



BMC NewsNet
January 2012

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1. BMC now a Brethren Volunteer Service Placement!



After more than a decade of being denied, BMC is very, very pleased to announce that we have been accepted as a Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) placement site. This means that our Kaleidoscope volunteers will now be able to serve through Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) instead of needing to go through Lutheran Volunteer Corps or the Volunteer Ministries of the United Church of Christ as they currently must.

We are grateful to Dan McFadden, Director of BVS, for being a persistent advocate for BMC, and to Stan Noffsinger, General Secretary, for his courage in making this decision. Please consider sending them a note of thanks and support to counter the negative feedback they are sure to receive. They can be e-mailed at dmacfadden@brethren.org; snoffsinger@brethren.org. We are also grateful to Lutheran Volunteer Corps and the United Church of Christ for their embrace of us for so long, and to the thousands of justice loving people whose prayers, advocacy and support have moved us to this place. Times are changing!

2. Richmond Church of the Brethren Joins SCN

BMC is very pleased to announce that the Richmond Church of the Brethren in Indiana, has unanimously decided to join the Supportive Communities Network as a congregation that is welcoming and affirming of LGBT people. Prior to the vote, the congregation developed two papers: one that articulated their commitment to welcome and inclusion, and another that defined their relationship with the larger church. Both are excellent statements that offer a helpful theological analysis of what it means to be a prophetic and welcoming congregation. [Click here](#) to read their statements. Welcome Richmond COB!



If you would like to explore helping your congregation to become a member of SCN, please contact the BMC office (612.343.2060 or bmc@bmclgbt.org). We would love to help you!

3. BMC Ontario Winter Retreat 2012

Enjoy a wonderful two day, two night Winter Northern Ontario Getaway with other Mennonite affiliated, LGBTTIQ identified people in a family friendly atmosphere. It will take place on **Friday February 10th - Sunday February 12th** at Silver Lake Mennonite Camp (near Sauble Beach).

Arrive Friday afternoon/evening (a light fare will be available on Friday evening), get your cozy cabin assignment and settle in.

Join us around one of two fireplaces for cookies, hot chocolate, chat, catch up, laughter!

Take part in spontaneous outdoor group activities

(create snow sculptures, explore the many sprawling acres, take a two minute walk to Silver Lake or a 30 minute walk to see dramatic ice formations at the edge of Lake Huron, cross country ski or snow shoe ...bring you own, or pairs to share)

Relax with some solitary moments of journaling, doodling, reading, or day dreaming.

Start a circle, card/board game, puzzle, sing-a-long.

Share your accomplishments, struggles of 2011 (bring brag photos of trips or special times, your favorite reads to recommend, poems you've written, knitting, work projects (optional)

Consider inviting someone who has never been, or who may no longer be connected to our list.

Cost is \$65 per adult, \$30 per youth 13-18yrs, children 12 and under are free. Financial assistance is available for those who need it for the weekend. Please **RSVP by February 1st** and directly to BMC Ontario by e-mailing bmcontario@yahoo.com.

When you RSVP, please let us know:

1. Number of people attending
2. When you plan to arrive (Friday there will be a small dinner group and they need to know how many to prepare for)
3. What food group is your preference (We will do our best to accommodate)
4. Any special food restrictions/requests
5. Any other special requests

Directions:

[72 Pine Forest Dr South Bruce Peninsula, ON N0H 1P0](#)

Silver Lake Mennonite Camp website has [directions](#).

4. New BMC Local Group in Winnipeg

In December a local BMC group began gathering in Winnipeg, Manitoba. They invite any (broadly and self-defined) lgbtqq people able to tolerate hanging out with mostly Mennonites to join them. They'd love to connect with others in the area, or anyone passing through. The next gathering will be a potluck meal on January 21st, with successive events planned every month or two. Their "mission" is simply to create queer space in which to be, to enjoy each other's company (and food!). For more information, please feel free to contact us at winnipegbmc@gmail.com, or contact the BMC office.

5. Kaleidoscope News



Rebekah Enns of Westgate Mennonite Collegiate in Winnipeg received "The Annual Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award" on December 8, 2011. This annual award is given to a youth who works to improve human rights in Manitoba. She received the award for starting a Gay-Straight Alliance at her school. This marks the first official Gay-Straight Alliance at a Mennonite high

school! Congratulations Beka!

6. BMC Facilitates Bethany Training

BMC was recently invited to spend a day with Bethany Seminary faculty and staff exploring what it would mean for the seminary to be a safe space for LGBTQ students. Melissa Bennett (Pastor at Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren), Dean Johnson (Asst. Professor of Religious Studies at Defiance College), and Carol Wise (Ex. Director of BMC) teamed up to provide the training that focused upon the dynamics of power and privilege and the impact of coming out within that social context. Please consider expressing your appreciation to President Ruthann K. Johnsen (johanru@bethanyseminary.edu) for her leadership in making the seminary a more sensitive and informed place.

7. Brethren SCN Pastors Issue Letter

The December issue of The Messenger, the Church of the Brethren's denominational magazine, includes a full page ad that is a letter from Brethren SCN pastors to those in the church who were disturbed by the tone and actions of the 2011 Annual Conference. The pastors issue an invitation to join them in "identifying with the radical inclusive love of Jesus" and "practicing the healing and transforming power of hospitality." They invite others to sign on. [Click here](#) to read the letter and add your name to the list by sending your name and the name of your congregation to SCNletter@bmclgbt.org.

8. Connecting Families East and West

Our West Coast Connecting Families Weekend at Camp Myrtlewood in Bridge, Oregon is fast approaching. The dates are March 30 - April 1, 2012. Now is the time to encourage individuals or families that would benefit from this event to attend. They may send registration forms to Eileen Wilson at 10319 SE Long Street, Portland, OR 97266. Deadline for registration is February 14, 2012.

The Brethren Mennonite Council Connecting Families weekend is intended to be a safe, relaxing time to share our common thoughts regarding sexual minority issues as they affect our families, our friends, our churches, and ourselves. We welcome families and supporters of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. Connecting Families is a group of people, each on our own journey. Through listening and sharing our stories, we seek to provide support for families whose children are coming out to them and/or to their church. We are committed to maintaining confidentiality within the group, to providing a place to speak in safety or to remain silent, and to share in a nonjudgmental atmosphere. As a group, we work to find ways to educate and engage our churches in dialogue and to help them understand and accept our families.

[Click here](#) to download the registration form. Thank you so much for your support. If you have any questions, please contact bmcoregon@earthlink.net, LaVonne Blowers (lblowers@ix.netcom.com), or Eileen Wilson (patricko@3dwave.com)

Connecting Families East will be held on April 20-22, 2012 at the Pearlstone Conference and Retreat

Center in Reisterstown, Maryland. Randall Spaulding will be the featured presenter. [Click here](#) to download a brochure to register for this event.

9. Travel

January 21-22; Carol to Skyridge COB in Kalamazoo, Michigan

February 17-19; Carol and Reuben to BMC board meeting at York Center COB in Chicago

February 21-23; Carol to La Verne, CA for Progressive Brethren Council meeting

March 8-12: Reuben to Lutheran Volunteer Corps Mid-Year Retreat

March 30-April 1: Carol to Connecting Families West in Bridge, Oregon

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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