A Reconciling Cookbook
recipes for an inclusive church

A Handbook of Activities and Strategies
for the Reconciling Congregation Program’s General Conference Campaign
A Reconciling Cookbook
recipes for an inclusive church

Wide is God’s Welcome! Extend the Table!
¡La Bienvenida de Dios es Amplia! ¡Extienda La Mesa!

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RCP Mission Statement

Persons are incorporated into the Body of Christ through baptism. It is the outward and visible sign of God's grace.

The United Methodist Book of Discipline states that God's grace is available to all and commits us to be in ministry for and with all persons. However, in principle and practice, our United Methodist Church excludes some people, particularly lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, from full participation in its life and work. The result is a Body of Christ that is broken and incomplete and that often acts in unjust ways.

The Reconciling Congregation Program exists to be a healing voice within this climate of fear, ignorance, and injustice. The program encourages and equips individuals, congregations, campus ministries, and church agencies to be instruments of justice within the church by inviting all persons to be full participants in the life of the church, both in policy and practice. In this endeavor, the program provides a supportive network, educational and worship resources, and strategies that enable and empower individuals and church organizations for Christian ministries with lesbian, gay, bisexual and other persons.

—adopted 8/16/92
$ 3.00 donation requested

"One of the traditional invitations for communion is to ‘taste and see the goodness of the Lord.’ It is an invitation to get up, come forward and experience for oneself the fullness of God’s love. The recipes in this cookbook, like communion, require participation—and help us embody and experience an acceptance that is as wide as God’s mercy."  
—Chip Aldridge, RCP Board member

"Over the last few years, publicity around issues affecting lesbians, gay men and their families and friends has been frequent and often contentious. In an effort to provide a more personal witness and education to our church, we invite you to become an integral part of the Wide is God’s Welcome—Extend the Table! General Conference campaign."  
—Jeanne Audrey Powers, RCP Board member

"Refusal to fully accept gay and lesbian persons is continuing evidence of how far we yet are from being the inclusive community of love that God intends the church to be. Have we learned so little from the struggles against racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination? How dare the church proclaim grace and practice condemnation!"  
—Gayle Felton, RCP Board Chair

"Sharing our stories being personal is key to the witness of the Reconciling Congregation Program and to this General Conference campaign. For too long the church has dealt with the ‘issue of homosexuality’ in the abstract rather than focusing on the real people and ministries affected."  
—Mark Bowman, Executive Director, RCP

"The recipes in this book are nothing short of divine! Make a feast and invite everyone in to savor the richness of a church where no one is excluded! These recipes make sure that there is plenty of God’s love to share!"  
—Karen Oliveto, Past RCP Board Chair

You can help accomplish the RCP mission by:

✓ Trying one of the enclosed strategies.
✓ Enrolling United Methodists and cultivating Reconciling ministries.
✓ Becoming an RCP Angel with a pledge of $100 or more for the year— or, if you are already an Angel, by increasing your pledge.
✓ Volunteering at the UM General Conference in Cleveland, May 2-12, 2000
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Introduction

Knowing that United Methodists are known for their love of food, especially food around the fellowship table, the Reconciling Congregation Program has drawn on this rich heritage and our enjoyment of a good metaphor to offer this “cookbook” of strategy recipes. If you are the type that enjoys reading cookbooks while never actually attempting a recipe, savor reading this collection and be inspired by the hope for the church that its authors offer. If, on the other hand, you’re willing to strive for a fresh, hospitable flavor or cook up something promising for the church, then use the recipes freely. Take the advice of good chefs, who recommend adjusting the recipes to your own tastes. Make substitutions and change ingredients as necessary; after all, not all ingredients may be available in your area.

Consistent with the form and style of the Reconciling Congregation Program (RCP), the *Wide is God’s Welcome—Extend the Table!* campaign provides a variety of strategy recipes from which to choose. All are designed to support the communities and individuals that call themselves reconciling in their ministries with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons and their families.

The RCP is a network of congregations, conferences, ministries, and individuals bound together by common declaration that “all persons regardless of sexual orientation are welcome to participate in the life of the church.” The RCP’s fundamental organizing principle is that by changing persons’ thoughts and actions at the local level and by linking those persons and communities together, a national movement will expand and eventually transform the whole church.

The campaign, as it unfolds in the months leading up to the General Conference, includes enrolling more Reconciling United Methodists, canvassing General Conference delegates and broadcasting the *Wide Is God’s Welcome—Extend the Table!* message throughout the life of each annual conference. Some Reconciling United Methodists are also working with our allies, the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) and Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian/Gay/ Bisexual Transgendered Concerns, to directly engage the General Conference’s legislative process. The campaign will look different in each annual conference, depending upon the needs and energies of local Reconciling United Methodists.

The campaign will climax in Cleveland from May 2-12, 2000, as hundreds of Reconciling United Methodists converge on the General Conference to model God’s welcoming hospitality and to invite the church to extend the table to all persons regardless of sexual orientation. The actions there will be dramatic, inspiring, and fun.

The *Wide Is God’s Welcome—Extend the Table!* campaign provides a unique opportunity to make a difference on issues of sexual orientation in The United Methodist Church. Everyone is invited to get involved in the campaign—to sample the following strategy recipes.

Let’s get cooking together.
In reading the following collection of recipes, you will note that this is indeed a collection drawn from many sources, not the work of one author. I have tried to maintain the individual voices represented in each recipe.

There are many who deserve thanks for offering their culinary wisdom and for molding the various ideas into recipes: Chip Aldridge, Pamela Bayes, Paul Beeman, Melany Burrill, Mary Callaway Logan, Mary Ann Carlson, Tina Cansler, Nancy Carter, Mark Chupp, Youtha Hardman-Cromwell, Chris Glaser, Annette Jones, Harry Knox, Kirsten Kingdon, Roger Kruse, Katie Ladd, June Lane, Jorge Lockward, Jeni Markum, Bobby McMillian, Nina Nichols, Elane O'Rourke, Ruth Burns Oates, Karen Oliveto, Jennifer Peterson, Jeanne Audrey Powers, Beth Richardson, Joyce Rock, Susan Ross, Sunessa Schettler, Gloria Soliz, Tom Starnes, Kristen Terrell, Julie Trainum, Bill Weber, Mike Wright-Chapman.

I am also deeply appreciative of the test kitchen staff in Atlanta that worked hard testing and reworking recipes: Rhonda Browning, Liz Conner, Lynne France, Julie Trainum, Patricia York. By the way, they highly recommend the pink triangle cookies.

My colleagues who work with me deserve gratitude for their assistance and encouragement including Mark Crenshaw, Saralyn Chesnut, Paulette Dilworth, Robert Ethridge, Carol Flowers, Marian Mathis-Grant, and Laurie Renfro-Collins.

And, of course, many thanks go to Mark Bowman, Jan Graves and Karen Hundrieser for their editing, information, inspiration, and the “cookbook” theme we’ve so enjoyed. Thanks especially to Jan for all the design and formatting work that made possible the publication of the handbook.

And to all those others on the email networks who offered assistance in locating resources and contacts at a moment’s notice, thank you.

May we know the resurrection promise as we offer words of hope and hospitality to the church.

Kelly Turney
Chef & Editor
Break the Ice with a Button

Ingredients
- Wide is God's Welcome campaign button from national office
- clothing on which to pin button
- extra buttons to distribute

Prep. Time
- 1-2 weeks to request and receive buttons from national office
- 5 seconds to pin on button

Instructions
Wear a theme button everywhere you go. Carry the message of hospitality to everyone who sees you at church, district events, conference meetings, potlucks, picnics, ice cream socials, bar-b-ques, pancake suppers, dinner clubs and dessert parties.

Use the opportunity to share with others your fears, concerns, hopes and dreams about the upcoming General Conference. Share your hope that the church will lovingly disagree about sexual orientation but will make space for those offering reconciling ministries.

Enrolling Reconciling United Methodists

Ingredients
- Enrollment Cards (obtain from RCP national office)
- Pens

Prep. Time
- 1-2 weeks to request and receive cards from national office

This pre-conference campaign centers around grass-root support and activities by laity around the country. The objective is to increase the number of Reconciling United Methodists by General Conference (a goal of 20,000 by 2000 has been set). These registration cards (available from the RCP national office) can be distributed at meetings or by individuals as part of an "each one, recruit one" campaign.

The statement Reconciling United Methodists commit to is:

I join the witness to "extend the table" of The United Methodist Church to the participation of all people, regardless of sexual orientation.

Names of Reconciling United Methodists will be listed in national and local publicity and used during the General Conference in Cleveland.
Enrollment cards are available in bulk from the national RCP office for you to distribute and collect. You may duplicate or adapt the enrollment cards for local distribution or printing in newsletters.

Those signing cards are given to opportunity to identify themselves as clergy, layperson, parent of l/g/b child, or student/youth. In addition, the enrollment cards allow participants to give an optional financial contribution to Wide is God’s Welcome–Extend the Table. There is no membership fee to become a Reconciling United Methodist.

The national office maintains the list of Reconciling United Methodists and those who enroll are invited, in follow-up letters, to actively participate in Wide is God’s Welcome–Extend the Table.

Lists of Reconciling United Methodists are available to each conference coordinator.

Enrolling Reconciling United Methodists is an opportunity to build a groundswell of support for adopting more welcoming policies at the 2000 General Conference, and a vehicle for enlarging the base of support for the RC movement.

This is an easy strategy that can be used in a variety of settings. You can plan a reconciling event with a speaker, include the cards in a worship bulletin, or simply distribute RC sign-up cards at any other planned event such as your district UMW event or committee meeting. You can also send cards to your colleagues with short, personal notes. Think of ways to reach out to new persons so as to widen the base of support in your conference. Strategize ways to reach out to the diversity of persons in your conference—to groups that may not be currently well represented in local RCP activities such as persons from rural churches, persons of color and youth/students.

Anyone who enrolled last time may enroll again allowing us to update the national database.

Contact for ordering enrollment cards: Office Manager, National RCP office, 773-736-5526
Pink Triangle Cookies

Ingredients
1 cup butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg
1 tablespoon milk

Icing: milk, powdered sugar, red food coloring

1 teaspoon vanilla
2 3/4 cups flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt

For packaging: plastic wrap, ribbon, labels/tags, markers

Prep. Time
- 3 hours for preparation, baking, cooling and frosting of cookies
- 1 hour for packaging with labels (see page 4 for sample labels for copying)
- 1 hour or more for distribution, or display plate of cookies

Provide these cookies as a sign of hospitality at conference (distribute to delegates as they enter the hall), local church events or any other event. They can even be offered at UMW, district events or other meetings. Distribute them on their own or wrap 2-3 cookies in plastic wrap, and attach a label (see suggested tag labels on page 4). You might want to provide information about the historical significance of the pink triangle as it was used to label and oppress gays during the Holocaust.

