Inspiring and equipping individuals and organizations to address climate change through the perspective of climate justice, and through Anabaptist values, community and faith.
Welcome to the Anabaptist Climate Collaborative!

The climate crisis is a rapidly changing crisis; it seems like every day the news reports an important new development that gives us renewed concern or hope. Effective organizations change with the times, and we are likewise changing to the evolving climate landscape. After six years of operating as the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions, we’re excited to announce that we are now incorporated as a new entity under the name “Anabaptist Climate Collaborative”.

Why did we change? First, we talked to a lot of people about how to be most effective, maybe you are one of those! Through this process, it became clear that there are opportunities to both build on our successes while embracing new goals, and that both of these are best achieved by an independent organization. This reduces the confusion about who we are as an organization.

Take one example of how this helps: ACC is embracing a convening role, bringing together different organizations and individuals around climate change. In this newsletter you can read about one successful example of this role, the recent Mennonite Sustainability Summit for Higher Education. We’ve learned that guiding groups in deciding and acting on a common goal is best accomplished by positioning ourselves as an independent, neutral actor that can relate equally to all participants. What does this transition mean? In administration, we will also be an independent nonprofit (501c3) organization, moving away from being formally housed at Eastern Mennonite University, Mennonite Central Committee and Goshen College. We’re grateful for the support and commitment of these organizations and individuals that act now in concert to care for this sustaining creation. We cannot pause in our efforts, and are energized by how this transition steps into a needed role as we work together. Thank you for journeying with us as we step into this new space!

Why this name? Every successful organization needs a clear niche. Rooted in Anabaptist values, community and faith, our organization not only works directly with Mennonite and other Anabaptist traditions, but also acts as a voice of Anabaptist perspectives and values as a player amongst other climate organizations. There is no other organization that does this. We fully recognize that “Anabaptist” is not a term recognized by all, but also recognize that it best encapsulates the set of approaches needed role as we work together. Thank you for journeying with us as we step into this new space!

The Anabaptist Climate Collaborative works to inspire and equip individuals and organizations to address climate change through the perspective of climate justice, and through Anabaptist values, community and faith. The Anabaptist Climate Collaborative recognizes climate change as one of the most crucial moral challenges of our time, and works toward climate justice through a focus on targeted strategies of: 1) developing emerging leaders who act as catalysts for larger scale changes, 2) empowering diverse voices of those most impacted by climate change, and 3) bringing together individuals and organizations into partnerships that more effectively address climate change.

Deirdre Longacher Smeltzer
A mathematician by training, Deirdre worked for 20 years at Eastern Mennonite University as a faculty member, department chair, and academic dean. During her tenure as EMU’s Undergraduate Dean, Deirdre participated in the establishment of the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions and served on the CSCS Oversight Board for three years. Currently, Deirdre serves as Vice Chair of Harrisonburg’s Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee, is a member of the Bridge of Hope – Harrisonburg/Bockingam Board, and holds several roles within her church congregation.

Eric Kurtz
Eric Kurtz is executive director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Great Lakes. He has an MSc in Land Resources from the Institute for Environmental Studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Prior to working for MCC, he was stormwater manager with the Elkhart County (Indiana) Soil and Water Conservation District. He has also worked with rural indigenous communities in Northern Argentina, documenting land use in support of their land rights claim.

LUKE GASCHO
Luke Gascho served as executive director of Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College. He served in sustainability leadership at Goshen College, leading the implementation of field-based undergraduate programs, master grants in environmental education program and the Institute for Ecological Regeneration. Luke provided leadership for the establishment of several creation care and social justice organizations and regularly speaks on the concepts of creation care, leadership, regenerative food systems and repairing relationships with Indigenous peoples.

LYUBOV SLASHCHEVA
Lyubov was raised in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia after her family emigrated from Kazakhstan. After completing undergraduate training at Eastern Mennonite University and dental training at Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Iowa she served the oral health needs of underserved communities in National Health Service Corps Scholar. She served on the Board of the Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship, which engaged as a Strategic Partner with the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions, for which Lyubov served as Board of Reference Chairperson.

