner co-creator?
- What would it look like if the Earth belonged to the Lord? Stimulate moral imagination. How does being a kingdom citizen differ from being a captive of our political and economic system?
- Mention resolution.
- Where do we find hope in creation care issues? Healing?
- Address idea that we are all going to heaven and it doesn't matter what happens to creation.
- Recreating creation from Kreiders' book, mentioned on page 1 of resolution.
- Lord's prayer: "as it is in heaven."
- Parable of vineyard: Why would God leave abusive tenants in the vineyard?
- Practical suggestions? Cutting down waste at Convention?
- Theological piece? Why creation care is something we should care about.

7. Ideas for Booth at MC USA

- **Grounding ideas:**
 - Find ways to review, preview concepts in the resolution
 - How can we tie in the theme of convention:
 - The earth is the Lord's
 - Tie-in to immigration
- **Include pictures and reports from as many of our creation care congregations as possible.**
 - What are the environmental issues within 25 miles of your congregation? Get responses from the 100 shades congregations, clarifying that these things are in our OWN backyards.
 - Best practices from 100 shades of green: chance to post people's challenges and responses? Examples of challenges and successes.
 - I'm caring for creation by... take pix, hang up around booth. Way for people to add their own statements.
- **Develop self-guided building tour, as in last convention**
 - Ask the convention center's sustainability person what can be recycled? Honor the people who work hard to make sustainability work in this setting. Provide docents, perhaps standing by different barrels explaining what goes where. Be the face of active sustainability on the spot.
 - Daily scavenger hunt. Make it simpler than last year.

- **Something on local environmental issues in Phoenix:** modeling how to think about places you travel and visit.
 - Leaf, cactus, plant connection.

- **Gizmos, demos:**
 - Energy balancing station with balance beam: Compare amount of energy in meat versus vegetables...bottled water versus tap water...Number of Earths your lifestyle requires.
 - Have a different theme every day
 - Solar powered cells that make a little wind generator go. Solar demonstration.
 - Solar powered clothes. ...solar powered hat.
 - Bicycle powered light for an LED or incandescent
 - Kill-o-watt meter
 - Solar cooker...aluminum reflective things.
 - Show value and impact of insulation
 - Technology for the poor, as in Greg's grow buckets
 - Vermiculture: worm bin. Include how-to card.

- **Flash mob: times for creation care liaisons to meet at the booth.**
 - The Franciscan basilica across the street from conference center has a nice outdoor space. How to procure: Jason Boone talked to the head priest at the basilica. Could we use this space to meet?

- **KIT: Complete ideas for resources on how to introduce this to your congregation**
 - Poster, cards
 - Ppt slide show
 - Finish Tri-fold kit

- **Include a display of things made out of upcycled stuff. Build something out of excess conference materials.**
 - Trash sculpture--that people can add to, perhaps especially for kids
 - Trash sculpture includes sticky notes where people write what they are doing.

- **Have people assist with evaluating green efforts** at the convention.

- **Local Connections:**
 - Arizona Interfaith Power and Light group: Faith Footprint increases in Phoenix.
 - Sunnyslope Mennonite Church has an environmental engineer in the congregation. Started a skate park as a way to relate to local kids.
 - Sidenote: Trinity Menno has a hikers group and a meatless yoga group.

8. Retrofit Funds/Programs for Energy Reduction in Churches in Canada & MCUSA

A. In Canada: Report from Joanne

A tentative plan is under discussion. It involves providing funds via Mennonite Foundation Canada for churches who want to do retrofitting. Dave Bergen, MCC Canada & Willard Metzler, MC Canada are eager to link such an effort to a Canada-wide initiative to reduce energy. Joanne is not sure how to help get it off the ground. The task requires a committee of people who are committed to working on this project.

Dave Hockman-Wert suggested Mennonite Men and their “Join Hands” program: a partnership opportunity that provides funds to churches to help buy buildings. Someone mentioned organizations in Toronto that have done something similar and might serve as resources. Darren Kropf may also have ideas.

A resource that MCCN might contribute: A template to use to see what kind of savings/benefit might result from adding/improving insulation in church buildings.

B. In Canada: Report from Jim Smith

Jim reported on [Everence's new High Impact Annuity](#). The company went through several legal hoops to create an annuity with fixed interest rates for two to four years. The premium is then lent out to support the work of non-profit organizations making environmentally friendly improvements, churches wanting to grow their ministries and community development in underserved areas.

Questions:

What does this mean for agencies and schools?

Should we challenge places like Everence to create incentives for small businesses to make green investments?

An additional resource for congregations: Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light got a grant for state monies to award to six congregations committed to reducing their energy over 25%...1/3 of members reduce household energy by 1/7th. Waterford considered applying. Savvy congregations can find resources like this.

9. Suggestions for Website

- Need set list of tags to pull up stories.
- What about a site map to help people get around?
- Google search box? Work with Lightsky on search box, site map.
- Stories index
- Need to work more on getting information out that site exists. Reintroduce the idea that Menno Creation care web site is out there. Get this into church bulletins, newsletters.
- We don't have a linkage with MC USA web site: fix that.
- Add animal book to MCCN resources
- Put Second Mile on our website. Was an excellent starting point for East Chestnut St.
- RE-ad Karla's article about bridges to the cross in an archival spot
- Work at cross-referencing Facebook and website
- Link to Menno Media *Living More with Less* site

10. Direction-setting for MCCN for the next 3-5 years

A. Marlisa, Janie and Dave worked on node development and regional groups.

Regional groups:

- Figure out natural groupings of liaisons to meet with each other if they want to. This has been fruitful in the Goshen/Elkhart area. Talk about what is happening here.
- Emphasize watershed discipleship—our communities consist of those whom we share resources with.
- Regional reps everywhere would be helpful.
- Good place to share ideas, resources
- Send mass emails to all congregations letting them know we exist.