Instructions
Cream butter and gradually add sugar. Beat until light and fluffy. Beat in egg, milk, and vanilla. Combine dry ingredients and add to cream mixture. Shape dough into a ball, wrap in plastic wrap and chill for 2 hours.

Roll out dough to 1/8th of an inch thick on a floured surface and cut out triangle shapes. Bake at 350% for 8-10 minutes. Cool on sheet for a minute, then transfer from baking sheet to cooling rack.

Quicker (but more costly) version. Use packaged, refrigerated sugar cookie dough. Slice and bake as directed. Once cooled, decorate with icing in the form of triangles.

Icing
Mix 1 part milk with 10 parts powdered sugar, stirring until smooth. Add a drop of two of red food coloring to create the desired shade of pink. Brush on icing to lightly glaze cookies after cookies have cooled completely. This icing hardens as it dries, making these cookies easy to stack and transport.
Pink Triangle Cookie Labels

Let’s agree to disagree
Proclaim to the world that God’s church is open to all!
In the midst of our debate, let’s not hate.

“First, by doing no harm”
–From the General Rules of the Book of Discipline

Let ministry happen, whenever, where-ever, to whomever
Seek to love, minister and have compassion for others

During the Holocaust, pink triangles were used to label and persecute gays. In the midst of our disagreement in the church, let’s focus on love, not persecution and prosecution

At God’s Table—All are Welcome
Together, let’s build up the faithful, not tear down those that are different
Let’s build up the faithful and stop tearing down gays and lesbians and their families
Wide is God’s Welcome—Extend the Table
Wide is God’s Welcome—Extend the Table
No one should be excluded from God’s blessings

But as to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think. So that whatsoever they are, whether right or wrong, they are not distinguishing marks of a Methodist.
–From John Wesley’s Character of a Methodist
Old Family Recipes
Strategies that reach all ages and use the rich resources of family members of g/l/b/t persons

Family Album

Ingredients

- photo album
- materials to decorate album cover: stick-on letters, fabric, glitter, construction paper, markers, etc.
- short (1 page if possible) stories, poems or letters regarding the experiences of friends and family members of g/l/b/t persons and memorabilia items such as photographs, hate mail, anti-gay rhetoric flyers, articles in local newspapers—anything related to their stories.

Prep. time

- 1-2 months

Instructions

Work with the local P-FLAG group and/or reconciling congregations to develop an “album” of stories from family members and friends of g/l/b/t persons that can be circulated at district events, UMW meetings, or displayed at annual conference. Story pages may include the stories as well as photos and memorabilia applicable to the story. In addition, develop a list of parents of g/l/b/t persons willing to accompany the album and share their stories at meetings in your area. It is preferable that these parents or family members be United Methodists but any family member or friend who has struggled with the church around the acceptance of their family is appropriate as long as there is someone present knowledgeable and prepared to speak to the current situation in the United Methodist Church.

Telling and hearing the stories of the parents of g/l/b/t persons is one of the most powerful witnesses to many folks who may think they don’t know any g/l/b/t persons or that inclusion of gays and lesbians is not an issue about which they need care. In addition, access for the parent of a g/l/b/t person to speak at a UMW, UMM or district meeting may be easier because there may be less of a perceived political agenda.

The cover of the photo album may be decorated to include symbols of themes such as inclusion, God’s children, the body of Christ, and the family of God. If the album is to be displayed at an annual conference reconciling table, take care to make the cover inviting to United Methodists unfamiliar with the issues of discrimination and inclusion in the church. Be creative. Possible cover titles include: All in the Family, All God’s Children, Around the Table.

The following stories may be copied and used in your album. Also, quotes from family members may be printed from the PFLAG website (www.PFLAG.org) and included as long as the source is referenced. More stories are available also from the national RCP office.
It's been almost two years since my son, Jimmy, told me he was gay. Jimmy is a wonderful young man and has always been the perfect son. Valedictorian of his senior class, student council president, and Presidential Scholar, he was involved in many things and was well liked by everyone. On June 22, 1998, I was in my kitchen when Jimmy came in to talk to me. The look of fear in his eyes when he looked at me and said, "Mom, I'm gay," will always be with me. My son, whom I love more than words can tell, was afraid that I would turn him away. Even worse, he thought that my love for him would change.

I have been trying to look back over the past two years and analyze the feelings that have emerged since I have known that Jimmy is gay. The feeling that stands out the most is FEAR. There is the very real fear of knowing that some people would hurt your child simply because they are gay. At first, there is the fear of how your friends and family will react when they find out. There is the fear for the mental well being of your child as they learn to cope with their identity. For me, there was the fear of how we were going to reconcile this with our faith, and the fear of Jimmy losing his connection with God.

We were members of a large Baptist church and Jimmy had always been very active in the church. He has a very special relationship with God and I was very afraid that he would lose that. How I wish I could go back and raise him in a different faith environment. The counsel that he received from our minister was to never tell his parents—we would not be able to handle it. I am so thankful he did not heed that advice. We now attend a different church that is much more accepting, but all of us have had to struggle through the condemnation of the Baptist doctrine. Jimmy will begin divinity school this fall. It makes me very sad to think of all the pain we cause people in the name of religion.

I know that being gay is not a choice for my son. It is a part of him. To change that would be to change the person that he is, and I would not do that at all. I also know that he is gay regardless of his sexual activity. This is the part that seems so hard for people to understand. Jimmy could be abstinent, he could be married to a woman, or he could have a male partner. He would still be gay. I also know that God loves all people and I believe that he has a special hand upon Jimmy. I think that perhaps Jimmy is one of the people that will change the paradigms of our society. He is such a spiritual person and such a good person that he will not be easily explained away.

I believe that Jesus' mission here on earth was to show us how to love one another. Somewhere along the way we've missed the mark. When we do not accept and love people for who they are and turn them away from our churches we lose sight of the blessings of God. Having a gay son has made me a much better person. It has taught me humility and brought many people into my life that I love dearly. I have met so many young men and women that have been turned away by their families and they have been made to feel so unworthy and so sinful. I hope that in my lifetime this will change.

With the recent scientific and brain-based research I do not see how we can not change the way we accept homosexuality in our society. I urge you to be accepting of all individuals and to focus on the life-giving qualities of that person. We need to teach our young people to love themselves and to accept themselves.

—Joyce Rock, Oklahoma
My parents are members of a United Methodist church in the South—the same church in which I grew up and was nurtured and I’m sure the same church in which their funerals will be held. They are both in their mid-80’s. My dad is in poor health due to heart trouble. The church is the center of their lives. Mother’s father was a local Methodist pastor. Methodism is in our blood. Mother has taught Sunday School and quilted a dozen or more quilts, gathering weekly with her friends in the Fellowship Hall. My father has been Santa at the all-church Christmas party for more years than I can count. There are stained glass windows in honor of my family in the new sanctuary.

I have not been to visit my parents in two years. They have not asked me to visit. They have known I am lesbian for 16 years and that I have a family but have kept their distance. When my dad was hospitalized this year during the Christmas holidays, my partner and I planned to visit him but postponed the trip when my mother panicked at my suggestion. I failed to realize my mother didn’t want us to visit because she was afraid our visit would upset my Dad. She said seeing me reminds him of what he considers to be my ‘sinful’ lifestyle. I discovered this last week when I again approached her about our visiting soon. She finally told me they didn’t want me to come to visit because it was ‘too upsetting’. She told me that her church was up-in-arms about these same-sex unions and that she dared not say a word about me because if her church found out I am lesbian they might reject her and my dad.

That church community connection, maybe rightly so, is more important to my parents at this time in their lives than connection with their own daughter. The judgmental position of my Mother’s and Dad’s church on this issue which is giving rise to their fear of losing a community that is a life line for them in their old age has deepened the chasm between me and my parents. It does so in violation of the first of our General Rules in the United Methodist Book of Discipline, to “Do No Harm.”

Signed,
Annette, South Central Jurisdiction
My father asked me
if I am gay.
I asked, Does it matter?
He said, No, not really.
I said yes.
He said, Get out of my life.
I guess it mattered.

My boss asked if I am gay.
I asked, Does it matter?
He said, No, not really.
I told him yes.
He said, You’re fired, faggot.
I guess it mattered.

My friend asked if I am gay.
I said, Does it matter?
He said, No, not really.
I told him yes.
He said,
Don’t call me your friend.
I guess it mattered.

My lover asked,
Do you love me?
I asked, Does it matter?
He said, Yes.
I told him, I love you.
He said,
Let me hold you in my arms.
For the first time in my life
something matters.

My God asked me,
Do you love yourself?
I said, Does it matter?
God said, YES.
I said, How can I love myself?
I am gay.
God said,
That is the way I made you.
Nothing will ever matter again.

—An anonymous high school student
About 30 years ago I was on a church retreat with a group of junior highs. We had camped out, sung, cooked breakfast and the kids had gone on a morning walk with another counselor. A wonderful young, male counselor and I were sitting by the campfire talking. We had worked together on youth programs for some time and I had the highest regard for his abilities and his wonderful manner with the kids. Here was truly one of God’s very gifted children, giving generously of his time and talents to serve in the church.

“I would like to tell you something about myself,” he said. Until that moment, I had never given a great deal of thought to homosexuality other than as an orientation that some other people have. My friend said, “I want you to know that I am homosexual.” He went on to tell me, with both pathos and humor, about how gay men train themselves to watch a woman walk across the room like straight men do so nobody will guess The Big Secret. He told me about the ways gay men have of identifying themselves to one another. He told me how he dealt with his homosexuality with his family and how he had to hide it from his employer. He told me about how he felt forced to live two lives in order to get along in straight society.

Throughout the telling, his voice never became angry. He stated the situation simply as fact. Throughout the intervening years, our lives have crossed in many ways. He has been incredibly helpful and supportive to me and my family in many ways. He is a gifted teacher and friend. He is one of the funniest people in the universe. When he enters a room, it lights up. Not long ago he was at our house for a mystery party which included lots of our other friends, none of whom had ever met him before. At some point he began talking about southern history in his soft, distinctive voice. In a few minutes, all our guests had gathered around him and were sitting in the living room, spellbound, as he made historical accounts of slavery come alive. There wasn’t another sound in the room! (I might add that our usually skittish cat made himself at home on our friend’s lap, also enjoying the lecture.) It was a special moment in a special evening.

From that moment at the campfire (there is magic in circles, is there not?), there was forged in my psyche the God-given understanding that if my friend is gay, gay is a very fine thing indeed. I cringe that anybody could pass judgment on him, hurt him or deny him full participation in the church he has served lovingly and generously since he was a little child. From that day to this, neither of us has even mentioned the campfire conversation again. It just isn’t necessary.

Signed,
June B. Lane, former United Methodist education director
I Remember My Daughter’s Baptism

I have finally figured out what our mistake was.

