

Biographical Sketch of:

**Luke A. Gascho, Ed.D.**

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Dr. Luke Gascho retired on June 30, 2019 as the Executive Director of Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College, Wolf Lake, IN. He had served in this role since August 1997. Merry Lea is among the best-assembled land preserves in Indiana and contains a diverse group of Indiana ecosystems. The 1,189-acre preserve – founded in 1964 – contains a wonderful complex of wetlands, bogs, lakeshores, upland and lowland forests, prairies, and meadows. Merry Lea’s 16 team members provide support to the mission of providing environmental education for persons of all ages.

For twenty-two years, Luke led the Merry Lea team and board in strategically planning for the ways in which to best fulfill its mission. In addition to serving 5,000 K-12 students annually, Merry Lea is uniquely postured to expand environmental studies offerings at the collegiate level. He led the design and implementation of field-based undergraduate programs at Merry Lea in sustainable agriculture, environmental science and sustainability leadership.

A master of arts in environmental education program was developed and accredited in 2006 under Luke’s leadership. In 2011, he led the process for forming the Institute for Ecological Regeneration at Goshen College. The institute pursues research in field-based ecology, environmental education pedagogy and practice, creation care and stewardship, and sustainability in systems. He served as the chair of the Sustainability and Environmental Education Department at Goshen College.

With the commitment to expand the collegiate programming at Merry Lea, Dr. Gascho guided the process for creating a facility to house an ecological field station. A key objective from the beginning of design was to have the facility achieve the best in sustainable practices. Luke was instrumental in selecting a design team of architects, engineers, landscape architects, wastewater engineers, commissioners, and contractors that have worked together in outstanding collaboration to complete phase one of the facility. The project has earned the Platinum LEED rating from the U.S. Green Building Council in 2007.

In addition to his role at Merry Lea, Dr. Gascho served as chair of the Goshen College Strategic Planning Committee for fifteen years. He was a founding member of the Ecological Stewardship Committee at Goshen College, which is committed to reducing the ecological footprint of the college. Luke helped establish and provided leadership for Mennonite Creation Care Network, an organization guiding Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada in environmental stewardship. In 2013, he led the process of writing a resolution on creation care for the delegates of Mennonite Church USA, which was passed at the delegate assembly in July 2013.

Previous to his current role, Luke served as principal of the Johnstown Christian School, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, for 20 years. He taught life and physical science courses in a high school in Grenada, West Indies for three years while serving with Mennonite Central Committee.

He taught high school science and math in San Juan, Puerto Rico during a sabbatical year. Luke earned his Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 1999. His masters is in Christian School Administration is from Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Indiana, and his B.S. is in biology and secondary education from Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Luke studies and speaks on the concepts of creation care theology and ethics, leadership, and ecological systems—and the intersection of the three. He is active in projects that focus on repairing relationships with Indigenous people and regularly lectures on the topic. Luke tends his 2.5-acre urban farm and gives tours on regenerative agriculture. Luke is married to Becky. They have three adult children and four grandchildren.

## Curriculum Vitae

### **Education**

- Ed.D., 1999. Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Degree in Educational Leadership
- M.A. 1983. Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Indiana. Degree in Christian School Administration
- B.S. 1974. Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia. Degree in Biology and Education

### **Professional Experience**

- Executive Director of Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College, 1997 – retirement 2019
- Chair of the Sustainability and Environmental Education Department at Goshen College, 2010-2019
- Professor in the Master of Arts in Environmental Education program at Goshen College, 2007 – retirement 2019
- Adjunct Professor at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana, 2007 - 2013
- Chief School Administrator of Johnstown Christian School, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1979-1997
- Secondary School teacher in Grenada, West Indies with Mennonite Central Committee, 1976-79
- Principal of Johnstown Christian School, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1974-1976

