

Virtual MCCN Council Meeting – 1-28-16 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. EST

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

Absent: Marlisa Yoder-Bontrager

1. Opening: Luke read from Psalm 126 and asked us when we had experienced the universe as an expression of God’s love—a phrase used in our Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective. We mentioned five planets aligned and visible in the morning sky...ice patterns in a stream...two feet of snow in Charlottesville...Northern lights in BC.

2. Brief updates on creation care activities from council members

- **Janie** is teaching *Every Creature Singing* at Charlottesville Mennonite. Thirty people attended the first session.
- **Janie** is taking a full time position as director of communications at MCUSA, effective February 1. Although she will be leaving MCCN, she hopes her new role will enable her to give MCCN a greater role in MCUSA.
- **Greg** is focusing on seminary classes and enjoys watching for agro themes in the Bible. He anticipates a pastoral role in the next few years.
- **Dave HW** reported on Oregon news. He wryly described the armed protestors who took over a wildlife refuge as an “invasive species” problem and mentioned that mammoth bones were found under a football field. Drift Creek Camp is planning a new event for young adults.
- **Jim’s** in-laws may move in, changing the “environment” of their home.
- **Joanne** is deep into her first year of faculty life, teaching two courses. Last weekend, she attended a two-day conference where the keynotes were Kathryn Hayhoe and Michael Northcott.
- **Jennifer** is enjoying having time for administrative work with MCCN. She has had several interesting phone calls with network members and with Creation Justice Ministries.
- **Mike** is changing jobs. He is looking at a government position involving water.
- **Luke** was on Andros Island in the Bahamas, an economically challenged area near sea level, which made climate change feel real. Luke also attended the National Council on Science and the Environment in Washington, DC. He was surprised by how frequently the world’s poor came up. A recipient of a lifetime achievement award shared how important he believes it is for science and faith to work together.

3. Budget update:

- Jim noted that we have never reached the goal set for us for donations. This year was no exception. Donations totaled \$5,545 instead of the projected \$8000. The budget for 2016 will be \$12,000, similar to other years.
- The Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery project brought in \$23,145 which passed through our organization and on to the filmmakers. Multiple networks were involved in this fundraising and

were exposed to our website through the donations page. We continue to hold a few thousand dollars for the DDD while they reorganize. A congregation may take on this project.

- Travel expenses were higher this year due to two conferences and the use of hotel lodging for council members instead of homes.

4. Updates from Canada:

- In late 2015, budget shortfalls at MCCCanada resulted in layoffs, including Elsie Rempel, our former contact. The new MCCCanada contact is Karen Marten Zimmerly. Reach her at: 204-888-6781, ext 118; kmzimeerly@mennonitechurch.ca.
- Joanne reported that the climate group that she helped convene met in September and completed its reflection on divestment. Randy Haluza DeLay and Joanne headed the group, and Mike Currie was also part of it. They had some anxieties due to the diverse points of view represented, but the meeting went well. Their task was not to make a decision about divestment, but to lay out the investing options for MCCCanada's board. Joanne will send the final report for publication on the MCCN website when it is complete.
- The Canadian version of the *Every Creature Singing* curriculum is still waiting for final edits. They hope to launch it at the assembly at Saskatoon next July. Joanne has submitted a proposal to do a workshop about the curriculum.
- Joanne has made a rewarding connection with Rachel Krause, a new biology professor at Canadian Mennonite University.
- Plans are progressing for a gathering the Sunday after the Saskatoon Assembly entitled, "Caring for God's Good Creation: A Churchwide Consultation on Next Steps. MCCN has been invited to co-sponsor the event, along with MCC Peace and Justice. This means helping to promote the event through our network and sending a request for financial support to Canadian members. (They need to raise \$1500.) We agreed this would be a good thing for all parties and would give us more exposure. Joanne will ask Henry Krause, one of the planners, to write the text and determine the timing of the request.
- The 2016 Annual Report is complete except for the following corrections: List Dave HW as attending both conferences. Add Marlisa as an attendee at MWC and note that she was very involved in making the food composting work.