Our mistake was, we, (my family), believed the church. We believed what we were taught and sang as children, “Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world . . .” and “Yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.” We are made in the image of the creator—provided for on every side by Her Grace.

As my own children grew, and I watched them with awe and wonder, I began to understand what the Psalmist meant when he said God is kind to us like a parent—remembering our frame, knowing us as we are, but loving us with an all encompassing love.

Her father and I took our baby daughter to church to be baptized. There we vowed, before The Almighty and those witnesses, first to “accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever form they present themselves.”

Then, to “. . .so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, [will] be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.”

We did this with three children. Each time, the congregation joined us in the last vow—ending with “we will surround this child with a community of love and forgiveness.” We meant to do as we promised. we never doubted that the rest of the congregation meant to do it, too. We never doubted that they knew what they were saying.

I remember the wonder with which I saw my little daughter. I thought she was the most beautiful, the most wonderful child who had ever been born! As they say, “Every old crow thinks hers is the blackest.” Well, I did. I didn’t want to change anything about her. Her face was so bright! Her legs were so shapely and sturdy! Even the way she breathed as she slept was beautiful.

And she grew up in church. Sunday school, confirmation, youth group, even leading a youth group for a while. It took that long for the trouble to develop.

When Calla began to realize that somehow she was different, she instinctively drew back, trying to keep it to herself. While she checked it out and searched for someone, somewhere, who was like her, she carefully kept all the social conventions when she came to visit her family and home community. When she finally knew who she was, and that she was lesbian, she tried her best to shield her family from social repercussions by keeping her lesbianism invisible.

You see, she had heard all about love from the church, but she had also heard the other messages, about hate. And she had realized at last that she was different in a way those messages named “hateful.” Sadly, without sharing it with her family, she came to bitter terms with the truth about herself and the church as she knew it.
When Calla finally came out to me, it was in many ways an enormous relief. For some years we had carefully ignored some things that were obvious, cautiously skirting some topics of conversation. Now we could be more honest with one another.

However, I still lived in a world where no one asked, so no one told. By sharing her truth with me, my daughter had caused me to dive deeper into a closet I had already been using, because, of course, I knew before she told me. I just had not faced the truth. Now, what to do?

For a while, trying to figure out what would be best to do, I went along much as before. Nobody asked, I never told. My friends admired my pictures of Calla, along with those of my other children, and of Calla and her “friends.” Calla brought her partner to visit, and I took them around. Everyone was nice to Calla, as always, but she carefully avoided shows of affection with her partner, and the words “lesbian,” “gay,” and “homosexual” never came up.

Finally I got past the first shock of truth. Now I heard those other words of the church, the words of hate and avoidance. Something primeval in me reared up. These were not words from the God I knew! As a really mature person (at least in years!), I found that I must remake a decision I had thought long past, to answer the basic question: What is God like? Or to put it another way, Which God do I believe in?, a God of love, or a God of judgment and retribution? One who turns His back on His children—His own creations? At the same time, when someone in the church said something negative about homosexuals or homosexuality, about the “evil” and “unnaturalness” that those words represented, I knew that “evil” and “unnatural” did not describe the woman I knew as my daughter.

In short, when anyone moved to exclude Calla from the love of God, or anything else, this primeval something inside me bristled, and my inmost self said emphatically, “NOT MY DAUGHTER!”

Unfortunately, it did not yet speak aloud. That took some growing, a lot of thinking, and some experimentation, on how to do it right. How to speak in such a way that I would be heard, not automatically discounted. I am still trying hard to learn this.

You can only begin to imagine the joy of someone like me finding a church like Bethany. Here I am not only allowed, but expected, to see the likeness of my God in all these wonderful people—lesbian, gay, straight, whatever. I can openly love all of them, and they can openly love me, and each other, without any social stigma.

This is a truly remarkable and blessed freedom. These people live up to their baptismal vows.

Please! You who read this. Remember your baptismal vows and live up to them.

–Ruth Burns Oates
member of a reconciling congregation
Parents Talk About Their Daughters and Sons
from the PFLAG website - www.pflag.org

“I’d say that reading and learning more about sexual orientation is what helped me most... laying to rest some of the myths I had heard... So the more I learned, the angrier I got, and the more I wanted to change society instead of my son.”

–Mother of a gay son

“I hit a point where I was feeling sad and thinking what would I say when people asked, ‘How is Gary?’ And it occurred to me: Gary’s fine. I’m the one who’s not. And once I reached that point, it was easier... as we met Gary’s friends, we found them to be wonderful people and realized that he’s really part of a pretty terrific community. So what’s the problem? It’s society’s problem. That’s when we figured we were over the hump.”

–Mother of a gay son

“I think the turning point for me was when I read more about it, and read that most kids who can accept their sexuality say they feel calmer, happier and more confident. And of course, that’s what I wanted for my child and I sure didn’t want to be what was standing in the way of that.”

–Father of a gay son

“I have to tell you, there are so many pluses now. You begin to recognize what an incredible child you have to share this with you and to want you to be a part of their lives... [Look at] the trust that has been placed in your hands and how much guts it took to do that.”

–Father of a lesbian daughter

“For me, it was my son’s saying to me, ‘Dad, I’m the same person I was before.’ Now it’s been six months, and I realize even more that really, nothing has changed in his life. It was our perception of him, I guess.”

–Father of a gay son
10-3 Guilty. The Bishop had asked that there be no response when the verdict was read but his warning wasn’t necessary.

The knee jerk simplicity of the prosecution’s case had seemed to pale with the wholeness of the defense. Many came in assuming that Pastor Dell would be found guilty but had found the defense case persuasive. There was a strong hope that ministry would triumph over law.

As the verdict was read, those gathered in the Downers Grove church were stunned into silence. The trial adjourned for dinner but few had any interest in food. Slowly they made their way out of the sanctuary to the park where supporters of Greg Dell had been gathering for two days. Half a dozen members of the Broadway community clustered in a circle while others had quiet conversations in small groups. Those in the small circle began to talk, and as they did, others joined. Slowly the circle expanded. People talked about their anger about the verdict, their experiences in coming out, the times they were excluded from the church. They sang and cried. In the midst of all that pain it seemed necessary to be touching someone. As the circle expanded the nearby press rushed over to capture the event. They couldn’t because the stories exploded from all over the circle. Eventually, the hundred people in the circle headed back into the church to hear the arguments for the penalty phase.

Then it happened again. As people waited for the Trial Court to complete their deliberations, some stood silently at the front of the sanctuary, holding hands. The circle grew and spilled into the main aisle. For perhaps 20 minutes not a word was spoken in the group. Then it began; it sounded almost like a moan. A simple song spread through the circle but it was so quiet that it didn’t interrupt the many conversations that were taking place all over the room. In solemn tones, one song after another was sung. Slowly, it increased in volume and the circle increased in size. Many of the security team from the local church joined in. The participants spilled into all the aisles and the mood became more energetic, even raucous. Some of those who were unable to stand would call out words to hymns and the gathered crowd responded. By now, there were a hundred in the circle and another 40 participating in the seats.

There were a half a dozen observers in the rear of the church whose expressions clearly identified them in opposition to the hopes and dreams of the majority but even some of them mouthed the words to the hymns. For an hour and a half the songs of struggle, anger and hope poured out of the windows of the Downers Grove United Methodist Church. It was a time none of us will ever forget.

—Dale Fast
Letter to the Editor

Ingredients

- a willingness to share your story
- pen and paper or a computer & printer

Prep Time

- varies from 1 hour to several days

Instructions

Write a letter to the editor of your conference United Methodist newspaper (see press strategies on page 53). Publication policies differ by region but, generally, relevant, brief (300 words or fewer) letters from a local layperson or clergyperson are printed. You may also wish to submit an op-ed piece to your local, secular newspaper.

Some policies allow for your name to be withheld from publication upon request as long as you include your name and phone number in the information sent to the paper. If you feel that you cannot provide your name, ask a friend to submit the letter for you as “an experience of a friend.” You may also want them to include the reason you felt it important to remain anonymous.

For suggestions regarding themes and guidelines see Family Album and Dear Bishop recipes. Many national leaders in the Reconciling movement have suggested that the real progress will be made not in court rulings, judicial council decisions, or in lawmaking, but in the telling of the agonizing stories—personalizing our concerns and changing the climate of opinion. Many good Methodists don’t want to believe that discrimination against gays and lesbians occurs or that current UMC policies cause unnecessary pain to l/g/b/t persons and their families. Therefore, it is important for family members to share their experiences of heartbreak and pain so that the discussion focuses not on those who break a rule in the Discipline, but rather on our vision for an inclusive, justice-loving and grace-filled church.
Youth Tablecloth: Hopes for An Inclusive Church

Ingredients
- plain white sheet (choose the size based on the number of people working on the project and where you plan to use the final tablecloth)
- fabric crayons in a variety of colors (fabric dye in crayon form)
- iron-on transfers, embroidery materials, puff paints, fabric glue and scrap fabric or felt (optional)

Prep. Time
- a day to pick up supplies

Instructions
Multiple possibilities exist for having the youth group of a single congregation (or several congregations) come together for educational event during which a tablecloth is decorated. Possible topics include: the struggles of a gay youth, youth talking about what it’s like having a gay parent, a parent speaking on child’s suicide or struggles with sexual orientation and the church.

As a part of a study or after the speech, ask youth to decorate a tablecloth with images that represent their hopes for a future inclusive church. The group can come up with the theme, which may evolve as the tablecloth is decorated.

The process will vary depending on the group: each person can be responsible for a portion of the cloth to decorate individually, and the center and border can be worked on communally, or any variation on which the group decides.

The tablecloth could be used to cover the altar at communion, with the youth reporting on their work, or could be displayed at district events or annual conference.

Resources: Youth Pride groups in metropolitan areas offer support to gay/lesbian and questioning youth. Local P-FLAG and Straight But Not Narrow groups may be also be able to provide speakers or suggestions.

Recipe from: Melany Burrill, mburrill@kroll-ogara.com
Soul Food
Spirituality and worship resources and suggestions for ethnic populations

Prayer Vigil - Day of Prayer (L, CM, C)

Local Congregation version

Ingredients
- For a prayer service: liturgy, music, worship leaders, musicians, paper and pens (optional), envelopes and stamps for letter-writing
- For prayer vigil: candles, prayer calendars, booklets of prayers (see resources under Reconciling Worship Resources)

Prep. Time – 2-3 months

Cooking Time – 1 hour (for a prayer service); for other ideas - cook until done!

