

Mennonite Creation Care Network Annual Report 2017

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 2017: Members Serving a Full Year

Sponsor Representatives: Luke Gascho (Goshen, IN), Jim Smith (Goshen, IN)

Staff: Jennifer Halteman Schrock (Goshen, IN)

Canada: Mike Currie (Abbotsford, BC), Joanne Moyer (Edmonton, AB)

USA: Dave Hockman-Wert (Corvallis, OR), Marlisa Yoder-Bontrager (Lancaster, PA).

Council Transitions: (All USA) Greg Bowman (Salem, OH) completed his last meeting in May 2017. Haroldo Nunes (Wooster, OH) began a three-year term in September 2017. Lillie Koerner Eisenbeis (Freeman, SD) began a three-year term in January 2018.

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

Activities in 2017

- ***Council Meetings:*** We held a face-to-face meeting on May 5 and 6, 2017, Goshen, IN, and two virtual meetings--on February 8, 2017 and September 20, 2017.

- ***Participation in Mennonite Church Conferences:***

MC USA Convention, Orlando, FL: Jennifer Schrock, Luke Gascho and Dave Hockman-Wert all attended this gathering. MCCN had a booth in the exhibit hall and purchased slide advertising that ran before worship services.

- Jennifer led a workshop on Becoming a Green Patchwork Congregation and hosted a gathering for MCCN congregations. Jennifer collaborated with Andrew Hudson, a local pastor and farmer, on a field trip to HEART Village, a permaculture ministry and training organization. She also wrote a follow-up article.
 - Luke led workshops entitled Ecological Leadership for Today's Church (adults) and Sustainable Living is Joy-filled Living! (youth).
 - Luke was also part of the team that planned the Future Church Summit, a visioning period organized around the question, "How will we follow Jesus as Anabaptists in the 21st century?" Jennifer and Dave were attendees. While creation care did not get top billing at this event, a number of people spoke on its behalf.
 - Todd Wynward, an MCCN member, was very active at the Orlando Convention, leading a young adult gathering on watershed discipleship and climate justice and several other workshops for youth.
- ***Pam De Young Net Zero Energy Fund:*** Two congregations received Net Zero Energy grants. They were Walnut Hill Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN, (\$7,000) and Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship, Goshen, IN, (\$5,000). The grant selection committee moved the grant deadline from October 31 to June 30 for bookkeeping reasons.
- ***Network Building:***
 - *New members:* Active email addresses are now at 980. Some of this growth was due to database reorganization and adding pastors and office managers of current Green Patchwork congregations.

- *Green Patchwork Congregations:* This year, we cleaned up our congregational listing and moved congregations into two categories: Active (42) and Formerly Active (27). Liaisons are now expected to complete a form annually to let us know about their activities. Pastors and office managers of Green Patchwork congregations are now expected to join MCCN to improve connection and communication.
- *Watershed Way:* At the face-to-face meeting in May, the Creation Care Council reiterated its position that while we affirm the Watershed Way as part of our network, its radical vision is not our core vision. MCCN seeks a broader audience, including the many middle-of-the-road congregations who have not yet begun thinking about creation care at all.

Donations: MCCN appreciates the financial support of donors. The support for our creation care emphasis comes primarily from two countries, i.e., Canada and the USA. The 2017 budget of about \$14,000 came mainly from institutions, e.g., Merry Lea, Everence, Goshen College, MCC Canada and congregations. Nevertheless, a growing number of individuals are adding MCCN to their financial stewardship plans. These persons shared nearly \$17,000 via web based giving, annual end of year gifts, and some by including MCCN in their estate plans for special projects like the *Net Zero Energy Fund*.

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- ***Curriculum:***

- Jennifer revised the *Every Creature Singing* curriculum in June and reposted a 2.0 version on the new website. Revisions included a more user-friendly Leader's Guide, improved readability and some paring down of discussion questions.
- There were 13 requests for the Leader's Guide for the U.S. version of *Every Creature Singing* curriculum in 2017. Four of those were Mennonite, two were Evangelical, four were Mainline Protestant and the others were not identified.
- The Canadian version of the curriculum has been available since 2016, but was not officially launched until May 2017. See <http://news.mennonitechurch.ca/every-creature-singing-faith-based-creation-care-curriculum-canadian-focus>.

- ***E-Newsletter and Website:*** Jennifer completed a major website revision in March 2017, just in time for a showing at the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions consultation March 24 to 26. There were 8,171 unique page views during the nine months following the launch. MCCN continued to publish its monthly E-newsletter. The open rate averages 329 people.

- ***Social Media:*** Jennifer reactivated our old Facebook page and also created a Facebook group where MCCN members can have in-house discussions. As of the end of 2017, the former has about 470 likes; the latter, 83 members.

- ***Council Member Outreach: Speaking and Publications***

- *Joanne Moyer* presented her research on faith-based environmental engagement at an event celebrating the installation of solar panels at St. Paul's United Church in Edmonton, and led a workshop on Voluntary Simplicity at Ascension Lutheran Church in Edmonton.
- *Jennifer Schrock's writing and speaking included:*
 - 1.) a research article entitled "Churches Working Against Climate Change" in *Intersections: MCC Theory and Practice Quarterly*, Summer 2017, 5:3. The article explored the common characteristics of four congregations in the MCCN network who have acted against climate change in some way.
 - 2.) Jennifer also gave a seminar on this paper at AMBS' Rooted and Grounded conference in April 2017.
 - 3.) An article Jennifer wrote entitled, "Michiana Mennonite Relief Sale Recycles 48 Cubic Yards of Waste" was picked up by *The Mennonite* and possibly MWR as well.
 - 4.) Jennifer wrote an article entitled, "Ten Types of People who Care About Creation," which was published in the April 2017 issue of *The Mennonite*.
 - 5.) MCCN received some press in talks Jennifer gave at Christopher Dock Mennonite High School in October. 2017.
 - 6.) See also MCUSA Convention section.