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BMC NewsNet Summer Edition

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1. Annual Conference Report



BMC had a strong and positive presence at this year's Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, held in St. Louis, Missouri. This year marked the very first time that BMC was approved for a booth in the exhibit hall, and it turned out to be a very busy center of activity, welcome and conversation. Hundreds of people stopped by the booth to express their delight at our presence or to just hang out for awhile. In addition to the booth, BMC held a wonderful worship service at the nearby Centenary United Methodist Church, offered an insight session about SCN congregations, and provided some training for Ministry of Reconciliation volunteers

who were present at the Conference. Finally, BMC volunteers got up early to help serve breakfast for homeless individuals at the Bridge in St. Louis, and collected a car trunk full of personal toiletry items and diapers to replenish the pantry at the Bridge. [Click here to read Carol Wise's reflections on Annual Conference.](#)



2. Pastors and Congregations Make News

BMC is grateful for pastors of the Supportive Communities Network (SCN) who courageously speaking out for inclusion, justice and human dignity within their conferences, denominations and communities, and for the SCN congregations who offer healing and hope. Here are just a few examples of their impressive witness:

+ Joanna Harader, pastor of the Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kansas, an SCN congregation since 2001. Joanna presided over a covenant service for two lesbian women, a pastoral act that led to a review of her credentials by the Leadership Commission of the Western District Conference. The decision of the committee to maintain her credentials disturbed one congregation enough that it brought a resolution to the district conference to overturn the decision, a resolution that was not passed by the delegate body. Joanna's unquenchable spirit is captured in her blog, [Spacious Faith](#). She can also be found at [The World Together](#), and has even been featured in the Huffington Post.

+ Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren was featured in an article in the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette last month entitled, "[Local Churches Coming Out of the Closet](#)." Brian Flory,

pastor at Beacon Heights, is quoted as saying, "The decision to become open and affirming came out of that sense of justice and peace and care for all of God's world and God's children."

+ Karl Shelly, pastor at Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana, wrote "[Gay Equality part of Christian Theology, Ethics](#)," an opinion piece that was printed in "Pastor's Pen" column of the Goshen News. It was his response to an anti-lgbt piece that had been written by another local pastor and published earlier. The community interest in both pieces led to a special [two part series](#) featuring a dialogue between Shelly and the other pastor. Thank you, Karl!

3. St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship Joins Central District Conference

Congratulations to Saint Paul Mennonite Fellowship upon their acceptance as a member congregation of Central District Conference by an 88% vote! The Fellowship was previously a member of Central Plains District, where they had a very complicated history, including various periods of discipline, because they are affirming of lgbt members. St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship has the distinction of being the very first SCN congregation.

4. New SCN Congregations Welcomed

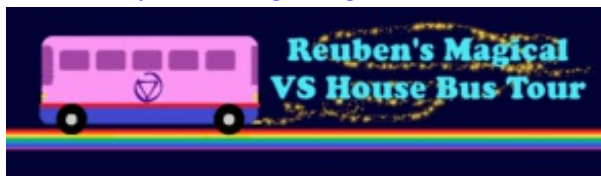
+ [Stone Church of the Brethren](#) in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, is the newest member of the Supportive Communities Network (SCN). It was their youth who first encouraged the congregation to be publicly affirming of lgbt people. The congregation took up the challenge and organized a series of study and conversation that led to the adoption of a new welcome statement and the joining of SCN. Their welcoming statement is featured on the home page of their website and begins: *Stone Church of the Brethren is a Christ-centered community which celebrates every individual as a unique and beloved child of God. We are very pleased to welcome Stone Church to SCN!*

+ [Northview Church of the Brethren](#) in Indianapolis, Indiana, a congregation with a history of lgbt welcome, has formally joined SCN. Their congregational motto is simple and succinct: *Thinking encouraged. Diversity welcomed.* Northview COB not only offers a presence of peace and justice in their community and beyond, but they also allocate one third of their annual budget to outreach. It is a joy to welcome this vibrant and committed congregation to SCN!



5. Reuben's Magical Megabus Tour

This year, Reuben is going on a tour of Mennonite Voluntary Service and Brethren Volunteer Service houses and their supportive congregations to promote more lgbt inclusion in their communities. Contact Reuben at kaleidoscope@bmcilgbt.org to learn more and/or set-up a visit! Follow his adventures on his [travel blog](#).



6. National Young Adult Conference Reflection

This past June, Reuben traveled to Knoxville, TN and attended the Church of the Brethren National Young Adult Conference. [Click here](#) to read about his experience!

7. Progressive Brethren Gathering

Holy Work: Becoming a Beloved Community is the theme of the fifth Progressive Brethren Gathering. The beautiful La Verne Church of the Brethren in La Verne, California, will host this year's conference that will be held October 26-28, 2012. The event will feature celebratory worship, insightful presentations about the dynamics of social justice movements, engaging conversation among participants, a film screening and talk back with the director, and rich experiences of the music that has inspired and encouraged those engaged in the struggle of creating justice and social change. [Click here](#) to learn more about the event. All are welcome!

8. New Study on Gay and Transgender Work Discrimination

The Center for American Progress recently came out with a report *Gay and Transgender*

Discrimination in the Public Sector: Why It's a Problem for State and Local Governments, Employees, and Taxpayers. [Click here](#) to read the report.

9. Travel

October 26-30: Carol in La Verne, CA.

October: Reuben on the Megabus

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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