Serves – all members of a local congregation

Instructions
A Reconciling Day of Prayer could be planned around a prayer service to be held in a church sanctuary or outside. This could be a worship service that primarily centers on prayer, perhaps with some corporate printed prayers, some reading of scripture, some times of silence. Such a service could end with a time of action—i.e. letter-writing, with materials provided, about a local issue relating to reconciling. A Reconciling Prayer Vigil implies a less structured time—either a group that gathers to sing and pray or be in silence (with candles, perhaps, if it is night) for a certain amount of time, or a schedule which folks sign to come and pray in the sanctuary at designated times (i.e. one person from 2-2:30, another from 2:30-3, etc.) for as a long a period as you like. People could also sign up to pray at designated times in their own homes. In that case, printed prayers could be sent out or made available for people’s use at home. Or, a prayer calendar to cover a specific time—the weeks of Advent or Lent, for example—could be made available, on the theme of reconciliation, with prayers and/or meditations for each day.

District version

Ingredients – See Local Congregation Day of Prayer

Prep. Time – 3-6 months

Cooking Time – 1 hour for a service

Serves – All laity and/or clergy of a district

Instructions
Offer in local church as a part of another district event—a UMW Day Apart, a District Conference, a Clergy Retreat, etc.
Conference/Community version

Ingredients – See Local Congregation Day of Prayer
Prep. Time – 6 months - 1 year
Cooking Time – Local Congregation Day of Prayer
Serves – All laity and/or clergy of a conference

Instructions
Offer at Annual Conference or another Conference event—or a name a day “Conference Reconciling Day of Prayer” and invite local churches to participate, with resources supplied. Could be planned by supportive congregations from several denominations in a community.

Reconciling Worship Resources

Ingredients – liturgy, music, worship leaders, musicians, worshipers
Prep. Time – 3-6 months (or more, depending on event)
Cooking Time – 1 hour
Serves – Any group of worshipers–local congregation, attendees at a special event (i.e. District or Annual Conference, UMW event, youth event, etc.)

Instructions
There are many ways a reconciling worship service could be put together. Some examples of liturgies, prayers, music, etc. follow.

Wide is God’s Welcome—Extend the Table Biblical References

Luke 14:12-24
He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, “Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” Then Jesus said to him, “Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.’ Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.’ Another said, ‘I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.’ So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’ And the slave said, ‘Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.’ Then the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.’” NRSV
A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." NRSV

I Corinthians 12:12-26
For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. NRSV

Romans 15:7
Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. NRSV
Accept one another, then, for the glory of God, as Christ has accepted you. TEVW

Psalm 23
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. NRSV

Also see: Acts 10; I Cor. 11; Luke 24; Luke 16; John 6; John 21;15; Isaiah 55

Music ideas

In the *UM Hymnal*:

In the Gather songbook from GIA:
“Faithful Family,” “All Things New,” “Envia Tu Espiritu,” “Spirit Blowing Through Creation,” “Send Down the Fire,” “God is One, Unique and Holy,” “Stand Up, Friends,” “God Beyond All Names,” “Song at the Center,” “Shake Up the Morning,” “Sing Our God Together,” “How Can I Keep From Singing,” “You Are Mine,” “Servant Song,” “You Are Called to Tell the Story,” “Sing Hey for the Carpenter,” “The Summons,” “We Are Called,” “Voices That Challenge,” “World Peace Prayer,” “Many Are the Lightbeams,” “Diverse in Culture, Nation, Race,” “Come to Us,” “Gather Us In,” “All Who Hunger”

From Augsburg Press, several inclusive collections, including:
“A Dazzling Bouquet” by Bret Hesla in Global Songs 2—Songs of Faith
“Open the Door” by Ray Makeever in Dancing at the Harvest

From The Shaker Gift of Song by Ann Black Sturm:
“Come to Zion,” “Love is Little,” and “Welcome Here”

From A Minor Music Company (932 Virginia, SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506; free and may be copied):
“Hallelujah, Amen” by Carl Wiltse
“Extend the Table” by Carl Wiltse with words by Vicki Pruett written for the RCP campaign

Other suggestions: anything by Jim/Jean Strathdee, Janis Ian’s “What About the Love?” Dorie Ellzey’s “We Are Gathered Here Together.” See also the Songs of Shalom songbook (UM Board of Discipleship, 1983), Songs for a New World (also UM Board of Discipleship, no date), “Songs” compiled by Yohann Anderson, “Hello” in Lift Every Voice and Sing (Cooperative Recreation Service), and “I’m Gonna Set at the Welcome Table” from the CD of the same name by Bill Harley (Round River Records).

Alternative words for They’ll Know We Are Christians By Our Love:
As we learn how to pray, we will learn how to live (repeat)
And the gift we’ve received will be the gift we’ll have to give.

Love was there, love was then, love is here, love is now (repeat)
And the love of Christ we know will be the love that shows us how.

We will strengthen each other, and our life in Christ we’ll share, (repeat)
And by serving our neighbors we will show them that we care.
We'll have drink for the thirsty, for the hungry we'll have food, (repeat)
So we'll spread abroad the word to all: the news of God is good.

We will work for all justice, we will see captives free, (repeat)
And we'll demonstrate the truth anew: God's love is liberty.

(Dunlap/Schoelte)

Alternate words to Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Christ all creatures here below.
Praise Holy Spirit, Comforter, One God, Triune, whom we adore.

Liturgies

Call to Worship
God of Infinite Love! We gather to give thanks for your loving presence.
Wide is Your Welcome!
Jesus, Giver of the Table! We gather to share in your ministry of reconciliation!
Help us to Extend Your Table!
Spirit, Breath of Life! We gather to receive wisdom and renewal!
Fill us with your Spirit and refresh us anew.

Call to Worship
One: We are people of the Creator of love.
ALL: WE ARE PEOPLE OF THE CREATOR OF FAITH.
One: We come seeking love beyond understanding.
ALL: WE COME LONGING FOR UNENDING FAITH.
One: O Holy God, we see injustice in our midst.
ALL: O HOLY GOD, TURMOIL SURROUNDS OUR DAILY LIVES.
One: O Holy God, guide us to be faithful to love.
ALL: O HOLY GOD, GUIDE US TO LOVE TO BE FAITHFUL.
O HOLY GOD, STRENGTHEN OUR LOVE FOR PEACE;
EMPOWER US WITH FAITHFULNESS TO JUSTICE. AMEN.

(from Church Women United. World Community Day Service, 1990)

Call to Worship
One: We are called together to celebrate our faith, to worship our covenant God, to
gather around the table and to renew our lives!
ALL: GOD'S LOVE, EMBODIED IN JESUS CHRIST, RECONCILES AND
SUSTAINS US.
One: The voices of God's love call out to us:
ALL: "LET THE CHILDREN COME!" "FOLLOW ME."
"ALL ARE WELCOME AT MY TABLE."
One: We are challenged to respond to God's amazing love:
ALL: WITH PASSION AND COMPASSION FOR ALL OF GOD'S CHILDREN,
PERSONS OF ALL KINDS, OF ALL COLORS, OF ALL AGES, OF ALL
SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS.
One: We are called and are committed to making a home for all people,

One: Enter our circle of faith, God.
ALL: AND MAKE OUR JOY COMPLETE!

(“Gather Around the Table” service, Grant Park-Aldersgate UMC)

Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, whose justice we seek, and whose Holy name is above all names, we come this day in joy to claim your power in our lives. We are thankful for the gift of life which you bestow on all creation. We are thankful, yes, but often we know that this gift is flaunted and abused. We are in pain, O God. We are told whom to love and whom to hate, whom to help and whom to ignore. Yet we know the suffering of our sisters and brothers, and we know that often we are responsible.

Forgive us, Holy God. Reconcile us. Heal us. Bring us unto you and create in us clean hearts for the doing of your justice. Give us a right spirit for the bringing of your peace. Renew us. make us one in the healing springs of your hope. This we pray in the embracing spirit of justice and peace. Amen.

(Church Women United, World Community Day Service, 1990)

Prayer of Confession

One: What are those things, personal and corporate, which stand in the way of our transformation?

Many: Eternal God, when our eyes are too full of our own visions, when our ears are too full of our own sounds, when our mouths are too full of our own wisdom, when our hearts are too full of our own concerns—break through. Gather us in when we turn on one another in our own diversity, when we separate ourselves by age, sex, and race. Gather us together when we are preoccupied with our own concerns, and fail to see beyond ourselves. Gather us to You when our faith seems weak, when we lose hope in believing things will ever really change.

One: And when the hurt in our soul is deep...

Many: And we felt weak at the beginning of a mighty task; when we are parched for the water of life and hungry for the bread of life; when we are guilty with a guilt that will not leave us in peace, then, O God, heal us, strengthen us, feed us, forgive us.

One: And bring us through birth and rebirth.

Many: Through giving and forgiving, through loving and loving kindness, through using us and preparing us for use, through judgement and grace, into citizenship in the community. We are all sinners, yet we are all accepted. All are judged, yet all find mercy. All are limited, yet all are ministers, grateful citizens, loving children of the community of God. Amen.

(Grant Park-Aldersgate UMC)
Prayer of Jesus
Beloved, our Father and Mother, in whom is heaven,
Hallowed be your name.
Followed be your royal way.
Done be your will and rule,
Throughout the whole creation.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
For your reign is the glory of the power that is love
Now and forever. Amen.

(St. Hilda Community)

Prayers of the People
Blessed are you, Merciful God, Mother and Father of us all, and blessed are we who are called by your name. Hear the prayers of your children as we ask:

Gather us at your table to share in the feast.

In your image we were created, both male and female, Black, White, American Indian, Asian and Latino. In your eyes we are all equal, one is not greater than the other. Help us to see the value and sacredness in our similarities and differences, knowing that each person is unique and precious in your sight.

Gather us at your table to share in the feast.

We pray for those who would deny us our rightful place at your feast and would have us to only gather the crumbs under your table. Show us how to love them even though they cannot yet share your bounty freely and openly with us. Show us how to find common ground in which to begin dialogue so that we might forgive each other and all sit together as one family.

Gather us at your table to share in the feast.

Challenge us to live intentionally, loving our neighbor as ourselves. We pray for those who we hold dear, our friends, families, partners, and children. May the way we tend to each other reflect to the world the true meaning of family values. Help us to demonstrate just how sacred and holy these relationships are to us. We pray for the day when they can be honored and celebrated by those who would now discount their validity and deny us access to the blessing of the church.

Gather us at your table to share in the feast.

Save us from the shadows of fear and shame; shadows cast upon us and shadows we cast upon ourselves and others, especially our children. These shadows of avarice, jealousy, prejudice and hate are not of you. Help us to uncover these dark places and bring them into the light of your healing grace where there is neither fear nor shame.

Gather us at your table to share in the feast.
We pray for our sisters and brothers who are living with disease, especially those who cannot come to the table with us this day. Heal their pain, ease their suffering, take away their anxiety and use us to bring to them the Bread of Life and the Cup of Healing to nourish and restore them to wholeness. (Congregation may add, either silently or aloud, the names of those for whom we pray.)

Gather us at your table to share in the feast.

We remember your children who have died and gone before us and who are sharing in the mystery of this Eucharist. Although we miss them and grieve for our own loss of their presence here with us; we are reassured that in this Holy Mystery, we are all united as one body in your Son, Jesus Christ. (Congregation may add, either silently or aloud, the names of those for whom we pray.)

