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1. Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Report



It is a time of tension and anxiety as the Church of the Brethren enters its second year in a two year Dealing with Highly Controversial Issues Special Response Process. But tensions aside, good things still happened at this year's Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Pittsburgh! Rainbow scarves were on bright display, the BMC mobile booth was out and about, the SCN (Supportive Communities Network) pastors met for planning and support, BMC sponsored a wonderful luncheon, and many, many engaging conversations. Read a full [Annual Conference Report](#) by

BMC director Carol Wise.

2. 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 for upcoming trainings include:

August 20 - 21, Indianapolis, Indiana - Christian Theological Seminary

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. We promise that it will be a great experience!

3. 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.

4. Outspoken Online

Two [new articles](#) have just been posted to Outspoken Online!

A Story About Feet (and what a little courage can do)
by Dylan Haro

Top Ten Reasons for Being an Open and Affirming Congregation
by Anita Smith Buckwalter, pastor at Lansing Church of the Brethren



5. Gay Mennonite League

To keep up with the latest news and information related to LGBT Mennonites, BMC recommends the [Gay Mennonite League](#). Conceived by Randall Friesen (former Outspoken editor), the website offers news and advocacy commentary about upcoming events, the arts, the Mennonite LGBT community, and various ecumenical happenings that might be of interest to LGBT people and our allies. The League also responds to activities, statements and positions taken by the Mennonite Church that affect LGBT Mennonites in the form of press releases and positional statements. Check it out - it's great!

6. Christian Peacemaker Teams - Undoing Oppression

Carol and Kirsten joined Christian Peacemaker Teams trainees in Chicago, attending two workshop days on Undoing Racism and Undoing Sexism before leading a workshop day on Undoing Heterosexism. Through a variety of exercises and discussions, the workshop sought to sensitize and educate participants to the

dynamics and realities of the privileges accorded to those who are heterosexual and/or cisgender. The workshop also included an introduction to issues and experiences that affect the transgender community. If you are interested in having a workshop presented at your congregations, college or conference, contact the BMC office at 612.343.2060 or bmc@bmclgbt.org.



7. Family Medical Leave Act and LGBT Rights (US)

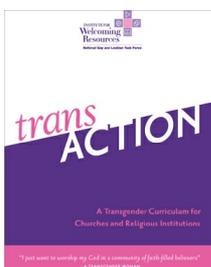
At the request of the Secretary of Labor, the interpretation of "family" has been broadened for the purpose of the US Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to include those with an *in loco parentis* status. This will give lgbt people opportunities to take advantage of the Act, that enables workers to take up to 12 weeks of job protected unpaid leave for the birth or placement of a child, to bond with a newborn or newly placed child, or to care for a child or parent with a serious health condition. To learn more about the Act and your rights, go to www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28B.htm or www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/shdfs28C.htm.

8. Victories for Human Rights

In two victories for human rights, a federal judge in California ruled that California's ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional, and a federal judge in Arizona blocked key portions of Arizona's hostile anti-immigration law. Read the full text of Judge Walker's [marriage-related findings](#), and the full text of Judge Bolton's [immigration-related findings](#). It is likely that both of these cases will eventually make their way to the Supreme Court.

9. Take Action in August

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:



Talk to at least one other Brethren or Mennonite person about something you read in this newsletter or saw on BMC's website.

Pick one of the many resources on www.bmclgbt.org or www.welcomingresources.org, print it off and read it while enjoying the summer sun.

Sign up for a Welcoming Church Training

10. Travel

Aug 25-27 - Carol at Welcoming Church Program Leaders Meeting in Minnesota

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

Nov 12-14 - Carol and Kirsten in North Manchester IN for 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.

BMC Staff

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

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

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