



## NewsNet - August 2010

1. The Loss of a Prophet and Friend
2. BMC Board Meeting, Community Potluck and Workshop
3. BMC Awarded Grant for Elder Projects
4. Quick Tips for Allies
5. Safe and Sacred Hearings
6. Welcoming Church Trainings
7. Covenant Mennonite in the News
8. Progressive Brethren Gathering, November 12-14
9. When Society Considers You "Different:" Some Parallel Experiences
10. Homelessness and LGBTQ Youth
11. Steps for September
12. Travel

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### 1. The Loss of a Prophet and Friend



After a long struggle with cancer, Chuck Boyer died on Thursday evening, September 2nd, surrounded by the love and prayers of countless individuals who have been touched by his remarkable life. Chuck was a voice and presence for peace and justice within the Church of the Brethren and throughout the world. His public affirmation of lgbt people when he was the denominational moderator made him the target of vicious scorn and hostility, yet he was unwavering in his support and modeled courage and grace. He was a member of the original steering committee for the Supportive Congregations Network and rigorous in his support of BMC and the lgbta community. During his life Chuck served as a pastor, college chaplain, denominational staff person and volunteer. The church has lost a pastoral prophet and BMC has lost a good friend. Carol

Wise will be participating in Chuck's memorial service on September 16th at the La Verne Church of the Brethren. Cards and condolences to Chuck's family may be sent to his wife, Shirley, at 2747 A Street, La Verne, CA 91750.

### 2. BMC Board Meeting, Community Potluck and Workshop

The BMC board meets twice a year, usually in the fall and in the spring. This year, the fall meeting will be held at Hyattsville Mennonite Church on September 24-26. Agenda items include the usual reports, budget, and a review of program and priorities. On Saturday evening, September 25, the broader BMC community is invited to a potluck dinner beginning at 6:30 p.m. at Hyattsville Mennonite Church, located at 4217 East-West Highway, Hyattsville, Maryland. This is an opportunity to meet the board, converse with friends, learn more about what BMC is doing, and add your input and ideas. All are invited - bring a friend and a dish to share!

In addition, on Sunday evening, September 26, BMC director Carol Wise will be presenting a workshop, *Support to Solidarity: Undoing Heterosexual and Cisgender Privilege*, that will explore the assumptions that

we carry about what it means to be gay, straight, bisexual, transgender or queer. The workshop will be held at the Washington Community Scholars Center in DC (red line). It will run from 5-9 pm and include a break for a light supper. All are invited.

### **3. BMC Awarded Grand for Elder Projects**

BMC is pleased to announce that we have been awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Carpenter Foundation to enhance our work on behalf of elder LGBT Mennonites and Brethren. The funds will primarily be used for a digital and oral history project that will capture stories reflecting the resistance, courage and hope that sustained and enriched the BMC community during difficult times. Amy Short, former executive director of BMC, is providing guidance for this project. Funds will also be used to advocate for LGBT needs at Mennonite and Brethren retirement and nursing facilities. Board chair Ralph McFadden is taking the lead on this project, which will include the development of an in-service training for staff at Mennonite and Brethren retirement communities. We are grateful to the Carpenter Foundation for their generous support.

### **4. Quick Tips for Allies**

New from BMC - information sheets that are just the right size for your church brochure rack, your coffee table, or even your back pocket. All available at [www.bmclgbt.org](http://www.bmclgbt.org):

- How can we have a fair and helpful dialogue?
- How can I support LGBT youth in my congregation?
- How can I support LGBT Brethren?
- How can I support LGBT Mennonites?
- Why should my church become publicly affirming?

### **5. Safe and Sacred Hearings**

As a part of its Special Response Process, the Church of the Brethren is initiating a series of district hearings to address two items of business related to the church's relationship with its LGBT members. BMC has raised concerns about the design and working assumptions of the hearings, particularly the absence of access to pastoral care in a potentially charged and harmful environment. Anna Lisa Gross, a student at Bethany, has prepared some guidelines and helpful suggestions for hearing facilitators and participants in order to enable a safer and more sacred conversation. Click here to access her [\*Recommendations for Safe, Sacred and Meaningful Conversations\*](#).

