

OCTOBER 2021 | NEWSLETTER

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS



CENTER FOR
Sustainable
Climate Solutions





DOUG GRABER NEUFELD
DIRECTOR'S
NOTE

“THERE’S NO WAY I COULD HAVE DONE THIS WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF MY FELLOW RIDERS.”

That is perhaps the most common comment that I heard when talking with our climate riders during the 2021 Climate Ride. They faced nearly 4000 miles of biking, storms, thorns, heat and wind, numerous flat tires, traffic, and other challenges. But nobody gave up on the journey — all of them successfully rode into Washington DC on July 28th together.

The lesson in this is glaringly obvious. The journey towards avoiding the worst of climate impacts will not succeed unless we support each other. When we join efforts as a community, we not only multiply our efforts, but we provide encouragement when the road seems too long and rough. We need the hope that comes through mutual support, in order to avoid doomism that can overtake us during the long journey.

As we all listened to the stories from the climate riders, it became clear that there is a community of support for climate action that permeates the country. From the many churches that hosted riders, to the unexpected campground encounters, to the random strangers that were so moved by the power of this group of young people that they gave their support - the riders found a world aching to find a way to make the world better in the face of climate change.

I’m blessed to have the opportunity to chair the Creation Care Task Force of the Mennonite World Conference, a worldwide community of Anabaptists. The task force has been working through the results of a worldwide survey of Mennonites, asking a variety of questions about their experiences with climate change. One striking result is to

see how respondents from affluent countries often said they were not yet experiencing the effects of climate change, whereas nearly all respondents from less affluent areas (of Africa, Asia and Latin America) said they were. This affirms what we already know — those most marginalized and vulnerable are feeling the impacts most. Yet in terms of emotions, people across the world reported similar feelings of sadness and fear, regardless of where they are in the world. The lesson here is the same — we’re a community of people across the globe that have different experiences, but we are on this journey together.

CSCS is on our own journey, and building a community of supporters. We’re still a relatively young organization (we just passed 5 years!). As we continue the programs that we’ve successfully built up, we’re looking at ways to expand and adjust how we operate, so that we have impacts that effectively “move the needle” in the Anabaptist community. Our new strategic plan identifies three areas of successful impact for CSCS, and for which there is good potential for real impact in the future: Inspiring Action, Building Networks, and Training Leaders.

At a number of stops along the way, the climate riders invited community members to ride along for the day. These were important days that energized the long-distance riders, as they experienced the broad support for a common cause. As you read the accounts in this newsletter of climate actions initiated by CSCS, we invite you to “ride along” as we continue on our journey.



MOVING THE STORY

CSCS Climate Ride

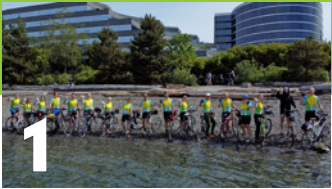


Why spend 59 days riding across the country, from Seattle to Washington DC? For 16 riders and the leaders and support staff, riding was a way of being close to the land and communities that are already being impacted by climate change — to hear and see those stories. CSCS organized this group of young people to raise awareness of climate change and to connect CSCS with a larger audience of people that is concerned about climate issues. What were their stories, and what stories did they hear? And what was their impact? The [Climate Ride website](#) has a full complement of reflections, pictures and videos that tell these stories. Here are just a few highlights:

SEE PICTURES & VIDEO OF THE CLIMATE RIDE

MOVING THE STORY

CSCS CLIMATE RIDE HIGHLIGHTS



1
May 30 / Seattle, WA - Dipping their wheels in the Pacific, riders start the journey. Kate Yoder and Daniel Penner from Grist (and Goshen College graduates) join our first townhall to lend their expertise on how to best communicate about climate change. [See video of Town Hall meeting.](#)



2
June 7 / Continental Divide, MT - Riders cross the continental divide after passing through 100 degree heat, a prelude to the record-shattering temperatures that hit the area several weeks later.



3
June 20 / Bear Lodge ("Devil's Tower") WY - Riders engage indigenous issues, are invited by Cheyenne members to spend the night in traditional tipis. [Read rider Anna Paetkau's reflection on native lands.](#) In one of many providential encounters, riders are invited by several Cheyenne members to consider how climate issues impact indigenous communities. Riders spend the night in their traditional tipis at the base of Sleeping Bear ("Devil's Tower").



4
June 24 / Oglala National Grassland, NE - The most challenging part of the trip as the group faces prairie storms, flat tires and bad roads. [Read rider Greta Lapp Klassen's reflection on how group support got them through the tough spots](#)



5
July 1 / Lincoln, NE - Riders are welcomed by Mennonites and others in the Lincoln community for the first in-person townhall, a conversation on climate and racial justice. [Watch the climate and racial justice townhall here.](#)



6
July 6 / Oxford, IA - Riders stay at the Geyer farm, joined by community members to talk about how climate affects agriculture and immigration.



