



EXTENDING BEYOND

A joining of Pentecost and creation care

By Zachary Headings

This year, two holidays share the date of June 5. One is secular, the other spiritual, but both should hold great importance to followers of Christ: Pentecost, the celebration of the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples, and the whole world; and World Environment Day, a day when activists and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) remind us that we only have one Earth and that we must take better care of it.

On the surface, to some, these two observances remain quite separate in our public consciousness, but upon digging deeper, you might find common threads that tell a larger story.

In the beginning, God created with words. God spoke a beautiful creation — an intricately-connected web of animals, plants, microorganisms that rely on each other by design — into being. The animals — and humans! — breathe in oxygen

and breathe out carbon dioxide. The plants use that carbon dioxide themselves, “breathing” it in and “breathing out” the oxygen that the animals, in turn, can breathe in.

Even in death, there is interconnectedness.

When something dies — it could be an animal, a person or even a plant — the earthly body becomes part of the earth again. We become fuel for the plants that produce beauty, food and oxygen for those still here on earth. To borrow from a popular 1994 Disney classic, it’s the “circle of life.” When God spoke creation into being, it was designed to be interconnected, reliant on all

parts to make the whole work.

Pentecost was much the same. When the Holy Spirit descended upon on the apostles, God spoke through them in many languages, creating the diverse body of Christ that was (and is) the church

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A hand reaches out to touch *pasto de laguna* (lagoon grass). This photo comes from a photography workshop, in the community-based culture of the Toba Qom people, in which participants identified photographs together, not by individual photographers. The workshop was led by Emilia Oyanguren, daughter of mission workers Alfonsina Finger and José Oyanguren.

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it,”

— Psalm 24:1 (NRSV)



Photo by Paulin Bossou

Bienvenu Kadja, in the vest, the administrator and financial officer for *la Casa Grande-Benin*, is collecting garbage in the city center with his colleagues.



Photo by Karla Minter

Marlène Dako Houessou, accountant of Bethesda Hospital's community development department, explains the recycling program to a Mennonite Mission Network-sponsored fellowship group in 2016.

— another beautiful and interconnected work of creation.

Throughout the act of creation, God said that what had been created was good. God is delighted by creation — in this case, both the world and the church — and compels us to share the joy of re-creation, restoration and redemption with our neighbors (Matthew 28:16-20), across the street and around the world. This is the work of Mennonite Mission Network. Each member of the church, which was created on that day of Pentecost, empowered by the Holy Spirit, brings God's joy in creation, restoration and redemption to the world. Every place that two or three people gather in God's name serves as a place of God's grace, joy and peace. Every person has a part to play in that sharing, and Mission Network serves to empower those that feel called to share.

Caring for the world we live in is a natural part of mission. So many of Mission Network's partners have expanded into creation care ministries. Bethesda Hospital started out as a ministry of healing, and when they realized that the

environment has a big impact on people's health, they started a garbage and recycling collection project and a farm. *La Casa Grande* children's home started out as home for children who had nowhere else to live, and now, it also has a garbage and recycling collection project and a farm. Benin Bible Institute started out as church leadership training program, and now, it has a farm that strives for creation care. These are just a few examples, all within the country of Benin. There are many more instances in which mission partners have adopted creation care as a core tenant of their mission.

In Genesis, God spoke, and a beautiful creation came into being. At Pentecost, God spoke through people, and the beautiful church came into being. At Mission Network, we hold both of these acts of *dabar* (Hebrew for "spoken word") as greatly important to our mission and calling.

On June 5, when Pentecost shares a day with World Environment Day, let us remember that, just as God calls us to care for each other, so too are we called to care for creation. ■



Photo by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

Benin Bible Institute's farm at Oumako, Benin.

Mission Network supports ministries that are mindful of our calling to care for creation. Give today to support these initiatives! Go to [MennoniteMission.net/Donate](https://www.MennoniteMission.net/Donate).

