

Mennonite Creation Care Network Annual Report 2012

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 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: Emily Dueck (Windsor, ON), 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 2012

Council Transitions: Emily Dueck of Windsor, ON, began her first term in March. Karla Stoltzfus Detweiler, Iowa City, IA, left the Creation Care Council in December, to give time to local pursuits including the birth of her first child. Karla joined the council in 2009. Two positions for members from the USA are now vacant. Recommendations can be sent to Luke Gascho (lukeag@goshen.edu).

- ***Council Meetings:***
 - We held a face-to-face meeting on March 9-10, 2012, in Goshen, IN.
 - We held two virtual meetings, on May 15, 2012, and September 25, 2012, in Ontario, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Manitoba, and Oregon.
- ***Interns:*** The council welcomed its second intern, Janie Beck Kreider, of Archbold, OH, in August 2012. Janie is a graduate of Anabaptist Mennonite Seminary and is planning to stay with MCCN for two years. We are delighted by the quality applicants we have been blessed with so far.
- ***Area Representatives:*** With the objective of increasing our connection to and coverage of the churches we represent, MCCN has appointed area representatives from each of the area churches in Canada. These volunteers will pay attention to creation care activities, communicate these with council members, and help to promote MCCN in their area. The current representatives are:
 - Walter Bergen, Abbotsford, BC
 - Tim Wiebe-Neufeld, Edmonton, AB
 - Mark Bigland-Pritchard, Saskatoon, SK
 - Jason Rempel, Steinback, MB
 - Alissa Bender, Hamilton, ON
- ***Network Building:*** The database lists 42 new members who joined in 2012. Meanwhile, seven congregations became members of the 100 Shades of Green. Three additional congregations are still in the process of becoming members. Two companion congregations from other denominations are also in process.
- ***E-Newsletter:*** MCCN published three newsletters in 2012. Topics included congregational features, resources for green preaching, the economics of creation care in Kenya, the Lausanne Movement's commitment to creation care, creation care and homelessness.
- ***Website:*** The lion's share of staff time this year was devoted to the upgrade of the MCCN web site and transition to Drupal software. The new look is bright and attractive, and the improved software makes posting information much easier. Another new capability is a searchable map showing the locations of our congregations and a web page for each of our hundred shades of green congregations. Creation Care Liaisons can now enter information

and photographs related to their own churches. A third new feature is a sermon collection featuring sermons from MCCN members.

- ***Mennonite Church Conference Activities:***
 - *Mennonite Church Canada Assembly, Richmond, BC:* Neither Joanne nor Emily was able to attend the conference this year, but the area representatives who attended helped with the display. The assembly theme was “Dusting off the Bible”, which is relevant to creation care, among many other issues. Creation care was used as an example by Sheila Klassen-Wiebe in one of the Bible study sessions. One of the area representatives was also going to conduct the green survey to produce the assembly green report, but was unable to attend at the last minute, so no report was produced this year.
 - Planning for the MC USA Assembly in Phoenix, July 2013, began with Dave Hockman-Wert continuing as our link to the MC USA planners. Luke and Jennifer submitted workshop proposals on topics ranging from climate change to Revelation 21.
 - Preparations are underway for displays and presenting workshops at the MC Canada youth assembly at Camp Assiniboia in 2013.
- ***Connections with Mennonite Church Canada:*** Mennonite Church Canada general secretary, Willard Metzger, has named creation care as one of his main priorities. Council member, Joanne Moyer, Willard Metzger, and Director of Formation for MC-Canada, Dave Bergen, have begun meeting regularly to discuss how MC-Canada can further support the work of MCCN. We have identified 100 Shades of Green as a focus, and have set the goal to increase the number of Canadian congregations participating in the campaign by 10 by the end of 2013.
- ***Survey:*** Laurina Graber, a graduate student in environmental education at Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College, surveyed MCCN creation care liaisons as part of a research project. Her research indicated that MCCN is not yet well known in Mennonite circles. The survey also provided a list of what liaisons were interested in having their congregations study.
- ***Staff GOALS for 2013 include:***
 - Reactivate the MCCN Facebook page (in process)
 - Publish six e-newsletters
 - Engage liaisons in creating their congregational pages
 - Have at least one contact with each liaison in 2013
 - Call 100 congregations that are not members of MCCN and invite them to join.

- ***Council Member Outreach:***

- During the summer of 2012, *Emily Dueck* continued to give leadership to the Sanctuary garden project through her work with MCC in Toronto, giving those who live on the margins an opportunity to find community and be active in the process of growing fresh produce. Emily is now studying to be a teacher at the University of Windsor. As part of her ‘urban education’ program she is volunteering at a center for immigrant women, and is taking an active role in helping to plan for their gardening program this spring/summer.
- *Joanne Moyer* preached at Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB, as part of the congregation’s summer creation care theme. The sermon was entitled: “Blessed are the Tree Huggers?”, and explored how we as human beings should relate to both God and the rest of creation.
- *Luke Gascho* led several workshops and seminars at venues such as the Byron Fellowship and the Wild Goose Festival. He also spoke in numerous settings on creation topics while on a two-week trip to Benin, West Africa. His home congregation, Waterford Mennonite Church, is in partnership with the Benin Bible Institute.
- *Greg Bowman* preached in several congregations in his role as director of Goodness Grows, an outreach of Common Ground Church Community. A frequent sermon title is: “For God so loved the cosmos: Food, water, justice and urban agriculture.”