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1. BMC AWARDED BOOTH AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

IT HAPPENED! BMC is very pleased to announce that we have been approved for a booth in the exhibit hall at the 2012 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. After more than twenty years of applications, appeals, witnesses, disappointments, mobile booths and endless conversations, BMC can finally take its rightful place at Annual Conference. We are intensely grateful for the countless people over the years who have patiently and persistently worked for this moment, particularly Martin Rock, Everett Fisher, Jim Sauder and Dave McFadden. We are also especially thankful for Womaen's Caucus, who has been a partner in solidarity for many, many years.

Please take a moment to thank the Program and Arrangements Committee for their decision. You may contact them via Annual Conference Executive Director Chris Douglas, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120.

Thank you to everyone who has worked for this moment. More details will be coming as we plan how best to celebrate this achievement. Until then, we'll see you at the booth in St. Louis this summer!

2. It's a Movement!

BMC is delighted to announce three additions to the Supportive Communities Network (SCN) of communities who are publicly affirming of lgbt people. We are pleased to note that SCN has grown by nearly 20% in 2011! Welcome to:

Hyattsville Mennonite Church in Hyattsville, Maryland. This congregation has been supportive of lgbt people for many years, and it is a delight to welcome them to SCN. Currently under discipline from the Allegheny Conference for their welcoming posture, Hyattsville is a growing and dynamic community of faith that offers a vision of peace, justice and hope within the shadows of the nation's capital.



Goshen City Church of the Brethren in Goshen, Indiana. It's not just Mennonites who live in Goshen - this group of Brethren have made us all proud! After a significant process of discernment covering several months, the body was unanimous in its decision to join SCN at its recent congregational business meeting. BMC is pleased to welcome this congregation that practices service, community and warm hospitality.

LGBT Welcome Group of Perkasio Mennonite Church in Perkasio, Pennsylvania. This group of nearly half of the active adults at Perkasio Mennonite, has made joining SCN a first order of business. Their statement reads as follows: *Perkasio Mennonite Church values spiritual seekers and tries to create a safe place for all who wish to journey towards God's joy and wholeness with us. We value the gifts and participation of many types of people, without regard to age, ability, class, race, gender or sexual orientation. The LGBT Welcome Group, part of the PMC congregation, is a member of Supporting Communities Network and is committed to support the LGBT community.*

To learn more about how your congregation can be part of this growing movement, please contact the BMC office at bmc@bmclgbt.org or call 612.343.2060.

3. Open Letter Pastors

The Open Letter Pastors have issued a new challenge to Mennonite Church USA by asking whether one issue is to define what it means to be a faithful Mennonite. Noting that there have always been differences among Mennonites over the interpretations of church documents, they state that, "Those advocating full inclusion of LGBT people are not going away, at least not voluntarily. Imposing greater uniformity or stronger rules is not going to change that." [Click here](#) to read the full letter that is contained in the November 28, 2011 issue of the Mennonite Weekly Review.

4. Brethren SCN Pastors Issue Letter

The December issue of *The Messenger*, the Church of the Brethren's denominational magazine, includes a full page ad that is a letter from Brethren SCN pastors to those in the church who were disturbed by the tone and actions of the 2011 Annual Conference. The pastors issue an invitation to join them in "identifying with the radical inclusive love of Jesus" and "practicing the healing and transforming power of hospitality." They invite others to sign on. [Click here](#) to read the letter and add your name to the list by sending your name and the name of your congregation to SCNletter@bmclgbt.org.

5. BMC Ontario Winter Retreat

Please reserve the date for the 2012 BMC Ontario Winter Retreat. Friday February 10th - Sunday February 12th 2012. More details coming soon!

6. Progressive Brethren Gathering

The Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren and the COB National Offices were the sites for a very successful *No Turning Back Progressive Brethren Gathering* in November. Keynote presenter Dr. Sharon Welch, Provost and Professor of Religion and Society at Meadville Lombard Theological School reminded participants about the relevance of non-violent direct action as a tool for peace. This provided a point of reference for the bulk of the Gathering, which consisted of vigorous conversations, presentations and reflections about how to move forward as a progressive people. To view web casts (thank you, Enten Eller) from the Gathering, go to www.progressivebrethren.org.

