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### **1. New History Release: Parenting Gay Children in S. Ontario**

Helen Keller wrote, "The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shove of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of tiny pushes of each worker." BMC is so very proud to present this [history](#) of the Parent's Group in Ontario, a beautiful assembly of individuals who have been busy doing the work of love for more than two decades. You are our heroes!!

### **2. Meditation on Power and Privilege**

There is a small and faithful Mennonite community that gathers every Sunday in a UCC church in St. Paul, Minnesota. Because of its welcome to lgbtq people, it has a long and complicated history with its conferences that has been marked by a series of disciplining, withdrawal of mission funding, and broken promises. Such actions would have challenged the survival and soul of even a very large congregation. Yet the St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship (SPMF) has managed to persist with gutsiness and grace. It also does some of the best queer theology within the Mennonite Church today. We are proud to feature one of SPMFs' queer theologians, Lisa Pierce, and her [Lenten meditation on 'Power and Privilege.'](#)

### **3. Manchester University Becomes First SCN College Community**

The depth and scope of the Supportive Communities Network has been enhanced as we welcome [Manchester University](#) of Indiana as the first SCN college community. In her letter to us, President Jo Young Switzer stated, "Your commitment to public affirmation of LGBTQ persons and the value of their participation in college life matches ours. We accept your invitation [to join SCN] with gratitude and commitment."

Manchester University is rooted in the tradition of the Church of the Brethren. It offers an academic program in gender studies, has an active United Sexualities student group, and is committed to non-discrimination in its employment and admitting practices. Their mission statement reflects the university's embrace of diversity: "Manchester University respects the infinite worth of every individual and graduates persons of ability and conviction who draw upon their education and faith to lead principled, productive and compassionate lives

that improve the human condition.”

Thank you, Manchester University, and welcome to SCN!

#### 4. SCN Adds New Congregations

BMC is very pleased to announce the addition of two new congregations to the Supportive Communities Network (SCN) as congregations that are publicly affirming of LGBTQ people in all aspects of congregational life:

**Lower Miami Church of the Brethren** in Dayton, Ohio (Southern Ohio District) has a long and important history of social justice engagement within the Church of the Brethren that continues to this day. With a unanimous vote they elected to join SCN, affirming, “Our welcome knows no boundaries of age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, economic condition, physical or mental ability. We embrace and acknowledge the beautiful, amazing diversity of all of God’s children.” Welcome, Lower Miami COB!

**[Florence Church of the Brethren/Mennonite](#)** identifies itself as a “welcoming rural peace church in Constantine, Michigan” and is affiliated with both the Church of the Brethren and the Mennonite Church USA. Their welcoming statement reflects their beautiful vision statement and reads....“we seek to be Christ-like in welcoming lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their many gifts. We are committed to our parent denominations and conferences. We also acknowledge that we are currently at variance with Mennonite Church USA and Church of the Brethren denominational statements on this issue.” Welcome to Florence COB/Mennonite!

#### 5. Kaleidoscope Schools Update

##### ***Bethel College***

On March 25, Bethel College faculty voted 25-5 to pass a proposed Human Rights Policy and Affirmative Action Policy which includes non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. The Bethel College board will vote on the proposed policy over April 4th and 5th. If the board passes the policy, Bethel College will be the first Mennonite college to have a non-discrimination policy which includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. The policy was initiated by the Bethel College Faculty Welfare Committee: Professors Ada Schmidt-Tieszen, Dwight Krehbiel, John McCabe-Juhnke, and Vice-President for Academic Affairs Brad Born.



While the proposed policy signals a perceived step forward, [recent comments](#) from Lori L. Livengood, vice president for marketing and communications, call into question the intent to actually employ this policy. Livengood states, “The proposed revisions to statements in the faculty handbook reflect a clarification of discrimination language, not a change in hiring policy. As the guiding principle for its hiring policy, Bethel College has historically sought full compliance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Act and its spirit of non-discrimination. The faculty’s recent vote signals support for more precision within the institution’s human rights and affirmative action statements and an attempt to more closely align that language with existing non-discriminatory practices in hiring.”