Gather us at your table to share in the feast.

We celebrate this day our worthiness to sit at your table, O Loving God. We come not because we have earned this right, but because in your mercy and longing for relationship with us, you have invited us through your Son, Jesus Christ, to be your sons and daughters. Therefore, we join together today and honor who we are and how we were created. We acknowledge our uniqueness as lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, and transgendered children of yours. We celebrate and thank you for loving us so much that you made us in your image. We indeed have reason to rejoice and be glad!

Gather us at your table to share in the feast. Amen.

(Gerry Hoyt)

Communion Liturgy

Statement of Preparation

Why do we keep coming back to this table?

We come, because it is here where we experience acceptance, grace, forgiveness and hope. And we come because it is often at the altar when we are surprised by God’s presence.

Far from being a useless ritual created by ancient peoples to make our worship time longer, this is a time and place when we are reminded that there is no separation between our time and God’s time—all time is holy.

So, on the first Sunday of the month, we take time to come to the table, to breathe in the faith of each other, to experience that trust has tasted good.

We keep coming back because here, we are offered a new beginning—
a chance to feast on the bread of life
and to be the bread that feeds a tired and weary world.
And we drink deeply of the living cup—
to quench our thirst for the desert times to which we are called.

The Eucharist is not something we do but something we are. Holy Communion is the way we will be in the world. We take the body of Christ into the world and live it—we become the Eucharist for the world.

And so let us again come to the table to experience Eucharist.
The Great Thanksgiving, page 13 UMH

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Blessed are you, O God, who created us to love one another and who called us to be community.

We come today, gathered in gratitude: (words appropriate to the season here)
grateful for creation
for the cycles of sowing and reaping,
for the joy of work & play & rest,
and for your call on our lives to love, to serve and to act justly.

And so, we join our voices in song, [OR if not using sung responses: we join our voices] as our ancestors have done before us to praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full, full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest. Blessed is one who comes, in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest. (Musical settings in UMH pages 17-25)

Holy are you God, and blessed is this gathering today, for we come around this table as a foretaste of the heavenly banquet— as a model of the your realm on earth. In this place especially, in this church, we are reminded that you created and are creating a world of diversity, change—of new things. By coming to this table, we participate in your creation.

We can be present with Jesus on the night before meeting with death, when he took bread, was thankful for it, and broke it for his disciples saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”
And likewise after an evening of fellowship and eating together around the table, he took the cup saying, “This cup poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. Drink of it, all of you.”

And so, he initiated this holy sacrament—a way to remember your presence through Christ—a way for us to celebrate your presence among us. And in our participating, we become for others a continual remembrance of your presence among us.

And so, we participate in this holy mystery and offer to make real the memory of Christ in the world. Christ is present for us so we can be present for the world as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and the fruit of the vine. Make them be the bread of life and the quenching cup of blessing so that we may feast and drink deeply and be the Eucharist for the world, co-creating the realm of
God until all are reconciled and we feast at your table for ever.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever.

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray:
[insert your church’s version of the Lord’s prayer]

*The minister breaks bread while saying:*
Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body.
The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the new covenant of Christ.

*The bread and fruit of the vine are given to the people, with these words being exchanged:*
The bread of life, for you. **Amen.**
Drink deeply of the living cup. **Or** The promise of a new covenant. **Amen.**

*Post communion prayer:*
Loving God, we thank you that you fed us in this Sacrament. Help us remember that the Eucharist is not a passive activity. For if the Eucharist stays in the sanctuary, then it is a distortion. Rather gather us to be reminded and restored so that we scatter to be broken for the world—to be the Eucharist—the body of Christ for the world. Be with us as you take us places that on our own, we would not go. Help us make real the power of love in the world. Amen.

*(Kelly Turney, 7/5/98)*

**Affirmation**
We are unique human beings linked with all of creation and gathered from diverse places to share a ministry faithfully, to raise questions hopefully, to work for justice lovingly...

We believe in the church, community of faith and caring, covenant and promise that nurtures our pilgrimage and through which we are called to be witness to God’s truth, love and justice.

We believe our believing affects our daily walking and talking, our doubting and struggling, our decisions and choice-making, our responses to persons and systems.

We intend in this community in these days to raise questions hopefully, to work for justice lovingly, to share a ministry faithfully, and, by God’s grace, passionately!

*(Barbara Troxell used in the Covenant Service for Jeanne Barnett and Ellie Charlton)*

**Statement of Welcome**
This is not my house.
This is God’s house.
I cannot tell God
who is welcome and who is not.

This is not my table.
I do not sit at the head as host.
It is the table of Christ. He is host.
I cannot tell the Host who can sit here and who cannot.
This is not my food on this sacred table.
I did not prepare it. It is not my blood, my body.
It is the very life of the Christ laid out there.
I cannot tell Him, this one who constantly ate with sinners and outcasts, 
who is worthy to partake of it and who is not.

The doors of God’s House are open to all who need shelter, 
who crave the fellowship and friendship of God, 
and even to those who hate God or cannot bring themselves to trust that 
God exists or could care for them. Anyone, everyone 
is welcome as honored guests in God’s house.

This table of Christ is long and it has many chairs. 
There is always room for one more, 
for those craving the fellowship of the sacred table, 
a place to belong, to be somebody to Somebody. 
Anyone, everyone has a place at the table of Christ.

This food, simple yet divine, is bountiful, abundant, ample for all, 
especially those who are hungry and thirsty for what mere bread and drink cannot supply. 
Anyone, everyone has a plate and a portion served by the very hand of the Christ. 
No one is sent away hungry or thirsty here.

Lord, who am I that you swing open your door and embrace me? 
Who am I that you escort me to your table and pull out a chair for me? 
Who am I that you would provide such wondrous and costly food? 
And how can I but humbly bow my head at such grace and, like you, 
embrace all your guests, all who, like me, are unworthy of your house, 
unfit for your table and food?

(Bass Mitchell, Hot Springs, VA)

Another idea for worship: Pass around a “Cup of Reconciliation,” asking each participant to symbolically place in it their silent commitment to act as a reconciler. Sing as the cup is passed.

Other worship resources can be found in:
- *Here Is My Hand* by Patricia Ann Meyers
- *Claiming the Promise* by Mary Jo Ostermann
- RCP website (www.rcp.org) under RC Sunday suggestions
- Issues of *Open Hands* magazine, Chris Glaser, editor (ChrsGlaser@aol.com)
- *Guerrillas of Grace* by Ted Loder
- Broadway UMC’s web site: www.brddyumc.org

Suggested readings include “A Party for Coats” (a Turkish folktale found in *Stories for the Journey* by William White) and the children’s story “Wide is the Welcome” (provided as a reader’s theatre in the Decadent Desserts section)
Panel Discussion on the Church and Discrimination

Ingredients
- Panelists – experts on civil rights and gay/lesbian discrimination in the church (local PFLAG chapters often have a speakers bureau that can help you with this)
- Handouts (optional) - Prominent Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People of African Descent and resource list
- RCP resource display (contact national office)

Prep. Time
- 3-4 weeks to secure speakers
- 3 weeks to publicize event
- 2-3 hours to buy and prepare refreshments
- 1 hour to setup site and copy handouts
- 3 weeks to obtain display resources from the RCP national office

Provide a forum for discussion of the broader issues of racism and discrimination in the church and include speakers who can address exclusion of gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered persons. It may be helpful to note that many prominent Black civil rights leaders have “come out” in favor of full inclusion of gays and lesbians in the church. Leaders such as the Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Dr. Cornel West, Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, former Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, and Congressman John Lewis have all spoken or written on the necessary inclusion of gays and lesbians in the civil rights struggles.

Providing as a handout a list of prominent lesbian, gay, bisexual people of African descent may also help in overcoming stereotypes and breaking through prejudices (see page 29).

Video Screening & Discussion - All God's Children

Ingredients
- All God's Children video – appropriate for all audiences, this documentary explores the Black Church’s embracing of African American lesbians and gay men as members of the church family.
- Video projection capabilities, or large television and VCR
- A person or two willing to facilitate a discussion
- RCP resource display (contact national office)
- Handouts (optional) - Prominent L/G/B People of African Descent and resource list

Prep. Time
- 3 weeks to obtain video
- 3-4 weeks to publicize event
- 2-3 hours to buy and prepare refreshments
- 1 hour to set-up site and copy handouts
- 3 weeks to obtain RCP display resources from the national office
Instructions

Plan a time when the video can be shown. While the video is only 26 minutes long, plan for another 1 hour or more of discussion. Make sure to introduce the topic in such a way as to personalize it and introduce parents/friends/relatives of gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered individuals so that the discussion considers real people and is not purely a philosophical/theological debate. Use the discussion guide for the video for suggestions regarding questions and facilitation of the dialogue. Assume there are gay or lesbian persons or persons struggling with issues of sexual orientation in the room, and facilitate the discussion accordingly. It is important to end with a prayer and/or a song and to provide resources for those who would like further information.

The video can be offered during a Sunday school class, after church or as an evening program. You may want to schedule it in conjunction with the choir’s presentation of a welcoming theme anthem.

All God’s Children is a documentary about the Black Church’s embracing of African American lesbians and gay men as dedicated members of the spiritual family. Prominent religious, intellectual, and political leaders, family members, and activists speak out about the role of the church and the importance of a commitment to equal rights and social justice for all people. Luminaries such as Rev. Jesse Jackson, Carol Moseley-Braun, and Dr. Cornel West are among speakers from church, government and academia who participate. While specific religious issues are not addressed in detail, this lively, slickly produced, and attractive film should offer encouragement and raise the consciousness of African-American Christians. A discussion guide is available.

The video is promoted as a well-rounded affirmation of African-American lesbians and gay men as valued members of the spiritual community that profiles the Lavender Light Lesbian and Gay Gospel Choir, which is seen in joyful celebration, intercut with scenes of individuals and couples describing their journey of faith and parents expressing their support and love. Order from Women Vision, 1-800-343-5540 or fax: 201-652-1973.

One of the most difficult contemporary issues for our denomination is the role of gay/lesbian/bisexual people in society and our church....One of the points of conflict in our church is in the perceived competing claims between issues of race and sexual orientation. All God’s Children bridges these issues in a supportive, uncompromising manner....This is crucial in our world where well-meaning Christians are complicit, through their passivity, in the violence and hatred against gay/lesbian/bisexual people. All God’s Children helps these Christians move beyond culturally defined bigotry to Christian advocacy for justice.

—Ann Craig, Executive Secretary for Spiritual and Theological Development, Global Ministries General Board, UMC

All God’s Children is an insightful look into the spirituality of African-American lesbians and gay men and their supporters. All God’s Children is the best thing I have seen in terms of addressing wedge issues among Black people.

