

BMC NewsNet
January 2014

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1. Thank you for your support!

Thank you to everyone who contributed to BMC in 2013. Because of you, we were able to reach our goal and begin the new year on a positive note. We appreciate and value your support very much. With your help, 2014 promises to be another strong year for lgbtq justice and equality within the Mennonite Church and Church of the Brethren. Thank you for your work and commitment!

2. Job Opening – BMC Kaleidoscope Coordinator

Are you looking for a meaningful experience following graduation? The Kaleidoscope Coordinator is a full-time one or two year volunteer position at BMC that provides support, resources and programming for Mennonite and Brethren lgbtqa youth and young adults, and assists with general office duties. The position offers an opportunity to travel, learn how a non-profit runs, experience the joys of living in Minnesota, and most importantly, make a difference in individual lives and within the church. This position will be available August 2014. If you are interested or know someone who might be, please contact Carol Wise at bmc@bmcigbt.org. BMC is recognized as a placement site by [Lutheran Volunteer Corps](#) and the [Volunteer Ministries of the United Church of Christ](#). LVC is currently accepting applications for its second round of placements, so if you are interested, please submit your application to LVC as soon as possible.

3. MCUSA Mountain States Conference Makes History

The Leadership Board of the Mountain States Conference, in a unanimous vote, elected to license Theda Good, pastor of nurture and fellowship at First Mennonite Church in

Denver, Colorado to the ministry. Theda is the first openly lesbian pastor to be licensed in the Mennonite Church USA. She is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite Seminary. The Leadership Board made their decision after a year long process of conversation and listening within the conference, in addition to the regular interviews with the candidate. Congratulations, Theda!

In response to the decision by the Mountain States Conference and also reacting to the announcement that Eastern Mennonite University is re-evaluating its discriminatory policies towards lgbt people, Ervin Stutzman, Executive Director of MCUSA, has called conferences to prayer. He has also scheduled a meeting with representatives from Mountain State Conference and members of the Executive Board, and promised to bring a recommendation on how to respond to these actions to the Executive Board when it meets in February. Ervin requested that individuals share “particular scriptures or devotional insights” that come to mind in helping the church to be faithful in this time in history. You may send your insights to ervins@mennoniteusa.org.

4. Chicago Mennonite Voluntary Service Unit as Safe Space

[Chicago Community Mennonite Church](#), a member of the [Supportive Communities Network](#) (SCN) and sponsoring congregation of the Chicago Mennonite Voluntary Service unit, is pleased to announce the designation of their unit as a safe space that “welcomes and celebrates people of any sexual orientation or gender expression.” If you or someone you know would like to spend a year serving and learning in this kind of environment, please consider MVS Chicago. You can learn more about the unit [here](#) and find a link to the MVS application [here](#). For best results, please submit your application by March 15.

5. Lutheran Volunteer House Resists Eviction

As a part of Lutheran Volunteer Corps, the Kaleidoscope Coordinator lives in an intentional community of seven Lutheran volunteers. The community, known as Winona, was thrown for a loop when a bright-orange eviction notice was taped to its door due to over-occupancy. Minneapolis Ordinance 546.50 reads that a house zoned as R2 “shall not exceed one family plus up to two unrelated persons living together as a permanent household.” While an intention of the ordinance is to protect tenants from landlords, the ordinance makes it difficult for young people, intentional communities, immigrant communities and others to live affordably and collectively.

Dan Perucco of Winona House wrote a [commentary](#) in the *StarTribune* which garnered attention from community members and city officials alike. This stir resulted in an extension of Winona's eviction date as a more permanent legal solution is constructed. A [story](#) in the *City Pages* outlines the journey of Winona House and its expanding efforts to

address social justice issues like affordable housing. Winona continues to be a beautiful, justice-seeking community for the Kaleidoscope Coordinator to call home.

6. Welcoming Dialogue Group to Release DVD

The [Welcoming Dialogue Group](#) of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a member of the Supportive Communities Network, is releasing a video of the presentation by Megan Ramer (pastor of Chicago Community Mennonite) at a recent event sponsored by the Welcoming Dialogue Group and BMC. Entitled *Fashioned in Love*, the two DVD set will include a discussion guide, and is offered as a valuable resource for Sunday School classes, Bible study groups, seminary classes, college classes, and anyone interested in better understand why lgbt welcome is good for the church. Cost for the set will be \$15. To pre-order, contact the BMC office at bmc@bmclgbt.org.

