



NewsNet - January 2011

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Travel Pictures from the Chicago area...



Nancy Ulrich (left), Carolyn DeCoursey, and Christy Waldersdorf (in pink), of York Center Church of the Brethren receive a Supportive Communities Network plaque from BMC's Carol Wise (middle) and Kirsten Freed (right).



Christian Peacemaker Team trainees work on an exercise during BMC's undoing oppression workshop.

1. First Mennonite Church Champaign-Urbana Joins SCN

BMC is pleased to announce that First Mennonite Church Champaign-Urbana, after a process of education and discernment, has become the latest congregation to join the Supportive Communities Network as a congregation that is publicly affirming of LGBT people. Their inclusion statement reads: "Seeking to experience the full richness of Christ's body, we welcome into fellowship and membership all persons who confess faith in Jesus Christ, inclusive of diversity of age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic or social class, education, and physical or mental condition."

To learn more about this welcoming congregation, go to their website at www.fmc-cu.org. There are currently fifty SCN Mennonite and Brethren communities. Welcome to First Mennonite!

2. BMC Gathering - October 7-9

BMC will host its community gathering on October 7-9 at [Ronora Lodge](#) in southwestern Michigan. It has been a number of years since the far flung BMC community has gathered, and we look forward to a time of fun and relaxation together. If you have ideas about things you would like to see happen during the gathering, particular themes, or interesting individuals whom you think would be great as a presenter, please let us know.

3. Think Pink!

It's time to start thinking pink! Energy is beginning to spark as Pink Menno gears up for the MCUSA Assembly in Pittsburgh this summer. Your ideas for activities and events, as well as your financial support is needed to help make this campaign for lgbt inclusion within the church even more visible and strong. To learn more about Pink Menno and how you can be a part of this exciting movement for change, go to www.pinkmenno.org. See you in Pittsburgh!

4. Information Sought About COB District Hearings

BMC is collecting information about our community's experience with the Church of the Brethren Special Response Process. We have heard some positive and also some very negative things about this process and want to learn more. If you participated in a district hearing or were part of a special study group as an ally or lgbt person, we are interested in learning what that experience was like for you, how you felt, and/or any other reflections that you are willing to share. We are also interested in knowing reasons why you may have elected not to participate in the district hearings. Please send your comments to Carol Wise at bmc@bmclgbt.org. Thank you! Your confidentiality will be respected.

5. BMC Job Opening - Kaleidoscope Position

The Kaleidoscope Coordinator is a full-time one or two year volunteer position at BMC that provides support, resources and programming for Mennonite and Brethren lgbtqa youth and young adults. The coordinator also assists with general office duties as assigned by the executive director. The position offers an opportunity to travel, to learn about how a non-profit runs, to experience the joys of living in Minnesota, and most importantly, to make a difference in individual lives and within the church. This position will be available August 2011. If you are interested or know someone who might be, please contact Carol Wise at bmc@bmclgbt.org. More information about the position is available [here](#). Although we have applied, BMC is not a recognized placement for Brethren Volunteer Service or Mennonite Voluntary Service. However, we are graciously recognized by the [Lutheran Volunteer Corps](#) and the Volunteer Ministries of the [United Church of Christ](#), who offer their programmatic support for this position.

6. Connecting Families Weekend - March 18-20

The Pearlstone Conference and Retreat Center in Reisterstown, Maryland, is the site for the annual Connecting Families Weekend on March 18-20, 2011. This is a wonderful opportunity for Mennonite and Brethren parents and families with LGBT members as well as LGBT people themselves, to gather to share stories, relax in a supportive environment, and work at ways to educate and engage the church in dialogue and understanding. This year's theme is One in Christ: Dividing Walls Destroyed and will be led by the planning committee. Amy Yoder McGloughlin, pastor of Germantown Mennonite Church, will preach at the Sunday morning worship service. Download a brochure and/or register at www.bmclgbt.org/documents/2011CFBrochure_001.pdf.

7. Save the Date - Progressive Brethren Gathering

The 2011 Gathering will take place in Elgin, Illinois from November 11-13. You can check out photos and the keynote address from last year's Gathering at ProgressiveBrethren.org.

8. Transgender Rights Bill - Canada

Gender identity is currently not included in the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#), which prohibits discrimination against particular groups of people. Sexual orientation was added in 1996. This week you can help ensure that transgender people receive the same protections lesbian, gay and bisexual people have gained. Bill C-389 has been moved up on the House of Commons Order Paper thanks to cooperation between MPs Olivia Chow and [Bill Siksay](#). Debate in the House begins February 7, with a vote expected the evening of February 9. Find out how your MP voted on the first reading of the bill (which passed narrowly in December), and encourage them to attend and to vote in favour of rights for all people. The bill would then progress to the Senate.

9. US Passports Slightly Easier for Transgender People

Recent revisions to policies regarding changing the gender on passports means it will be slightly easier for transgender people to obtain accurate forms of identification. Under the updated policy, an individual can submit a letter from a "licensed physician who has treated the (passport) applicant or reviewed and evaluated the medical history of the applicant" (www.state.gov/documents/organization/143160.pdf). This is a small but important step towards justice and dignity for the transgender community. For more information, see related articles on the websites of the [National Center for Transgender Equality](#) or the [Transgender Legal Defense Education Fund](#).

10. State of Higher Education for LGBT People

Not surprisingly, this 2010 report (www.campuspride.org) on post-secondary institutions in the US reveals the harassment and discrimination that LGBT students, faculty and staff face on campuses. The report outlines best practices for creating positive climates that in turn benefit students' educational experiences such as: develop inclusive policies, demonstrate institutional commitment, integrate LGBT issues and concerns in curricular and co-curricular education, respond appropriately to anti-LGBT incidents/bias, create brave spaces for student dialogues in on-campus housing, offer comprehensive counseling and healthcare, and improve recruitment and retention efforts.

11. Ugandan LGBT Rights Activist Killed

David Kato of [Sexual Minorities Uganda](#) was killed at his home on January 27. According to [Amnesty International](#), various human rights organizations "have documented the steady increase in discrimination, arbitrary arrests, incommunicado detention, torture and other ill-treatment on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in Uganda, and against activists exposing violations against LGBT people."

Sexual Minorities Uganda has been one of the organizations advocating against the proposed Anti-Homosexuality Bill. While homosexuality is already a crime in Uganda, the bill would increase punishment to a death sentence. International media stories at the time drew connections between the legislation and several American evangelicals who visited Uganda spreading anti-lgbt messages.

12. Travel

Mar 10-13: Kirsten at Lutheran Volunteer Corp retreat

Mar 12: Carol leading anti-oppression training at LVC retreat

March 18-20: Carol to Maryland for Connecting Families Weekend

If we're going to be in your area, let us know! We'd love to meet with you.

BMC Staff

[Carol Wise](#) - Executive Director, SCN Coordinator

[Kirsten Freed](#) - Kaleidoscope Coordinator, BMC Volunteer

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BMC
Box 6300
Minneapolis, MN 55406
US

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