

WINTER NEWSLETTER



CENTER FOR
Sustainable
Climate Solutions

PREPARED BY
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DOUG GRABER NEUFELD

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"I am more aware of the seriousness of this issue. In many places it is not a problem of the future, it is already here, a serious issue right now."

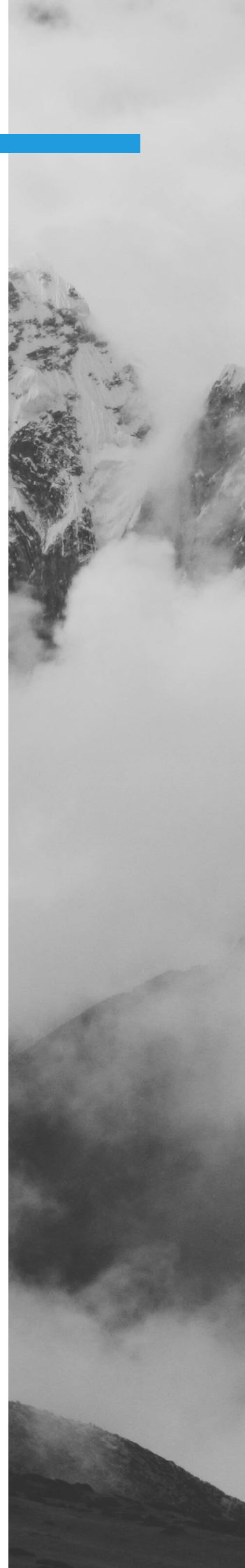
This was the response from one of the more than 1100 people who heard stories from our Global South Voices participants in September and October, as they traveled for three weeks explaining how climate change is critically affecting communities they work with in Nepal, Zimbabwe and El Salvador.

Why is it important that we hear voices such as those of Durga, Sibbo and Zacarias, as we seek to 'move the needle' on climate issues in Anabaptist communities?

People who care about climate change are sometimes thought of as being largely white and middle- or upperclass. But as Nathaniel Stinnett of the Environmental Voter Project points out, this is no longer accurate. The picture of those who express concern about environmental impacts, and what they are doing to communities, increasingly is represented by minorities and others from vulnerable populations. This was evident, for instance, in the recent Six Americas survey showing that Latinos in the U.S. have a higher concern about climate change than non-Latinos. Although climate change will impact everyone on the planet, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the world's vulnerable are impacted the most. So it is not surprising that these communities care the most. Yet they have less of a voice in society on these issues. At CSCS, we believe that the Anabaptist community has an obligation to recognize their voice on the urgency of climate change.

But hearing the voices of these vulnerable communities is not just a moral imperative. Listening to stories is also effective in changing attitudes which can lead to action. Experienced climate communicators know that effective change occurs when people can personally identify with climate effects, and can feel a combination of urgency and hope. This was the message that our Global South Voices participants brought. While calling us to recognize our contributions to the problem, their message was not one of blame or guilt. Rather, they inspire hope by calling us to respond together.

Urgency and hope: this is also the message from other voices you'll hear at CSCS, from the Shifting Climates podcast, to the Pastoral Workshops, to our recent voices in response to climate reports. Join us in listening to those voices, and let it be a call to action.



STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

CSCS's Global South Voices program is giving voice to our sisters and brothers around the world who are being impacted now by climate change. Our first speaking tour brought speakers from Zimbabwe, Nepal, El Salvador to gatherings in the US to tell their stories about climate change. These participants spoke at **30 separate events** in churches, universities and businesses, **reached over 1100 people** directly through these events and **told their stories to congressional representatives at the U.S. Capital**.

Sibo, Zacarias and Durga told their stories to our Climate Futures Fellows for the ShiftingClimates podcast in the fall. Enjoy the following transcript excerpts, and visit shiftingclimates.com for more of their stories.

HARRISON: From her vantage point in Zimbabwe, the ripple effects of a changing climate are highly visible.

SIBO: One of the stories that really moves my heart is a story of a woman I'll call Esther. Before she heard about conservation agriculture she had tried to work a small plot of land. And her husband had passed away. And so she was in a very terrible space of vulnerability and had decided to abandon her land. She had been using conventional ways of growing crops, and these weren't, obviously, doing well in light of the persistent and protracted droughts.

