

# **Mennonite Creation Care Network Annual Report 2011**

## **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](http://www.mennoncreationcare.org).

## **Activities in 2011**

- ***Council Transitions:*** The Council said farewell to Dave Neufeld of Winnipeg, MB in June 2011. Dave has served with the Mennonite Creation Care Network and the Mennonite Environmental Taskforce since the early 1990s. Emily Dueck of Toronto, ON, has been appointed to the committee beginning in 2012. One position for another member from the USA is also vacant. Recommendations can be sent to Luke Gascho (lukeag@goshen.edu).
- ***Council Meetings:***
  - We held a face-to-face meeting on June 10-11, 2011, in Goshen, IN.
  - We held two virtual meetings, on February 12, 2011, and November 19, 2011, in Pennsylvania, Indiana, Iowa, Oregon and Manitoba.
- ***Interns:*** The council welcomed its first intern in June. Annalisa Harder, a 2011 graduate of Goshen College filled the position this year. The year-long internship is a permanent position offering recent college grads the opportunity to learn about creation care while developing communications experience. Interns work 50% time for MCCN and 50% time for Merry Lea. The job description includes working on newsletters, caring for the web site and networking with 100 Shades of Green congregations.
- ***Network Building:***
  - *100 Shades of Green:* Thirteen new congregations became 100 Shades of Green Congregations this year, bringing the number to 56. Activities range from community gardens to protesting the uranium industry. Liaisons receive a poster and cards for their congregation's bulletin board and a yearly update on the list of 100 Shades congregations and contact emails. When our new web site is live, each congregation will have its own page where the liaison can share information.
  - *Database growth:* At least 120 people joined MCCN this year as individual members, bringing our numbers up to 618. The web site continues to be the most effective way to recruit members.
  - *E-Newsletter:* Members receive the MCCN e-newsletter 4 – 6 times a year. This year's newsletter featured a number of the 100 Shades congregations in addition to providing other news tidbits.
- ***Website:*** In November, the Goshen members of the council began working with Lightsky, a web design company, on an upgrade for our web site. In addition to an attractive new look, the upgrade will enable each of the 100 Shades congregations to log in and contribute to their own page. It will also make our Facebook page more prominent. The improved site should launch by mid-March.

- **Publicity:** During the first half of the year, the council prepared a new fold-up banner for travel events, as well as matching cards and posters. The snappy yellow design caught the eye at conventions, and the posters and cards are now part of a “welcome package” that each new liaison receives.
  
- **Mennonite Church Conference Activities:**
  - *Mennonite Church Canada Assembly, Waterloo, ON:* Joanne Moyer, Darren Kropf (Mennonite Central Committee Ontario), and Jane Snyder (Greening Sacred Spaces) collaborated to deliver a workshop for youth and adults, entitled “Living More with Less,” exploring our possessions and their impacts throughout their production, consumption and disposal cycles. Participants shared ways in which they and their churches are working to mitigate these impacts. At our display, we also provided a forum for confessing creation care sins through a dirty laundry line hung at its display. Sins confessed ranged from failing to compost, flying, use of bad hair products, failing to recycle, and consumption choices. In collaboration with Vic Thiessen, Chief Operating Officer for Mennonite Church Canada, we also prepared a Green Report on the assembly after its completion. This report was presented to Mennonite Church Canada and included in the MCCN newsletter.
  
  - *Mennonite Church USA Assembly:* Pittsburgh’s David Lawrence Center is touted as the first green convention center in the world. This choice of location for MC USA’s July 2011 gathering provided many opportunities for thinking about sustainable living. The facility reclaimed wastewater, recycled many different materials, composted food waste and provided bulk water containers instead of bottled water, among other innovations. Council members were able to keep the MCCN booth in the exhibit hall staffed most of the time. Two activities that engaged passersby were a scavenger hunt that enabled people to learn more about the green building where they were meeting and a travel survey map. About 100 people left pins in the map showing where they had come from and how they had traveled to Pittsburgh, allowing us to do a rough calculation of emissions generated.
  
  - For more information on activities and encounters at both assemblies, see the [August 2011 MCCN E-newsletter](#).
  
- **MCCN Objectives Named in MC USA Purposeful Plan:** US members of the MCCN council were pleased to note that the initial draft of their denomination’s new Purposeful Plan lists creation care as a priority. Three of the eight objectives under stewardship refer to MCCN. Congregations are encouraged to use the MCCN web site, appoint a creation care liaison and use [MCCN’s Green Congregation Score Sheet](#). “This is the clearest action related to greening the Mennonite Church that has happened,” observed Creation Care Council Chair Luke Gascho. “This is great affirmation for the planning MCCN has done.”
  
- **Music Project:** For several years, MCCN has been in discussion with Bryan Moyer-Suderman of Small Tall Music about a collaborative music project which would result in a

CD of songs about faith and place. While enthusiasm existed for the project from both partners, we struggled to find a model that would work. Prior to the November meeting, Bryan suggested a different model that would be more process rather than product oriented, involving small groups of musicians developing music on the theme of faith and place which would be shared online through music sharing software such as SoundCloud. MCCN's role would be to help publicize the project through our networks and to provide ecological/environmental knowledge and focus. The proposal was approved and a pilot project with a group of musicians in Ontario will be starting soon. MCCN envisions that this could grow into a project that share other forms of artistic expression, such as photography and poetry as well.

- ***Council Member Outreach:***

- *Joanne Moyer* presented an adult Sunday School session at First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg in September, entitled: "Ecology: Connections Far and Near". Participants explored how they are connected to God, to each other and to earth, both in our neighbourhood and around the world through an exercise of considering the elements in their daily surroundings, such as water, soil, food, electricity, transportation, etc., and exploring where they come from and how our use of them affects people and other aspects of the world.
- *Luke Gascho* led three seminars at the Mennonite Church USA Assembly in July 2011. They were entitled, *Greening the Church Experience*, *How Might the Church Respond to Climate Change?* and *What Does Sustainable Living Mean for People of Faith?* Each seminar was full.
- *Jennifer Halteman Schrock* led most of a seven-session series entitled, *Just Eating: Practicing Your Faith at the Table* at 8<sup>th</sup> St. Mennonite Church. She also led a 4-week worship series at Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship entitled *Creation Waits*.