##### ***Bluffton University***

Bluffton University held its second annual Sexuality Series March 31-April 4, this year with a focus on healthy relationships. Bluffton Safe Space President Sarah Daily reports the week’s activities went smoothly, particularly Ted & Co.’s *Learning to Play*, which she felt resonated with a wide audience. Looking ahead, Bluffton Safe Space will be participating in the Day of Silence on April 11th. In this day of action, students across the country take a vow of silence to call attention to the silencing effect of LGBTQ bullying and harassment in schools. Keep up the good work, Bluffton!

##### ***Eastern Mennonite University***



*Photo by Michael Sheeler*

Gathering the evening of March 24, students at Eastern Mennonite University held a vigil in support of change to EMU's current hiring policy. Student speakers included Erin Nafziger, Seth Stauffer, Chris Parks and Bonnie Rae. The vigil took place two days before a series of student, faculty and staff dialogues began on campus. In the broader [EMU listening process](#) which takes place February through April, the vigil served as a space to share courage, commitment and hope through song, light and words.



Continuing a tradition of LGBTQ inter-collegiate solidarity, Goshen College held vigil the same evening in prayer for EMU and its own campus community.

April is a key month in which you can participate in EMU's listening process:

- Please fill out the [public survey](#) which will remain open through April 30.
- Through April 28, EMU Safe Space invites you to submit stories of your experience of marginalization because of EMU's policy or policies similar to that of EMU. You are also welcome to submit a story if you are someone who walks alongside those directly impacted by these policies. Your stories may be offered anonymously or with your name to [emusafespace@gmail.com](mailto:emusafespace@gmail.com). In a process that is largely determined by heterosexual and cisgender individuals, the intention of gathering these stories is to offer needed voices in the listening process.

## 6. BMC Board Member Hosts Celebration



During the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) meetings in March, BMC Board Member Leann Toews, Jerry Toews and Bethel College student Caleb Lázaro Moreno hosted a party in celebration of pastor Theda Good's licensing and Mountain States Mennonite Conference's courageous work. The party took place at the Toews' home in Goessel, Kansas, ten miles north of where the CLC met. 30 individuals were in attendance, including Karen Cox, moderator of Mountain States Mennonite Conference. The party provided a space not only for deepening community connections, but also for discussing intersectionality. Caleb Lázaro Moreno presented a short lecture on the intersections of undocumented immigrants and LGBTQ discrimination in the United States. Thanks goes to all who make these important spaces possible!





Photo by Patricia Lazaro



Photo by Jaime Lazaro

## 7. BMC Moves to New Facebook Page



At 610 members, Brethren Mennonite Council has outgrown its Facebook “group” and is transferring its Facebook presence to a “page.” To keep up to date on news, events and community posts, like our new Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/BMCLGBT](http://www.facebook.com/BMCLGBT). After April 14, all posts will be found on the new page, so please take a moment to connect!

## 8. Stored Treasure?

An invaluable piece of any movement or organization is its history. Frank Trnka recently gathered several friends to help him sort through a lifetime of LGBTQ related materials that he had collected and stored in his attic. It was a marvelous trove of articles, worship experiences, letters, resources, tee shirts, bumper stickers and photos, some of which will go to the BMC archives. If you have BMC-related materials that you think should be kept for historical and/or research purposes, please contact the BMC office. Thank you!



## 9. Final Call for Along the Arc Submissions

Do you have LGBTQ-inclusive worship resources, songs, poems or rituals you would like to share with the wider community? [Along the Arc: Worship and Ritual for Welcoming Communities](#) is in its final call for submissions. We welcome your contributions to this community publication which will fill a need for inclusive Brethren and Mennonite worship material, strengthen our relationship to one another, and invite others to participate in the language and experience of an open church community. Please send your submissions to

[bmc@bmclgbt.org](mailto:bmc@bmclgbt.org).

## 10. Want to Create Change??



If you are wondering how you might contribute to this amazing movement for LGBTQ equality and justice within the Mennonite Church, BMC would invite you to consider volunteering as our Kaleidoscope Coordinator. This is a full time position that is located in Minneapolis, MN. Housing, health insurance, and a stipend for food, transportation and personal necessities are provided. The Coordinator works primarily with youth and young adults; conducting trainings, connecting individuals and working with LGBTQ groups on Mennonite and Brethren colleges. Please contact the BMC office at [bmc@bmclgbt.org](mailto:bmc@bmclgbt.org) for more information.

### **BMC Staff**

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

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