

Mennonite Creation Care Network Annual Report 2010

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 is as follows: 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 (formerly Mennonite Mutual Aid) 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:

Canada: David Neufeld (Winnipeg, MB), Joanne Moyer (Winnipeg, MB) USA: Greg Bowman (Salem, OH), Karla Detweiler (Iowa City, IA), Luke Gascho (Goshen, IN), Dave Hockman-Wert (Corvallis, OR), Jennifer Halteman Schrock (Goshen, IN), Jim Smith (Goshen, IN).

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

Activities in 2010

- ***Council Transitions:*** The Council said farewell to Nekeisha Alexis-Baker of Elkhart, IN, in April 2010. Dave Hockman-Wert and Joanne Moyer renewed their terms in June 2010. Two council member positions remain vacant. Recommendations can be sent to Luke Gascho (lukeag@goshen.edu).
- ***Council Meetings:***
 - We held a face-to-face meeting on April 9-10, 2010, in Goshen, IN. On Friday evening, we welcomed Jim Alvarez and Chris Meyer of Everence (formerly Mennonite Mutual Aid) who gave presentations on Everence's environmental stewardship work. We hope to network with other Mennonite agencies by inviting representatives to future meetings.
 - We held our third annual virtual meeting on August 21, 2010, in Pennsylvania, Indiana, Iowa, Oregon and Manitoba. The four members who would otherwise travel long distances (from Oregon, Pennsylvania and Manitoba) to get to Goshen Indiana, avoided creating over 5,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions as well as saving significant travel costs and approximately 100 person hours of travel time.
- ***Fundraising:*** Dave Neufeld and Joanne Moyer met with representatives from Mennonite Foundation Canada and Mennonite Church Canada to discuss options for fund raising in Canada.
- ***Sustainability Plan:*** MCCN council members developed a sustainability plan for 2010-2011. The plan reviewed MCCN's historical background, assessed the current condition of organizational operations, defined problems or issues confronting the organization, developed a list of desired outcomes for effective mission, and developed an implementation action plan. Long-term action points included development in the following areas: congregational liaisons, contacts with denominational agencies, strategies for communications, a promotional campaign entitled "100 Shades of Green", and support for the development of MCCN Canada. The planning also focused on exploratory actions for a publishing project, MCCN staffing needs (.5 FTE, internships, etc.), and the promotion of the "Green Congregation Scorecard" usage. The implementation calls for various administrative tasks, including use of "Equipping" packets to contact denominational leaders, the development of measures to track MCCN's success, and making decisions about new resources and finances for long term ministry.
- ***Website:***
 - Dave Hockman-Wert and Karla Stoltzfus-Detweiler prepared web pages on what we can do to help make our conventions even more sustainable. These are linked to our home page and also linked to MC USA's sustainability page.
 - The congregations page was upgraded with inviting language. This is consistently the most viewed page, according to Google Analytics.

- ***Network Building:***
 - ***100 Shades of Green:*** The 100 Shades initiative was launched in the fall of 2009 with ads in *The Mennonite*, *Mennonite Weekly Review* and *The Canadian Mennonite* online. The goal is to find 100 churches that have at least taken the step of appointing a liaison to MCCN. In December 2009, we had 16 congregations with liaisons; in 2010 we added 27 congregations for a total of 43 congregations. Database membership is almost to 500.
 - ***100 Shades of Green Poster:*** We created a poster during the summer to further promote the campaign, particularly in Canadian churches, which had been missed in some of the original promotion. Approximately 350 copies of the poster, along with a letter of invitation, were distributed to member congregations of Mennonite Church Canada in the fall of 2010. Mennonite Central Committee Canada contributed to the printing of the poster and also ordered some to distribute within their networks.

- ***Congregational Resourcing:***
 - We revised our Congregational Score Sheet to make it more user-friendly and added a one-page discussion guide for each category covered. These are available on our congregations page. While attending a National Council of Churches workshop in Washington DC, Luke met an influential Methodist who has been using our score sheet.

- ***Mennonite Church Conference Activities:***
 - Joanne Moyer brought the MCCN display to the Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Calgary, AB, June 29 - July 2. To further the commitment to greening church conferences, she did a map survey, collecting rough data on the distances participants travelled to attend the conference. This allowed us to make estimates of the energy impact and costs caused by travel to these gatherings. A green audit report was produced in collaboration with Mennonite Church Canada staff.
 - Dave Hockman-Wert attended the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference (PNMC) annual meeting. It was held in Alaska for the first time, and had Caring for God's Creation as the theme. David Radcliff, director of the New Community Project and so-called "environmental wacko," preached at the worship services and provided short Creation Care-themed dramas that were presented by attendees. Showing photos of great environmental beauty and destruction taken on his organization's learning tours, Radcliff emphasized themes of eco-justice, pointing out the link between damage to the earth and mistreatment of poor and marginalized human communities. Radcliff challenged attendees "to be models for a system that shows God's hope to others and to our earth."

- Preparations for Pittsburgh and Waterloo: Plans are underway for the presentation of workshops at the youth and main assemblies in Waterloo and at Pittsburgh. Greening suggestions were posted on our website and linked to the MC USA sustainability page. We also remain in conversation with Mennonite Church Canada conference planners regarding ways to further improve the sustainability of the event.
- **Music Project:** For several years, MCCN has been in conversation with Bryan Moyer-Suderman (Small Tall Music) about the possibility of collaborating on a CD project that would promote creation care through music. The vision is to produce a compilation album with songs submitted by artists within the Mennonite community. Bryan presented a formal proposal which was reviewed at the August meeting and given conditional approval, pending some further revisions. Joanne and Karla are working with Bryan to advance this project.
- **Council Member Outreach:**
 - In February, Jennifer Schrock gave a lecture entitled “Just Eating: Practicing Your Faith at the Table” in Eastern Mennonite University’s Windows on the World Series. She also began a Creation Care Group at her church.
 - In April, Joanne Moyer gave a public lecture, entitled “The Conserving Vision of Aldo Leopold,” as part of A Rocha Prairie Canada’s Conservation/Nature Talk Series in Morden, Manitoba.
 - In October, David Neufeld represented MCCN at an A Rocha Canada event in Winkler Manitoba featuring Preston and Sandra Manning speaking on "Servants of God, Stewards of the Land."
 - Luke Gascho continues his frequent speaking engagements. In the fall, he spoke at University Mennonite Church, State College, PA, and East Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN, both of which resulted in good contacts. John Wierwille, pastor of Berea Mennonite Church, Atlanta, GA, joined the network and also came to visit Merry Lea to learn about efforts there.