Mennonite Creation Care Network
Annual Face-to-Face Meeting, June 10 – 11, 2011


Absent: Karla Stoltzfus-Detweiler (Karla joined us electronically Saturday afternoon.)

Friday evening, June 10

1. Introductions: We met Annalisa Harder and Patrick Maxwell, current MCCN interns. Annalisa is a 2011 graduate of Goshen College in English and history. She has been hired full time for a year. Half of her time will contribute to MCCN and the other half will assist with Merry Lea tasks. She will be responsible for our E-newsletter, among other things. Patrick is doing a volunteer educational internship through Goshen College’s Bible and religion department for six weeks, and will write several stories for the MCCN web site.

2. Luke asked us to imagine what the ideal church carrying out creation care would look like, at both the congregational and denominational levels. Our ideas:

Congregational Level:
- Congregations recognize their impact on watersheds.
- Good role models are available.
- Live missionally from a creation care perspective
- Library or online database of concrete things people can do: gardening manuals, practices plus theological basis
- At the congregational level it is all about practice...then reflection...then practice.
- Joyful, simple living.
- People discern with each other how to spend their carbon footprints.
- People pray with and for creation.
- People see the earth and its resources as a gift of God, not as a commodity.
- Creation care theology is expressed in worship, teaching, preaching and building design.
- Congregation donates its compost to a specific community garden as a gift. (Greg B. says that in Youngstown, OH, compost is in short supply.)
- Live in the Matthew 6:25-34 way (This is the “Consider the lilies…” passage.)
- Space to slow down collectively.
- Matthew 6:3—“When you give, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” Creation care becomes so integrated that people are not aware of what they are doing.
- The congregation is working at ecojustice issues locally.
- Engage as disciples in their creation care activities and a center
- “Green” is in balance with other objectives.
• Congregations understand their ecological surroundings.
• People practice Sabbath living in order to have time to think about and act on what really matters.

**Denominational level:**
• The denomination consciously prioritizes the needs of the whole over just the needs of our community (in terms of policy).
• Denominational leadership is a visible, inspiring force for local congregations.
• The denomination avoids apocalyptic thinking.
• The denomination selects 20 generic sustainability goals; then asks every agency that either serves food or owns land to pick three of the goals and focus on them for five years. Agencies would report on goals at assemblies and be held accountable.
• The Church as a whole will learn to respect science and knowledge as much as doctrine.
• Creation care infiltrates all levels of the Church’s acting and thinking, similar to the way peace and justice are allegedly integral to the Mennonite Church.
• The denomination is a visible presence in national and international forums.
• Organizational policies are adopted that are consistent with creation care.
• MCCN is widely known and enthusiastically supported as a source of inspiration and resources.
• A stable of best and brightest thinkers discerns best strategies and focal points for planetary housekeeping.

**What are the challenges that keep these goals from being realized?**

• Fuzzy thinking about what results would most benefit the planet and broader community.
• Lack of personal engagement
• Lack of knowledge
• Materialism and the economic drivers of our lives
• Financial constraints
• No time or energy
• Lack of immediate gratification
• Lack of an enjoyable process. Often, working at these goals is laden with guilt and fear rather than joy.
• Rationalization
• Lack of spiritual conviction that this is a way of following Christ
Concluding observation: We have a responsibility to articulate these directions to the Church.

3. Resources: Luke recommended the following books.

Christ of the Celts: The Healing of Creation, by J. Philip Newell. This is a helpful description of a different stream of Christianity than the Western version we are most familiar with, and its treatment of creation themes.

Hell and High Water: Climate Change, Hope and the Human Condition, by Alastair McIntosh. The author interweaves his own loss of an infant with the search for hope in the face of disturbing climate realities.

Global Warming and the Risen Lord, by Jim Ball, recent director of the Evangelical Environmental Network. The book emphasizes how climate change will affect the poor and describes climate change to be as critical as the civil rights movement was in its day.

Dave HW recommended The Last Chance to See, by Douglas Adams. This is both a book and a movie featuring the rarest of endangered species.

Saturday, June 11

1. Show and Tell: Greg Bowman brought an item from his new job promoting sustainable food with Goodness Grows, North Lima, Ohio. (See Goodness Grows.net.) Greg showed us a “living bucket” containing a patio tomato, basil and lettuce. This is a strategy his organization has adapted from globalbuckets.org in order to help people to grow food even if their space, money and expertise is limited. Two food-grade plastic buckets from restaurants were nested, with the bottom bucket serving as a self-watering reservoir. Disabled people drilled the holes in the buckets, and college students designed a business plan to promote the product. The whole committee got a kick out of the buckets! We took lots of pictures.

2. Devotional: Dave Neufeld shared a reflection on two sets of parables that form a paradox: the parables of the treasure and pearl in Matthew 13:44 and the tower-builder and the king in Luke 14:28 – 32. He asked us to relate the stories to each other and to creation care.

3. Mennonite Church Canada Assembly: Joanne reported on this event, which will take place in Waterloo, Ont., July 4 – 8, 2011. Joanne will attend and provide a display of creation care books for children and adults. She has a friend to assist with the booth. Darren Kropf, Jane Snyder and Joanne are doing a workshop, entitled Living More with Less. They’ve taken inspiration from a Sunday school curriculum from the Story of Stuff folks. What do we know about the stuff we have? How do we reduce it? What do we do about
electronics? What ecojustice issues touch our lives? The workshop is for both youth and adults and will happen twice.

MC Canada decided to have organizations make 1-minute video ads to play during breaks, rather than offering “swag in a bag.” We did not manage to make a video, but Joanne sent MCCN info for use in the week’s newsletter. We discussed the possibility of making a video for later events. Should it be Canadian focused or for broader use? Joanne knows someone who can help.

4. Pittsburgh Happenings: The MC USA convention is July 4 – 9 in Pittsburgh, PA. We will have an exhibit space similar to what we had in Columbus 09, jointly with Merry Lea. Our literature and banner is ready. Jennifer, Luke, Dave HW and Jim will attend.

A. Delegate conversation related to creation care: Luke does not know if this will happen, since resolutions are not being invited from the floor this year. However, stewardship is named as one of seven denominational priorities and is on the docket for discussion. (Creation care is a sub-point under stewardship.) Luke and Jim have submitted suggestions for specific goals. (See attached sheet, Goals for MC USA Stewardship, July 2011)

B. Activities at the Booth: We plan to keep the booth staffed throughout the hours the exhibit hall is open. Our main goal is increasing the number of shades of green congregations. A sub-group of Dave HW, Jennifer, Jim and Annalisa discussed interactive ideas for the booth.

C. Workshops on Creation Care: Luke is doing three workshops. They are:
   Greening the Church Experience
   How Might the Church Respond to Climate Change?
   What Does Sustainable Living Mean for People of Faith?

A number of other workshops touch on creation care as well. Dave HW prepared a list. (See attached.)