5. Creating opportunities for donations: Council members suggested the following with regard to soliciting donations:

- Do not send too many solicitations.
- Communicating the purpose of giving is important. Make the need clear.
- Point to the benefits. It is important to highlight the positives in MCUSA right now.
- Special projects are appealing but we don't have staff time to do projects.
- Relate donations to the ECS curriculum. This is a winsome, practical, tangible benefit.
- Avoid competition with the many charities requesting donations at Christmastime by shifting to Earth Day or the Season of Creation in September.

- Give donating an agricultural theme relating to planting and harvest time. “Help us bloom this year.”
- MCUSA has an email list that we might be able to tap into. Janie, as director of communications can give us that list. We might find we could tap into some sympathetic and interested supporters.
- Have people sponsor an e-newsletter.
- People who care about our existence need to take some responsibility. Broader representative support from donors is important for us, the donors, Merry Lea and Everence.

6. Quarterly emails to liaisons: Council members made the following suggestions regarding Jennifer’s plan to send separate emails to liaisons with practical suggestions for congregational life.

- Jim suggested a liaison teleconference two to four times a year. Offer a feature liaisons could carry back to their congregation.
- Offer creation care tips for church newsletters.
- Pull suggestions from the curriculum for this email. It is a good way to advertise the curriculum.
- Make it easy for people to get things done.
- DaveHW and Greg may be willing to call liaisons in their region who desire a contact.

7. Occasional blogs and opinion pieces by network members: Council members made the following suggestions regarding Jennifer’s desire to provide more idea-based content by network members.

- Create a writer’s bureau.
- Forward these blogs to MWR and talk with *The Mennonite*. Are they interested in semi-regular contributions related to creation care?

8. Every Creature Singing – Spanish translation

- Reaction to the idea of finding Hispanic advisors to review the English translation and comment on what would be most helpful was mixed. Dave HW advocated for translating the whole curriculum right away. He said his conference decided to translate all materials as a matter of equity. If they are available, they will be used.
- Janie can recommend translators. Jennifer has a translation contact at MCC. Jennifer will obtain quotes from translator(s) which may clarify our options.
- Luke observed that we are not asking someone to revise the curriculum to fit a particular culture; just translate it. People can then decide how they need to adapt it.
- Saulo Padilla, Assembly Mennonite, was mentioned as a potential advisor.
- Luke noted that people beyond the Mennonite Church also access the curriculum. A future master’s student found Merry Lea through the MCCN curriculum.

9. Member survey: Council members made the following responses to the two questions proposed: a.) What do you personally want to work on with regard to creation care in 2016? b.) How can MCCN support you in your answer to the question above?

- DaveHW would like to be asked what he is working on right now, what he would do if he had more time and what he would like the Church to work on.
- Give people a chance to vent. What do you see as the strongest limitation to doing more environmental work in your congregation? In your region?
- Make it short. Make it multiple choice.
- Let people choose two items in a list.

10. An effective and functioning venue for members to communicate with each other?

- We considered disbanding the ineffective Facebook page. Successful FBs have staff members posting at least once a day. We are also dissatisfied with the way our page locates posts from non-administrators, but we would need to shut down the page and restart as a FB group in order to do that.
- A difficulty with disbanding the page is that we never did figure out how to get them off the web. We decided to leave it hang out there because multiple pathways are always good. Post a last message inviting people to come to our website.

11. Ideas for adding members to the MCCN council?

- Janie suggested Todd Wynward, Taos, NM, who has since been added to the council.

12. Face-to-face meeting agenda for April 1-2, 2016

- Start time for the meeting will be 10:30 a.m., Friday which makes travel easier. Jim will reserve meeting rooms at Everence.
- Please send agenda items to Luke and let him know if you need lodging.
- Are there people we should bring in?
 - Joanne suggested Willard Metzger by Skype. He has been involved in the climate change scene in Canada.
 - Jennifer suggested Hispanic folks locally with regard to the Spanish translation of the curriculum.