

## TerraCycle: Recycle, upcycle and raise funds

**D**rink pouches. Potato chip bags. Toothbrushes and toothpaste tubes. Pouches from foods for infants. Skin care product containers.

Yes, these are recyclable—if you have a TerraCycle collection center nearby.

Hively Avenue Preschool, a ministry of Hively Avenue Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., has been part of the TerraCycle program for almost ten years. Participating in this program fits into the congregation's work toward creation care and it earns income for the preschool.

TerraCycle offers free recycling programs for items that are generally not recyclable. With funding from partnerships and corporate donors, the waste is turned into raw material for new products. Organizations can become collectors by signing up online, and they receive points for the items they turn in. These points can then be redeemed for donations to a designated cause or school.

Hively's program is well established, so it's not only church members and preschool families, but also friends, neighbors and other local organizations who bring their waste to the church. This has helped the preschool to receive almost \$1,000 each year.

The kinds of items that can be turned in change frequently, so the

coordinator provides updated information several times a year. She also leads the efforts to sort, package and ship the items. Shipping is free, funded by the brands and sponsors.

A collection area in the lower level of the Hively education wing has bins for collecting the items. Those who donate can sort what they bring or drop them off for volunteers to sort.

New efforts in Hively's creation care goal include planting 22 trees on the campus and installing solar panels this spring. TerraCycle, though officially a preschool effort, is also claimed by the congregation in its creation care work—diverting items from landfills and incinerators, with the added benefit of supporting the preschool financially. ♻️



*Hively Avenue Preschool's TerraCycle collection center.*

## Community garden builds relationships, feeds neighbors, educates

New Horizons Garden is a ministry of First Church of the Brethren and Chicago Community Mennonite Church, coordinated by Ms. Erma Purnell of First Church and the Rev. Celeste Grace Groff, associate pastor of CCMC. The initial vision made reality by Ms. Joan Gerig and youth leaders from First Church continues today as members of our congregations work with partners from the Chicago Community Gardeners Association and volunteers from around the city and suburbs to grow produce and flowers on a plot of land next to our church building.

The garden began in 1987, making it one of the oldest community gardens in Chicago. We share the bounty of our produce with volunteers, neighbors and local organizations. But perhaps the garden's most important role is as a place of peace, where people can rest and play surrounded by the beauty of creation. Through special events as well as tending

the earth, New Horizons Garden shows the tangible—and sometimes tastable—results of community peace-building to all who pass by.

The garden is surrounded by empty lots in a neighborhood that has seen decades of neglect from private developers and city resources as well as the harm of racism, both of which are linked to a high level of violence in the area. When we work in the garden, elders from First Church tell the story of when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at First Church in the 1960s as part of his work for housing justice in Chicago. Those who work in the garden learn about environmental justice and the interconnectedness of food security, health disparities, and housing issues.

At our 30th anniversary celebration in 2017, Ms. Joan Gerig summed up our mission well, “This garden is a reminder that life is precious, and that we are all part of God’s creation.”

—Chicago Community Mennonite Church

This garden is a reminder that life is precious, And that we are all part of God’s creation.

Joan Gerig at 30th anniversary



Celeste Grace Groff

*Community picnic celebrating New Horizons Garden, September 2019.*



## Birthing new systems, lighting new lights\*

by Andy Hedberg, Mennonite Church of Normal (Ill.)

Dr. Jonathan Foley, an Environmental Scientist and the Executive Director of Project Drawdown says that:

People want to know how they can help reduce their impact on the environment. We can do a lot, of course. But it's important to recognize that we can't do everything as individuals. The systems we're working to change are enormous, and our personal actions simply can't do it all. We really need new policies, new technologies, new markets and business approaches, and new political and social movements.... But our individual actions can help too, and together, they can be part of the solutions we need.

Anthony Siegrist, a pastor and theologian who serves at Ottawa Mennonite Church in Ontario said that:

Churches hold the potential of presenting a total way of life that reflects, among other things, the value of non-human creation and the goodness of living less consumptive lives.

Here are some of the creation care actions the Mennonite Church of Normal in Illinois (MCN) and its members have already taken:

- The **Creation Care Confab** has been showing up in The Midweek (MCN's electronic newsletter) since last fall where periodic info and musings are shared to help open conversations about God's amazing Creation.
- MCN has **180 solar panels**, providing more than enough power to support its operations: link to newspaper article. (<https://bit.ly/3b9Utj2>)
- MCN has a **large rain garden** with many native prairie plants. It also uses native and naturalized plantings around its building and has native bee houses on the property.

