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BRETHREN MENNONITE COUNCIL
FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL
AND TRANSGENDER INTERESTS

BMC NewsNet November 2012

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1. The Tide is Turning!

After many years of painful defeats, persistent hope, and hard, hard work, the tide is finally turning. Voters in Maine, Maryland and Washington voted in favor of marriage equality on the same night as voters in Minnesota rejected a constitutional amendment that would ban same sex marriage. This brings the number to nine states that support marriage equality, plus the District of Columbia – significant in that it exceeds the tipping point of approximately 15-18%. In addition, the election of Tammy Baldwin from Wisconsin makes her the first openly gay member of the US Senate. What made the difference? Certainly there are many factors, but a significant one is simple awareness. In the 1990's, most Americans said they didn't know anyone close to them who was gay or lesbian. In 2010, 49% of Americans said they had a close friend or family member who is gay or lesbian. In 2012, that number is 60%. BMC thanks everyone, gay and straight, who has risked, sacrificed and worked diligently to help move the US, and our denominations, to this kinder and more just place.

2. Election Stress

It is very stressful to have your life and/or the lives of your loved ones become objects of debate in contentious elections, regardless of the ultimate outcome of the vote. The constant stream of anti-lgbt rhetoric is difficult to stomach and may result in reactions of fear, sadness, anger, pain as one confronts the reality of homophobia, or a reduced self esteem as one internalizes the negative messages. Psychologist Glenda Russell (University of Colorado at Boulder) has developed some helpful responses to foster resistance and resiliency to anti-lgbt politics in her piece "Surviving and Thriving in the Midst of Anti-Gay Politics."

In addition, BMC is one of the co-sponsors of a post-election virtual gathering for those working for lgbtq justice in the political arena. *A Ritual of Pause, Letting Go, Gratitude and Hope* offers an opportunity to give thanks for successes, lament losses, pray, sing, and worship together. The event will be held on Thursday, November 8 at 1:00 EST. To participate online, go to www.welcomingresources.org and follow the instructions under the article "Post-Election Virtual Ritual." To simply join the audio conference, dial 650-479-3208 and use the access code 806-776-589.

3. Progressive Brethren Gathering Report



The Progressive Brethren Gathering, held October 26-28 in La Verne, California, was a wonderful celebration of warm hospitality, positive community building, uplifting worship, timely education, and, with the performance of *Annual Conference: The Musical*, just plain fun. The weather was perfect, highlighting the colorful rainbow banners flying from the church bell tower. Thank you to the La Verne Church of the Brethren for their gracious hosting and hard work. Thank you also to Enten Eller, whose technological skills made it possible for most of the event to be webcasted. [Click here](#) to watch the recorded segments of the Gathering.

4. Brethren SCN Pastors and Board Chairs Meet

Pastors and/or board chairs from a dozen Brethren SCN congregations met for a day and a half of meetings following the Progressive Brethren Gathering. The group had lively conversation in which they evaluated the state of the welcoming movement within the Church of the Brethren, discussed the general health of the denomination, and considered ways in which to engage or not engage the larger church. Kurt Borgmann, pastor at the North Manchester Church of the Brethren, led the group in an exercise to discern the good news of the welcoming movement in 7 words. [Click here](#) to see how members of the group responded. Plans are underway to enhance structures of communication for better support and action.

5. Sunnyslope Church Joins SCN



BMC is very pleased to welcome [Sunnyslope Church](#) of Wenatchee, Washington, as the newest member of the Supportive Communities Network (SCN) as a congregation that welcomes and affirms lgbt people as full participating members. Sunnyslope is affiliated both with the Church of the Brethren and the United Church of Christ. Their unique statement of welcome begins, "Come as you are. No dress code. No judgment. No discriminations. No distinctions..." Welcome Sunnyslope!

6. Safe Zone Training at Bluffton University

In October, Reuben co-led an eight hour Safe Zone training for the Bluffton University community. The training was sponsored by Safe Space, the student group created to support and affirm lgbtq members of the college community. Reuben led the training with Georgia Metz, co-leader of Safe Space, and Alex Sider and Kathy Dickson, the two faculty advisors for Safe Space. The focus of the training was on the theme of safety. The training also incorporated plenty discussion about the environment at Bluffton for lgbtq people and the role Safe Space can take to promote inclusion. Reuben was encouraged by the participants' passion to make Bluffton a safe and welcoming space. Thank you to members of Safe Space and their advisors for providing meals, travel, and arranging the schedule and accommodations for the visit!



7. Reuben's Magical VS House Bus Tour goes to Chicago



The Chicago MVS Unit has created an lgbtq inclusion task force! [Click here](#) to read more about Reuben's latest adventure! Contact Reuben at kaleidoscope@bmclgbt.org to learn more about this project and arrange a visit to your unit!

8. Artist Joseph Quintela Reaches Out to NYC LBGT Youth

The [Ali Forney Center](#) is the major resource for homeless lgbtq youth in New York City. Unfortunately, their drop in center was destroyed by Hurricane Sandy. This was a place where lgbtq homeless youth could come for food, showers, clothing, medical care, HIV testing and mental health services. Artist Joseph Quintela, formerly of the [St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship](#) (an SCN congregation), and now a resident of NYC, has announced that he will donate 1/3 of the proceeds from his art sales to the Ali Forney Center to help them get reestablished. To view his work, go to www.footknots.com.

9. Transgender Day of Remembrance

Transgender Day of Remembrance is held each year on November 20. It is a time to memorialize those killed because of hatred or prejudice towards transgender people, and to stand in solidarity with the transgender community. Levels of violence and discrimination are on the rise and are particularly severe for transgender and gender non-conforming people of color, highlighting the painful intersections between racism and anti-transgender bias. Memorial services are being held all over the world. To see if there is one in your community, go to www.transgenderdor.org.

10. Travel

December 7: Reuben to Minneapolis, MN for Lutheran Volunteer Corps Workshop
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

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