7. So Much for 'Unity'

Joanna Harader, pastor of [Peace Mennonite Church](#) in Lawrence, Kansas, had an article printed in the December 25, 2013 edition of the Christian Century. Entitled [So Much for 'Unity'](#) the article was a reflection upon Joanna's experience in Western District Conference where her willingness to officiate at a same sex wedding was a catalyst that led seven congregations to leave the conference. It is a powerful statement about the intricate and challenging connections between peace, unity, and the call of the Spirit. Congratulations, Joanna!

8. Goshen College Students Continue Moving Forward

In the fall, BMC met with Goshen College students to offer a nonviolence training for lgbtqa organizers. There, BMC worked with students of Advocates, a group providing lgbtq education, and [Goshen College Open Letter](#), a group focused on creating inclusive hiring policy for lgbtq faculty. Both of these groups have strong students who are moving their work forward into the spring semester.

Goshen College Open Letter held a summit in the fall with students, faculty, and a small number of community members and administrators. The summit opened a space for collaborative thinking which will continue into the spring. The group asks that alumni and donors of Goshen College sign the [letter](#) and/or contact Jim Brenneman at president@goshen.edu to encourage a change in policy now. Advocates plans to facilitate education through a video series and dialogue with the wider Goshen Community. Goshen College's lgbtq focused convocations in the spring include *Learning to Play: A Theatrical Conversation about Same Sex Relationships and the Church* with Ted Schwartz and a panel of student and faculty storytellers tentatively titled *When We Disagree*. BMC looks forward to continue working alongside Goshen students this spring!

9. Kaleidoscope Coordinator to Co-facilitate Workshop at IPFC

Kay Guyer of BMC and Christian Parks of Eastern Mennonite University Safe Space are co-facilitating the workshop *Cultivating Visions and Acknowledging Challenges: LGBTQA Campus Organizing* at the Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship Conference. The conference will take place January 31 - February 2 at Eastern Mennonite University. The workshop description reads, "With growing pressure for colleges and universities to be accountable to their LGBTQ communities, the time has come for nonviolent student organizers to collaborate. Come, draw on the collective knowledge of students organizing for LGBTQ justice in various campus contexts. Together we will share stories of challenge and vision in the journey toward institutional justice for LGBTQ students, faculty and staff." Kay and Christian are looking forward to drawing out collective wisdom from students building an inclusive campus in policy and practice.

10. Connecting Families West

If you have a family member who is lgbt, or you are lgbt yourself, or you love or care about someone who is lgbt, then West Coast Connecting Families Retreat may be just the place for you. The retreat will be April 25-27, 2014 at the beautiful Alton L. Collins Retreat Center in Eagle Creek, Oregon. It is close to Portland, OR for easy access to the airport and to public transportation. The featured speaker will be Randy Spaulding, a gay, former Mennonite pastor who is currently studying at Yale Divinity School and seeking ordination in the Unitarian denomination. The retreat welcomes glbt and their families and supporters. It is intended to be a safe, relaxing time to share our stories regarding sexual minority issues as they affect our families, our friends, our churches and ourselves. Please contact LaVonne Blowers (lblowers@ix.netcom.com) or Eileen Wilson (eileenandpatricko@comcast.net) with questions. A fun and supportive time is promised!

11. New Mexico is #17

With the addition of New Mexico, there are now 17 states that practice marriage equality in the United States. Over 38% of the US population now lives in a state where there is marriage equality. Can you name all the states? Answers are listed below.

12. Travel

January 29 - February 3 Kay to Bridgewater College, Bridgewater Church of the Brethren and Eastern Mennonite University

February 7-10 Carol to Covenant Mennonite Church in Sarasota, FL for a BMC Board Meeting

March 7-10 Carol to State College PA for a Church of the Brethren Progressive Council Meeting

BMC Staff

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

[Kay Guyer](#) - Kaleidoscope Coordinator, BMC Volunteer

States with marriage equality (in alphabetical order): California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington – plus Washington, DC.