HARRISON HORST
Harrison is an urban planner and data analyst with degrees in sociology (EMU ’18) and sustainable urban development (DePaul ’22), where he researched the relationship between urban food systems, gentrification, and equity. In 2018, Harrison worked for CSCS as part of a Climate Futures Fellow team co-producing a podcast on climate change and Anabaptist faith (Shifting Climates). Harrison is a founding member of the Sustainability Alumni Network, which connects recent graduates from Mennonite colleges and universities interested in sustainability and leverages its collective resources to make positive change related to climate change and environmental issues.

LORRAINE STOLTZFUS
Lorraine Stoltzfus grew up on a Mennonite farm in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and attended Eastern Mennonite College and Messiah College. She graduated with a law degree from the University of Wisconsin, and served for 33 years as an Assistant Attorney General in the Environmental Protection Unit, Wisconsin Department of Justice, handling a broad range of cases that covered almost all aspects of environmental law from air pollution and conservation easements to wetland preservation. She looks forward to drawing on both her Mennonite values and lessons learned as an environmental lawyer.

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DOUG GRABER NEUFELD
DIRECTOR’S NOTE

A NEW BOARD FOR ACC

Join us in welcoming the following passionate and qualified individuals as members of the new ACC board! These individuals are committed to guiding us through the transition process for the first year of our new structure.

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FUNDING NEEDS
from the Anabaptist Climate Collaborative

FUNDING PLAN
Over the past several months, as we have been in conversation about how we would transition from being a program of Eastern Mennonite University, Goshen College, and Mennonite Central Committee, we have also begun to address how we would fund the work of the new organization—Anabaptist Climate Collaborative (ACC), as the original funding from a major donor has been spent down. Our budget for full programming is currently around $300,000 per year. We anticipate that for the next three years we will want to keep our budget at this same amount. Our plan for funding the organization for the next three years is to do the following:

1. Seek pledges from donors to fund us at levels they are comfortable with for each of the next three years.
2. Seek matching grant donors and those willing to contribute to the match. We already have one $25,000 donor who will give for three years. We will be searching for others to join this faithful supporter.
3. Expand by 25% per year both the number of organizational donors (we currently have two) and a growing the number of individual donors.

We will use the time during the next three years to continue to expand our donor base so that by the end of year three, we will easily meet our projected budget.

NEW DIRECTOR SOUGHT
With the planned departure of Doug Graber Neufeld as the director for ACC sometime in the first part of 2023, the new board of ACC will be drafting a job description and beginning the process for hiring a new executive director. Transformation will be full time and can be based at any location (remote). Please watch for additional news about this in the coming weeks.

Bringing on a new executive director is part of the funding plan going forward. Along with our advancement director, Mark Lancaster, the new director will be raising funds. This is a chance for somebody who is passionate about the climate crisis, and who would like the unique opportunity to guide this new organization in its future work. Please share names you might think of that could fit into the work of ACC and in partnership with Anabaptist organizations, congregations and individuals. Please share those names with Doug or Mark.

ANNUAL FUND
Announcing the start of the “Annual Fund” for ACC

“Before I retired from NASA Langley Research Center, part of my job was to help the Center prepare for climate change impacts. The work resulted in daily receiving climate change email reports. Thus, I was emersed in the details that could impact the Center. Since then, I have been very concerned about the impacts of climate change and have sought out ways to address it, especially from a Mennonite perspective. The Anabaptist Climate Collaborative is a Mennonite resource that can help and motivate Mennonites to care for what God has given us a creation that nurtures and sustains us all. I am committed to supporting the Collective in its critical mission.”

RETIRED NASA SCIENTIST, AND ACC DONOR

Along with the rest of the world, the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions (becoming Anabaptist Climate Collaborative) has been living into the new reality created for us by COVID-19 and the economic challenges that have resulted from a global pandemic, supply chain issues, climate change and threats to democracy everywhere. Fortunately, we have learned that as complicated as navigating the new environment is, all is not lost. Our donors have continued to be strong supporters of our important work. Each day we are learning new ways to continue the vital work of ACC and to fund that work through creativity and determination.

With these new circumstances, we have recognized that what has served us in the past will not be sustainable for the future and that we must create more resilient systems and financial structures in order to support our ongoing program work of protecting the earth and guarding against the worst effects of climate change.

Many of you support the ongoing needs of your alma-maters, colleges and universities. Many give monthly to local civic organizations or to your faith communities. At home, we all recognize that each month we need to pay our utility bills, our insurance premiums, our mortgage or rent. Many organizations call the resources that are used to cover these budget items their “Annual Fund” and it is core to how they create sustainable systems to support their missions.