—Walter Davis, Executive Director, Southern Empowerment Project

All God’s Children...brings a voice and a song to the work of civil rights that has before been unheard and unsung....We have been taught well to divide, separate and hate, but the greatest message of this film is love.

—Cheryl Deaner, Executive Director, All Our Families Coalition

I’m a social worker who has had gay clients that needed a spiritual home and couldn’t find one. It was just heartbreaking. Thank you for making All God’s Children. It’s just wonderful.

—Pam Hoffer, social worker
Prominent Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People of African Descent

Alvin Ailey, dancer & choreographer
Josephine Baker, writer, entertainer
James Baldwin, writer, activist
Alicia Banks, radio producer
Benjamin Banneker, farmer, scientist, Gazetteer (on commission that surveyed & designed DC)
Deborah Batts, judge
Bishop Carl Bean, clergyman, activist, (founder, Unity Fellowship Church)
Joseph Bean, poet, singer, composer
Alan Bell, publisher
George Bellinger, AIDS activist
Gladys Bentley, Harlem Renaissance-pianist, composer, male impersonator
Becky Birtha, writer
Blackberry, musician, actor & activist
Keith Boykin, attorney & writer
Glen Burge, athlete (LA Dodger 1976-78, originates the "high five")
Mandy Carter, activist
George Washington Carver, scientist, inventor ("The Wizard of Tuskegee")
Rainey Cheeks, clergyman (Unity Fellowship Church of Wash., DC)
James Cleveland, theologian & gospel pioneer
Michelle Cuff, Jamaican writer
Countee Cullen, Harlem Renaissance-writer & poet
Jaye Davidson, actor
Angela Davis, activist, scholar, visionary
Gary Deloach, dancer
Larry Deplechan, novelist
Alice Dunbar-Nelson, writer
Herbert Evans, clergy
David Warren Frechette, journalist
Darlene Garner, clergy (1st elder, the UFMCC Church)
Peter Gomes, theologian (clergy, Memorial Church at Harvard University)
Jewelle Gomez, writer
Annie Lee Grant, passed as a man for 20 years to get higher-paying jobs
Angelina Weld Grimke, teacher, writer (related to the abolitionist Grimke sisters)
Mabel Hampton, activist
Lorraine Hansberry, playwright (A Raisin in the Sun)
James E. Hardy, writer
E. Lynn Harris, writer
Sherrie Harris, politician (1st openly-lesbian African American elected official)
Donnie Hathaway, entertainer
Essex Hemphill, poet
Nona Hendryx, entertainer (former member, LaBelle)
Billie Holiday, blues singer
Langston Hughes, Harlem Renaissance-era writer
Alberta Hunter, blues singer
Pat Hussein, activist (organizer, 1993 March on Washington)
Tony Jackson, Composer (Pretty Baby)
Deborah Johnson, theologian, activist
Michelle Johnson, journalist
Bill T. Jones, choreographer
Barbara Jordan, attorney, stateswoman, educator
June Jordan, writer, educator
Patrick Kelley, fashion designer
Rupert Kinnard, cartoonist
Edmonia Lewis, sculptor
Larry Levan, legendary NYC DJ
Derek Charles Livingston, activist, (co-chair, 1993 March on Washington)
Audre Lorde, writer, poet laureate
Frankie Lyman, singer
Jackie "Moms" Mabley, comedian
Hattie MacDonald, actor (1st African-American Oscar recipient)
Cleo Manago, writer, instructor, and social architect
Johnnie Mathis, entertainer, athlete
Claude McKay, Harlem Renaissance-era writer
Me’Shell Ndege’ocello, singer
Bruce Nugent, writer
Pat Parker, writer, education
Michelle Parkinson, filmmaker, activist
Michele Peters, choreographer
Afro Homos Pomo, theater troupe
Ma Rainey, blues singer
Kenneth Reeves, politician, (1st openly gay mayor)
Sylvia F. Rhue, writer, sexologist, filmmaker (1st African American to receive a doctorate in human sexuality)
Marion Riggs, filmmaker (Tongues Untied, Black Is... Black Ain't)
Sandra L. Robinson, clergy (President & CEO, Samaritan College, UFMCC)
Rupaul - entertainer
Bayard Rustin, civil right activist (chief organizer of '63 March on Washington)
Assota Saint, writer, publisher, activist
Keith St. John, politician (1st openly-gay African American elected official)
Franklyn Seales, actor (Dexter Stufsis on Silver Spoons)
Stephen Semien, performer
Barbara Smith, editor & publisher
Bessie Smith, singer (aka "The Empress of the Blues")
Nadine Smith, activist
Vengerflutta C. Smith, educator
Willi Smith, fashion designer
Sabrina Sojourner, activist (aide to Maxine Waters)
Billy Strayhorn, composer
Sylvester, entertainer
Willa Taylor, cultural activist
Jewel Thais-Williams, businesswoman
Harriet Tubman, freedom fighter
Carl van Vechten, music critic, photographer, writer
Linda Villarosa, journalist
Vallerie Wagner, activist
Alice Walker, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer
Ethel Waters, actor
Ruth Waters, activist
Perry Watkins, soldier
Evelyn C White, journalist, writer
Phill Wilson (founder, National Black Lesbian & Gay Leadership Forum)
George C Wolfe, playwright, producer (Jelly’s Last Jam)

from All God’s Children video, discussion guide (pages 14 & 15).
Benefit Concert

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 tons of faith or that of a mustard seed
- friends to act as advisors
- 1 active imagination
- 1 gazillion pieces of paper (all colors, of course)
- 1 prayer a day (at least)
- advisory viewing committee
- performance space
- donors (financial, hospitality, food, etc.)
- email/fax access
- an array of FUN (mandatory!)
- 1 or 2 performers (preferably Folk/Christian/Gospel)
- sound equipment

Optional

- 1 or 2 dates with friends
- a dash of naps (sleep is important)
- refreshments and baked goods for intermission

Prep. Time – 3 to 4 months

Cooking Time – 2 hours

Instructions

First, you must have faith. You will be successful no matter what the outcome is! Imagine what type of performer your friends, family, colleagues, acquaintances, or congregation would actually take time to see. Talk to a few friends who will support your imagination, but who can also provide a realistic perspective. Always keep notes (you will need plenty of paper). Once you have a vision, put it on paper to present to a viewing committee. Pray a lot before presenting the concert plan.

Once the event has been chopped and prepared, find a date that will be suitable for your congregation or campus ministry. Always check the liturgical and conference calendar to ensure the event will not be overlooked. You may want to invite a Reconciling Congregation staff member, Board member or representative to attend.

Next, start looking for a performer(s). Any benefit event should not exceed 2 hours, including intermission. Therefore, one or two performers/groups will be sufficient. When you make your final selections of musicians, decide how much time each performer is allotted. The performer does not have to be of a particular faith. Because this is an event for RCP, a gay/lesbian artist
may be preferable. Depending on the crowd you expect, you can advertise a need for any type of artists from poets to music, visual art to drag. First-time shows should be probably have musical artists. Place want ads in free newspapers, campus papers, fliers in gay communities, email, and the net. Explain the RCP mission, what type of performance expected and whether or not you will be able to pay the performer or need volunteers. Also, ask for a press kit; it makes the search a lot easier. Pray and have fun with your advertising efforts. This search will take 2-3 months.

The biggest problem you may have is financial. If you don’t have the money to advertise, pay a performer, or buy equipment, then ask for donors in your congregations, neighborhoods, other churches. Exhaust your resources first, before spending any money. Ask yourself questions: Who in the church has a computer? Who do I know who works for a newspaper or advertising company? Who do I know who knows someone who.....? Think big! PRAY! Have FUN! Put your faith into works!

Once a performer is secured, focus on the details of the event. Begin advertising for the event itself by returning to the same advertising sources used to find a performer. When advertising, again, provide information regarding RCP, the artist performing, when, where and contact numbers. Admission should be a $10-$20 suggested donation. Provide opportunities for students or others who cannot afford a donation to help work the event.

To ensure the concert covers the expenses, sell baked goods, coffees, teas, and sodas. Open the doors and refreshment center at least thirty minutes before the show. You will find success by going the extra mile.

Recipe from: Tina G. Cansler, tatee@juno.com

**Canvassing Delegates**

**(C)**

**Ingredients**

- a willingness to write letters to your delegates or make a presentation at a delegation meeting
- list of names and contact information for the General Conference delegates from your annual conference

**Prep. Time**

- varies according to individual and strategy

The Wide is God's Welcome—Extend the Table! campaign intends to model a different way of relating to General conference delegates—a style that reflects the message of hospitality we proclaim. The Delegates Team has general information regarding the delegates and plans to offer care and support to General Conference delegates as they undertake this significant leadership task in our church.

The team plans to share with delegates stories from persons in their area to communicate that the policies adopted by the General Conference directly affect people and ministries in the local conference. Being personal is key. For too long the church has dealt with the “issue of homosexuality” in the abstract rather than focusing on the real people and ministry affected.
To participate in the national campaign, contact Roger Kruse (773-275-6058, kruse-roger @norcmail.uchicago.edu) or participate at the local level by developing the below strategies.

**Letters**—Encourage individuals and churches in your conference to communicate with your General Conference delegates. Provide the list of names and addresses of your conference’s delegates to Reconciling Congregations and Campus Ministries and other interested churches and individuals in your conference. Also, distribute a sheet with the *Book of Discipline* provisions regarding homosexuality and new legislative proposals which persons may address in their letters (see Legislative Witness, page 36). Some congregations provide letter-writing tables after worship with the legislative information, paper, pens, envelopes and stamps, and encourage persons to write a personal letter before leaving.

Personal contact is key to communicating with delegates effectively. A personal letter addressed to the delegate will get more attention than a mass-produced and mass-mailed letter. Use campaign language, like “God’s welcome is wide,” “the wideness of God’s love,” “extending the table of Christ,” and “opening doors.” Don’t harangue or appear argumentative. The style of communication should reflect our message of God’s unconditional love and invitation to all to join us at God’s table.

**Meeting**—Most General Conference delegations meet together several times in the months preceding General Conference. These meetings inform delegates about the issues that will come before the conference. During these meetings, delegations are generally willing to hear presentations from groups in their conference.

Contact the chair of your General Conference delegation during the summer of 1999 to schedule a time to meet with the delegation. The chair of the delegation (usually the first delegate elected; confirm with your conference office) usually sets the meeting dates by early fall and the agendas fill quickly. You can expect to be given 15-30 minutes at one of their meetings.

Form a group to plan and present the material. It is important for this group to represent the diversity of persons from your conference—gender, age, sexual orientation, clergy/laity, race/ethnicity, rural/urban. Include several people in the presentation and have others attend as supporters, but not as part of the presentation.

The key message to communicate is that the policies adopted by the General Conference (GC) directly affect people and ministries in your conference. More specifically, negative policies towards lesbian, gay and bisexual persons adopted by the GC cause pain to lesbian, gay and bisexual members and their families, and hinder reconciling ministries in your conference.

