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BMC NewsNet
March 2013

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1. New SCN Congregations Welcomed

BMC is pleased to welcome two new congregations to the Supportive Communities Network (SCN) as congregations who publicly affirm lgbt people as full members. They are:

[Hope Mennonite Church](#) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hope represents the first congregation in Manitoba to come out as a publicly affirming congregation. The congregation has taken a long and very thorough path, engaging in an extensive process of education, dialogue and discernment. Their statement of welcome reads: *Hope Mennonite Church desires to follow Jesus' example of welcoming all people to God's table. In our context, this includes welcoming lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people and affirming their full participation in the life of our church.* [Click here](#) to read about their process and consensus. Welcome to Hope Mennonite!

[Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren](#) in South Bend, Indiana. Prince of Peace is the eighth congregation in Indiana to join SCN. After a very intentional process of discernment, the congregation moved by unanimous consent to join SCN. A part of their welcome statement captures the spirit and commitment of Prince of Peace: *At Prince of Peace, "together" includes everyone. We join those voices in the Church of the Brethren and in caring communities worldwide, who model the loving, radical inclusion shown by Jesus Christ. We are very pleased to welcome more Hoosiers to the SCN community!*



2. SCN Sees 36% Growth in Two Years



With the addition of Hope Mennonite and Prince of Peace, SCN has grown to a total of 67 congregations and/or groups. More significant, from February 2011 – February 2013, SCN has grown by 36%. If you would like information about how to help your congregation become a member of SCN, please contact Carol at bmc@bmclgbt.org or call the BMC office at 612.343.2060.

3. How Welcoming Congregations Grow

Carol Wise, BMC's executive director, will offer a presentation on "How Welcoming

Congregations Grow” at two venues during her trip to Pennsylvania next month. The first presentation will be at [Germantown Mennonite Church](#) on Saturday, April 13 at 9:00 am, and then on Sunday, April 14 at 7:00 pm at [Akron Mennonite Church](#), an event sponsored by the [Welcoming Dialogue Group](#) of Lancaster. All are welcomed to these presentations, which will explore what is happening within the welcoming movement, evaluate the risks and opportunities of becoming a welcoming congregation, and offer practical advice for initiating a discernment process.

4. Reuben’s Magical VS House Bus Tour comes to Madison

Reuben traveled to Madison and visited with the current members of the Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) unit and their host congregation, [Madison Mennonite Church](#). The Madison MVSers hosted a potluck, where Reuben discussed his tour of MVS houses to promote inclusion in the program. Madison Mennonite is having a series of Sunday school classes on how their church can continue to extend their welcome to the LGBTQ community. As a part of the series, Reuben led a class on increasing awareness of the transgender community. He thanks the members of the Madison MVS house and Madison Mennonite Church for their gracious hospitality and open spirit.

[Chicago Community Mennonite Church](#) has put together a task force to work on ways to make their MVS unit more LGBTQ inclusive. They’ve added “open and affirming” in their congregation’s description on the [Chicago MVS unit’s](#) page. In addition, the task force is working on a welcoming statement that will be available online to prospective MVSers.



Visit Reuben’s [travel blog](#) to read more details about his latest trip.

5. BVS Meeting

On February 11 members of the BMC board met with the Executive Committee of the Mission and Ministry Board of the Church of the Brethren. While considerable work remains for genuine reconciliation, this meeting represented an important first step. [Click here](#) to read the joint statement regarding the meeting.

6. Pink Menno Campaign Returns!

The Pink Menno campaign has begun planning for a presence at the Mennonite Church USA conference in Phoenix, AZ this summer. They will hold worship services, seminars, and other events continuing their work to make the church welcoming and affirming of LGBTQ people. Pink Menno is looking for more people to get involved for the next convention! If you are interested contact bmc@bmcclgbt.org.



7. Connecting Families East – May 17-19, 2013



Sheri Hostetler, pastor of the First Mennonite Church in San Francisco (an SCN congregation), will be the resource person for the Connecting Families East Weekend, scheduled for May 17-19 at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center in Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania. Sheri is an engaging and delightful person who will reflect upon the theme, *Loving Our Neighbors as Ourselves*. Connecting Families have been meeting since 1988 and provide a welcoming space for families with LGBTQ members and LGBTQ people to share experiences related to sexual minority issues as they affect our families, friends, ourselves, and our churches. All are invited to this weekend of relaxation, support, and sharing. [Click here](#) to see a brochure and to register for this exciting weekend – you’ll be glad that you did!

8. Progressive Brethren Gathering – Save the Date!

The next Progressive Brethren Gathering will be held on November 15-17, 2013 at the Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Indiana. We are pleased to announce that Sharon Groves, Religion and Faith Director for the [Human Rights Campaign](#), will be our main presenter on the theme, *Holy Longing: This is My Body*.

9. Community News:

Congratulations to Lin Garber and Jay Schatt, who were married on March 9th in a private ceremony at their home in Massachusetts. The wedding, originally scheduled for this summer in July to coincide with their 50th anniversary, was pushed forward because of Jay's declining health. Jay is currently receiving hospice care at home. We celebrate the joy of their relationship and marriage, and extend our prayers of support and care for Lin and Jay in this difficult time.

Congratulations to Chris Bohlander and Zamir Magalhaes upon the successful adoption of their son, Aparecido, in Goias, Brazil!! We share their happiness and applaud the way that they are breaking barriers for other bi-national gay couples in Brazil.

10. Odds and Ends:

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the leading national grass roots organization for LGBTQ activism, announces the availability of fellowships for their Academy for Leadership and Action. These ten week fellowships offer individuals an opportunity to provide "first hand real-world experience working for social justice that is necessary for becoming a professional organizer." Fellows receive a living expenses stipend of \$500 per week from June 10 – August 16. Placement cities include New York City, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Portland (OR) and Washington DC. Applications are due by April 19. To learn more, go to www.thetaskforce.org.

Open Table Cooperative is seeking a [summer intern](#) to support the work of this emerging organization in the Church of the Brethren. This part time position will assist with various aspects of communication, fundraising and administrative responsibilities, as well as represent the organization at Annual Conference. Applications are due by April 1 to info@opentablecoop.org.

Manitoba's anti-bullying Bill 18, which calls for public and private schools to accommodate pupils who "want to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote gender equality, antiracism, the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people who are disabled by barriers, or the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities," has been met with loud resistance from conservative religious groups, particularly in Steinbach. Steinbach city councilors passed a motion asking for a review of the bill, claiming that it infringes on their religious beliefs. BMC appreciates the gentle voice of Kyle Penner, a Mennonite pastor in Steinbach, who has [blogged](#) about his perspective. Please take time to express your appreciation to Kyle for his witness.

Support of Love's Obedience, a document that emerged from the Progressive Brethren Gathering in support of pastors who officiate at same sex marriages, is gaining momentum. [Click here](#) to read the full document and add your signature to the growing list. Thank You!

11. Travel

April 12-15 – Carol to Philadelphia and Lancaster, PA

April 14 – Carol preach at Germantown Mennonite Church

May 17-19 - Carol to Connecting Families East, Mt. Pleasant, PA

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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