### **6. Welcoming Church Trainings**

Individuals interested in helping their congregations become more welcoming of LGBT people are encouraged to participate in a Welcoming Church Training sponsored by BMC in partnership with the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, Welcoming Church Network of the Community of Christ and Gay and Lesbian Affirming Disciples. The training provides information, encouragement, ideas and strategies that are helpful in moving congregations forward. Dates and locations for upcoming trainings include:

- September 24 - 25 Seattle, Washington - University Baptist Church
- October 29 - 30 Boston, Massachusetts - Andover Newton Theological School
- November 5 - 6 Orange, California - Chapman University
- November 19 - 20 Lawrence, Kansas - Peace Mennonite Church
- December 10 - 11 Harrisonburg, Virginia - Broad Street Mennonite Church

To register for a training or to learn more, call the BMC office or go to [www.welcomingresources.org/communityorg.htm](http://www.welcomingresources.org/communityorg.htm). We promise that it will be a great experience!

## 7. Covenant Mennonite in the News

Covenant Mennonite Fellowship (Sarasota, FL) proudly proclaimed their beliefs about welcome and diversity in the Sarasota Harold Tribune article [Covenant Welcomes Everyone](#). Congratulations, Covenant!



## 8. Progressive Brethren Gathering, November 12-14

The third Progressive Brethren Gathering will be held at the Manchester Church of the Brethren in Indiana on November 12-14. The theme, Forward Together: Conversations Toward an Enlivened Community is described as follows:

Wearied by the violence of the Thirty Year's War and discouraged by the complacency of the institutional church, the early Brethren reached out for new conversation partners and a different way of being faithful together. They knew themselves as a Gemeinde, a German word built on the root meaning "common" as in "community" rather than the more formal, Kirche, or church. Similarly, our contemporary times present challenges and circumstances that call for new conversations and new conversation partners as we discern what it means to live as a faithful community today. This conference offers an opportunity to explore the meaning and possibilities of being a distinctive Brethren Gemeinde in this time in history.

We are pleased to welcome Ruthann Knechel Johansen, President of Bethany Theological Seminary, as the keynote speaker. Workshops will offer opportunities for conversation about topics such as white theology and structures of racism; animal liberation theology; trends in religious education; the dynamics of a welcoming congregation, and more. Download a [brochure](#), or [register](#) online. The Gathering is sponsored by BMC, Women's Caucus, and Voices for an Open Spirit. All are welcome!

## 9. When Society Considers You "Different:" Some Parallel Experiences

BMCer Janice McKown writes about similar experiences of people with disabilities and LGBTQ people, such as messages about the desirability of change/cure, awareness of being different in one's own family, and being viewed in terms of sexual stereotypes. Janice encourages "both groups to reach out to one another with understanding and love, and to work together for social justice for all persons." (Link to [When Society Considers You "Different."](#))

## 10. Homelessness and LGBTQ Youth

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth are at a far higher risk of becoming homeless than their straight and cisgender peers. Although 5-10% of youth are LGBTQ, a new study indicates that 20-40% of youth who are homeless identify as LGBTQ. See the report [Nowhere to Go](#) - Issue Brief on Gay and Transgender Youth Homelessness, and the 5 minute video On the Street, [Without a Safety Net](#) - A Look at Homelessness Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth.

## 11. Steps for September

It's up to all of us - we're making great strides towards a more welcoming and just church and society because people are taking action. Here are some suggestions of things you can do:

Print off a copy of the new *Quick Tips for Allies* information sheets described above (each are only 1/3 of a page), make them available along with other literature in your church building, and tell people about them.

For those in Church of the Brethren communities, find out about and plan to attend a Special Response Process hearing in your district. Go to [www.progressivebrethren.org](http://www.progressivebrethren.org) or [www.cobannualconference.org](http://www.cobannualconference.org) for information.

Take the time to express your appreciation to someone who is working for lgbtq equality.

## 12. Travel

Sept 15-18 - Carol in La Verne, CA

Sept 24-26 - Carol and Kirsten in Washington DC for BMC board meeting

Sept 27-28 - Kirsten in Harrisonburg and Bridgewater, VA

Nov 12-14 - Carol and Kirsten in North Manchester IN for the Progressive Brethren Summit

Nov 19-20 - Carol at Welcoming Church Training in Lawrence, Kansas

Dec 10-11 - Carol at Welcoming Church Training in Harrisonburg, Virginia

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

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## BMC Staff

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

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

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