7
July 14 / Goshen, IN - Several hundred join riders and guest speakers in a townhall asking the question "How should the church respond to climate change?"

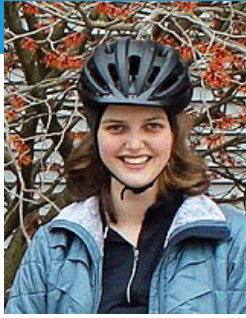


8
July 28 / Washington DC - After nearly 4000 miles, everybody successfully arrives at ride's end in our national capital! Riders meet with their lawmakers to tell their story, and to advocate for action on climate change.



MOVING THE STORY

CSCS CLIMATE RIDERS' STORIES



GRETA LAPP KLASSEN

"I think something that we all experienced this summer was just realizing how adaptable we can be, and how, once you're equipped [for] a certain situation, you can get used to a lot of different hard things — waking up at five AM, sleeping in a tent every night, and eventually,

once we got further east, being wet a lot of the time, biking seventy plus miles every day — there are a lot of things we had to get used to... There were definitely things that were hard to get used to. But it was definitely very striking, when we would get to a place where we were being welcomed in, whether it was a church community or host families, people would say 'sorry about the bed, it's not super comfortable,' or 'there's only one pillow...' [we were] realizing that those things that would matter so much, maybe, in my normal life, became very unimportant. The other thing about that is how much we lived in community with each other... Waking up at five and biking is hard, but when you're with a bunch of other people... we're all doing it together."



CALEB SCHROCK-HURST

"One of my favorite memories from the trip, and something that challenged my worldview a lot was one day, we were about three or four miles from camp, and Isaac Andreas, who is a big dumpster diver, happened to see this sign, which said 'Landfill.' He says,

'dumpster diver heaven!,' and just, without consulting any of us, turns off the route into there, and we're kinda like, well, okay, I guess we'll follow him. [After exploring the landfill and being told to leave], we go down and we stop at the office, and meet a landfill employee: completely dirty overalls, fluorescent neon shirt... a situation like that where we would — and it happened frequently on this trip — run into someone working class, people who I might expect to not know much about climate issues... It turned out that this guy basically dedicates all of his time to making the landfill as environmentally friendly as possible. Incredibly knowledgeable guy, and so much goes on in a landfill to keep the water clean, to keep the air clean... it really opened my eyes not only to the way rural working class people work really hard to keep their land clean, but also challenged my world view of just expecting that guy to not be that way." [See video](#)



WHAT YOU CAN DO...

The CSCS Climate Riders ended their journey by meeting with their lawmakers in Washington DC, and asking them to take action on climate through initiatives like the Green Climate Fund. You can join the riders' call for action by contacting your own representative, and also asking them to support climate justice by funding these international efforts. As Congress finalizes its budget for fiscal year 2022, Mennonite Central Committee is joining with a multitude of organizations calling for at least \$3.3 billion to be allotted to programs directly addressing climate change — that's less than 0.06 percent of the federal budget. Programs of this type allow high-wealth countries, which historically have been the largest contributors to climate change, to aid lower-wealth countries in building resilience and preventing some of the negative effects of climate change. [Learn more and contact your Congressional representative here.](#)

RESOURCES



ENVIRONMENTAL EXPRESSIONS IN MENNONITE HYMNALS

One of our 2020-2021 Climate Futures Fellows, Joseph Harder, is nearing completion of his research project on environmental expressions in U.S. Mennonite hymnody. This project investigated the metaphors and environmental statements made in each of the official English-language church hymnals used by U.S. Mennonites from 1902 to the present, exploring the ethical and theological import of Mennonite hymn singing. Available soon will be resources that your congregation can use in selecting and using hymns that help engage with creation care through music. [Visit the CSCS website for those resources, and for an in-depth essay analyzing this theme.](#)



COP26 RESOURCE

COP26, the twenty-sixth meeting of the 190+ international bodies that have convened at each UN climate conference since 1992, is set to take place this November. Like most other international summits, such as the G7, the COP is a big deal for the global community. At each COP, virtually every country in the world gets the chance to come together to engage in climate negotiations. View the resource crafted by CSCS Climate Advocacy Intern, Eleanor Partington, on the history of the conference, as well as hopes and expectations for this year's conference.

