

Mennonite Creation Care Network Annual Report 2013

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 in 2013:

Canada: Mike Currie (Abbotsford, BC), Emily Dueck (Windsor, ON), 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 2013

- ***Council Transitions:*** Marlisa Yoder Bontrager from Lancaster, PA, joined the council in April, and Mike Currie, (Abbotsford, BC), joined the council at the end of 2013. Emily Dueck left the council in spring 2013. One position for members from the USA is now vacant. Recommendations can be sent to Luke Gascho (lukeag@goshen.edu).
- ***Council Meetings:*** We held a face-to-face meeting on April 12-13, 2013, Goshen, IN, and a virtual meeting by conference call on August 13, 2013.
- ***Mennonite Church Conference Activities:***
 - The largest accomplishment of 2013 was preparing a resolution on creation care for the MC USA Convention in Phoenix, July 2013, and seeing it safely passed by the delegates. The resolution called all Mennonite congregations in MC USA to study a series of questions related to creation care at some point during the next two years. The resolution passed by a wide margin.
 - Other MCCN activities at the MC USA convention included:
 - Workshops by Luke Gascho on sustainable living and climate change.
 - An MCCN booth that featured our congregation's creation care projects and a quiz on the green features of the Phoenix Convention Center.
 - Joanne Moyer presented a workshop at the Fat Calf Youth Assembly in Headingly, MB, in July, entitled: "Caring for Creation: Making your Voice Heard." Participants shared things they love and are concerned about in creation, explored some biblical passages, and then wrote letters to church leadership about their hopes and fears for creation and the church's response to it.
- ***Network Building:*** 109 individuals joined MCCN in 2013, bringing the membership over 750. MCCN staff put energy into local initiatives this year in an attempt to model ways congregations could work together. We organized three quarterly meetings of MCCN members in the Goshen area. These were well-attended, with six to eight congregations and 10 to 15 people represented. A smaller number of people gathered to read Peter Sawtell's Eco-justice Notes together.
- ***Curriculum:*** Along with the resolution, MCCN committed to providing a creation care curriculum for congregations. Writing the first draft of the curriculum consumed much of the fall of 2013. The 13-session adult curriculum is entitled **Every Creature Singing** and will be available in March 2014. It includes both a biblical-theological piece and a series of "circle questions" that invite congregations to learn to know the ecological aspects of their communities.

- **Interns:** Janie Beck Kreider, who arrived in August 2012 stayed a second year. Janie has taken on a number of web revisions in preparation for making MCCN's new curriculum available. She also worked with local initiatives including the quarterly MCCN meetings in Goshen and the Eco-Justice Notes discussions.
- **E-Newsletter:** MCCN published six E-newsletters in 2013. Topics covered included rural congregations, watershed discipleship, climate change, coverage of MC USA and MC Canada creation care events and news from congregations.
- **Website:** Current work on the web site includes the following:
 - Reformatting the home page so that current postings appear where they are easy to find.
 - Creating an attractive display page for the Every Creature Singing curriculum. We are also setting up a password-protected system that will enable us to know who and how many people are using it.
 - Disabling the congregational pages, as these have not worked as planned.
- **Music Project:** In June 2014, Conrad Grebel University College will host its third Sound in the Land conference. The theme is Music and the Environment, and Bryan Moyer Suderman of Small Tall Music has been asked to plan the Menno Folk portion of the conference. He has invited MCCN to collaborate on this initiative, and council member Joanne Moyer has joined the planning committee. At the same time, an ongoing project, called "Songs of Place," is being planned to engage environmental issue through music. Songwriters are being called to write songs focussing on place, some of which will be performed at the conference.
- **Council Member Outreach:**
 - *Greg Bowman* joined an organic farmer and Pittsburgh-area farmer marketing cooperative director in planning the 2013 Sustainable Food, Faith and Farming conference at Laurelville Mennonite Center (March 1-3) titled "Farming that Heals: From cornfields to community gardens." Speakers include women and men from Catholic, Presbyterian, Amish-Mennonite, Mennonite, and Amish confessions.
 - *Joanne Moyer* gave a presentation entitled, "Faith-Based Environmental Work: MCCN and Beyond," at Steinmann Mennonite Church's adult education hour. The presentation described the work of MCCN and her academic research exploring faith-based organizations engaged in environmental work.
 - *Jennifer Schrock* represented MCCN at a Watershed Discipleship Roundtable organized by biblical scholar Ched Myers in November 2013. She also gave a response to a paper on Watershed Discipleship that Myers presented at the Mennonite Scholars and Friends Forum of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature.

