

Mennonite Creation Care Network Annual Report 2015

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 2015:

Canada: Mike Currie (Abbotsford, BC), Joanne Moyer (Edmonton, AB); 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). Staff: Janie Beck Kreider (Charlottesville, VA).

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

Activities in 2015

- ***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 13-14, 2015, Goshen, IN, and two virtual meetings by conference call on January 22 and September 10, 2015.
- ***Mennonite Church Conference Activities:***
 - *MC USA Convention in Kansas City:*
Janie Beck Kreider, Luke Gascho, Jennifer Schrock, Jim Smith, and Dave Hockman Wert attended this event. Collectively, they delivered six workshops on topics that included climate change, green youth group activities, sustainable living, green building and watershed discipleship. They also provided a booth with several interactive activities to inform visitors about MCCN. Janie Beck Kreider worked with Rainbow Mennonite to plan a canoe day trip on the Kansas River with informative stops along the way. It was cancelled due to high water, but we hope to reuse the idea when the convention returns to this locale in 2019.
 - *Mennonite World Conference:*
Greg Bowman, Janie Beck Kreider, Jennifer Schrock, Dave Hockman Wert and Marlisa Yoder Bontrager attended this gathering. They provided a small display and delivered three workshops, two of which were translated into Spanish. Marlisa Yoder Bontrager and her family contributed to planning green aspects of the gathering, particularly making a program to compost food at meals actually work.
 - *Climate Change Working Group:* In response to the 2014 Climate Change Resolution, Mennonite Church Canada formed a working group to consider steps that can be taken to address climate change by the church body, focusing specifically on financial measures such as divestment. The group is chaired by Randy Haluza-DeLay, MCCN network member, and Joanne Moyer is providing additional leadership. Mike Currie is also a participant. The group met in Edmonton on September 25-26.
 - *MC Canada Assembly:* Several creation care activities are being planned for the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly in Saskatoon in July 2016, including at least one workshop and a day-long consultation the following day entitled: “Caring for God’s Good Creation: A Church Wide Consultation on Creation Care and Responding to Climate Change.” This event is being planned by the Mennonite Church British Columbia Peace and Justice Committee, with support from several MCCN members.

- **Network Building:**
 - The fact that both the MCUSA convention and Mennonite World Conference took place this summer enabled MCCN to add over 100 new members. Most signed up during workshops.
 - *Connections with Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery (DDoD):* DDoD is a new Anabaptist movement concerned with contemporary indigenous land rights and the ways Mennonites benefitted from injustices against native peoples historically. DDoD and MCCN share mutual concerns in the areas of environmental justice and care for the earth. Luke Gascho participated in the DDoD working group. Following this personal connection, MCCN raised awareness about a film the group was preparing for MC USA and provided a channel for donations. In November, Merry Lea/MCCN hosted a Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Exhibit at Goshen College's Good Library and also two showings of the Loss of Turtle Island—a simulation led by Erica Littlewolf and Karin Kaufmann Wall. Over 200 people were introduced to DDoD through these events.
 - *Watershed Way:* MCCN member Todd Wynward of Taos, NM, was licensed for watershed discipleship ministry by the Western District of MCUSA. He also published a book entitled, *Rewilding the Way: Break Free to Follow an Untamed God*. Todd is inviting congregations within the same region to commit to "walking the watershed way" locally for a ten-year period and partnering with other churches who are doing the same.
 - Luke Gascho and Jennifer Schrock attended the Rooted and Grounded conference at AMBS and took a booth there.
- **Curriculum:**
 - With funding from MCC Canada, Mennonite Church Canada contracted Deborah Froese to create a Canadian version of *Every Creature Singing*, including Canadian examples, resources, and links. MCCN and MC Canada are working to have it ready to launch at the Assembly in Saskatoon in July 2016.
 - At least 36 congregations used the *Every Creature Singing* curriculum in 2015. Of those, 27 were from MC Canada or MC USA. The remaining nine included other Mennonite groups, Evangelicals, Methodists, Disciples of Christ, and an order of Catholic nuns. Churches in England, El Salvador and the Philippines also made use the curriculum.
 - *Every Creature Singing* was featured in *Toolkit*, a popular news digest put out by Everence.
- **E-Newsletter and Website:** MCCN continued to publish its monthly E-newsletter and maintain a website.

- ***Council Member Outreach:***

- *Joanne Moyer* conducted two adult Sunday School sessions on creation care at Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church, Winnipeg, in the spring. In the summer, she began working as assistant professor of Environmental Studies and Geography at The King's University, in Edmonton, AB.
- *Marlisa Yoder-Bontrager* kept the council apprised of greening plans for Mennonite World Conference. In her hometown of Lancaster, she served on a panel on gardening and creation care and helped to promote tree-planting. This effort supports the city's goal of building green infrastructure to reduce stormwater runoff into local streams.
- *Greg Bowman* starred in a video clip played at Mennonite World Conference during evening worship. Thanks to his communication skills, thousands finally grasped the composting system.