

## Mission Statement and Rationale

Good environmental citizenship, which involves responsible stewardship of land and resources, and minimizing our harmful impact on the environment around us, at Bethel College grows out of the following understandings and commitments:

1. Public commitments by Mennonite Church USA. Article 21, "Christian Stewardship," from the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective (1995), states "As stewards of God's earth, we are called to care for the earth and to bring rest and renewal to the land and everything that lives on it. As stewards of money and possessions, we are to live simply..." These ideals inform the College's environmental mission statement and align with our mission as the Church. The broad concept of peace embraces an individual's personal peace with God, peace among people within community, peace among nations, and peace with the Creation.
2. The educational mission of the College. The core purpose of Bethel College is the education of its students. Essential aspects of a modern liberal arts education include developing basic intellectual skills, promoting global responsibility, understanding the interconnections between groups of people and between humans and the natural world, and achieving awareness of global environmental issues and the part each of us can play in solving environmental problems. Our graduates need to be prepared to serve in a world in flux, to be "at home" within a diversity of lands and cultures. The College, however, exists not just for the intellectual cultivation of its graduates, but also for the benefit and improvement of society. Bethel also has a core value of service—to college, to church, to local community, and to the wider global community of the Earth and its inhabitants.

Bethel College is especially placed in a convergence of suburbs, open farmland, and semi-wild habitat. We thus have a rare opportunity as well as a particular responsibility to use the natural world as a resource for teaching and engaging students. Bethel can distinguish itself regionally through its public statements, its environmental policies implemented, and by its daily actions that demonstrate a deep concern for, and protection of, the natural world.

3. Our obligation to Earth's inhabitants and to future generations of people. Humanity's use of natural resources, its "ecological footprint," is now exceeding the regenerative capacity of the Earth. Our demand for Earth's resources exceeds the supply by about 30 percent. In other words, it takes the biosphere at least a year and four months to replenish what humankind uses in a single year. Colleges and universities, in particular, should be leading the way in moving society toward a sustainable future. To lead by example, Bethel College desires to become a more environmentally conscious campus. Bethel thus strives to become a model of environmental citizenship by incorporating ideals of sustainability into the operations of the College and the daily life of its students and employees.