Be creative in developing your presentation. Use drama, music, and/or worship liturgies. Invite the delegates’ participation. Also, ground the materials in our Christian faith as United Methodists.

Prepare a handout (preferably one-page) to cover the details: a brief overview of the *Wide Is God’s Welcome—Extend the Table!* campaign, specific legislation being proposed, a list of Reconciling Congregations and Campus Ministries and the number of Reconciling United Methodists in your conference, etc. You can then refer to these items in your presentation, but not spend your limited presentation time getting out these facts.
Rehearse the presentation beforehand. Be respectful of the set time limits. If you engage the delegates with your presentation, it is not uncommon for them to take extra time to dialogue with you.

If your presentation time is before a break or toward the end of the meeting, stick around so that your group can talk with individuals in the delegation.

Claiming the Promise Bible Study

* (L, CM, C)

**Ingredients**
- Study book (52 pp) @ 5.95 (10+ copies @ $4.50)
- Leader’s guide (64 pp) @ $9.95. Plus $3 for shipping and handling

**Prep. Time**
- Several weeks to order materials and publicize study

**Cooking Time**
- Planned for seven one- to two-hour sessions

**Serves**
- Can be used for individual or group study by youth and/or adults

**Instructions**
Offer this ecumenical, welcoming Bible study on homosexuality. The curriculum:

- examines biblical references to same-sex conduct in light of the broader biblical message which affirms we are children or heirs of the Promise;
- explores biblical authority and biblical interpretation;
- discusses “gracious hospitality,” “gift-ed sexuality,” and “inclusive holiness;”
- tackles hard questions of “right relationship,” lust/love, and sexual responsibility;
- calls us to live out the Promise as reconciling disciples.

This study can be used for those seeking more information about the Bible and same-sex conduct and is good for questioning audiences. One class of “old-timers,” after finishing the study declared itself “reconciling” and challenged other Sunday school classes in their church to complete the study.

For more information, see the web site: www.rcp.ctp.html

Prepaid order (check or credit card) to:
Reconciling Congregation Program
3801 N. Keeler Avenue, Chicago, IL 60641, 773-736-5526
Dear Bishop letter writing campaign

*Ingredients*
- Copies of Dear Bishop guidelines
- Commitment forms (optional)

*Prep. Time*
If planning a year long (or some time period) campaign in which you register letter writers and assign dates then you’ll need a month or more to advertise the campaign through local allies (such as RC churches, P-FLAG and other ally community organizations, UMW, MFSA, Affirmation chapters, etc). If, on the other hand, you choose a more informal approach such as writing a letter yourself and encouraging friends to do the same then preparation time is reduced to a couple weeks. You may wish to let the Bishop, District Superintendent or Delegate know what the campaign is about, and to expect some letters. You will want to forward the guidelines to those you are encouraging to submit letters.

*Serves*
Letters can be sent to the Bishop, District Superintendent, or Annual/General Conference delegates in your area. This campaign usually benefits both the sender and receiver of the letter which testifies to the power of telling our stories.

*Instructions*
The original Dear Bishop: A Year of Witness campaign was created in the North Georgia conference in response to a request by Bishop Lindsey Davis for more personal education around issues affecting lesbians, gay men, their families, and friends. A word about this history was included in the original letter-writing guidelines that invited persons to participate. You may wish to add a few sentences about your own conference to the generic model below.

Distribute copies of the following letter-writing guidelines and encourage g/l/b/t United Methodists (or those who have left Methodism) and the families and friends affected by the church’s discriminatory or hospitable response to write their Bishop, District Superintendent, Pastor, or Delegate. The local coordinator is encouraged to forward copies of letters to the RCP national office, 3801 N. Keeler Avenue, Chicago, IL 60641.

*Recipe from* Harry Knox, North Georgia Conference,1029 Deckner Avenue, SW, Atlanta, GA 30310-4128; dirdev@gep.org
Dear Bishop: A Witness

Over the last years, publicity around issues affecting lesbians, gay men, their families and friends has been frequent and often contentious. In an effort to provide a more personal response and education to our church leaders, we invite you to participate in the Dear Bishop: A Witness.

Much can be offered to our church leaders by way of scientific and religious studies of issues related to gays and lesbians. However, it is personal witness to how the church’s attitude toward homosexuals limits the church and impairs the religious practice of homosexuals and their loved ones that will bring home to our church leaders the import of actions taken by the church with relation to lesbian and gay Christians.

DEAR BISHOP... is a coordinated effort to find Methodists (and former UM’s) willing to write to your Bishop, District Superintendent, Pastor, or Delegate a letter regarding how the church’s policies related to homosexuality have affected them (or someone they care about) personally. The idea is to have a different person write the bishop every day for a [enter length of time for your campaign]. In this way, there will not be a flood of letters that would be impressive, but hard to digest, but instead a steady drumbeat of witness on this important subject.

DEAR BISHOP... will be a respectful response on this issue that too often divides churches, families, and friends.

To participate, please fill out and return the attached form. The project coordinator will assign a date to you between ___________, and ___________. On that date, please mail or e-mail your letter to the church leader and send a copy to the coordinator. A fine book might arise out of a compilation of these letters. Please let us know whether or not we have permission to reprint your letter. We need your participation even if you are not comfortable with having your letter reprinted!

Thanks for your interest in participating in this unique project.

[Insert Bishop’s address] [Insert District Superintendent’s address]

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Sample Commitment Form

DEAR BISHOP...: A Witness

Commitment Form

I want to participate in DEAR BISHOP...: A Witness. Please send me more details.

Name ____________________________________________
Address _________________________________________
City ______________________ State ________ Zip ________
Email address ____________________________________
Phone number (_____) _____________________________

Please return to:
______________________, Project Coordinator, address, phone

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I - Individual  L - Local Church  CM - Campus Ministry  C - District/Conference
Legislative Witness

Ingredients
- a United Methodist member, clergymember or congregation
- The Book of Discipline, 1996 Edition
- petition
- envelope and postage

Prep. Time
- 2-3 months, if congregation is developing and approving petition

Cooking Time
- Petitions for General Conference 2000 must be postmarked by December 3, 1999

Instructions
As spelled out in ¶ 608 of The Book of Discipline, each petition must address only one paragraph of The Book of Discipline or one issue, be signed by the person or group submitting it, be typed, double-spaced and be submitted in triplicate to the petitions secretary: Sheila McGee, P.O. Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

For clarity, it is asked that proposed additions to a disciplinary paragraph be double underlined and proposed deletions be underlined.

Suggested legislation:
The legislative focus recommended by the Legislative Work Team at the RCP Visioning Retreat is to amend Social Principles ¶ 65 G (5) by changing the dependent clause of the penultimate sentence to read:

We are not clear about the origins of the status of homosexuality. We acknowledge with humility that the church is currently unable to arrive at a common mind on the compatibility of homosexual practice with Christian faith.

Other Possible Legislation:
Reconciling Congregations and United Methodists may choose to send petitions to General Conference related to parts of the 1996 Book of Discipline which are inhospitable to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons.

Subjects of petitions in previous General Conferences and/or proposed by other groups include:
- Amend Social Principles ¶ 304.3, which states “... self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”
- Delete ¶ 806.12 which prohibits national bodies of the UMC from giving funds to “any 'gay' caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality.”
- Strengthen statements on the rights of gay and lesbian persons per ¶ 66H.
- Delete or amend ¶ 65 C which prohibits clergy from performing homosexual unions and the prohibition against conducting such services in churches of the UMC.
Shower of Stoles Display

The *Shower of Stoles* will be displayed in Cleveland during General Conference 2000. You can be a part of this exhibit by encouraging people to contribute a stole, by making a financial donation, or by organizing groups to visit the display. If you are donating a stole to be included in the Cleveland exhibit, it is recommended that you send the stole no later than February 29, 2000. To arrange for the exhibit in your local area and the costs associated with hosting the display, please contact Martha Juillerat at the address below.

The following information is provided by the national *Shower of Stoles* Project.

How to Donate a Stole to the *Shower of Stoles* Project

*Who can donate a stole?*

1. Any gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered person of faith can make a stole for yourself. Many of the stoles are from ministers, elders, deacons, church musicians, Directors of Christian Education, and seminarians. However, you need not be ordained or church-employed to send us a stole. We acknowledge that many g/l/b/t person have been barred from sharing their gifts and calls within the church. If you are active in your faith community, regardless of your “status” in the church, your story is important to us!

2. Any person or congregation may honor a g/l/b/t friend, family member, or person in your faith community with a stole. However, do not use the person’s name on the stole unless you have their permission to do so!

3. We do not accept individual stoles from heterosexual persons. We encourage the participation of heterosexuals in the project through “Straight Ally” stoles. These are stoles that are covered with the signatures of straight allies, to make them visually distinct from the individual stoles of g/l/b/t persons. Typically, they are plain white or light-colored stoles that are passed around congregations or other groups to collect the signatures of supportive straight individuals.

*How do I make a stole?*

You can buy an inexpensive stole from a supplier, or make one yourself. If you would prefer to buy a stole, we recommend purchasing one from SERRV International. They have stoles for as little as $14, and all proceeds from SERRV are returned directly to the crafts persons who make these stoles. You can reach them at 1-800-432-0071, or via the Internet at www.serrv.org

If you wish to make a stole, we have very few “rules.” Generally, it should be about 6 to 8 feet long, and about 4 to 6 inches wide. One simple way to do this is to make a single-seam “tube,” turn it rightside out, and slip-stitch the ends. Or you can turn under the ends and iron them shut with “Stitch-Witchery,” an iron-on sticky tape available at any fabric store.
Be sure that the stole is made and/or decorated securely enough to withstand constant shipping and handling! Use only permanent markers (we recommend “Sharpie Rub-A-Dub” laundry markers), and avoid glitter, puff paint, or iron-on appliques that are likely to peel off with repeated handling. If you are sewing anything onto the stole (such as an AIDS ribbon or rainbow ribbon) make sure you sew it on securely!

*MOST IMPORTANT*: Include your story on the stole. A clear statement from you on a simple stole is far more important to this project than the finest quilting or artwork. Limit your statement to about one paragraph, and be sure to include your name (unless you want to remain anonymous), where you are from, and your service to the church (e.g. minister, elder, deacon, church school teacher, church musician, choir member, long-time member, etc.). If you aren’t sure how to attach this story to your stole, just write your note on a piece of paper exactly as you want it to read on the stole, ship it to us with the stole, and we will transfer it to a stole-size computer template and sew it on with a permanent vinyl covering.

*How can I submit an anonymous stole?*
You can submit a stole for yourself anonymously. However, we do ask that you identify yourself in some way, and note where you are from (e.g. “Lesbian Deacon, Kentucky”) for the benefit of those viewing the collection who think that all gay people are white males living in San Francisco or New York! In some cases, a congregation has sent an individual stole with only the church’s name on it, to protect the anonymity of one or more gay persons who are members of that church.

