

Mennonite Creation Care Network Annual Report 2014

Overview

Caring for God's creation has been a part of the Mennonite Church's official agenda since 1977, when it passed a resolution on Christian Stewardship of Energy Resources. In 2005, MC Canada and MC USA appointed representatives to the Mennonite Creation Care Network.

The vision statement of MCCN states: Christ, who created the world in peace and sustains all things, calls us to be stewards of the earth and to bring rest and renewal to the land and everything that lives on it. In response to this call, we will equip lay people and leaders with tools, resources and models that will educate, encourage, and inspire the church to care for creation, which is an expression of God's love.

MCCN is a network for Mennonite people and agencies actively engaged in the care and restoration of God's creation. Its goals are to encourage the Church to:

- Claim our biblical and theological foundation regarding the care of God's Creation.
- Discover the ties that link all created beings to each other and to God.
- Confess the harm we have caused the natural world and our neighbors.
- Act faithfully to restore the earth.

This bi-national council of volunteers meets several times per year (once in person and once or twice via computer and phone conference). Staff from the Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College and from Everence provide continuity between meetings and manage a web-site for MCCN. With its stewardship emphasis, Everence is a natural partner and our major financial supporter. Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Central Committee Canada help defray partial travel costs of the two Canadian members.

The Mennonite Creation Care Network promotes environmental stewardship activities with regional grassroots groups and institutional agencies as a way of inspiring people to be agents of change at home and in the global context. MCCN's current activities include: developing communications materials, collecting stories of Mennonites who care about the environment, and building a network among those in our constituency for whom the environment is an ongoing concern. We also serve our national and regional conferences by assisting with the greening of our gatherings and presenting and coordinating creation care themed workshops and activities at these gatherings.

The Council in 2014:

Canada: Mike Currie (Abbotsford, BC), Joanne Moyer (Winnipeg, MB); USA: Greg Bowman (Salem, OH), Luke Gascho (Goshen, IN), Dave Hockman-Wert (Corvallis, OR), Jennifer Halteman Schrock (Goshen, IN), Jim Smith (Goshen, IN), Marlisa Yoder Bontrager (Lancaster, PA). Intern: Janie Beck Kreider (Goshen, IN).

To join the growing network or get more information: www.mennoncreationcare.org.

Activities in 2014

- ***Council Transitions:*** One position for members from the USA is still vacant. Recommendations can be sent to Luke Gascho (lukeag@goshen.edu).
- ***Council Meetings:*** We held a face-to-face meeting on March 28-29, 2014, Goshen, IN, and a virtual meeting by conference call on September 4, 2014.
- ***Mennonite Church Conference Activities:***
 - Mennonite Church Canada Assembly (Wild Hope: Faith for an Unknown Season) took place in Winnipeg, MB, on July 3-6, 2014. Joanne Moyer attended with the MCCN display. She presented a report on MCCN's activities during the Business Meeting, and facilitated a workshop entitled, "Creation Care: Testing our Resolve," to explore developing a Canadian creation care resolution. She also provided a meditation on climate change, connectedness, and hope at the Saturday evening worship service.
 - Climate Change Resolution: At the MC-Canada Assembly, a resolution was presented by Mark Bigland-Pritchard (member of the MCCN network from Saskatoon, SK) to address climate change, including a request to MC-Canada to study divesting its money from the fossil fuel industry. The resolution was referred to the General Board (because it was submitted too late to be included for voting at the assembly). The General Board decided in November to accept all but one points of the resolution, including the divestment study. A study group will be convened at the beginning of 2015, and will include several MCCN members, as well as a diverse combination of other members of the MC-Canada constituency.
 - MC USA Convention: Plans are underway to have a booth and present multiple workshops at Kansas City 2015.
 - Mennonite World Conference: Jennifer Schrock and Dave Hockman-Wert are making plans to attend the Mennonite World Conference in Harrisburg, PA, in July 2015. Workshop options have been submitted.
- ***Creation Care Primer for Churches:*** In collaboration with Mennonite Church Canada, MCCN prepared a pamphlet describing the background and history of creation care work in Canada. It also outlined the organizations and initiatives that churches and individuals can access to engage in creation care activities, including MCCN's website and resources, faith-based organizations active across Canada, and other environmental organizations.
- ***Network Building:*** MCCN ran a series of three ads in *The Mennonite* and in *Mennonite Weekly Review* during the summer, advertising the *Every Creature Singing* curriculum and inviting people to join the network.

- **Curriculum:** Pilot congregations began using the *Every Creature Singing* curriculum in early 2014 and the completed version is now available on the MCCN website. About 20 congregations have used the curriculum or are preparing to do so.
- **Staffing:** Janie Beck Kreider, who arrived as an intern in August 2012, now has a permanent half time position with MCCN. She moved to Charlottesville, VA, in July and works long distance with tasks such as the MCCN website and newsletter.
- **E-Newsletter:** MCCN members received E-newsletters once or twice a month. Switching to a free software program called Mail Chimp has enabled staff to track how many people open the newsletter and click on links. Open rates are over 40%, which is much better than the religion “industry” standard.
- **Website:** Janie Beck Kreider revamped the website home page so that most recent posts all appear in one place. She also added pages for the online curriculum.
- **Music Project:** In June 2014, Conrad Grebel University College hosted its third Sound in the Land conference. The theme was Music and the Environment, and Bryan Moyer Suderman of Small Tall Music was asked to plan the Menno Folk portion of the conference. He invited MCCN to collaborate on this initiative, and council member Joanne Moyer joined the planning committee. The event was a creative combination of science and art.
- **Council Member Outreach:**
 - *Joanne Moyer* conducted two adult Sunday School sessions on creation care at Toronto United Mennonite Church in the spring.
 - *Luke Gascho* spoke in multiple churches on creation care topics. He participated in a gathering of creation care leaders and investors from over 10 denominations exploring understandings and options regarding divesting from fossil fuels. The National Council of Churches – Creation Justice Ministries group, hosted the meeting in Washington, DC. He worked closely with investors from Everence on this area of socially responsible investing. Luke represented MCCN at a MC USA gathering on the long-term impact of the Doctrine of Discovery. The participants discussed various ways the church could respond to these pervasive injustices.
 - Several council members attended and presented at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary’s Rooted and Grounded Conference, September 18 to 20, 2015:
 - *Greg Bowman:* “Designing the ‘New Earth’ Where We Live, Work and Worship as an On-going Invitation” at the Rooted and Grounded conference.
 - *Joanne Moyer:* “Green Disciples: Faith-Based Environmental Work in Canada”
 - *Jennifer Schrock:* “Slow Violence and the Gospel of Peace”