

# GREEN CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER COVENANT

At the spring 2009 meeting of the Steering Committee of the Church of the Brethren's Outdoor Ministries Association a covenant statement drafted by the National Council of Churches' Committee on Outdoor Ministries and the Eco-justice Program, was presented and reviewed. The covenant recognizes that camps and conference centers have a special responsibility to play in protecting God's creation and maintaining places where people of faith come to experience God. The covenant can be read and signed at [www.nccecojustice.org/campcovenant.html](http://www.nccecojustice.org/campcovenant.html).

"Camp and conference centers have a unique role to play in the protection of, and education about, God's Creation", said Jordan Blevins, Assistant Director of the Eco-Justice Program of the National Council of Churches and a Church of the Brethren camper who came through Shepherd's Spring. "This covenant gives them the opportunity to put words and commitments to the values many of them have been living out for generations, and to be recognized for and supported in doing so."

The NCC's Committee on Outdoor Ministries has long maintained Creation Care as one of their main priorities, writing in their Theological Mission Statement, "Outdoor ministry settings provide space and time to encounter God, others, and creation. The sacred place apart, intentional programs of study, recreation, worship, and sustained time together, offer opportunities for Christian community. The natural environment reminds campers of the richness and variety God creates, the call to praise God, and the charge to care for all creation."

Jeff Puhlmann-Becker, chair of the NCC's Committee on Outdoor Ministries, explained, "This covenant was developed with the hopes that a wide variety of participants, leaders, camps and denominations will sign on as individuals and collective groups."

Camps across the Church of the Brethren denomination are encouraged to review this document and sign on as a supporter of this covenant. This covenant is available from the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice website at <http://nccecojustice.org/outdoor/campcovenant.php>. Text of the covenant is as follows:

*God created the Earth and all that is in it, and declared it good. God's creation is marked by wondrous complexity, interdependence, and beauty. Human beings are called to the task of stewardship – to care for the Earth as created by God, and to maintain this blessing for future generations to enjoy. Furthermore, the protection of Creation is an issue of justice, as its degradation of the Earth often disproportionately affects the "least of these".*

*Places of wilderness and solitude are places where we often experience the sacredness of Creation most clearly, and are places where God meets us, sometimes most powerfully. Whether as the site of Moses' call, the Israelites' freedom and consecration, the inspiration of prophets, the testing of Jesus, or our own experiences today, the solitude of being with God in the midst of Creation often reacquaints us with our interdependence with that Creation. Specifically, we commit ourselves to the following:*



1. *When making decisions about how to use the lands we have been blessed with, consider the sacred nature of land and wilderness as a part of God's Creation*
2. *To conserve energy in as many ways as possible, recognizing that our use of energy is a justice issue, as the impacts of energy's overuse falls on those living in poverty first, and relates to our call to care for all of God's children, especially the most vulnerable, and to protect and restore God's creation.*
3. *To practice conservation in our use of water, recognizing that good water management plays a vital role in realizing the importance of water for all communities around God's Earth.*
4. *To recycle our waste in as many ways as possible, seeking to achieve sustainability. Recycling is a tangible action that reminds us of the interdependence of the world, and seeks to sustain the ongoing capacity of natural and social system to thrive together.*
5. *To purchase environmentally sustainable products (products made seeking the sustainability defined above), as recognition that how we live our lives and make purchasing decisions have profound environmental and justice impacts on God's creation.*
6. *To continue to educate those who use our camp and conference centers to the sacred nature of the Creation they are experiencing, and to teach them how to lead lives in recognition of this sacredness.*

*We recognize that as a camp and conference center of the faith community, we have a unique role and responsibility to play in protecting God's creation and maintaining places where people of faith come to experience God.*