7. College News

On November 17-19 BMC visited McPherson and Bethel College. Reuben met with several Faculty and student leaders of G.L.O.W. (Gay, Lesbian or whatever). Carol spoke at Bethel's common ground convocation. Reuben and Carol met with Bethel's newly formed GSA.



Reuben has created a facebook page for the various LGBTQ and Ally student groups of the church of the Brethren and Mennonite colleges. It was created to strengthen and network the groups. If you would like to learn more about what is happening contact Reuben at bmclgbt@bmc.org.

8. Connecting Families East and West

Connecting Families Weekend is a relaxing time for Mennonite and Brethren families with lgbt members and lgbt people to gather, share common experiences, and support one another. For nearly two decades this event has been a place of healing and hope for many families and individuals.

BMC is pleased to announce that BMC Oregon is planning a West Coast Connecting Families Weekend. The event will be held on March 30- April 1, 2012 at Camp Myrtlewood in Bridge, Oregon. For additional information, contact bmcoregon@earthlink.net or view Connecting Families West Coast on [Facebook](#).

Connecting Families East will be held on April 20-22, 2012 at the Pearlstone Conference and Retreat Center in Reisterstown, Maryland. Randall Spaulding will be the featured presenter. To download a brochure to register for this event, go to www.bmclgbt.org.

9. Your Support is Needed

This has been a busy and productive year for BMC. Thanks to the many who have supported us, lgbt welcome and justice is becoming more of a reality within Mennonite and Brethren congregations, colleges and organizations. The Supportive Communities Network is growing, college campus lgbt and ally groups are becoming more active, BMC workshops are being offered at various venues, our dream of a booth at Annual Conference has become a reality, almost a dozen elder histories have been documented, and more and more individuals and congregations are making the connections between faith, hospitality and lgbt welcome.

We need your help to keep the momentum going. Please consider making a generous contribution to BMC. You may send a check to: BMC/Box 6300/Minneapolis, MN 55406, donate on [Facebook](#), or simply [click here](#). Thank you so very much for your support!

10. *SCN Video: One Congregation's Story

Pastor Karl Shelly speaks about Assembly Mennonite Church's journey to becoming a member of SCN. This is a new resource for congregations exploring joining SCN. Special thanks to Jacob Landis-Eigsti, a Goshen College student and the owner of Reimagine Cinema, who shot and edited the video. [Click here](#) to watch.

11. Hillary Clinton: UN International Human Rights Day Declaration

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in a landmark speech, marked International Human Rights Day (Dec 6) by declaring unequivocally that "gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights." She also used the occasion to announce that the US will use diplomacy and \$3 million in foreign aid to help expand the rights of LGBT people across the globe. In one of her concluding paragraphs, Clinton says:

There is a phrase that people in the United States invoke when urging others to support human rights: "Be on the right side of history." The story of the United States is the story of a nation that has repeatedly grappled with intolerance and inequality. We fought a brutal civil war over slavery. People from coast to coast joined in campaigns to recognize the rights of women, indigenous peoples, racial minorities, children, people with disabilities, immigrants, workers, and on and on. And the march toward equality and justice has continued. Those who advocate for expanding the circle of human rights were and are on the right side of history, and history honors them. Those who tried to constrict human rights were wrong, and history reflects that as well.

To read the full text of this remarkable speech, go to: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/>

12. Travel

January 4-6: Carol to Bethany Seminary in Richmond, Indiana
March 8-12: Reuben to Lutheran Volunteer Corps Mid-Year Retreat
March 30-April 1: Carol to Connecting Families West in Bridge, Oregon
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

[Reuben Sancken](#) - Kaleidoscope Coordinator, BMC Volunteer

BMC wishes you and your loved ones a joyous holiday!

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