SIBO: Hence, she stopped growing crops, and that was very sad, because she didn't have many choices of what else she could do within her village and so it is that she chose, perhaps, to work by selling her body. She didn't have a great name at all, and was the center of whisperings in the community. However, she thought to take a stab at conservation agriculture. And from a pathetic field, she produced a bumper harvest that caused the provincial officers of the Agriculture Extension Office to send a delegation to come and see how she did it! *laughter*

HARRISON: Esther's harvest the following year was even bigger. And the third year? Bigger still.

SIBO: And her name changed. She no longer had to sell her body. She had enough to feed her children. She had enough to sell. She had enough to barter for other things, foods, and services that she needed. And she quips to me the other day and she says, "You know, I got to realize that the changing climate had pushed me to make really terrible decisions. But I'm so glad that I started doing conservation agriculture. Now I am healed. Now I have a good name in my community. I really feel dignified, you know."

Global South Voices Speaking tour participant, Sibonukuhle Ncube [left], speaking at EMU with fellow GSV participants Zacarias Bernabé Martínez and Durga Sunchiuri [right]





Global South Voices Speaking tour participants, Zacarías Bernabé Martínez and Durga Sunchiuri. Photos by Sarah Longenecker

MICHAELA: Most people in the rural areas of El Salvador make a living off the land. Zacarías himself grew up on a farm – a coffee farm in a small town called San Francisco Chinameca.

ZACARÍAS: Era un pueblito picturesque muy bonito con vistas panorámicas y el mar. Mi casa era una casa de lodo de tierra, pero enfrente teníamos un cerdo y habían cascadas.

ZACARÍAS (translated): It was a beautiful town, full of color, with a great view to the sea. My house was a cob house made with earth and soil, and we had a view, front of mountains and waterfalls.

MICHAELA: Zacarías' connection with the earth came through his parents, especially his mother. His mother taught him about the coffee crops, he said, while his father went to work in the city.

ZACARÍAS: Y mi mamá nos enseñó mucho el cultivo de café. A mi me gusta mucho la jardinería. Y siempre plante un arbolito, una semilla en una bolsita, para ver como crecía, y luego sembrarla bien en otro espacio.

ZACARÍAS (translated): My mother taught us much about the cultivation and the coffee crops. I really enjoyed gardening, and I always planted a small seed in a bag and like to look at it and see it grow and then plant it somewhere else.

MICHAELA: Zacarías told us that armed conflict forced his family and many others to the city, disrupting the country's coffee production.

ZACARÍAS: Pero de repente, hoy yo pasé hace dos años, no existe.

ZACARÍAS (translated): And I went recently [back] a couple of years ago and there was nothing.

MICHAELA: Many rivers had dried out, so that when you walk by it doesn't look like there was a river there, to begin with. Of course for rural communities making a living off of farming, this is especially problematic.

DURGA: In that flood last year, 141 people died, more than 170 people were injured, about 600,000 had to displace for some weeks because the total area was flooded.

HARRISON: About 200,000 people completely lost their houses in Nepal alone. Almost 2 million homes were damaged or destroyed in all of South Asia. Compare this to the devastation of Hurricane Florence this past fall in North America – where just 30,000 homes were damaged or destroyed.

DURGA: I think Paul writes in Romans, "The whole creation is groaning." Is that the correct word in English? The whole creation is groaning. And that I see, the atmosphere is groaning. It has impact. When I see these landslides, floods, the creation in my country is groaning, and when it is groaning, it affects the people.

MICHAELA: As Durga witnesses the groaning of creation all around, he is motivated to act for the sake of his people. He shared familiar words with us from Micah 6:8, as an encouragement and challenge.

DURGA: What God requires of you – it's to love mercy, to do justice, and to walk with God, humbly. So it always encourages me to talk about and to be careful about justice; whatever I'm doing, does that, is it just? Is it affecting others, or is it just, if I, I'm using resources, sometimes, we think that using resources is my right. But when I use my right, is it affecting to other's rights, negatively?

FUTURE GLOBAL SOUTH VOICES EVENTS

- Zimbabweans Sibonukuhle Ncube and Vurayayi Pugenji will address "Who is under your carbon footprint" at the MCUSA convention in Kansas City (July 3-6)
- A new group of participants will tour in the spring of 2020. Watch our website for details.

