

SUMMER NEWSLETTER



CENTER FOR
Sustainable
Climate Solutions

PREPARED BY
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DOUG GRABER NEUFELD

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

“What exactly does CSCS do?”

As we've increased our visibility, it is not always obvious to those who hear about us what we actually do. Even the name, the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions, which contains in its individual words the components of our focus, admittedly does not roll off the tongue in a way that easily conveys the entirety of what we do. So exactly how do we explain what we do?!

On one level, what we do is simply conveyed by our vision: “We envision the church responding to climate change as a moral equivalent to peacebuilding.” In this vision, we name our focus on the church, starting with those churches within the Anabaptist tradition. And amongst the myriad of environmental problems which our planet unfortunately faces at this time, we name specifically climate change as arguably the most pressing threat to our society and all of the natural world.

Critically, we name this as a moral issue, and it is a moral issue in at least two ways. It's a moral issue because we are motivated by our obligation to care for all that inhabit God's creation. It doesn't matter that those of us in wealthier, temperate areas of the world will likely be impacted relatively less compared to other parts of the world - we still believe there is a moral obligation to care for our brothers and sisters around the world that are most affected by climate change. And even if we humans could simply all avoid the effects of climate change, still we think that we have a moral obligation to treat God's amazing gift of creation with respect in its own right, and not as simply a tool for our use.

And second, there is a depth to our engagement with this issue that is conveyed by naming it as a moral issue equivalent to peacebuilding. Within the Anabaptist community, peacebuilding has a special importance, it is deeply ingrained in traditional Anabaptist practices and is part and parcel to our identity. What CSCS “does” is to make the claim that climate issues should hit our minds, bodies and souls at that level of importance. And as with peacebuilding, we make the claim that care of creation is deeply interwoven in all the other challenges our society faces - most obviously at the moment, the twin crises of the covid pandemic, and the reckoning with the racial inequality in our society.

Einstein is famously quoted as observing that “Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler.” The above is a ‘simple’ explanation for what we do, but it doesn't give a complete picture of how our programming and approaches are critical to having an impact. So how else can we describe our work?





What we do is change lives. In this issue of our newsletter, you will see some examples of this in the stories of students and other young adults whose life trajectories have been changed by being empowered to raise their voices against climate change. Importantly, they have motivated their colleagues to join them. Enjoy the accounts here of the inspiring work they have done by joining with the students around them. Addressing the climate crisis requires changing lives, and these young people show that this is possible.

What we do is work within communities. In the tradition of our Anabaptist roots, we believe that change best happens in the context of community. And most importantly, community work starts by listening. If the current social and political upheavals have told us anything, it is that just speaking facts louder does not change minds, and will not solve the climate crisis. We change when we feel trusted and heard, when we can find common ground, and when we hear stories of communities and individuals that inspire us. In this issue, you'll see the first announcement of our upcoming cross-country bike ride, where riders will engage with communities across the country on their diverse stories of climate change. Watch for more, and let us know if you're interested in riding!

What we do is contribute a unique perspective to the larger climate conversation. There are many good climate organizations out there, but we believe that we have a niche that is not filled by those others. In part this comes from our Anabaptist perspective, which adds a fresh and needed voice to the global conversation about climate. "Mennonites don't just say, they do", I've heard my colleagues from faith and non-faith traditions say multiple times, encapsulating one of many ways that our particular traditions can be a strength when joined with other traditions.

What we do is connect efforts at addressing the climate crisis. There are an increasing number of organizations and people engaging with climate change, and likewise a range of approaches to those efforts. Working together, to paraphrase an old adage, the whole can be more than the sum of the parts. We are uniquely positioned to bring together multiple organizations through our unusual multi-partner arrangement. At our core, we are not just our own entity, but a part of the workings of our three core partners - Eastern Mennonite University, Mennonite Central Committee, and Goshen College. Embedded in these organizations, we draw from the longstanding strengths of these proven institutions in a way that could not otherwise occur. More broadly, we connect closely with a range of key Anabaptist institutions, such as our recent work with Mennonite World Conference through my role as chair of their new global Creation Care Task Force.

So "it's complicated" to explain what exactly we do! But it's also simply in the stories of those who work for us, and who are impacted by our work. In this newsletter, you will find the embodied answer to that question "What does CSCS do?" in the stories of students and other young adults who have engaged with climate issues through CSCS programs. Enjoy the stories in this issue of our newsletter, and we hope that it whets your appetite for more!