[Read More](#)

AMBASSADORS

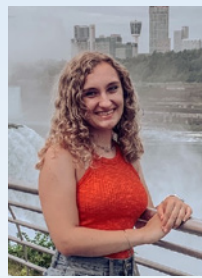
CSCS is excited to introduce our 2021-2022 cohort of Climate Ambassadors! Our ambassadors are students at various Mennonite colleges, and serve to spark conversations and plan events facilitating climate action on their respective campuses.



AIDAN SWARTZENDRUBER
HESSTON COLLEGE



ADHIKA EZRA
GOSHEN COLLEGE



SEARRA HOUGH
BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY



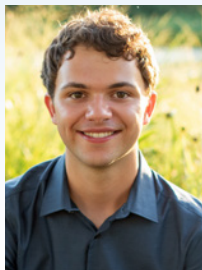
STEPHANY MEYER
BETHEL COLLEGE



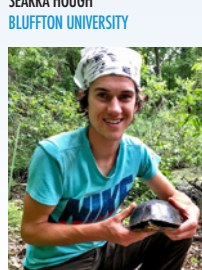
ANDREA TROYER
EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY



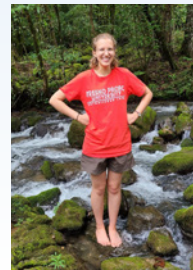
RUBY ANDERSON
CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY



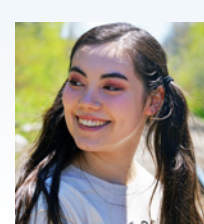
JOSHUA KENNEL
BETHEL COLLEGE



LIAM ELIAS
GOSHEN COLLEGE



MAGDALENA WENGER
FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY



ALANA MATSUO
CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

CHALLENGING THE CHURCH ON CLIMATE CHANGE



For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

COLOSSIANS 1:16 NIV

When most of us think about creation, we recall the stories from Genesis that we consider “the” creation story. And in that story, it is God alone who creates everything that is considered “creation”. But St. Paul has a bit of a different take on the matter of creation. Paul knew that the Christians in Colossae in Asia Minor were being strongly influenced by their culture—a culture that was slipping into Gnosticism and mixing all manner of religious teaching. Paul’s reason for writing the church in Colossae was to call their attention to the role of Jesus Christ in Creation— “things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible”.

What would Paul’s message be for us today? If Jesus Christ is integral to the gift of creation for us, then what must be our role as Christians to move away from our own cultural Gnosticism and embrace caring for the creation that we were freely given. As Christians we MUST care about and do something about what is happening to creation and the most vulnerable among us through Climate Change.

Pastor Doug Kaufman is CSCS’s “Director for Pastoral Ecology”. He is helping to challenge the Church to embrace our role as Christians to turn back the clock on Climate Change, through his climate retreat program. Here are a few of his reflections:

How can pastors and other church leaders lead their congregations in addressing climate justice? This is the

question I have pursued during my time with the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions. Those of us working with climate change know that we need transformational shifts in how we think and live as humans in relation to the wider creation. For this reason, the essence of my work has been to create three-day pastoral retreats called “Who cares about climate change? Pastoral responses to denial and despair.” I have led six in-person retreats and two online ones with a total of about 250 participants. Along with the retreats I preach, teach Sunday School and give presentations in schools, churches, and with community groups, reaching about 1500 people in this way.

I have focused on what I call soft forms of climate denial, those of us who believe the science but don’t live as if we did. We deny its implications. Of course, that denial also protects us from climate anxiety. I help leaders explore how spiritual practices and theological understandings can help us go beyond this denial and engage our anxiety in ways that lead to transformation.

I am excited about the future of this work as I keep exploring how to engage new leaders. I have moved beyond Mennonites. Last fall I led a retreat with a Church of the Brethren district in Ohio and am making plans with the Brethren in Christ. Going beyond Anabaptists, I am planning an interfaith event this fall and am also talking with an interdenominational group.



YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS NEEDED



As you can see, CSCS's role to help transform the Church and Christians concerning our call to be engaged in climate change work is growing. However, we need your financial and prayer support to keep moving our mission in this direction. Please accept our sincere thanks if you have given in the past. But, as we embrace new challenges related to the Church and Climate Change, we will need increased financial support to meet those challenges. Your gift today could make the difference.



[Please go to this link to give online](#)

Although we have three core partners (EMU, MCC, and Goshen), Eastern Mennonite University serves as our fiscal entity. Therefore, you will be directed to the donations system of EMU for processing your contribution. However, be assured that all online donations come to CSCS.

Blessings+

Mark Lancaster
Development Director, Center for Sustainable Climate
Solutions



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Please make the check out to "**CSCS – Eastern Mennonite University**", and send to:

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