- **Recycling** has been done for many years at MCN. Recycling bins are located in classrooms, the kitchen and beneath member mailboxes.
- A number of years ago, a Sunday School class used "**Creation Care: Keepers of the Earth**" as a study guide, which was written by Luke Gascho, former Executive Director of Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College.
- Several MCN families have **electric or hybrid cars**.
- Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, MCN played **host to events sponsored by**  
(continued on next page)



Volunteers work on establishing naturalized plantings around the church.



This view of the Mennonite Church of Normal building show some of the native flowers.

\*inspired by Hymn 27, "God of the Bible," from *Sing the Journey*.

## Birthing new systems, lighting new lights (continued)

the **Illinois Prairie Chapter of Wild Ones**, which promotes the use of native plants. ([illinoisprairie.wildones.org/](http://illinoisprairie.wildones.org/))


- Some MCN members participate in the newly formed **Bloomington-Normal Interfaith Green Team Gathering**.

### Future opportunities for MCN:

- Join other Illinois houses of faith as a member of Faith in Place ([www.faithinplace.org/who-we-are](http://www.faithinplace.org/who-we-are))
- Form a Green Team to help integrate creation care efforts into MCN's missional work
- Offer a Sunday School Class based on the Mennonite Creation Care Network's "Every Creature Singing" curriculum

([mennocreationcare.org/every-creature-singing/](http://mennocreationcare.org/every-creature-singing/))

Here are more ideas for you and your congregation:

- A Personal Action Guide ([globalecoguy.org/a-personal-action-guide-for-the-environment-20d70fcdd840](http://globalecoguy.org/a-personal-action-guide-for-the-environment-20d70fcdd840))
- Shifting Climates Podcast ([shiftingclimates.com/](http://shiftingclimates.com/)), a series from the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions, a collaborative initiative of Eastern Mennonite University, Goshen College and Mennonite Central Committee to lead Anabaptist efforts to respond to the challenges of climate change. 

## 2020 Annual Meeting: June 27

The 2020 CDC Annual Meeting will happen by Zoom, because of continuing recommendations for physical distancing with the COVID-19 virus. The usual three-day gathering that had been scheduled at Oak Grove Mennonite Church in Smithville, Ohio, has been cancelled.

On Saturday, June 27, delegates will participate in a Zoom session, which will include worship, opportunities to talk in smaller groups, and the essential business items.

A new song, "Holy Spirit, bless us with a yearning," written by Adam Tice (Faith, Goshen) and Katie Graber (Columbus), will be featured in the worship time. Four members of the conference have been commissioned to create art pieces that reflect the theme: Kay Bontrager-Singer (Faith, Goshen), Eugene Stutzman (Covenant, Sarasota), Anita Lehman (First, Bluffton) and Rachel Horst (First, Urbana). They will share their work and reflect on it in the worship time. Glen Guyton, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, will be the featured speaker.

A question and answer time with Glen Guyton will explore how he sees the church changing as a result of the virus.




Break-out groups will discuss two items:

- Reflect on your experience with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on church life.
- What did we learn that we might want to carry forward in our congregational life?

Essential business for the Annual Meeting includes approving the people nominated to serve on conference committees and boards and approving the spending plan.

Congregations are urged to name delegates as they do each year, and these delegates will receive information and details about how to participate.

For information visit [mcusacdc.org/annual-meeting-2020/delegate-information-2020/](http://mcusacdc.org/annual-meeting-2020/delegate-information-2020/) 

May 2020

# Doug's Mug: A sip of normal?

by Doug Luginbill, Conference Minister

If there's one thing that I can say for certain about the church over the past couple of months, it is that only one of our CDC congregations can claim to be living in normal times. That is, of course, Mennonite Church of Normal (Illinois.) And even they are not



worshipping as "normal." COVID-19 has disrupted our normal and we likely have no idea yet what normal will taste like in the future; for ourselves, our churches, and our world.

Recently I have been reading from the prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. They were writing during unprecedented times when the world around them was changing rapidly and dramatically. The words from Psalm 46 could have easily come from their mouths; "The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; God utters God's voice, the earth melts." Life as they knew it had disappeared. Some of God's people were living in exile. Some were left amidst the ruins of their city and temple. Many households had lost a loved one to war, pestilence, famine, disease and terror. The earth was shaking and the world was melting. Nothing was normal! And in the midst of it all, the prophets tried to make meaning out of it. From their view, the pestilence and terror was the way that God brought judgment upon an idolatrous and faithless people. God's people had forsaken the Covenant and had failed to live justly with one another, with the strangers in their midst, and with themselves. The normal city of God had become chaos and ruin.

