

NewsNet - Special Conference/Convention Edition

The first week of July BMC will be at both the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, and Mennonite Church USA Convention. This special NewsNet Edition outlines activities that BMC and our organizational friends are engaging in during these national gatherings to cultivate a more inclusive church.

1. BMC and Friends at the **Church of the Brethren** Annual Conference (July 2-6, Grand Rapids)
2. BMC and Friends at **Mennonite Church USA** Convention (July 4-9, Pittsburgh)

1. BMC and Friends at the **Church of the Brethren** Annual Conference (July 2-6, Grand Rapids)

Once again, BMC is working in cooperation with Womaen's Caucus and Voices for an Open Spirit to offer a progressive presence at Annual Conference. Opportunities to learn and connect include workshops, luncheons/dinners, the VOS room, the BMC mobile booth, and more.

BMC LUNCHEON

Tuesday July 5, 12:00 noon

Carol Wise, executive director of BMC, will offer some brief reflections on where we are as a welcoming movement within the Church of the Brethren, with time for general conversation. We will also have a screening of a new BMC video featuring the licensing story of Carrie Fry-Miller. Cost is \$10. Please contact the BMC office at bmc@bmclgbt.org or call 612.343.2060 to make reservations. At St. Mark's Episcopal Church, a welcoming congregation, located just a couple of blocks from the convention center.

VOS DINNER

Saturday July 2, 5:00 pm

Dr. Philip Gulley. "If the Church Were Christian" Like his book by the same title, Philip Gulley will share a vision of Christianity that is consistent with Jesus' teachings and a church that encourages Jesus' example as a model for living. He will explore with us those values that Gulley believes the church should embrace with an emphasis on how we can be instruments of grace, hope, and reconciliation. Room: Amway/Ambassador West

WOMAEN'S CAUCUS LUNCHEON

Monday July 4, 12:00 noon

"Celebrating the Mothers of Caucus." As we begin our 40th Anniversary year and look toward the next 40, we are celebrating the mothers of Caucus. We continue to be blessed by their gifts and are looking toward the future. Our silent auction will be full of awesome handcrafts and more for you to bid on! And our Friend of Caucus Award will be presented. Don't miss this year's Caucus luncheon! Room: Amway/Ford

WORKSHOPS

These BMC workshops will take place in Voices for an Open Spirit's space (Thornapple Room, Amway Grand Plaza). Thank-you VOS for your gracious hospitality!

Saturday July 2, 9:00 pm

Our Journey to Becoming a Welcoming Congregation

Portland Peace Church of the Brethren has just released a DVD that details their congregational process as they became a welcoming congregation. This will be an opportunity to view the DVD and talk with Peace Church members about their experience.

Sunday July 3, 12:30 pm

What is the T in LGBT?

Many people are confused about what it means to be a transgender person. This workshop will explore the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity and increase our understanding of the transgender community. A new BMC video, *On the Male Side of Middle* will be shown.

Monday July 4, 9:00 pm

Just Hospitality: The Experience of Welcoming Congregations

A panel of pastors from congregations that are part of the *Supportive Communities Network* (SCN) will reflect on the ways that their congregations have grown and changed because of their affirmation of lgbt people. This is an opportunity to learn and also ask questions of pastors who have been in the forefront of change.

BMC MOBILE BOOTH

It's back again—look for BMC's mobile booth throughout annual conference. You'll find helpful resources, colorful rainbow scarves, and friendly people to talk to.

APPEALS HEARING

BMC has appealed the decision by Program and Arrangements to again exclude us from the exhibit hall. According to new Annual Conference rules, appeals of Program and Arrangements decisions now go to Standing Committee. A formal hearing will take place on Friday, July 1 before Standing Committee. Carol Wise and Dave McFadden will represent BMC.

