

Mennonite Creation Care Network Annual Report 2016

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 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 once per year in person and once or twice via phone conference. Staff from the Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College and from Everence provide continuity between meetings and manage a website for MCCN. With its stewardship emphasis, Everence is a natural partner and a major financial supporter. In addition to funding a half time staff person, Merry Lea roots MCCN in an inspiring land base and connects it to academic faculty and other resources. 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 in congregations and in regional grassroots groups 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 creation care activities at these gatherings.

The Council in 2016:

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), Todd Wynward (Taos, NM) Marlisa Yoder-Bontrager (Lancaster, PA).

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

Activities in 2016

- ***Council Transitions:*** Todd Wynward of Taos, New Mexico, joined the council for 2016. Todd is the author of *Rewilding the Way: Break Free to Follow an Untamed God*. Through his Watershed Way ministry, he calls communities to long term accountability and commitment to their watersheds and to each other. In early 2017, Todd decided to relate to MCCN in a different way. He will no longer serve on the council but will connect to MCCN as a field agent, keeping in touch long distance.
- ***Leadership Transition:*** Jennifer Schrock is now the leader of MCCN. She has .5 FTE earmarked for MCCN. Luke Gascho continues to serve on the council as a representative of Merry Lea.
- ***Council Meetings:*** We held a face-to-face meeting on April 1 to 2, 2016, Goshen, IN, and one virtual meeting on October 3, 2016.
- ***Participation in Mennonite Church Conferences:***
 - *Climate Change Working Group:* The CCWG report was completed and submitted to Mennonite Church Canada before the Assembly in Saskatoon. All Assembly participants received a summary of the report and the full report was available electronically. Because of the full schedule at the Assembly, the report was not discussed formally and there has not yet been an official response from the Board.
 - *MC Canada Assembly:* Council Member Joanne Moyer took the MCCN display to the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly in Saskatoon in July. She also presented a workshop entitled, “Every Creature Singing: Introducing Watershed Discipleship.”
 - *Caring for God's Good Creation: A national, church-wide consultation on living out our calling:* In conjunction with the MC-Canada Assembly, the Mennonite Church British Columbia Peace and Justice Committee planned a day long consultation to further explore creation care concerns. Speakers included MCCN Council Member Joanne Moyer, who presented “Faith-based creation care activities: Mennonite Creation Care Network and Beyond,” and several other MCCN members. The event was sponsored by MCCN.
- ***Pam De Young Net Zero Energy Grant:*** In April, MCCN member Russell De Young, a NASA scientist and member of Huntington Mennonite Church, Newport News, offered to make an ongoing donation of \$12,000 per year to assist congregations in renewable energy efforts. Advertising the grant, designing the application process and selecting applicants was a major focus for 2016. Two congregations, Albuquerque Mennonite Church, Albuquerque, NM, and Taftsville Chapel Mennonite Fellowship, Taftsville, VT, received funds for solar installations. Russell made a second donation of \$3,000 late in the year to enable MCCN to fund both churches.

- ***Spanish Curriculum Development:*** In consultation with a Hispanic translator from Everence who visited the Creation Care Council meeting in April, the council decided not to translate the *Every Creature Singing* curriculum. Instead, the hope is to pull together several Hispanic leaders and provide funds for them to design a few sessions that they think fit Hispanic Mennonite congregations. The result will likely be more culturally appropriate and cost-effective. This was postponed until 2017.
- ***Network Building:***
 - *New members:* About 64 individuals joined MCCN this year, most via either the website or the MC Canada's Assembly. Of those in the database who have indicated a location, about 20% are from Canada and about 80% are from the U.S. Active email addresses are around 775.
 - *Green Patchwork Congregations:* Nine new congregations joined MCCN. Note that the Green Patchwork name replaced 100 Shades of Green. Toward the end of the year, Jennifer began hosting electronic Zoom Chats for creation care liaisons. Only a few folks participated, but both conversations were rewarding enough to continue offering this option.
 - *Watershed Way:* Todd Wynward, along with his assistant, Tyler Eshleman, held a regional weekend gathering in Taos, New Mexico, in December.
 - *Donations:* MCCN received two large donations this year. In addition to the Net Zero Energy donation mentioned above, Evanston Mennonite Church made a \$10,000 donation from property they no longer needed. Unrestricted donations totalled \$11,560.
- ***Curriculum:***
 - Mennonite Church Canada contracted Deborah Froese, director of news services for MC Canada, to create a Canadian version of *Every Creature Singing*, including Canadian examples, resources, and links. The participant guide launched at the Canadian Assembly in Saskatoon in July 2016. It is available via MC Canada's Common Word site and the MCCN website.
 - Of the 21 congregations who requested the Leader's Guide for the U.S. version of *Every Creature Singing* curriculum in 2016, 12 were Mennonite, one was Evangelical and 8 were Mainline Protestant.
- ***E-Newsletter and Website:*** MCCN continued to publish its monthly E-newsletter and maintain a website. A major website revision is underway.
- ***Council Member Outreach: Speaking and Publications***

- *Luke Gascho* was one of two Goshen College representatives on the planning committee of the new Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions. This initiative originated at Eastern Mennonite University but also involves Goshen College and Mennonite Central Committee.
- *Joanne Moyer* presented a workshop on watershed discipleship at the Christian Reformed Church's "Day of Encouragement" in Edmonton in October.
- *Jennifer Schrock* published an article in *The Mennonite* featuring Russell De Young and the Net Zero Energy grants. A follow-up article announcing the recipients appeared on the websites of both *The Mennonite* and *Mennonite World Review*. She also conducted a Christian education session of the Every Creature Singing curriculum at Prairie St. Mennonite Church, Elkhart, IN.