As people of faith, we are meaning-makers. When things are going relatively well, when our cups runneth over, we consider this "normal" and are grateful for the lives we have. When things are going badly, when life as we know it is thrown into a tailspin, when jobs are lost, IRAs lose value and vacations are cancelled, we struggle to make meaning. "God's testing me,"

we might quip. "It just wasn't meant to be," we lament. "Que sera, sera," we sigh. "We'll get through this and we'll soon be back to normal," we hope. Few of us turn to Jeremiah 1:16, "I will utter my judgments against them, for all their wickedness in forsaking me; they have made offerings to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands."

In *Virus as a Summons to Faith*, (Cascade Books, 2020) Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann quotes a friend who says, "The (Corona) virus is God's way of ending consumerism." Brueggemann goes on to say that our conceited ideas of mastering and using up "the resources of the earth in our indifferent indulgences will fail. They will fail because such practices contradict the given reality of creation and the will of the creator." (p. 17)

I'm not ready to pronounce this novo corona virus as God's direct punishment for individual or corporate sin. I believe Jesus offered a different way of interpreting calamities—as opportunities to proclaim the "works of God" (John 9:3) and imagine a new normal. Indeed, people of faith make meaning out of calamities not so much by finding someone to blame, people to condemn or policies to berate. People of faith make meaning by making face masks and sharing their resources. People of faith make meaning by naming the injustices in our systems and committing to transforming them. People of faith make meaning by recognizing privilege and letting go of the need to control. Ultimately, people of faith make meaning by recognizing the gods we worship, acknowledging that the works of our individual hands are lacking and allowing ourselves to be transformed by the God who continues to make all things new. God continues to offer us a sip of normal that stimulates our imaginations.

*The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'*

*And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.'*

*And let everyone who is thirsty come.*

*Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.*

—Revelation 22:17 



## Financial report

April 30, 2020

Year-to-date contributed  
support . . . . . \$180,947  
Year-to-date plan . . . . . \$190,520  
Difference between giving and plan    -\$9,574

Year-to-date expenses . . . . . \$178,451  
Year-to-date plan . . . . . \$195,772  
Difference between expenses  
and plan . . . . . -\$17,321

In spite of the disruption of the global epidemic crisis, Central District Conference finances continue to be strong. After ten months of activity our balances are similar to—perhaps slightly stronger than—end-April balances in recent years. In part this is because expenditures reflect reduced activity, but to date our congregational giving remains on track. As always, we are grateful for continued faithful congregational and individual giving.

*Report provided by Timothy Lind, conference treasurer*

## Licensing



**Elizabeth Kelly** was licensed on March 15 at First Mennonite Church in Bluffton, Ohio, as a transitional minister and congregational consultant.

## Conference resources related to COVID-19

The conference website—**[www.mcusacdc.org](http://www.mcusacdc.org)**—has links to a wealth of resources for congregations as we live, worship and work in the context of the pandemic.

Most helpful now, as the strict shutdowns end and gatherings and movement are more possible, is the section: “Preparing to return to in-person church.” Doug Luginbill, conference

minister, has two documents in this section:

- So you want to go back to church
- Guidance for reopening your church

Check out these resources as well as information about how CDC congregations have navigated the opportunities of doing things in new ways. Visit **[mcusacdc.org/covid-19-coronavirus-resources/](http://mcusacdc.org/covid-19-coronavirus-resources/)** ●

**Central District Reporter**  
**Volume 64, Number 3, May 2020**  
**Editor: Mary E. Klassen**  
**Email:** [cdceditor@gmail.com](mailto:cdceditor@gmail.com)

*Reporter* is published six times a year. It is the official organ of communication among the churches of Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA. It is distributed free to CDC congregations through the CDC spending plan.

**Central District Office:**  
Doug Luginbill, conference minister  
Emma Hartman, administrator  
1015 Division St., Goshen, IN 46528

**Toll-free:** 800.662.2264  
**Phone:** 574.534.1485  
**Email:** [office@mcusacdc.org](mailto:office@mcusacdc.org)  
**Web:** [www.mcusacdc.org](http://www.mcusacdc.org)