At ACC it is our intention to continue to give our donors the opportunity to support our special programs that work with student leadership development, engagement with congregations and so much more. In addition, we will add a new giving opportunity to support our operating costs through what we will call the “Annual Fund”. We hope you will commit annually to this fund, no matter the size of your gift, and continue to support this part of our fundraising effort year after year. You could choose to give in monthly installments from your credit card or give a single gift annually.

Beginning with our “End of Year” email to you in November or December 2022, we will invite our donors to consider becoming monthly donors to our annual fund. Starting the first quarter of 2023, you will begin to receive regular communications from ACC that will do two things. First, we want to keep you regularly updated on the kind of transformational work we are doing through our climate change efforts and how your financial support to the “Annual Fund” is vital to continuing this work of growing the model throughout the country.

Second, and with your permission, we will begin sending you a quarterly appeal, unless you inform us otherwise, to support the work of ACC. We hope you will, in an ongoing fashion, recognize how you might become a financial partner with staff, board members and our volunteers, through the support of the “Annual Fund”. For each appeal, we will focus on one or more of our four “values” as listed in our Strategic Plan (Click Here) and the program support that is needed to fully fund the work of those values. These values actually form the bedrock of our work and are the basis of our strategic direction for the future. We promise to bring great stories of the lives that are being transformed daily and demonstrate that your financial partnership is not only deeply appreciated but also extremely necessary as we work together to transform our broken climate system.

We are committed to assure our donors and partners that our work is strategic, transparent and measurable. Should you have any questions about our approach, please do not hesitate to call or email me personally so that I might answer your questions. (Marklancaster116@gmail.com) Our hope is that this new “Annual Fund” will generate predictable program funding at targeted times throughout the year in order for our work to be sustainable in the long term.

Thank you for partnering with us to build a solid financial foundation for the future of ACC through your support of the “Annual Fund” and to help us create sustainable approaches to living on planet earth and growing new, young leaders to show us the way.
Together we can make a difference. We say that a lot, but until this summer, there has not been a chance for Mennonite institutions of higher education to come together and practice collective reflection and action that is focused on climate change, and the care of creation. In early August, ACC (CSCS) invited ten Mennonite institutions in the US and Canada to join together at Eastern Mennonite University for an intensive three days of figuratively and literally walking together in a time of reflecting on our commitments to taking care of the planet and all its inhabitants. Twenty students and faculty from six institutions were able to join together for a variety of activities. Learn more about what happened at this convening event, and how ACC is helping Mennonite colleges work on their campuses and together making a difference.

**FURTHER READING**

1. **ALENA MILLER**
   - Goshen College student
   - "This summer I had the opportunity to attend the CSCS climate conference at Eastern Mennonite University. For me it was a valuable time to talk with other students and faculty from anabaptist schools who are working on climate advocacy within their own campuses. Anabaptism is a faith tradition that emphasizes living in community with each other and creation, however at an institutional level, we don’t always practice this well. Part of our discussion at the conference was recognizing that climate change is a much bigger problem than individuals or small colleges can fix, however there are a lot of things we can do to reduce our climate footprint and to benefit the life and ecosystems that exist on our campuses. Micah 6:8 says to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. If we are to do justice, then together we must take steps to move away from practices that harm creation. I hope that continued collaboration between climate ambassadors at our universities will help bring about positive change at our institutions where it is needed, and the continuation of the good things already happening."

2. **JANEEN BERTSCHE JOHNSON**
   - Director of Campus Ministries, Admissions and Development Associate, Alumni Director, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
   - "I particularly appreciated the input by Dr. Carole Nash, an archaeology professor from James Madison University, who addressed the questions, “What does it mean to know a place?” What does it mean to be ruptured from place, and how do you acknowledge that?” At Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, we are working at both creation care/sustainability and acknowledging the indigenous history of our place, and Dr. Nash’s presentation helped me to imagine new ways that these two themes intersect. I was also greatly encouraged by the conversations that we had between our institutions. I believe this event will help us collaborate more with other schools and move us all further in our goals of addressing the climate crisis with both practical and faith-based actions."

