

# **Mennonite Creation Care Network Annual Report 2018**

## **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.

To join the growing network or get more information: [www.mennocreationcare.org](http://www.mennocreationcare.org).

## The Council in 2018

### Members Serving a Full Year

- *Sponsor Representatives:* Luke Gascho (Goshen, IN)
- *Staff:* Jennifer Halteman Schrock (Goshen, IN)
- *Canada:* Joanne Moyer (Edmonton, AB)
- *USA:* Dave Hockman-Wert (Corvallis, OR), Lawrence Jennings, (New York, NY) Lillie Koerner Eisenbeis (Freeman, SD)

### Council Transitions

- Jim Smith (Goshen, IN) transitioned out of the role of sponsor representative and was replaced by Marlene Kroeker on September 1, 2018.
- Marlisa Yoder-Bontrager (Lancaster, PA) completed her second term in May 2018.
- Canadian Rep Mike Curry completed his term in 2018.
- Haroldo Nunes (Wooster, OH) resigned before the fall virtual meeting.
- The U.S. and Canada vacancies were not filled until early 2019.

## Routine Activities in 2018

**Council meetings:** We held a face-to-face meeting on April 20 and 21, Goshen, IN, and three virtual meetings--on January 4, September 19 and October 29.

**Pam De Young Net Zero Energy Fund:** Three congregations received Net Zero Energy grants. The first project was in service by the end of 2018. The other two projects were completed by spring of 2019.

- Shalom Mennonite Fellowship of Tucson, Ariz., received \$5000 for solar panels.
- Hyattsville Mennonite Church, Hyattsville, Md., received \$5000 for solar panels.
- East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., was awarded \$1800 toward a car charging station.

### Network Building:

- **E-Newsletter and Website:** MCCN continued to publish its monthly E-newsletter. Active email addresses increased from 980 in 2017 to 1100. The open rate averages 406, compared to 329 people for 2017.
- **Social Media:** We continue to maintain a Facebook page and group. As of the end of 2018, the former has increased from 470 to 575 followers; the latter, 83 to 99 members.
- **Green Patchwork Congregations:** This area did not receive much attention this year, nor was there much activity. It will be reviewed at the 2019 meeting in Goshen.
- **Participation in broader Church events:** Jennifer and Luke attended the Rooted and Grounded conference at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Luke served on the

planning committee. Jennifer attended Women Doing Theology, also at AMBS.

- **Donations:** MCCN has two primary sponsors: Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College and Everence. The former contributes a half-time salary and the latter provides a budget for council member travel, advertising and other operating expenses. MC Canada and MCC Canada have also been regular supporters over the years. Russell De Young, whose vision it was to begin the Net Zero Energy Fund, has committed to \$12,000 per year, beginning in 2016. In 2018, MCCN received funds from 22 donors in addition to De Young. Their giving totalled \$5,498.

## **New in 2018:**

**Shared Congregational Practices:** In 2018, MCCN began calling its congregations to shared practices as a way to promote unity and networking. The first shared practice was a river clean-up during the summer of 2018. Six congregations informed us of their plans or results.

**Mennonite Church Canada Restructuring:** MCCN leadership has been working with Mennonite Church Canada over the last year to figure out how MCCN will fit into the new national and regional structure. Mennonite Church Canada has affirmed its commitment to supporting MCCN's work, and the conversation regarding how we can use this process to strengthen MCCN's work in Canada is ongoing.

**Collaboration with the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions (CSCS):** Goshen College is a core partner in CSCS, a non-profit begun at EMU in 2016. Consequently, MCCN was involved in CSCS projects in the following ways.

- *Pastoral retreats on climate change:* Jennifer Schrock and Luke Gascho worked closely with Doug Kaufman, a local pastor whom CSCS hired to design the retreats. Jennifer met weekly with Doug, reviewed curriculum, assisted with publicity and attended two retreats, leading small portions of them. Luke provided additional oversight.
- *Faith Outreach Intern:* Goshen College received funding for a summer intern from CSCS. Katie Isaac, a junior from Fresno Pacific University, Fresno, Calif., worked with Doug Kaufman and Jennifer Schrock for three months, dividing her time between CSCS and MCCN. Katie's MCCN responsibilities included overseeing Facebook pages, reaching out to congregations by phone and email and writing stories on members of the network.
- Luke Gascho helped plan a sociological research project funded by CSCS that involves faculty from Goshen College and Associate Mennonite Biblical Seminary. The researchers will prepare case studies on six congregations during the 2019-2020 school year. Focus questions are still being refined but involve creation care themes and climate change.
- Luke Gascho served on the Oversight Board for the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions, representing MCCN in this venue.

- Lawrence Jennings served on the Board of Reference for the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions.

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

*Joanne Moyer* continues to research faith-based environmental engagement in Canada.

*Lillie Koerner Eisenbeis* spoke at an event at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church called "Feeding Our Faith." It was one of three presentations by church members that dealt with our relationship with land. She talked about the mission of MCCN and led a discussion on one of the sessions from Every Creature Singing. They ended by working through the Greener Congregation Score Card in groups. She was encouraged by the conversation as attendees explored ways Salem-Zion could more fully incorporate creation care ideas in worship & practice.

*Jennifer Schrock's* writing and speaking included:

- An article for *The Mennonite* entitled, "What to Say on the Eve of an Election," November 2018, which received 2500 views.
- Several articles promoting or reporting on the CSCS pastoral climate change retreats.
- Along with a Merry Lea colleague, Jennifer served as a speaker for Rockway Mennonite High School's spiritual life week on the theme, "Down to Earth." The assignment also included speaking to a group of local pastors.
- Attendance at and small leadership roles in two pastoral retreats on climate change led by CSCS partner, Doug Kaufman. They took place at Camp Friedenswald, Mich., and Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, Ont.
- Speaking in Christian Education classes at Southside Fellowship, Elkhart, Ind., and College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.
- Preaching at Emmaus Road Mennonite Church, Berne, Ind., April 1.