Unanswered question: What is the relationship between regional reps and the Creation Care Council?

Node strengthening:

Schools:

- Seek out news from all colleges and high schools. Try to be balanced, fill in gaps from missing schools.
- How different is the work of our colleges compared to non-Menno colleges? Is it unique? Help colleges work out of their theology rather than just out of a secular, recognized need.
- Do students at Mennonite colleges understand the faith connection in addition to the practical experiences they gain with composting or whatever they are doing?
- Joanne mentioned that students at CMU were thankful that she and MCCN had come to connect with them; sense that wider Church cares.
- Meet with Eco-Pax at Goshen College
- Bring youth who are on our path, geographically speaking, to our meetings.

Agencies:

- Serve as consultant on creation care issues. How?
- Adapt Greening Congregations checklist or develop additional checklists for auditing, assessing greenness.
- Invite agencies and schools to be some Shades of Green, or to have a page on our web site.
- Comb others' web sites for green stuff and link to it.

B. Jim and Jennifer discussed structure/governance and financial goals.

Structure:

- They affirmed the historical structure we have at present as functioning well.
- Proposed expanding agency connections by:
- Inviting leaders from another agency to web-based meetings, one at a time, and interviewing them: What are they working on? How can we collaborate?
- Seek people within agencies who are already doing something similar to MCCN's work: for example, the *Living More with Less* book.

- Have a regular, yearly electronic meeting with liaisons, particularly about implementing the resolution, if it passes.
- Reinforce relationship with Canada. Explore options for collaboration. Darren Kropf is a good resource.
- Send an invitation, greeting to constituency groups (Native Americans, Mennonite Women, African Americans...) Ask how our concerns connect.

Financial Goals:

- Need money for permanent half to three quarter time staffing.
- Need a sustainable budget independent of Merry Lea, Everence, MC Canada.
- Make Mennonite financial advisors aware of MCCN. (We have received donations via Mennonite Foundation.)
- Jennifer will begin sending a yearly donation letter to members.

C. Greg, Luke and Joanne worked in a small group on future workshops, webinars and displays.

Idea for a workshop:

Have people brainstorm individually about what they love about creation care, what they are concerned about. Share and sort.

In groups, study a Bible passage for creation care principles.

Then, using these discussions, have them write a letter to their leaders on creation care. Or provide a basic template. Post results of discussion and letters publically.

Mobile display kits: Need two or more.

- Could include literature, pop-up display, energy balance beam and instructions for filling weights
- Provide suggestions for regional items that people can add, such as regional Interfaith Power and Light info; food system info, green technologies, personal interests.
- It is important to find liaisons to staff resource booths. Resources can't very well stand alone.

11. Reviewing MCCN's role regarding advocacy:

Do we want to continue to avoid advocacy work? Interfaith Power and Light, for example, is very strong on advocacy. When you sign on, it means you are agreeing to their advocacy work without any processing.

- Risks much greater than benefits. Who are we that politicians would care?
- Church doesn't have a unified voice on issues yet.
- This can compromise other actions
- Can create perceptions of skepticism, guilt by association
- Negative political environment can be harmful.
- Generation of dialog is part of our purpose. However, single issue things tend not to create healthy long term dialog. Our political systems don't model that for us.
- Our newsletter and Facebook page may have different standards.
- Helpful question: Is an advocacy article well-rounded, rooted in biblical theological grounding?

- A better approach for MCCN might be to work at helping people understand how to discuss an issue. What kinds of questions should you ask? See 2012 minutes; we worked on this some last year.
- We might do well to follow MCC's model of advocacy: Act as advocates when a voiceless group asks us to speak to our government on their behalf. (For example, Colombian Mennonites have asked U.S. Mennonites to speak for them.)

12. Additional Council Members:

Work on additional council members is in process, including a Canadian replacement for Emily Dueck. A name from the Harrisonburg area is under consideration, and Dave HW has some names from the Southwest and central IL to suggest.

What if we had 4 to 6 more people around the table? What does it cost to have more people? Could it be positive?

13. Summary of the work of the day:

We each shared what we found most energizing.

Janie: excited to hear an emphasis on regional models keep popping up

Marlisa: Greg's schemata on the process of change. This is something to keep in mind as we work with the Church.

Luke: Inspired by various parts of idea generation, including what might happen at convention.

Joanne: Enlivened by all the zany ideas for things to do at a booth.

Jim: Lots of good positive energy. Now the task will be prioritizing.

Jennifer: Eager to make the MCCN booth a fun and interesting home at the MCUSA convention. Also her logical and orderly conversation with Jim that left her thinking we could get some of the things under discussion done.

Greg and Dave HW: Sorry, I missed what they said.

14. Next Meetings: Our annual face to face will be:

MARCH 28-29, 2014.

We will also have a virtual check-in late in the summer, after the assemblies.