3. **RUBY ANDERSON**
   - Canadian Mennonite University student
   - "What I found most meaningful at the Sustainability Summit was being around other Mennonite college students/academics who were also advocating for sustainability on their respective campuses. It was both reassuring and invigorating to be around folks who understood what I was trying to do on my campus, as well as hear about projects that had been successful on their campuses. I found it meaningful to have the opportunity to share what sorts of sustainability projects were happening on my campus, and get support and ideas for success from new, yet experienced sources. I hope that this summit can act as proof that both students and faculty are serious about taking action, not just having conversations about how to make campuses more ecologically just and sustainable."

4. **KEN MARTENS FRIESEN**
   - Professor of History and Intl. Studies Coordinator for Global Education, Fresno Pacific University
   - “I thought the most useful part of our meeting was simply being together and sharing experiences and ideas. Hearing from folks from other Anabaptist institutions gave me both energy and hope that we could also push more change at Fresno Pacific. I was most impressed with the students and hearing their longing for and their commitment to change their institutions. For me the big takeaway was the relatively straightforward need to start a sustainability committee on campus made up of faculty, students, and staff, to give insights and ideas to various campus departments, as well as push us toward accountability in our decisions related to energy and resource sustainability, whether travel, food, landscaping, or building design and use. In listening to others, it felt like we were far behind the curve. I hope that new conversations and dialogue with colleagues at Fresno Pacific, and continued conversations with new-found colleagues at other Anabaptist schools, will help make that feeling disappear.”
REFLECTIONS ON OUR FIRST ECUMENICAL CLIMATE RETREAT

Doug Kaufman

After a pandemic break of more than two years, we again offered an in-person pastoral retreat on climate change. Wow, it was so satisfying to be face to face with Christian leaders who care about climate change! This was our first ecumenical retreat, where we focused beyond Anabaptists, and it was an enormous satisfaction.

Called “Pastoral Care for Climate: Weaving Science & Theology for Justice,” the retreat took place at the beautiful and engaging Duke University Marine Lab in coastal Beaufort, North Carolina. We found resourceful and passionate partners with Creation Justice Ministries, and the Divinity School and Nicholas School of the Environment, both at Duke University.

Diverse presenters, many of them Duke faculty, brought passion and deep knowledge to our time together. Having so many faculty brought experiences from all over the world on issues around natural disaster response, organizing, and pastoral care. Pastors brought broad leadership experiences and curiosity!

Because this was the first time we have offered a retreat in a region hit so regularly with hurricanes, more of the conversation was around how churches can respond to natural disasters. Norbert Wilson, an agricultural economist at the Divinity School, spoke about how the ongoing food ministries of churches can be so crucial at times of disaster. Betsey Albright raised the concern that when churches provide housing and food after a disaster, LGBTQ people may worry that they will not be welcome.

Speaking to pastors of congregations of diverse economic, social, and racial identities, homiletics professor Jerusha Neal noted that in interpreting the Scripture, some of us are more like the displaced people of God and some more like Babylonian. Each context takes a different interpretation.

The denominations represented included Disciples of Christ, Roman Catholic, United Church of Christ, Mennonite, Church of the Brethren, African Methodist Zion, United Methodist, and independent congregations. For some congregations a pastor and other leader in the congregation attended together.

A pastoral response to climate change includes engaging people at emotional, relational, spiritual, social, and political levels. This retreat once again included all these elements. The seaside location allowed us to have one Wild Church worship on a boat, where we mourned species loss and how the ocean has carried enslaved peoples. But we also concluded sharing our plans for engaging our congregations, and with a Lord’s Supper based in hope.

We must develop discipleship practices that make the connections between our individual body, our social body, and our ecological body.

INTRODUCING A NEW CLIMATE CURRICULUM FOR CHURCHES

I am working with a fantastic team of writers, leaders, and activists on a climate curriculum for congregations and other groups who want to engage climate change socially, personally, and spiritually. “Caring for Climate: From Anxiety to Action” is based on what I have learned from the pastoral retreats on climate change we have offered for four years.

We look at climate change from an array of angles, talking about the emotional aspect but also linking with issues of racial and global justice. We could think of the writers as a dream team of climate leaders from the Mennonite church. They include Dr. Sibonokuhle Ncube from the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe and student at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Sarah Augustine (WA) and Katerina Gea (CA) from the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition. Ken Pitts (OR) recently retired from teaching high schoolers about climate change, and Jennifer Schrock is director of Mennonite Creation Care Network.

