STEWARDS IN GOD’S CREATION

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it…” Psalms 24:1 NIV

Introduction: God’s purpose in Christ is to heal and bring to wholeness not only persons but the entire created order. “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross” (Col. 1:19-20). MCC seeks to follow God’s command in the process of incarnating God’s purposes of love for all creation. This love aids the essential needs of people, including not only food, clothing, shelter, and jobs, but also hope for a new life. The challenge is to bring wholeness without jeopardizing the ability of tomorrow’s people to meet their needs and the needs of other creatures with whom we share God’s creation.

All over God’s earth, humanity is rendering fertile land barren. This environment which sustains us all is suffering more and more serious degradation and human hands through:

- Destruction of productive farm and range lands
- Contamination of soil, water, atmosphere, and food
- Destruction of genetic resources, i.e. animal and plant habitats
- Climatic change caused by excessive use of fossil fuels and fluorocarbons
- Destruction of tropical rain forests
- Emission of sulfur and nitrogen oxides causing acid rain
- More conflict over waning resources by increasing numbers of people

The land, the rivers, and the skies cry out for healing. They “groan” for reconciliation with the human family they wish to sustain. As followers of Jesus Christ, we need to hear this cry. We need to hear and obey the command of our Creator who instructed us to be caretakers of and at peace with the creation. Faithful stewards of the gospel are also faithful stewards of God’s creation.

There have been and there are successful efforts underway within God’s creation where responsible people are taking action to correct the abuses. But much more remains to be done.

Belief Statement: As stated in the “Confession of Faith in Mennonite Perspective, Draft October 1993”:

We believe that God has created “the heavens and the earth” and all that is in them, and that God preserves and renews what has been created in accord with the divine will. We believe that God has begun the new creation in Jesus Christ and sustains it through the power of the Holy Spirit. We look forward to the redemption of creation and the coming of a new heaven and a new earth, where God’s purposes for all of creation will be fully realized.

We believe that human beings have been created good and have been called to glorify God, and to live in peace with each other, and to watch over the rest of creation. We gratefully acknowledge that God has created human beings in the divine image and has given the entire human family a special dignity among all the works of creation.

Repentance: MCC acknowledges patterns of working which have contributed to some of the destruction mentioned above. We repent of the ways we have caused pollution or destruction of our Creator’s work. We want to be more fully aware of the impact our lifestyle has on the global environment, and our sisters and brothers worldwide who share God’s good earth with us.

Poverty & the Environment: Poverty and environmental destruction often fuel each other. For too many, today’s survival decisions destroy land, water, and stratosphere over the long term. Conversely, some impoverished communities have learned to balance their demands and use the environment in sustainable ways. Whichever the case, MCC is committed to work in partnership with the poor and to protect and to heal our God-entrusted environment.
Wealth & the Environment: Modern “prosperity” and environmental destruction often fuel each other. People having access to billions of dollars in credit and modern machinery can destroy large areas of land or pollute the atmosphere. Individuals living in a consumptive culture also make choices that damage the environment and consume more than their fair share of the world’s resources.

Commitments of MCC: Safeguarding God’s creation is not an “add on” to MCC’s commitments. Preserving the creation must be integral to who we are and what we believe. Since 1920, MCC has been concerned with good soil and its capacity to produce food. Our intent has been to preserve God’s creation “In the name of Christ.” We have engaged in reforestation, water catchment, soil conservation, erosion control, etc. The printing of materials, e.g., “More with Less Cookbook” and “Living More with Less,” illustrates MCC’s environmentally friendly efforts. And, MCC has persisted in peace work which reduces destruction of God’s good creation.

In its attempts to be environmentally responsible and faithful, MCC will give primary concern to the following areas of activity:

1. **Become more aware** of and resist wherever possible the evil of environmental degradation.
2. **Inform** and **educate** in the mission of stewarding God’s creation.
3. **Live faithfully** as stewards, protectors, and reconcilers of God’s created earth.
4. **Conserve energy** by recycling, car-pooling, avoiding over-heating and cooling in our offices and homes, etc.
5. **Work with the poor** in their efforts to protect the environment, while also feeding themselves.
6. **Support and cooperate** with private and public organizations and actions which advance environmental improvement. Conversely, oppose legislation and actions which endanger the physical environment.
7. **Support** and **plan programs** that assure protection or restoration of God’s creation by:
   - Analyzing potential positive/negative impacts on the environment
   - Designating a staff person to monitor these commitments and provide feedback as appropriate.
   - Providing program administrators question and guidelines which become a part of the annual planning/reporting cycle.

Planners are requested to respond to the following questions and tasks to the degree that they are relevant and helpful, acknowledging that each program and region encounters differing environmental question. Additional screening resources are available from area administrators.

1. What are the major environmental issues in your region?
2. How do the activities in your area of program responsibility positively or negatively impact the environment?
3. Can negative impact be changed? How? What are the risks involved? What benefits can accrue?
4. Begin to collect and record relevant data which help us to be more specific.

Approved by MCC Executive Committee
Item No. 29, September 1994