Student Highlights:

Dhiraj Adhikari and Erika Enomoto

Dhiraj Adhikari is passionate about making an impact on the world. When he started working with CSCS the first thing he mentioned me was that his lifelong dream is to start an Environmental Protection Agency in Nepal, his home country. He hoped that working with CSCS would begin to equip him with the tools that he needs to make that dream a reality.

Dhiraj started working with the Center as a Campus Sustainability Ambassador at Tabor College, and after starting an eco club on campus, and leading the science club during his time in the position, went on to complete the Climate Advocacy Internship with MCC Washington. It has been inspiring and exciting to see Dhiraj grow in this position, and begin to take tangible steps towards his dreams. We can't wait to see what he'll do next! If you're interested in learning more about Dhiraj's work, or reading



an article written during his summer internship, check out his article in Third Way, [*Climate Change in Nepal*](#).



Erika Enomoto is a recent graduate of Fresno Pacific University (FPU), who worked with the Center this year as a Campus Sustainability Ambassador. During her time in the position, she helped plan more events than any other Ambassador, and not only strengthened her club, but made it the most active club on campus at FPU! From sustainable crafting (such as making homemade bee wraps) to sustainable potlucks, Erika helped build on her club's successes and

strengthen sustainability at FPU. She also helped lead the movement on campus towards composting, and took part in a greenhouse project to help students connect more with plants on campus. We're excited to see where her passion will take her next!

Center welcomes new Fellows

As part of our student engagement initiative, this August the Center will be welcoming Clara Weybright and Joseph Harder as fellows for the upcoming year. The Climate Futures Fellowship Program is a year-long paid fellowship and provides the space and support for recent graduates to work on project proposals that align with the Center's mission. In the past, we have had creative and meaningful projects from fellows, including a podcast series titled *Shifting Climates*, and a series of action plans geared to help churches engage more deeply in creation care.

Clara Weybright is a recent 2020 graduate of EMU with a degree in Environmental Sustainability and minors in Honors and English. "Environmental communication has always been at the forefront of my interests. I've enjoyed working more directly in the sciences, but I've always been most motivated by making the environment – particularly as it intersects with justice issues – compelling to everyday people. That's where this fellowship comes in!" she explains.



During her fellowship, Clara will be focusing on "finding ways to connect communities with sustained political action surrounding climate change." Her project will include surveying congregations to "assess understandings of what it means to do climate advocacy faithfully," and selecting some congregations that are "interested in committing to a long-term climate advocacy plan." She hopes that these congregations will be geographically, racially, and culturally diverse and is interested in utilizing her proficiency in Spanish to work with Spanish-speaking churches as well. "After engaging in advocacy training myself, I'll assist these churches in establishing sustained advocacy that's tailored to their specific community," she states. This will also include connecting them to local and existing grassroots organizing initiatives, as well as "helping

them identify and advocate their particular lawmakers." Clara will also be creating a climate advocacy resource that will be accessible from our website.

Joseph Harder, a native of Harrisonburg, is also a 2020 graduate of EMU and majored in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus in Music Composition, attempting to "roughly emulate a musicology major." Music has always been a big interest of his and is reflected in his project proposal.

For the coming year, Joseph will be completing an analysis of environmental ethics in Mennonite hymnody. "I am hoping [this project] will be personally meaningful due to the fact that it sits at the intersection of perhaps my three most active circles of thought – faith, music, and environment," he explains. "Each of these elements is something I have grown up with a relationship to." His family is Mennonite, his parents are both from musical families and have engaged with music throughout their lives, and he was pushed both as a kid and now to "think actively on how to live sustainably."



STUDENT UPDATES: EQUITY RESOURCE AND CHURCH PLANS

"We can no longer overlook the the connection between climate change and racial and social inequities," says communications intern Judith Marklin in her new resource on Equity and Climate Justice.

This is an important cultural and social moment for organizations from every background to speak up, and speak into the complexities and interconnectedness of racial justice. At CSCS, we acknowledge that the climate crisis is "a manifestation of structural violence against both the people and the environment, with roots in colonialism, capitalism, and other systemic forms of oppression against black and brown bodies." In response to this understanding, our summer intern decided to create a resource on Equity & Climate Justice, to lift up the voices of others.