BEING BORN AGAIN, AGAIN

Reflections by Bekah York, Project Coordinator for the 2018 Global South Voices speaking tour.

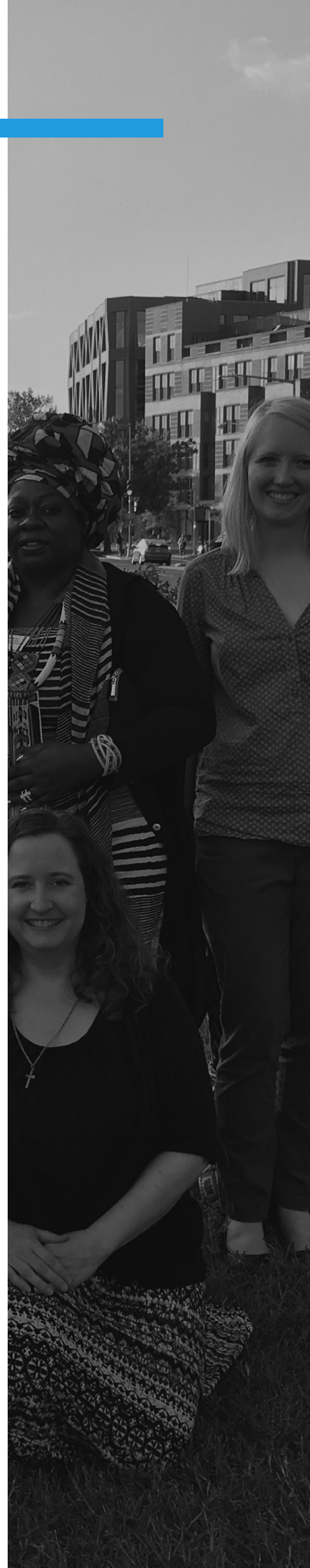
Drought. Tropical storms. Famine. Heat. Flash flooding. Severe weather. These somewhat diametrically opposed words are what brought the three Global South Voices speakers together. Traveling from three different continents Sibon Ncube, Zacarias Bernebe, and Durga Sunchiuri had one desire: for the church in North America to hear from their own mouths how the shifting climate is affecting their specific contexts. And so, for three weeks, they traveled around the Great Lakes area (Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin) and the East Coast (Virginia and Pennsylvania), talking to universities, seminaries, churches, and high schools about the everyday, tangible outcomes of the changes in the climate.

I was privileged to work as the project coordinator for this tour, planning the engagements and then participating in its birth. I also spent significant time with the speakers, listening to their presentations at each stop and, more often than not, continuing the conversation during the countless hours in the car. Four and a half months later, I still find myself reflecting on my experiences and conversations with Sibon, Durga, and Zacarias. Hearing the same stories over and over again did not make them 'old news.' In fact, I believe I am learning more in the months after the tour as I ponder further what I heard and saw as well as begin to articulate the depth of its impact.

As I come to more fully grasp what I've gleaned, the most profound aspect of my experience was learning how the three lived out their theological confession in their specific contexts.

It follows, then, that their ability to portray this reality to us in North America was powerful and challenging. Their confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and King of heaven and earth compelled them to intentionally live a different way in the face of the changing climate. The question for them was not "Is climate change occurring?" but rather "How are we, as children of God, going to respond to this brokenness?" It was a question of discipleship and call for church unity rather than a divisive political issue that could cause fractures. It was precisely their different way of living and working in the midst of change that God's love and justice was and is seen. I find this a huge challenge for the church in North America: a challenge from the Global Church to think about what it looks like to witness in the 21st century.

Finally, my experience on the tour was one of those moments that Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove would describe as "being born again, again." In other words, being involved in this tour was another significant moment of conversion for me as I continue the journey of following Jesus. I was converted to the pressing need to acknowledge and address climate change in my own community but also worldwide. Jesus was always being asked "What must I do?!" in response to the good news that he brought. It is the same question I - along with countless others we encountered during the tour - asked. Most of the time, Jesus' answer was simple: believe and live differently than you currently are (cf. Luke 18:18 and Matthew 19:16-30).



