

Reconciling United Methodist Gathering Toolkit

Creating Change - One Story at a Time



This toolkit will help Reconciling leaders in your area by plan a Reconciling United Methodist (RUM) Gathering. All of the items in this kit are designed to help you share your story, work for equality, and invite new people to be part of the movement for full inclusion. These items are suggestions to assist you in this work, and they will be greatly improved by your creativity and knowledge of what is best for your

We look forward to hearing about your gathering and celebrating with you the stories told, new RUMs, and the eventual transformation of the church and world into one which knows Jesus Christ's love for all people of all sexual orientations and gender identities!

Before the Gathering: Practical Considerations

Location: Gatherings take place in churches, homes, coffee shops and even diners! No location is perfect, so trust yourself. Where do people gather in your community? Houses are comfortable, but some people are timid about visiting another's home. Churches can be welcoming or big and impersonal. Coffee shops or diners are fun places to meet, but participants will be expected to buy coffee or food.

Accessibility: Consider who you are inviting and any possible needs. Will you need wheelchair and stroller access? Are hallways wide and clear? Will participants be asked to climb stairs or walk on uneven ground? Are restrooms large enough for wheelchair access? This is also a good time to consider dietary requirements like sugar, allergies, caffeine, gluten, salt, and meat.

Restrooms (gender): Ensure transgender inclusion by creating, announcing and posting clear and inclusive restrooms policies. Unisex or "gender-free" restrooms eliminate most questions, but you can also specify that attendees should enter the bathroom of either their *identity* or *expression*.

Supplies: Name tags are ALWAYS advisable. This helps break the ice and helps people who know one another by sight but may not remember one another's names. It prevents the awkwardness of asking someone's name that you should already know. You should also have RUM envelopes, a supply of pens, and perhaps RMN's *Reconciling Voices* DVD. Other supplies will depend on your plans for refreshments. We recommend that chairs or sofas be in a circle.

At a Gathering: Plan of Events:

Meet and Greet:

Welcome the group and ensure that each participant and leader are wearing their nametag. Introduce guests to each other by asking a question that encourages each person to share a part of their own story.

Possible questions include:

- Why did you say yes to attending this gathering?
- What is the thing you most love/like about your local church?
- Light hearted suggestions for introductions include:
 - Which section of the news do you read first? Why?
 - If you were a muffin, what flavor would you be? Why?
 - What is your favorite Saturday morning activity? Why?

Story Telling:

After everyone has been introduced, thank them for attending and **tell your story:** Why are you hosting tonight? Why are you part of RMN? After you have shared, invite participants to turn to the person next to them and share their stories. The following questions will help craft their stories:

- Why do you attend the church you attend (if you do)?
- When (how) was the first time you felt that you belonged to that ministry/church?
- Why do you believe in full inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities?
- When was the first time you understood that inclusion of all sexual orientations and gender identities is a justice issue?
- What would you like to change about your local church in regards to full inclusion? What would you change about The United Methodist Church

After sharing stories, you may wish to show a part of the *Reconciling Voices* DVD to help the participants understand how RMN is a vital part of the movement for full inclusion. [Click here to access the video online.](#)

Invitation to become a Reconciling United Methodist:

Tell the group why you committed to RMN by becoming a Reconciling United Methodist. For instance, “Today we have heard stories about the importance of including everyone without exceptions. Because I know in my heart that The United Methodist Church should treat all people equally, I support Reconciling Ministries Network, which is a group working for that change. ”

Invite each person to respond by filling out their card. For instance: “If you feel as I do about the importance of inclusion, then I ask you to join me in supporting RMN. Every time a person fills out and sends in this envelope, it shows how strong the call for inclusion and justice really is among ordinary United Methodists. Also, I invite you to join me in sharing financially with RMN. For this work to be successful we need all hands on deck. When you join me in supporting RMN with \$10 per month auto pledge, you give RMN the resources needed to transform the Church into the full expression of Christ’s inclusive love.”

Give people time to fill out the cards, seal them, then collect them. After most people have finished filling out the envelopes, start collecting them, and in that process say “If you want to turn in your commitment, but pray about or discuss your pledge with a partner, please feel free to take a second envelope and mail that directly to RMN.” *If the commitment envelope leaves the room, RMN will probably never see it. However, offering participants a second envelope is a perfect way to give them time AND empower them to make an immediate stand for full inclusion of all sexual orientations and gender identities.*

Offer a prayer or sing together after the envelopes are collected. Consider thanking God for God’s inclusive love and for the opportunity to use our voices and your resources to bring God’s realm to earth as it is in heaven.

Hints for Successful Invitations:

- Make it fun – express your excitement, be positive, you are *inviting*, not begging.
- Make it clear – do not get lost in the details. Ask them to commit, share, pledge.
- Make it powerful – do not apologize but present a clear, confident invitation.
- Make it specific – tangible results of pledging include new resources, outreach trips, BOL trainings, newsletters, announcements of new Reconciling communities, and more!
- Make it money – asking for pledges offers people a tangible way to make a difference.
- Make it short – your entire request last no more than six to seven minutes – only long enough to clearly explain what it means to be a Reconciling United Methodist.

After the Gathering: Follow up and Evaluation

After the gathering, the team coach assisted by other members of the team will continue to coach and follow up with participants to empower them to keep the commitments they made to the campaign.

- Report the success of the gathering to your Annual Conference Team.
- One week after the gathering, call each participant
 - Thank them for coming to the gathering and ask for their thoughts about the gathering.
 - Ask them if they had any further questions about telling their story.
 - Give them a CHOICE to make, do they want to step into a (specific, tangible) leadership role in your Annual Conference?
- Ask participants for the names of others who might be interested in attending future gatherings or if they would like to share their story on RMN's blog. If so, connect them to M at m@rmnetwork.org.

Sample Thank You Note Or Email:

Dear (Name),

It was great to see you last night! Thanks for participating in our gathering yesterday and especially for sharing your story. Here are some internet links that helped me learn more about Reconciling Ministries Network that you may also enjoy.

- Visit www.rmnetwork.org for General information about RMN

- Visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-Tw6UWtidc&feature=channel_page to view the movie we watched together last night again by clicking on this link.

- Visit www.rmnetwork.org/donate.asp to donate online and learn more about ways to support RMN.

It was so powerful and touching to hear how God is working in our lives last night. Thanks again for sharing in that experience and I'm excited to work with you as a fellow Reconciling United Methodist in our area.

Quick Facts About Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN):

- RMN has been working for full inclusion of all people for 30 years.
- We are a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation funded primarily by Reconciling United Methodist pledges.
- Our mission is to mobilize United Methodists of all sexual orientations and gender identities to transform our Church and world into the full expression of Christ's inclusive love

Contact Information

Reconciling Ministries Network

123 W. Madison St. Ste 2150

Chicago, IL 60641

(773)736-5526

www.rmnetwork.org