



CENTER FOR
Sustainable
Climate Solutions

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2018

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A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Bernice Mwende and Stephen Mutua farm a small plot near the famous Tsavo National Park, a hot semi-arid region of central Kenya. Like other Kamba people, they grow maize for their staple food, just as their parents and grandparents have. But things have changed for Bernice and Stephen. When I visited them in 2017, they had suffered from 10 seasons of failed maize crops, due in part to unpredictable rain patterns.

Nobody in Kenya doubts that the climate is changing. When the rains, upon which farmers depend, become less predictable, climate becomes a point of frequent conversation. And along with that conversation come questions of who and what is being done about it.



Bernice Mwende and Stephen Mutua.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR *continued...*

How should I respond when Africans tell me climate is a matter of justice? What do I tell them as a Christian that gives them hope for how North Americans are responding? What do I tell them as a scientist that gives hope?

There is hope for Bernice and Stephen. MCC partners in the region work with farmers to use conservation agriculture, a technique that not only makes farmers more resilient, but also mitigates the effects of climate change through increased carbon storage in the soil. It takes perseverance, but in time the soil is restored to health, and harvests increase. Bernice and Stephen's farm had in fact produced a harvest that season, thanks to changes in their farming practices.

The Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions was founded less than two years ago with a mandate to promote conversation and solutions around climate change, starting with the Mennonite Church. The "soil" of the Mennonite Church is ready for this work. In 2013, Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA) passed a resolution calling us to embrace our responsibility to treat God's creation with respect, to work against further damage to the planet, and to help those suffering from our past failures to do so. As our baseline survey demonstrates, most MCUSA members believe climate change is an issue, but are not motivated to act, or don't feel an urgency in this issue.

From its inception, CSCS was formed to focus on solutions. Solutions come in the form of technologies, in the form of conversations, and in the form of supportive and motivating communities. CSCS is rolling out a slate of program activities strategically focused on these solutions, and we encourage you to read more about these programs. From internships promoting student engagement, to a new pastor training program, to ongoing scholarly work, we're excited about the potential of these programs to make a difference.

We invite you to actively engage with the conversations and solutions, as we seek to motivate people to care and act. We invite you to be part of a movement which improves the prospects for God's creation upon which we all depend, including Bernice and Stephen.

-Doug Graber Neufeld, Director

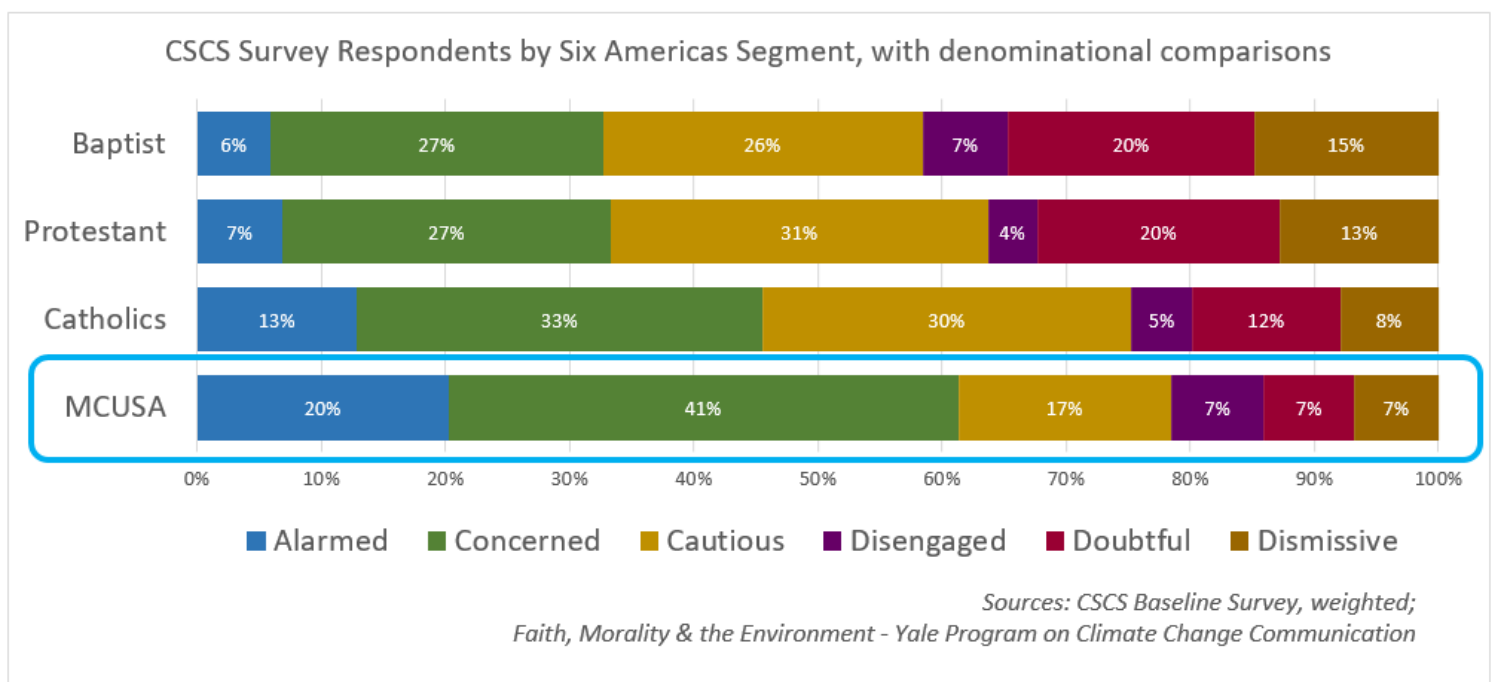
BASELINE SURVEY:

WHAT DO MENNONITES THINK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

Thanks to those of you who participated in our baseline survey last winter! Out of the nearly 40,000 individuals who the survey was sent to, over 7,000 responded, which gives us a wonderful 19% response rate.

The results of the survey have provided an interesting foundation for our work at the Center, and were key to guiding our planned activities. Using the "6 Americas" framework from George Mason and Yale Universities, we broke down respondents into 6 categories of engagement with climate change, ranging from those very concerned and willing to take action ("alarmed") to those least likely to believe in climate change or be motivated to act ("dismissive").

As shown in the bottom row of this graph, Mennonites in MCUSA were generally more concerned about climate change than other surveys have shown for a number of Christian categories. In fact, over 60% of respondents were either concerned or alarmed over climate change. This suggests that the majority of those in MCUSA are aware of climate change, and are open to taking actions on the issue, but are not currently motivated to make it a central issue. The same trend holds for pastors as a subgroup, suggesting that focusing on engaging pastors is a promising strategy for moving the congregation as a whole.



BASELINE SURVEY:

CONTINUED

The findings of the survey have offered important questions for the Center to consider. Which group should we focus on, if we want to change the Mennonite church around climate change? Results of the survey were processed at a weekend consultation of strategically chosen participants closely associated with the Center's activities.

In continued Conversation with the Oversight Board members, the Center has decided the greatest potential for engagement lies in the middle two segments of this scale. These are the segments which have some awareness and belief in climate change but have not been motivated to take action, or consider climate change to be of primary importance.

Results of this survey are encouraging for the mission-driven and data-focused strategy of the Center's work. Consider that 97% of respondents were supportive of the 2013 resolution on creation care, and that 91% of respondents show some degree of acceptance that climate change is occurring. These results suggest a large potential for moving Mennonites to greater engagement and action.

By focusing activities on the large middle segment of the Church, the Center may more closely to its goal of "moving the needle" on climate change, and making it the moral equivalent of war and violence in the Anabaptist tradition.

2018

OVERVIEW

Over the past year, the Center has been focusing on developing a framework through which it can begin creating programs. Now, having gone through the Spring consultation, and engaging in extensive discussion over the proper direction for the Center, we have determined three focuses, and have begun creating programs to promote each of these focuses.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

By resourcing student leaders and campus advocacy groups, the Center hopes to create leaders in sustainability for the next generation.

PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

By equipping pastors and congregational leaders, the Center hopes to inspire congregations to help "move the needle" for Mennonites.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

By researching best practices and innovative solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, the Center hopes to lead by example.



INTERNSHIPS/FELLOWSHIP

Starting this summer, the Center will be supporting internships in climate advocacy and faith outreach, and a year-long fellowship for recent graduates.



PASTORAL TRAINING

Check out our official press release on the recent hiring of Doug Kaufman as Director of Pastoral Ecology. Doug will engage with congregations and pastors.



FACULTY SUPPORT

To promote innovative solutions, the Center has been supporting research projects for faculty at EMU and Goshen, in a variety of disciplines.