Each session includes discussion questions, Scripture, and a short teaching available to read or to watch on a video (5 - 15 minutes). The lessons will be available by the end of the year. Jackson Steinmetz, a student at Goshen College, served as the videography intern for the videos.

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DOUG KAUFMAN, DIRECTOR PASTORAL ECOLOGY

Click to see video of Sarah Nahar talk about the new curriculum

Click to see curriculum trailer with descriptions from some of our writers.

Sarah Nahar
PhD Student in Religion and Environmental Studies, Syracuse University
Although these minerals are not carbon-emitting, the mining of solar panels, electric vehicles, and wind turbines relies on the use of critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and nickel. This must enact policies that work to phase out fossil fuel-reliant energy and move to renewable sources such as solar and wind power. Such policies, however, open the door to an often-overlooked problem: the dependence of clean energy systems on critical minerals.

A transition to clean energy sources is essential to decreasing the amount of carbon entering the atmosphere and thus lessening the effects of the climate crisis. But the production of solar panels, electric vehicles, and wind turbines relies on the use of critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and nickel. Although these minerals are not carbon-emitting, the mining process can be very environmentally damaging and current laws disproportionately affect indigenous communities in the United States.

We got to work creating resources that explained the issue and pointed to possible solutions, like supporting the Clean Energy Mining Reform Act that was introduced to Congress in April 2022. Like the name says, this bill would make much-needed changes to the current mining law. At the end of the summer, the MCC office hosted five students from Mennonite colleges and several CSCS employees for a working group meeting and sitting in on advocacy visits in congressional offices, I understand the importance of this piece of climate work.

Before this summer, I thought addressing the climate crisis would be an uphill battle, but simply in theory – transfer our energy usage to renewable sources and stop our dependence on fossil fuels. This internship, however, made it clear that things are not that simple. As we make a clean energy transition, we must be sure not to do so on the backs of indigenous and other frontline communities that are too often forgotten. There is still much, much more to be done, but there are brilliant people working hard every day to see that change come to life.
Partner with us as Donors

Dear friends of ACC (formerly CSCS), we want to take this opportunity to thank you for all of your generous support in the past. We also want to give you the chance to continue to generously support our work but to do it in a way that will multiply your gift.

A generous and anonymous donor will match any gift you give up to a total of $25,000, starting in October 2022. That means that instead of raising just $25,000, with this match, we have the potential of raising $50,000. So, we are counting on your gift to support the expanded vision and mission of ACC.

Your gift today will ensure that the Anabaptist Climate Collaborative will be able to move forward with our goals, including:

- Training young adults to be climate change leaders of the future just as we did with our “Mennonite Sustainability Summit for Higher Education” this past August at Eastern Mennonite University.
- Building Networks among Anabaptist organizations, congregations and individuals in order to give Anabaptists a voice on climate change concerns. This includes our retreat model that moves people beyond the emotions that keep them from engaging their faith when it comes to climate change.
- Inspiring action among the Anabaptist and wider faith community to move legislators, other leaders and communities to embrace positive action related to climate change.

If everyone reading this newsletter would make a gift of $25 or $50 we would make our funding goal before the end of 2022. Please give as generously as you can.

Although we are moving away from our three core partners Eastern Mennonite University still serves as our fiscal agent. Therefore, you will be directed to the donations system of EMU for processing your contribution. However, be assured that all online donations come to ACC.

Donate by mailing a check.

Please make the check out to “ACC – Eastern Mennonite University”, and send to:

Anabaptist Climate Collaborative
Eastern Mennonite University
1200 Park Rd
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Please include your contact information (phone number and email) so that we can send you a receipt for your tax-deductible contribution, and so that we can personally thank you for your generous contribution.

Talk with us about other options for giving.

If you are interested in information on other forms of giving, such as from an IRA, an estate, or through employer matching, we are happy to talk with you in person. We’ll answer your questions, or put you in touch with somebody who can give you the information you need.

If you would like to become a monthly donor or are interested in committing to be part of the matching gift from a $25,000 donor, or would like to talk about making an estate gift to ACC, please be in touch with me at 510 809 6721 or marklancaster116@gmail.com

Mark Lancaster
Advancement Director, ACC