



NewsNet - May 2011

Congratulations to Sue Blauch and Karen Meyers of Harrisonburg Virginia! Karen and Sue recently married in Washington DC and are pictured with their Certificate of Marriage.



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1. Students Get Active - Request Alumni Support

There is amazing work being done at many of our Brethren and Mennonite affiliated colleges and universities. We would like to highlight two who are asking for alumni support:

Goshen College: An open letter by students to the Goshen College community, about exclusive hiring policies. Signatures from students and staff were in the hundreds after a few days. They are specifically soliciting alumni signatures as well. See gcopenletter.org.

Manchester College: Members of three student groups (United Sexualities, Kenapoc Coalition and Feminist Student Union/Gender Cafe) have collaborated to form the Active Inclusive Movement. They are looking for lgbtq alumni to provide mentorship to lgbtq students entering the workforce, and alumni willing to speak on a panel about your experiences as an lgbtq student at Manchester. For details contact aim@manchester.edu.

Do you know what the current campus climate is at your former school? Alumni voices carry weight. Contact your school's gay-straight alliance, ask what kind of projects they have been working on recently, and consider how you can use your status as an alumnus to support their work. If your school does not have an lgbtq and/or allies group, contact the dean of students or campus minister, and ask why. Express your interest, and find out if there are staff, faculty, or students who would be

interested in talking to lgbtq-supportive alumni. The BMC office can provide contact information for Brethren and Mennonite affiliated colleges, universities, and seminaries, and would also be happy to hear how your conversation went.

2. Pastor Expelled from Bi-national Worship Council



Randy Spaulding, pastor of Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, Florida and a key member of the Bi-national Worship Council, was recently expelled from the Council by leaders of MCUSA because he is an openly gay man. While recognizing Randy's gifts for music and worship, Terry Shue (Director of Leadership Development) and Ervin Stutzman (Executive Director MCUSA) made the decision to expel Randy, citing his "homosexual relationship." A Letter of Lament to MCUSA Leadership has been developed by Pink Menno. To add your name to a growing list of individuals who are tired of the heavy-handed efforts to silence and purge the church of lgbt people and our allies, go to www.pinkmenno.org. To view Randy's response, click [here](#).

3. Retreat for SCN Pastors Announced

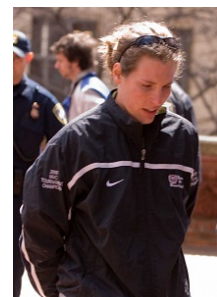
The journey toward lgbt justice and welcome gains momentum every day. The time is ripe for pastors of SCN (Supportive Communities Network) congregations to gather their collective wisdom, share experiences, and creatively engage new challenges and opportunities before us. *A Circle Ever Wider, A People Ever Free* is a three day retreat that offers SCN pastors an opportunity to explore together the next level of theological, biblical and pastoral discourse in the Mennonite and Brethren welcoming church movement. We anticipate rich conversation, moving worship and mutual encouragement as we offer leadership to an ever-emerging vision. Although not fully over, we trust that the age of church fear and failure to appreciate the gifts and faithfulness of lgbt sisters and brothers will soon run its course. In this conference we prepare for the new spirit-fed age of an inclusive and risk-taking church.

The retreat is scheduled for October 17-20, 2011 at Camp Friedenswald in Cassopolis, Michigan.

4. Seattle Mennonite Pastors Protest Empire



Sarah Klaassen and Weldon Nisly, pastors at Seattle Mennonite Church (a Supportive Communities Network congregation), were recently arrested along with two others from their congregation as part of a Good Friday liturgical action at the Federal Building in Seattle. They were there protesting the pervasive nature of US empire. Sarah has written very movingly about her experience on [her blog](#). Check it out!



5. COB Annual Conference Appeal Update

Three representatives from BMC; Ralph McFadden, David McFadden and Carol Wise, held a conference call with members of the (Church of the Brethren) Standing Committee Appeals Committee in April regarding BMC's exclusion from the Annual Conference exhibit hall. The Appeals

Committee is also scheduled to talk with the Program and Arrangements Committee, who made the decision to exclude BMC. The next step is to appear at a hearing in front of Standing Committee the day before Annual Conference begins. Oddly, the hearing is only supposed to determine whether the Program and Arrangements Committee followed proper policies and procedures, rather than potentially overturn the decision itself.

6. BMC at Denominational Conferences

Plans are currently in process for a BMC presence at both the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Grand Rapids and the Mennonite Church USA Assembly in Pittsburgh. Be on the lookout for a special conference edition of NewsNet that will detail activities and schedules. Mennonites are encouraged to "think pink" and track Pink Menno at www.pinkmenno.org.

7. Outspoken Online: On Silencing Easter

By Steven Wall - *"Mennonites, Brethren and other Christians have long understood and reflected on the power of words to create, to convict and to unify.... Less positively, the Mennonite-Amish also learned to manipulate the social narrative through the control of words..."* [full text](#)



8. BMC Community Gathering

Make sure you have October 7-9 on your calendar, and plan to join us at the relaxing Ronora Lodge and Retreat Center in Michigan (www.ronoralodge.com) for the BMC Gathering. Specific information about registration and fees will soon be released. If you have an interest in leading a workshop that you think would be of interest to our community, please let us know at bmc@bmclgbt.org. We're looking forward to a fun and fantastic time together!

9. Looking for Fierce and Fabulous Stories

Everyone has many stories, and sharing them with each other is a great way to celebrate our community's strength and persistence. During the Community Gathering this fall, BMC will be collecting stories of LGBTQ life experiences for an oral history project. If you have a personal story you would like to share, or are curious about the oral history project, please contact Amy Short or Adam Hostetter via the BMC office.

10. BMC Needs Your Photos!

As part of BMC's oral history project and storytelling events at the Community Gathering this fall, BMC is collecting photos from past Conventions and other events that are part of our 35 year history. If you have photographs or other documents you are willing to share, please contact Amy Short via

the BMC office.

11. Travel

May 12-14: Carol to McPherson, Kansas for Prairie to Pacific Roundtable

May 27-30: Carol and Kirsten to Toronto, Kitchener, and London, Ontario

BMC Staff

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

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

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