

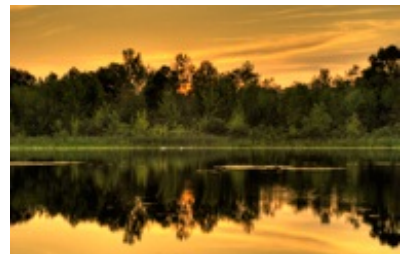


NewsNet - March 2011

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1. Fierce and Fabulous: 35 Faithful Years

Put the dates October 7-9 on your calendar and plan to join us at the relaxing [Ronora Lodge](#) and Retreat Center in Michigan for a fun-filled BMC Gathering. The theme for this event is *Fierce and Fabulous: 35 Faithful Years* as we gather to celebrate our strengths and persistence as a queer community. Amy Short and Adam Hostetter will be leading a special Story Cottage of "fierce and fabulous storytelling...legendary tales of fixing wrongs, leaving the past, creating a wonderful, astonishing future!" If you have a story to tell, they are interested in hearing from you. Specific information about registration and fees will soon be released. If you have an interest in leading a workshop that you think would be of interest to our community, please let us know at bmc@bmclgbt.org. We're looking forward to a fun and fabulous time together!



2. Thank-you

Thank-you to the children of Arvada Mennonite Church / Spirit of Joy Church of the Brethren, who made a donation to BMC by collecting coins from the congregation. You are awesome!

3. Coming Out Strong Blog

It's So Simple, posted March 1:

I watch as the teaching "violence is wrong" is distorted to "conflict is bad," and the value that "community is good" distorted to "the majority is never wrong." [Full text](#)

4. Gay Mennonite League Seeks Anthology Submissions

Randall Friesen, developer of the [Gay Mennonite League](#) is seeking stories of LGBT Mennonites for an upcoming anthology that celebrates their "Mennonite-ness." Randall writes, "We are seeking stories that reflect the Mennonite culture and effects of that culture on LGBT Mennonites in a joyful, celebratory manner. Stories of food, customs, music, people, family and church will explore how LGBT people experience being Mennonite and, likewise, how being LGBT has affected being Mennonite." If you are interested in writing for this anthology, please submit a one to three paragraph summary of the story you would like to write to Randall Friesen at randallfriesen@hotmail.com by March 30, 2011.

Randall is a publishing consultant and has over 15 years of experience as editor-in-chief of Science of Mind magazine and publisher of their book division. He was also editor of BMC's Outspoken. BMC is working with Randall on this project.

5. Portland Peace Church Releases Video



Portland Peace Church of the Brethren has produced a lovely new 44 minute video that shares the story of how they came to be a welcoming congregation that is part of SCN (Supportive Communities Network). Titled *Our Journey to Becoming a Welcoming Congregation*, it includes interviews with present and past members and pastors, and details the courage, love and compassion of the congregation. The video is a great resource for congregations and/or educational classes. BMC has several copies that we are pleased to loan, or you may order your own copy for \$8 at Peace Church of the Brethren, 12727 SE Market St., Portland, OR 97233 (email: peacecob@3dwave.com). Thank you, Peace Church!

6. Manitoba Mennonites Organizing

A group of Mennonites, mostly from congregations in Winnipeg, has been meeting for several years to network and discuss work being done towards the welcome of LGBTQ people. Originally referred to as "the group with no name" (by default), participants have settled on the name *Harmony*. Their vision includes a "desire to create open and loving spaces, affirming people of all sexual orientations and gender identities" and the belief that "the 'priesthood of all believers' is an inclusive concept that calls us to action." <http://mennoharmony.wordpress.com/>

7. BMC Job Opening - Kaleidoscope Coordinator



Available August 2011, this full-time voluntary service term is a great opportunity to make a

difference in people's lives and in the church. The Kaleidoscope Coordinator provides support, resources and programming for Mennonite and Brethren lgbtqa youth and young adults, and assists with general office duties as assigned by the executive director. The position offers an opportunity to travel across North America, to learn the ins and outs of how a non-profit runs, and to live in the terrific Twin Cities. More information about the position is available [here](#).

Support for the volunteer placement is graciously provided by either the [Lutheran Volunteer Corps](#) or the Volunteer Ministries of the [United Church of Christ](#). Brethren Volunteer Service and Mennonite Volunteer Service do not recognize BMC as a placement site.

8. Information Sought About COB District Hearings

We have heard some positive and also some very negative things about the Church of the Brethren Special Response Process, and want to learn more about our community's experience. If you participated in a district hearing or were part of a special study group as an ally or lgbt person, we are interested in learning what that was like for you, how you felt, and/or any other reflections that you are willing to share. If you elected not to participate in the process, we are interested in hearing the reasons for this choice. Your comments can be sent to Carol Wise at bmc@bmcigbt.org. Thank you! Your confidentiality will be respected.

9. Connecting Families Weekend - March 18-20

This is a wonderful opportunity for Mennonite and Brethren parents and families with lgbt members as well as lgbt people themselves, to gather to share stories, relax in a supportive environment, and work at ways to educate and engage the church in dialogue and understanding. This year's theme is One in Christ: Dividing Walls Destroyed. [Download a brochure and/or register](#)

10. Transgender Discrimination Survey

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has published a new study that details the harsh discrimination experienced by transgender and gender non-conforming people in nearly all areas of institutional life. *Injustice at Every Turn* was based upon a survey of 6,450 transgender and non-conforming participants. Among other things, it found that most respondents lived in extreme poverty, 41% reported attempting suicide; 90% reported experiencing harassment at work; and 19% reported having been refused a home or apartment. People of color in general fare far worse than white participants, with African American transgender respondents faring the worst in most areas examined. A link to the executive summary of this important report can be found on the [BMC website](#).



11. Spiritual Wellness and LGBT Community Retreat

A day long gathering for anyone interested in the important connections between spirituality and sexuality is being offered at the All Saints Church, Episcopal, in Worcester, Massachusetts, on March 26 from 8:30-3:30. Worship, workshops and special keynote addresses will reflect upon the connections between spiritual wellness and life in community. Cost is \$30. To register or learn more,

go to www.sherwoodhosting.com/accounts/gblt.

12. Clergy Call

Clergy Call is a gathering of hundreds of religious leaders across the US with the Religion and Faith Program of the Human Rights Campaign in Washington DC from May 22-24. The plenary theme is Leadership for Justice in Complex Times. [More information and to register](#)

13. One Step for Federal Marriage Rights - US

The US Justice Department will no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in court, though Congress may still do so. DOMA is the 1996 law that denies married same gender couples over 1000 federal rights and protections granted to married opposite gender couples.

www.hrc.org/15338.htm

14. Travel

March 10-13: Kirsten at Lutheran Volunteer Corps retreat

March 12: Carol & Kirsten leading anti-oppression training at LVC retreat

March 13-14: Carol in Elgin, IL

April 1-3: BMC board meeting in Minneapolis, MN

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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