



BMC NewsNet

June 2012

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1. **Covenants Made and Broken – Brethren Volunteer Position Withdrawn**

Last month, to our great disappointment, BMC learned that our designation as a project site for Brethren Volunteer Service was withdrawn by the Church of the Brethren General Secretary. The process by which this took place was convoluted, expedited and confusing. It raised numerous and disturbing questions about denominational governance, respect for agreements, staff/board relationships, the use of bullying and aggressive tactics to achieve a desired end, and general concerns about the general good will and trustworthiness of the denomination’s Mission and Ministry Board. [Click here](#) for a detailed description of BMC’s experience, including suggested responses.

2. **Alpha Mennonite Joins SCN**



BMC is very pleased to welcome Alpha Mennonite Church in Alpha, New Jersey, as the newest member of the Supportive Communities Network (SCN), a network of Mennonite and Brethren congregations and groups that are publicly affirming of LGBT people. Alpha Mennonite was formed the same year as BMC (1976) and understands itself as “a small congregation with a family feel, but a family that is open to all whom God brings through our doors.” Their welcome statement reads, “...Recently it seems that God has sought to help us broaden our understanding of exactly how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and, likewise, how our welcome is to embody this great love. In this spirit, we seek to experience the full richness of Christ’s body by welcoming into our life and ministry all who freely desire to join us in our Christian walk...” Welcome Alpha Mennonite!

3. **Church of the Brethren Annual Conference**

After decades of applying, BMC will have its first official booth at this year’s Church of the Brethren Annual Conference next month in St. Louis, Missouri. Predictably, the reaction to this decision by the Program and Arrangements Committee has been intense and prolonged. Several dozen people have signed up to staff the booth. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers as they will be

facing no small amount of hostility and challenge. A worship service celebrating the booth will be held at a United Methodist church during the Conference. A complete listing of BMC events at Annual Conference will be released next week.

4. Reuben's Magical Mega Bus VS Tour

As the Kaleidoscope Coordinator, Reuben's job focuses upon reaching out to Mennonite and Brethren youth and young adults, offering support and empowering them for the work of LGBT justice and understanding. In order to better connect with young adults serving in voluntary service, Reuben is launching his "Magical Mega Bus VS Tour" and riding the bus to visit various



VS houses across the country. He made his first trip this month to Madison, Wisconsin, where he met with volunteers and also offered a formal welcome to Madison Mennonite as a member of the Supportive Communities Network. If you are a volunteer and would like Reuben to come and visit you, simply contact him at: bmc@bmclgbt.org. We'd love to hear from you!

5. Elder Oral History Project

Amy Short continues to collect interviews for BMC's Elder Oral History Project, a relatively new project designed to preserve our history and provide materials to enhance education and understanding about our BMC community. Amy has already collected over 35 hours of interviews and is working on the release of a short video highlighting some of her interviews. While Amy's work targets elder members of BMC, we are also interested in the stories of those who do not yet identify as elder. If you have a story that you would like to share, simply tape yourself and send it to BMC. If you have specific questions, we will connect you with Amy Short. We would love to have as many stories as possible!

6. SCN Pastors on the Front Line



After nine months of discerning, the Ministerial Committee of Central District Conference has affirmed Pastor Megan Ramer's ministry and will not revoke her credentials for being "at variance with Mennonite Church USA's Membership Guidelines." Megan, pastor at Community Mennonite Church in Chicago, joins Joanna Harader, Cindy Lapp, Sheri Hostetter, and Weldon Nisly, all of whom have had their credentials reviewed for performing same-sex ceremonies. We are grateful for these pastors for offering a prophetic witness to the church and supporting their LGBT members.

7. BMC Community News



Minneapolis Fundraiser BMC

President Katie Hochstedler cooked up a delicious meal and organized a group of talented musicians for a night of fun to benefit BMC. Amy Short served as the evening's mistress of ceremonies that led us through the history of BMC. The event drew an appreciative crowd and made over \$1,000 for BMC. If you have an idea for a BMC fundraiser, please share



it with us!

Sympathy Extended

We were saddened to hear of the death of Steve Clapp, director of Christian Communities, Inc. Steve had done extensive research on attitudes related to LGBT welcome within Christian churches and was an important voice in encouraging congregations to be places of hospitality and LGBT welcome. BMC's support and sympathy is extended to Steve's family and loved ones.

8. Help!

BMC is nearing the end of our fiscal year and need your help to pay our bills and end the year in the black. Requests for our materials have been at an all-time high this year, and our travel expenses have increased because of demand. These are good and encouraging things, but they have caused a strain on our budget. Your generous support is both valued and needed. Checks can be sent to BMC/Box 6300/ Minneapolis, MN 55406 or [click here](#) to donate on-line. Thank you!

9. Travel

June 18-22: Reuben to COB Young Adult Conference in Knoxville, TN.

June 20-24: Carol STAR training in Minneapolis.

July 7-11: Carol to COB Annual Conference in St. Louis, Missouri.

July 22-24: Carol to McPherson, KS.

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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Minneapolis, 55406
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