The resource, which can be found on [our website](#), attempts to bring together resources from many disciplines and mediums to help CSCS supporters and staff gain a better understanding of the intersection between racial justice and climate justice. The resource includes articles, podcasts, books, and (most importantly) ways to get involved. We hope that this will only be the first step that we take towards engaging more deeply with this important issue. Keep an eye on our website for similar resources, and more updates on our work on this issue!



This year Climate Futures Fellow Katie Isaac completed her year-long research project to create four plans to help churches engage more deeply with creation care. Her plans are hosted on the CSCS website, accompanied by a quiz which helps congregations and church leaders understand where their church stands on creation care, and which plan to use for their specific congregation.

The plans are "designed to help congregations see creation care as a part of God's redemptive work and take part in God's vision of reconciliation for all creation. Each plan strives to meet churches where they are and empower them towards further creation care action." Her work was "informed and inspired by the experiences of Anabaptist pastors" in the United States and Canada.

Katie completed the project as a part of our Climate Futures Fellowship, which is a year-long program that allows students to pursue a project of their devising for a year of full-time work with the Center. To find out more about the program, check out our [website](#)!

PREPARED BY

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Creation Care
ACTION PLANS

UPDATES ON

PROJECTS AND EVENTS



SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT

In early June, the Center met virtually with faculty, students, and staff from Mennonite institutions in Canada and the United States for a pre-conference for the Mennonite Sustainability Summit for Higher Education. Due to COVID-19, the summit has been postponed until 2021, but collaboration and planning are still underway. After an opening prayer, the conversation was kicked off with the following question: "What is the state of sustainability on Mennonite campuses?" Participants were then broken into groups to discuss various sustainability initiatives, or lack thereof, on their respective campuses. Time was then given for groups to share-out overarching themes, ideas, and obstacles. On the whole, Mennonite institutions seemed to be engaged with sustainability in some capacity, yet everyone agreed that more could and should be done. We're excited to bring back the full conference next year and engage more deeply with these conversations!

MENNO WORLD CONFERENCE

CSCS is excited that our Director, Doug Graber Neufeld, has been invited to chair the Mennonite World Conference Creation Care Task Force. Mennonite World Conference has made a decision to bring together representatives from all continents who bring expertise on working on creation care issues in their local contexts. They are working to provide opportunities to engage in creation care not only at the Indonesia assembly (which is now officially delayed until 2022), but also to provide resources for congregations as they engage with climate change in particular. We are excited to be working alongside them in this important global mission of raising awareness around climate impacts in Mennonite churches!

CSCS 2021 CLIMATE RIDE

Our new Advancement Director, Anna Ruth Hershberger has taken initiative to spread the word about CSCS throughout the country next summer by planning a cross-country bike ride! The ride, which will include 15-20 people, will be going from Seattle, WA to New York, NY visiting various Anabaptist communities along the way. It will begin May 21st, and continue through June. Anyone wanting to sponsor this event or who knows of others with interest in sponsoring this event should contact Anna Ruth Hershberger at (574) 538-9632 or advancement@sustainableclimatesolutions.org.



THE CSCS IMPACT

CSCS' Student Programs have a major impact on the lives of the students who take part, and the campuses we work with. Some of our impacts this past year are:

- **Student representatives on 8 campuses in the US and Canada**
- **Over 500 students reached by events held by CSCS Ambassadors**
- **3 years of internships and fellowships, with many students applying for further positions**

HELP SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS

Even in the post-COVID world, CSCS is making an impact with Mennonite students throughout the US and Canada (the image below is from our virtual Ambassadors training this summer). We are proud of the impacts we are making on the lives of our students, but we need help to keep these impactful programs running. Consider joining the CSCS impact by giving in any amount, and helping us continue our important programs. [Go to sustainableclimatesolutions.org/donate](https://sustainableclimatesolutions.org/donate) to learn more!



A note from our Advancement Director

Friends, after just a few short months of working with CSCS I am realizing that **we change lives!** We've empowered some passionate and committed people who want to see action and awareness around climate change. In contrast to a world continuing toward destruction and fractured relationships, we are witnessing joy and purpose, directed towards attention to the earth and justice/shalom for all God's creation. What a true delight! Don't get me wrong; our work is not easy, nor is it always fun. Looking at hard realities takes courage, but we're seeing it happen. Please, **please consider giving** - at any level - to support the goodness that happens here.

- Anna Ruth Hershberger