Serve



Photo by Char Kellogg

Educational gardens coordinator
Alamosa, Colorado

Serve with the Valley Educational Gardens Initiative (VEGI), a program that teaches gardening and nutrition to children, as well as providing produce to local families and food banks. Develop gardening and nutrition education for schools and summer programs, utilize social media as an educational tool, and attend community events.

Term length: 1-2 years
Ages: 20+ may apply with Mennonite Voluntary Service



Photo provided



Photo provided

Prai'lude Café
Montbéliard, France

Serve at the Prai'lude Café at La Prairie Church in Montbéliard. Greet and serve customers, prepare and serve drinks and pastries, and, overall, be a good host. French-language fluency is not required, and language study can be arranged.

Term length: 6 months-2 years
Ages: 21+ may apply with Mission Network

Fundraising and communications management director
Mongolia

Serve with JCS International and help manage internal and external communications, organize and direct the communications staff, and develop effective fundraising and communication strategies.

Term length: Long-term service
Ages: 21+ may apply with Mission Network

Tutor/food pantry
Jackson, Mississippi

Work in the food pantry, tutor in an after-school program and serve lunch to those who come each day, with Stewpot, and inter-faith ministry that provides for the basic needs of those who are homeless and/or impoverished.

Term length: 10 months
Ages: 17-20 may apply with Service Adventure



Photo by Rick Lee

Teacher/agriculturalist/intern
Benin

Join the ministries of *La Casa Grande-Benin*, a Christian home for children who need food, shelter, love and a family. Whether you like teaching, agricultural projects, bio-fuel production or spending time with children, you can find a placement at *La Casa Grande-Benin*.

Term length: 3 months - 1 year
Ages: 20+ may apply with Mission Network



Photo by James R. Krabill

Learn Spanish
Guatemala

Serve with the Central America Study and Service (CASAS) program in which you can focus on learning Spanish, while serving in many placements with Guatemalan partners. CASAS supports a wide range of ministries and will work with you to find the best fit.

Term length: 1 week-1 year
Ages: 18+ may apply with Mission Network, families are welcome



Photo by Deborah Byler

TAP A SHOULDER

Apply or find other placements at MennoniteMission.net/Serve.

IMCOL creation care initiative

In a workshop at the assembly of the *Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia* (IMCOL, Colombian Mennonite Church) in March, Pastor Amanda Valencia of Ibagué shared about their program in which children collect items to be recycled and bring them to the church. The children are given food to take home for their families. IMCOL is beginning a new creation care pilot project that will generate self-diagnostic tools and model ways of sensitizing and mobilizing churches toward the care of creation, which can later be replicated on a larger scale. Mennonite Mission Network has contributed a grant to this initiative. To fund projects like this one, please consider a gift to Mission Network. Visit MennoniteMission.net/Donate to get started.



Photo by Linda Shelly



Did you know we have a podcast?



Service, calling, colonialism, pain. The word "mission" can bring forth a wide range of reactions. Join Lynda and Travis as they talk with pastors, thought leaders and partners around the world about what makes some people "mission wary" and others missionaries.

'MissionWary?' is available on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, YouTube, or wherever you listen to podcasts, or at MennoniteMission.net/MissionWary.

Creation care is a calling of the church

A message from Mike Sherrill



Pentecost: the day when the tongues of fire descended upon the believers gathered in the upper room, enabling them to speak in languages they'd never spoken, so all could understand. The Holy Spirit was empowering the church for the mission of Jesus. This year, Pentecost falls on the

same date as World Environment Day, June 5.

We can observe both holidays by remembering that one of the first responsibilities laid upon human beings by God was to take care of creation (Genesis 2:15). As a mission

agency, we are committed to fostering and supporting work in creation care. Mission Network is proud to have partners around the world that work in sustainable agriculture, recycling and other "green" practices.

As followers of Jesus, the church gathered, we are called to work together to care for God's sacred, beautiful and inter-connected creation. May the Spirit inspire and empower our words and actions this Pentecost and beyond. ■

Mike Sherrill

Mike Sherrill
Executive Director

Thank you for being a part of what God is doing! How is God calling you to share in additional ways with Mennonite Mission Network?

www.MennoniteMission.net
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