COMMUNITY CARE

Because of an anticipated vote, this will probably be a difficult conference for those of us who are lgbt, who love people who are lgbt, or who believe that God offers love and welcome to all. While we know that our work will continue as it always has, we also know that many of our more conservative sisters and brothers are viewing this conference as an opportunity to make a final and definitive statement in rejection of lgbt justice. The fear, hatred and legalism of the anti-lgbt position can be disturbing and overwhelming. We ask two things:

1. That those who are able please speak up and be "out" about your support of lgbt people. Even a simple statement of affirmation is sufficient. It is time to break the silence.
2. That we be gentle with our adversaries and even more so with each other. Please make every effort to offer support and care to each other as we speak our truth even in the face of challenge and fear. The VOS room has been established to provide a space of refuge and comfort, so please feel free to make use of it. If you need special care, Anita Smith-Buckwalter is the official Annual Conference Chaplain. In addition to being a warm and gracious person, Anita is also pastor of a welcoming and affirming congregation. You will find safety and comfort in her presence.

WEAR A RAINBOW SCARF!

Womaen's Caucus invites people to wear a rainbow scarf in support of our lgbtq sisters and brothers. Bring your rainbow wear from a previous year, or stop by the VOS Hospitality Center (Amway Grand Plaza, Thornapple Room) - Womaen's Caucus will have rainbow yarn, needles, crochet hooks, and instructions (and hopefully tutors!) available to help you make or learn to make rainbow scarves.

2. BMC and Friends at Mennonite Church USA Convention (July 4-9, Pittsburgh)

BMC is working with Pink Menno, Open Letter Pastors, and MennoNeighbors to offer a strong and faithful presence at the MCUSA Convention. A variety of activities will be offered including workshops, coffee houses, worship, videos, organizing and strategizing meetings, and general conversation.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Opening Worship - Tuesday July 5

Randall Spaulding, pastor of Covenant Mennonite Fellowship (Sarasota, FL) will be preaching.
8:00 - 9:30 at Smithfield UCC, a welcoming congregation a few blocks from the convention center.

Worship all other days

Worship services will be held on each day of the convention thanks to the coordinating efforts of Open Letter Pastors. Times and locations to be announced.

WORKSHOPS

All BMC workshops will be at Smithfield United Church of Christ, a welcoming congregation located a few blocks from the convention center.

Wednesday July 6, 9:00-10:30 am

Accompaniment: A Journey for Youth Sponsors

Youth pastors and sponsors can play a significant role in helping lgbt and questioning youth. This workshop will offer insights into the needs, challenges and strengths of lgbt youth and help adults working with youth to be more effective and caring.

Wednesday July 6, 1:00-2:30 pm

Coming Out Strong

What is it like to come out as an lgbtq youth? What does it mean to come out as an ally? How can youth work together to make youth groups and congregations safe places? We'll explore these questions and others at this workshop for lgbtq and non-lgbtq youth.

Thursday July 7, 9:00-10:30 am

Welcome Matters: How Homophobia Hurts the Church

An exploration of the costs of excluding lgbt people from full participation within the church and the benefits gained by publicly affirming congregations.

Thursday July 7, 1:00-2:30 pm

What is the T in LGBT?

This workshop will explore the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity. The new BMC video, "On the Male Side of Middle" by Paul Neudorf, will be featured.

Friday July 8, 9:00-10:30 am

Just Hospitality: The Experience of Welcoming Congregations

Pastors from BMC's *Supportive Communities Network* congregations will reflect on the ways that their congregations have grown and changed as a result of their publicly affirming position.

COFFEE HOUSES

Drop by fun and informal coffee houses organized by Pink Menno on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday night. Just a couple of blocks from the convention center at Smithfield UCC.

DISPLAY AREA

A room across the street from the convention center (at the *Courtyard by Marriott*) has been reserved as an area to provide resources and information about the various groups working for lgbt justice. This is also a place to check for times and places of workshops, coffee houses, organizing meetings, worship, etc.

PACK PINK!

Overcome silence and invisibility. Pink Menno is again asking people to wear pink as a visible sign of your desire for the Mennonite Church to be an open and welcoming place for lgbtq people.

BMC Staff

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

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

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