

The movement which started with Faithful Climate Conversations from For the Love of Creation

Brandon Manitoba is a city of approximately 50,000 people in the prairies. It is located on the banks of the Assiniboine River surrounded by agricultural activity. It is on Treaty 2 territory, traditional land of the Anishinabek, Ojibway, Cree, Oji Cree, Dene, Dakota and homeland of the Red River Métis.

For a number of years there have been individuals concerned about the impact of climate change, and the community actions which contribute to it. At Knox United Church, an active Green Team has been providing education and recommending actions which will reduce the impact. KAIROS members at Knox have been sharing resources and campaigns related to climate protection. We have been aware of possible partners in the community who share the concern for creation. These include other faith communities, naturalist organizations, farm organizations, school-based environment groups and more. We recognized that the collaborative efforts of all those concerned about reducing the global GHG emissions and learning to live differently was critical.

In February 2021, the Faithful Climate Conversation resources shared by For the Love of Creation were identified as the perfect tool for bringing people together in discussion and exploring ways in which this issue could be raised and addressed in our community. The three Climate Conversations were promoted in Brandon and surrounding communities, and hosted on Zoom. Madelyn Robinson, a member of the Knox Green Team with education and experience in environmental science and Debby Dandy, a KAIROS member, coordinated the gatherings. The attendance was not large for these conversations but it was meaningful and passionate. On conclusion of the third and final conversation the goal of establishing a community based environmental action group was set.

Over the next few months, attendees from the Climate Conversations, members of other organizations concerned about climate, and individuals with a love of creation were invited to be part of a larger discussion about specific actions that could be taken by citizens in Brandon. Eventually 20 individuals came together from a variety of backgrounds and organizations, including students from Brandon University, youth from high school environment groups, other environmental groups such as Bee City, Council of Canadians, and Assiniboine Food Forest, and concerned community members.

The group has been engaged in many activities and has established a presence in the community.

Some of our accomplishments:

- Established a group named Sustainable Brandon
- Successfully applied for a Manitoba Green Team grant and hired a university student to complete an excellent report on the climate protection actions taken by 10 cities across Canada of comparable size to Brandon. This report was shared widely. Both Manitoba's Climate Action Team and the City of Brandon requested a copy.

- Sustainable Brandon confirmed a constitution and formal membership process.
- Members participated in the planning forums held by the City of Brandon in preparation for the City Climate Plan.
- Vigil for Climate Change was held in November 2022 as part of a national For the Love of Creation initiative, Candles for COP.
- An application to the Manitoba Climate Action Team was successful and Sustainable Brandon received a grant of \$50,000 for a climate action project in Brandon.
- Received funding to conduct a Green Audit of a building in Brandon and chose the Brandon Friendship Center which is responsible for many buildings in the city. This project includes training employees at the BFC as well as members of Sustainable Brandon to conduct Green Audits. The project received \$8500 to support the cost of a retrofit that they identify as part of the Green Audit.
- Community Workshops were delivered with leadership from the Green Action Centre: composting, vermicomposting, creating nontoxic cleaning products at home, sharing and recycling products rather than discarding them. Other workshops will be scheduled in coming months.
- Sustainable Brandon supported the public event partnering with Manitoba Sustainable Energy Association, Manitoba Electric Vehicle Association and the Knox United Green Team to showcase electric vehicles and provide information.
- Sustainable Brandon has established sub-committees which are active in areas of Wetland Protection, Transportation, and Housing. Members gather information, research issues and propose actions for the organization to pursue.
- Sustainable Brandon has made a presentation at Brandon City Council, sharing concerns, and encouraging the actions contained in the Brandon Climate Plan.

We are grateful for the For the Love of Creation resources and the framework it provided for us to get people together discussing local and global climate change. Sustainable Brandon came out of that process, and will be a lasting initiative which we hope will drive community action.

Submitted by: Debby Dandy and Madelyn Robinson

July 6, 2023

Editor's Note: Faith Climate Conversation guides can be accessed at <https://fortheloveofcreation.ca/engagement/>