

Why should your community be publicly affirming and join SCN?

Because it matters. The sad reality is that the Church of the Brethren and The Mennonite Church actively discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (lgbt) people in their institutional practices and are often not very welcoming institutions. This makes the church a potentially harmful place for lgbt people. Many lgbt people assume that a Brethren or Mennonite congregation or community is not supportive or safe unless they specifically hear otherwise.

- “Coming out” as publicly affirming identifies the community as a “safe space” for lgbt individuals and their families. It provides lgbt people and the people who love them with some assurance that they will not be subjected to overt harm. It is an act of solidarity with the lgbt community.
- Being publicly affirming suggests that the community has educated itself about issues of sexuality, so that an openly lgbt person knows that they will not suddenly become a topic of controversy and discussion or that their presence in the congregation or community will suddenly become questioned.
- Being publicly affirming indicates to questioning or struggling youth that the church or community is a place where it is safe to discuss issues related to sexual identity. This is very important as lgbt youth have a statistically higher incidence of suicide because of their lack of mentors and support.
- Being publicly affirming shifts the onus of responsibility for explaining their position away from the lgbt community and onto those who would challenge the inclusion of lgbt people in the community.
- Being publicly affirming indicates a concern about the Church of the Brethren and the Mennonite Church. The level of hostility and fear that the church frequently exhibits towards lgbt people damages and diminishes the soul of the institution. Dissenting from the church’s fear and rejection of lgbt people is an act of faithfulness and hope because it witnesses to a more loving way of being church together.
- Being publicly affirming is a symbolic act of prophetic witness to the Church of the Brethren and the Mennonite Church and to the broader community, indicating a commitment to justice, hospitality, and the dignity of each human individual.
- Being publicly affirming connects a community with other communities that are serious about welcome, creating a network of support and encouragement.