UPDATE:

PASTORAL RETREATS



Doug Kaufman (back row, third from left), the Center's Director of Pastoral Ecology, poses with participants from the pastoral training retreat held in Ontario.

Since September of last year, pastor Doug Kaufman has been bringing pastors together for conversations about climate change. In partnership with Jennifer Schrock of Mennonite Creation Care Network, Doug has put together a program which tries to help pastors walk alongside congregants as they struggle to deal with the emotions that come up due to climate change.

In his first two retreats, held at Camp Friedenswald in Michigan, and Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp in Ontario, Doug brought together twenty-eight pastors for contemplation, worship, and conversation. The retreats allow pastors to move through these emotions with facilitators and endeavor to better understand how they might affect their congregants. Starting out by identifying various forms of denial human beings use to avoid facing climate change (from literal denial to denial through action), participants move through despair to lament and end the retreat at hope and action.

The retreats have successfully given pastors the opportunity to talk about climate change with other Mennonite pastors around them. As Glyn Jones of Wanner Mennonite Church observed, "I haven't had opportunities to talk about this with other pastors. It doesn't come up at most pastoral meetings."

By creating a space that allows for conversation, and for contemplation, Doug has paved the way for many pastors to engage on a deeper level with their own congregations, and to begin to answer congregants questions around the changing climate, and how it interacts with their faith.

UPCOMING RETREATS

- Camp Mennoscah, Murdock, KS, April 8-10
- Camp Deerpark, Cuddebackville, NY, May 4-5

To register, visit mennocreationcare.org/pastoral-retreats/. If you have interest in a pastoral retreat for your area, email ddkaufman@goshen.edu.

OTHER PROGRAMS & **ONGOING PROJECTS**



MENNONITE VOICES RESPOND TO RECENT CLIMATE REPORTS

Recent climate reports, like the IPCC Special Report and the 4th National Climate Assessment, have been the topic of many conversations at CSCS over the last few months. We thought it was important to respond, but wanted to do so from a perspective that would bring something new to the conversation, and allow many people to express their thoughts on the reports, not just climate science or policy experts. In response to these thoughts, we brought together a group of Mennonites from across the professional and generational spectrum to express their own responses to the reports, from a Mennonite perspective. From a public health professional to a pastor, to an environmental scientist, the responses we gathered were unique and powerful. You can find their responses compiled on our website, sustainableclimatesolutions.org.

SHIFTING CLIMATES PODCAST

Our Climate Futures Fellows, Harrison Horst, Michaela Mast, and Sarah Longenecker have been hard at work the past few months, producing and releasing the first season of their podcast, "Shifting Climates". The podcast has sparked conversations around the world, with listeners in over a dozen countries.

With the end of Season 1 around the corner, the fellows are starting to prepare for season two, which will feature more stories from across the US, including border communities in New Mexico and pipeline protesters in Virginia. Visit shiftingclimates.org to see their latest.



CAMPUS CLIMATE AMBASSADORS

This fall our first cohort of Campus Climate Ambassadors began working on seven different Mennonite campuses across the United States. They have been organizing events like a sustainable potluck, a climate justice event (which brought in over 30 people!), and political engagement tables for students to learn about the political process. Their organizing has been both inspiring, and successful, as students have come together to discuss climate change, and learn more about the work of CSCS.

CSCS NEEDS YOUR HELP

"I thank CSCS for inviting us three people to share the stories of climate change impacts in the lives of people in our countries... While speaking and listening from different groups of people in different places, I realized that the speaking tour was very important to raise awareness on climate issues among North Americans."

– Durga Sunchiuri, Global South Voices Participant

JOIN US IN BECOMING A CLIMATE SOLUTIONS PARTNER.

Climate issues need action now, and your financial support is needed to match the urgency of the challenge. Make an impact by contributing towards:

Ensuring the continued impact of our programs training students, engaging congregational leaders, and developing innovative solutions

Scaling up our impact by

- Offering more opportunities for students
- Giving voice to more of those affected by climate change
- Scaling up our communication outreach
- Expanding our staff capacity to match program need
- Ensuring financial sustainability through an endowment



Make an impact by donating at: sustainableclimatesolutions.org,
or by contacting Doug Graber Neufeld at: neufeldd@emu.edu