### **Publications and Book Reviews:**

- Review of *American Harvest: God, Country, and Farming in the Heartland* by Marie Mutsuki Mockett for the Mennonite Quarterly Review. Volume XCV April 2021
- Book review and endorsement of *The Drama of a Rural Community's Life Cycle* by S. Roy Kaufman, August 2020
- Book review and endorsement of *Healing Haunted Histories: A Settler Discipleship of Decolonization* by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers, June 2020
- "The Pursuit of Climate Justice" in the *Learn, Pray, Join* series for Mennonite Church USA, March 15, 2020
- "A Land Acknowledgement," Bulletin: The Magazine of Goshen College, Fall/Winter 2019
- "Tilling the land on stolen land" in *The Mennonite*, May 3, 2019

- Book review and endorsement of *Watershed Discipleship* edited by Ched Myers, August 2016
- Forward to *Rooted and Grounded: Essays on Land and Christian Discipleship*, Pickwick Publications (January 28, 2016)
- “Creating Momentum through Strategic Planning” in *Stepping Up*, a publication by Mennonite Education Agency, 2012.
- “Green Buildings: Why Should a Board Care?” in *Stepping Up*, a publication by Mennonite Education Agency, 2011.
- “The Role of the Board in Creation Care” in *Stepping Up*, a publication by Mennonite Education Agency, 2010.
- *Creation Care: Keepers of the Earth*, MMA Stewardship Solutions, 2008.
- *Living in and as God's Creation*, series of essays for Adult Bible Study, Faith and Life Resources, 2006.
- "A Gateway for the Future," Bulletin: The Magazine of Goshen College, Vol. 91, #3, 2006. Available online at [http://www.goshen.edu/bulletin/Archives/2005/Gateway\\_to\\_the\\_Future](http://www.goshen.edu/bulletin/Archives/2005/Gateway_to_the_Future)

### **Current and Past Academic Courses**

- “Christian Leadership in the 21st Century” at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
- “Leadership for Environmental Education Programs and Centers,” in the Master of Arts in Environmental Education degree program at Merry Lea.
- “Faith Ethics and Ecojustice” in the Sustainability Leadership Semester – fall semester at Merry Lea
- “Creation Care: Theology, Ethics, and Spirituality” at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, IN

### **Presentation Topics**

- Regular sermons, presentations and workshops on the following topics:
  - Reparative actions for Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery
  - Elkhart County: Potawatomi and Settler Histories
  - Regenerative agriculture in the urban setting
  - My life in Indigenous Landscapes
  - Ecological Leadership: Patterns in Nature as a Design for Leadership
  - Regenerative Stewardship of God’s Creation
  - Faith, Hope and Creation Care
  - Sustainable Living is Joy-Filled Living
  - The Church and Climate Change; a call to action
  - Greening Congregations as an Act of Faith
  - Sustainable Building Design and Redesign
  - Building Green in Indiana: A Case Study of Rieth Village
  - Sustainability, Stewardship and Spirituality
  - Systems Thinking as a Framework for Strategic Planning
  - Encountering God in Nature

### **Awards**

- Executive Director Emeritus of Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College – awarded by Goshen College Board of Directors, June 2022
- 2020 Alumnus of the Year, Eastern Mennonite University

- Environmental Educator of the Year, 2019 Howard Michaud Award from the Environmental Education Association of Indiana

### **Leadership Activities**

- Indiana Humanities Unearthed Speakers Bureau – 2021 to present
- Formed and leads the Potawatomi-Miami Trail Marker Committee – 2021 to present
- Member of the Anabaptist Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery – 2014-present
- Board member for the Maple City Market Coop – 2022-present
- Board member for the Anabaptist Climate Collaborative 2022-2023
- Chair of the Rooted and Grounded Conference Planning Committee at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary – 2021 and 2023
- Member of the Indigenous Studies Committee for Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2022-2023
- Facilitated future planning retreats for several non-profit organizations – 2021-2022
- Founding leader of the Mennonite Creation Care Network (MC USA and MC Canada)
- Founding member of the Ecological Stewardship Committee at Goshen College
- Member of the Mennonite Central Committee Creation Care Task Force
- Member of the Mennonite World Conference International Planning Committee for Care of Creation
- Signatory on the Evangelical Climate Initiative
- Regular participant in the Creation Care Leaders Forum of the Evangelical Environmental Network
- Founding board member for Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light