Art of Being Creatures Workshops

Saturday, Oct. 31

The following four workshops will be held twice on Saturday, Oct. 31, —once in the

morning (11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.) and once in the afternoon (3:30 – 5:00 p.m.). Please read through the descriptions and sign up at the registration table for the workshops you would like to attend. Some workshops will have limitations on number of participants.

You will be able to choose two of the four.

Workshop #1

Revolutions for peace: Anabaptists for bicycling and transportation justice
Saturday, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. *and* 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
Assiniboine Castle

How we move through the world - in a literal sense - impacts how we live in right relationships with God, one another, and creation. What can young adults do to build peace through advocacy for safe walking, bicycling, and better transit in our communities? Explore practical Anabaptist theological approaches to transportation advocacy with two activists and community organizers from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. and Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Learn how you can take immediate daily actions and join a North American Anabaptist movement for transportation justice and start creating positive change in your own communities.

Workshop facilitators: Laura Pauls-Thomas and Karla Braun



Laura Pauls-Thomas is a storyteller, advocate, strategist, and joy-monger. Born and raised in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Laura has undergraduate degrees in Communication Studies and Spanish from Eastern University (Saint Davids, PA). Laura leads advocacy and community-building initiatives for safe walking, bicycling, and better transit in Lancaster with a handful of community organizations including The Common Wheel and Transit For All PA. Laura was named 2026 Emerging Leader of the Year by the League of American Bicyclists for their efforts as co-founder and director of Ride, Roll & Stroll Lancaster, a young adult-led, intergenerational advocacy and community-building organization. By day, Pauls-Thomas serves as a regional director of Communications & Constituency Engagement with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) East Coast. Laura's hobbies include bicycling, fiber arts, and content creation (@LauraCapybaraBikes on Instagram). Laura lives in Lancaster City with spouse, Andrew, and chihuahua-terrier mix, Pinto.

Karla Braun is a communicator, activist and irrepressible garbage collector. Raised in rural Manitoba, she first realized she loved cities on a family trip to Germany at age 12 and confirmed that suspicion living in the Netherlands on the Intermenno program at age 21. She moved into the core area of Winnipeg determined to walk, bike and bus



regardless of how hard the city tries to make it. Her involvement with Bike Winnipeg began at the same time, first as a volunteer, currently as a board member. She also willingly identifies with the city's bike mafia, also known by even less salutary names. Additionally, Karla organizes for Mennonite Action Canada - Winnipeg chapter, sends a lot of letters (https://kar0ling.blogspot.com) and tries to keep her fingers in as many peace and climate pies as possible. For her day job, she has messed with words and websites for Mennonite publications for nearly two decades. In her spare time she works on her mighty salved receptacles collection, turns the compost for 3 households, harvests junk pallets for firewood and folk dances.

Workshop #2

Creatures in Chorus
Saturday, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. *and* 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
Assiniboine Castle



Description: Join Andrew Pauls in collectively writing a song inspired by the themes we will explore in The Art of Being Creatures. Together, we will listen deeply and set our stories and sensations to song.

Workshop facilitator: Andrew Pauls
Andrew Pauls is an award-winning songwriter and multi-instrumentalist. He writes vivid, compassionate songs that recognize the holy in the ordinary. Andrew's new album,
"Good Things", is out on October 25th.

Workshop #3

Artifying Creatureliness
Saturday, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. *and* 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
Assiniboine Castle



Join Joni in an arts and craft session where you'll learn about our creaturely kin, the lake sturgeon, and local advocacy efforts for the protection and preservation of this special creature. We'll play with watercolour, collage, and other assorted media. All are welcome; no previous arts and crafts or advocacy experience required.

Workshop facilitator: Joni Sawatzky
Joni Sawatzky is MCC Manitoba's Peace and Advocacy Coordinator. She's also training to become a relational psychotherapist. She cares deeply about justice, playing with art as self-expression and grounding, and practicing being a whole human person.

Workshop #4

Stones cry out: Climate and militarism in our world today
Saturday, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
Assiniboine Castle

Even rocks, silent and still, tune into the Truth and cry out when other creatures do not. Can we be like the stones, noting what is happening in our world at this very moment and speaking out? Join small group and fishbowl conversations that explore the intersection of climate change and militarism, uncovering dynamics between Canada and the U.S., the role of the Arctic, the impact of extraction on our planet and more. Share thoughts on the critical question— *what does nonviolence towards Creation look like in our communities and across the globe* —as we find our place as creatures building peace and planetary flourishing.

Workshop facilitators: Kirstin De Mello and Kenton Lobe



Kirstin De Mello is the climate advocacy and education coordinator for MCC U.S. National Peace & Justice Ministries. In this role, she advocates for climate policy that encourages right relationship with the Earth and centers the needs of those most impacted by climate change and critical/ transition mineral mining. Kirstin has a masters in conflict transformation from Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. For fifteen years she engaged in community peacebuilding initiatives in several countries, including the U.S. and Zimbabwe, and with MCC in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and India. Kirstin lives with her partner, Merwyn, in Washington, D.C., on unceded Piscataway land, and nurtures the earth by planting native plants.



Kenton Lobe is a teacher/practitioner at heart. He spends the winters teaching International Development and Environmental Studies at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, and the summers tending a small farm in southern Manitoba, selling vegetables and hay through direct marketing relationships (Prairie Lights Shared Farm). Kenton's curiosity revolves around discourses of food, agriculture, justice and ecological health. He holds a Master's degree in Natural Resource Management from the University of Manitoba. Kenton has lived and worked in India, Hong Kong, and Haiti.



Art of Being Creatures Community Workshops

***The following activities will be workshops for all participants together*.**

Sowing Peace
Saturday, 9 – 10:30 a.m.
Blaurock Cafe and Great Hall
Explore the intersection of our commitment to peace and our creaturely desire to care for the earth through stories from MCC Colombia's partner, Sembrandopaz (Sowing Peace). How might we work, as a community, towards peace, community building, and right relationship with the earth here in our own place?

Workshop facilitators: Annalee Giesbrecht (left) and Kirstin De Mello (above)

Council of All Beings
Saturday, 1:30 – 3 p.m.
Blaurock Cafe and Great Hall

Experience a powerful community workshop based on the innovative environmental education approach used around the world by A Rocha, called the *Council of All Beings*. Participants are invited to give voice to and then speak on behalf of non-human aspects of the natural world. A discussion is then held by this “council” about the changes and challenges faced by different life-forms.

Adapted from Joanna Macy and the Work that Connects, The *Council of All Beings* is designed to help participants raise awareness about the interdependence between humans and the natural world they are part of, while acknowledging and giving voice to the suffering of our world.

The workshop will be facilitated for all participants in 3-4 small groups simultaneously. Details of the small group you are assigned to are on your nametag.