

Camp Friedenwald, MI  
19 Oct 2011

### **Former Mennonite Brethren Fellowship:**

A small group of former Mennonite Brethren (MB) who have been negatively impacted by anti-gay sentiments within the MB met for a time of fellowship twice during the Denominational Times at the last *A Circle Ever Wider SCN Pastor's Retreat* at Camp Friedenwalde in Michigan:

1. Inspired by the pro-active brainstorming of the Mennonite Church and Brethren Church denominational groups, the former Mennonite Brethren felt it useful to identify as former Mennonite Brethren who have been adversely impacted by the anti-gay policies and actions of the Mennonite Brethren Church and to encourage BMC to maintain the former Mennonite Brethren outreach as both a useful organizational and fellowshiping outreach to those who have been excluded from membership and fellowship with their home Mennonite Brethren base either as church leaders, individual members or entire congregations.
2. It is important to maintain a beacon of hope and fellowship to individuals, church leaders, pastors and congregations who are dealing positively with the question of gay and lesbian membership or who have been adversely impacted by anti-gay sentiments and politics within the churches. We will continue to confer with BMC regarding useful resources and outreach.
3. Regarding recent experiences and research that all branches of the Anabaptist faith, including Amish, Evangelical Mennonites, Hutterites and other small groups are home to increasingly visible communities of gay and lesbian youth, we encourage BMC to maintain its role as a resource and repository of the Anabaptist LGBT narrative for all Anabaptist identities.
4. We will encourage members of the smaller Anabaptist cultures to submit testimonies to BMC for publication and inclusion in the BMC newsletter.
5. Regarding ways to encourage Inter-Mennonite in Calgary, Inter-Mennonite determined instead to turn the question into how Inter-Mennonite can more effectively reach other Mennonite and Brethren congregations in Canada.
  - a. Recommendations are to pursue continued relationship building with a small number of churches who have reached out to BMC in the past.
  - b. Despite the greater social visibility of Canada's LGBT community, only a small number of Mennonite churches have come out as welcoming congregations.
  - c. Perhaps Inter-Mennonite could host a retreat weekend for LGBTers and those who seek to end anti-LGBT discrimination within their congregations to network and fellowship. BMC's experience with the larger denominations is seemingly often that pastors are more inclined to be welcoming but are unable to lead more hesitant congregations to confront the issue. A general outreach to individuals within congregations might be the place to turn one's energies.

The former Mennonite Brethren fellowship spent about an hour in prayer to uphold welcoming congregations and for encouragement to LGBT youth and individuals within functioning, non-welcoming Mennonite Brethren and other Anabaptist congregations.