We go to great lengths to protect the anonymity of those who have stoles in this collection. Martha Juillerat and Tammy Lindahl, the founders of the project, are the only ones who have access to this information; we do not reveal names to our governing board or to any of our volunteers. Martha and Tammy do keep a confidential file of addresses, which is used only in the event a stole is lost or damaged and must be replaced.

*What do I do if I have questions?*
If you have questions about making or submitting a stole, please feel free to write us at the address below, or contact us at (612) 377 8792, e-mail: stoleproj@aol.com.

*Where do I send the finished stole?*
We recommend that you ship the stoles via UPS or FedEx. (The US Postal Office does not have an effective system for tracking packages, even insured ones, and they have lost a few of our stoles along the way.) Ship stoles to: Martha Juillerat, Shower of Stoles Project, 57 Upton Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55405

The shipping, storage, and ongoing repairs for this collection have become very expensive for us. Any donation you could send along with your stole would be gratefully accepted!

**Speakers Bureau**

Contact your local P-FLAG chapter or the national RCP office to identify speakers in your area willing to speak to Sunday School classes, church programs or district events.

To locate P-FLAG chapter in your area, check out their website at info@pflag.org
Shower of Soles Display

Ingredients

- shoes (lots of pairs of shoes from those who have experienced the church’s exclusionary policies concerning g/l/b/t persons)
- chairs (one for every pair of shoes in the exhibit)

Prep. Time

- allow a month to publicize and recruit people to donate their shoes
- the display may be installed in a location for a week or two or may be the focal point for an event lasting only a couple hours

Instructions

This idea is related to the Shower of Stoles which displays, primarily, the stoles of clergy who have been driven from the church for some reason. The display graphically illustrates the many people not in the church because they do not feel welcome. These may be people who, at one time, enjoyed a church life or were seeking a church life but have been so excluded or discriminated against that they can no longer remain a part of the church, or they may be people who have been asked to leave after their sexual orientation was discovered, or perhaps assumed or rumored.

Ask people to share stories of their real life experiences of being driven away from the church. Ask them to provide, for this installation, a pair of shoes they have worn. The person may have left the church completely or returned after finding a welcoming church—this could be a part of the written experience. The collection of soles might include only soles donated by those within the United Methodist denomination, soles from the local community, or even be a broader effort within the conference. The installation can also be designed as a traveling exhibit—those shoes were made for walkin’.

To set up the installation:

- Set up chairs in neat rows; and space the chairs with enough space for people to easily move around and through the rows to read the stories.
- Place one pair of shoes in front of each chair to represent the absence of this person.
- Attach the story of the shoes related to it on the chair.
- Provide a basket and a pad of paper for people who come to see the installation and want to add their own story and shoes.
- Provide literature about the RC program.

A few words to explain the exhibit:

Many gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons and their allies have experiences of being shunned, oppressed, rejected, or injured in the name of God. We all walk into the church much the same way, carried by our own individual souls/soles. This installation illustrates that some walk into the church and are treated so badly that they leave their souls behind, believing themselves not worthy of God’s love. The church must begin to heed the stories of those it has lost due to its exclusionary policies and inhospitality even as it has focused on those in the church that may leave if the church begins to include all. May God touch our souls with this reality when we see the soles left behind and hear the real stories of those who do not feel welcome in the church.

Food for the Funny Bone

Banana Split Celebration:
The Only Split We're Interested In (L, CM, C)

Prep. Time
This event has tremendous press appeal, so allow time to coordinator with the press. It is better to schedule the “splits” in conjunction with another event that has press appeal, so the event photo will be timely and therefore more likely to appear in newspapers.

Cooking Time
This event can last for a few minutes if you’re staging it for the entry to or exit from another event, or it last for a couple hours if staging it during annual conference.

Ingredients
- poster board, markers
- rope or cord
- handout addressing the “They’re splitting the church” concerns
- bananas (1 for every two splits)
- ice cream of varying flavors (1 gallon for every 20 scoops needed)
- canned whipped cream
- cherries
- nuts (beware of nut allergies) and syrups if you want to get fancy
- gutter material from hardware store for one long split or smaller containers for individual splits
- small bowls or Styrofoam cups for distribution of splits
- spoons
- napkins (lots)

Instructions
This can be done as individual banana splits given to those passing by or can be created as one giant banana split which can then be scooped into individual bowls. Makes a GREAT YOUTH ACTIVITY!

Create large signs that read, “The only split we’re interested in... is a banana split.” This can be done on two different signs strapped together with rope so that it reads on the front “The only split we’re interested in...” and on the back reads, “is a banana split!”

Stage this outside annual conference or during any event in which you can use it to talk with people about how much we love the UMC, how dedicated we are to it, and how we want it to be an inclusive church that is characterized by fairness and non-discrimination. Address people’s concerns that by raising the issue of the UMC’s un-just treatment of gays and lesbians, we are “splitting the church.” Assure them that a split is not what the Reconciling Congregation Movement is all about. Possible handouts include: pages 41 and 42, position papers from RCP, reconciling commitment cards, and buttons.

Difficult Techniques
This activity deals humorously with a very troubling subject for many people. Like any humor, people may take offense. It is recommended that this activity be used only in those conferences or areas where the talk of a split has been brought up by others, and where it is needed to counteract those perceptions regarding the RCP. While the RCP movement is not suggesting a split of any kind, it is understandable that some g/l/b/t persons and straight allies may feel it is necessary to leave the UMC rather than continue in an un-just institution. These feelings should be honored.
The Only Split We’re Interested In Is a Banana Split

Let us recognize the unique gifts and ministries of our churches—and value the gifts (and constituencies) of others. Let us, in humility agree to disagree where differences cannot be resolved and above all invite the Holy Spirit to use us all as we seek together to more fully serve and honor the Lord of the Church in all that we do and in all that we are.

Let us affirm the freedom of any congregation to allow its ministers to perform covenant ceremonies between persons of the same sex, reflecting our understanding that these ceremonies do not constitute marriage as defined in the Book of Discipline.

Others should not underestimate the pastoral mandate felt by our Reconciling Congregations. Only the Reconciling Congregations (RC) involved can begin to understand their situations. Our notion of hospitality is derived from our understanding of the Biblical mandate (we affirm our ministry to all people based in part on Matthew 25 and Isaiah 58). This meaning of hospitality is an example of the RC definition that has been forged in our community and should be allowed there. We recognize that our notion of hospitality offends others’ notions of the Bible.

What is ultimately important is reconciliation—the reconciliation of humans to God and to one another. Differences of understanding are to be expected and, in fact, part of our Wesleyan heritage is to allow such differences of opinion. We must learn to live with certain ambiguities and with each other without denigrating our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and refusing them access to rites and rituals of the church to which they are baptized.

Can’t we just stop discussing these controversial topics because they may split the church?

If we set out to keep the union together (above all else), the truth goes out the window. However, we are not interested in, nor are we trying to cause a split in the denomination. While we continue the debate and work toward consensus, which will be a very long and involved process, let us not discriminate against gay and lesbian Christians and their families. Let us not say “no” to important ministries of the Reconciling Congregations that have found a way, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to include all of God’s children, to faithfully study the Bible and to seek to live in unity with Christ.

Why are the folks who oppose full inclusion of gays and lesbians usually portrayed as Bible-believing Christians and Reconciling folks portrayed as Scriptural illiterates who are pagan, goddess-worshiping, and lost to Christ? Often, negative labeling and questioning the faith of the other side is used to dehumanize one’s opponent, to quickly demonize one’s enemies, and to discredit persons personally rather than addressing the theological differences at the heart of the debate. The truth is that there are respected Biblical scholars and Bible-loving, faithful Christians on both sides of the debate. So, the dividing issue between our churches is far less a matter of the seriousness with which we take Scripture, but rather the manner of the interpretation of Scripture.

Our hope is that we grow through continued conversation with each other. In the midst of our disagreement, we seek a way to respect each other’s distinctive gifts, abilities, and opportunities for ministry in our own unique settings. We believe that together we can indeed exalt and glorify Jesus Christ, not the Christianity of any particular church.
Since it seems we vehemently disagree on key Scriptural interpretations, what do we do now? How do we live together in the same denomination?

To live together, we should not:
- impose doctrinal standards beyond those currently in our Book of Discipline or develop doctrinal litmus-tests for church membership.
- encourage methods for removing from church membership those who disagree with us.
- recommend withholding of apportionments due to disagreements with the larger church.
- address areas of disagreement with Disciplinary changes prohibiting acts of ministry.
Legislative and legal actions cause winners and losers—they don’t bring about the reconciliation that allows us to understand each other.

To live together, we should:
- recognize and celebrate our similarities:
  » A high level of commitment to the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures.
  » A passion for the mission of the church in its local settings.
  » A strong sense of being called to serve the church with integrity under the guidance of the Book of Discipline.
  » An understanding that the issues before us are reflective of a wider struggle in society.
  » An honoring of our Wesleyan heritage in its valuing of scripture, tradition, reason and experience and in its historical acceptance of differences in doctrinal opinions characterized in the statement, “If you love Christ as I love Christ then take my hand and walk with me.”
- listen graciously to our differences:
  » a belief that those who perform covenant ceremonies for same-sex couples violate scriptures differing from those who believe that denying pastoral leadership and blessing based on a person’s sexual orientation violates the scriptural message.
  » a desire to purge the church of those who disagree with certain doctrinal standards differing from the conviction that a diversity of beliefs should be allowed to co-exist within the same church.
- remove Book of Discipline prohibitions that do not respect life-sustaining ministries, including those of Reconciling Congregations, or trust the discretion of local congregations in sustaining ministry with their own members.
- value the Social Principles and their purpose historically as guidelines on justice issues.
- follow the Wesleyan tradition that discourages “right beliefs” or the same opinions as a requirement for membership, but seeks to be a church whose unifying principle is the belief in loving God and loving neighbor. We end with a quote from our founder John Wesley:
  “What then is the mark? Who is a Methodist, according to your own account?” I answer: A Methodist is one who has “the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him,” one who “loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul; which is constantly crying out, ‘Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! My God and my all! Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.’”
  —John Wesley in The Character of a Methodist

—Developed by the Reconciling Congregation Program from a variety of sources including the Presbyterian church’s debate of same-sex ceremonies and Bishop Talbert’s press release regarding the charges against California pastors for conducting a covenant ceremony in January, 1999.
Decadent Desserts
For those who like a challenge, try one of these icing-on-the-cake efforts

Stage a Street Drama

Contact Mary Ann Carlson, on-site coordinator, for information on street dramas to be staged at General Conference, van1419mac@aol.com

Starting a Dialogue

Ingredients
- group of United Methodists willing to dialogue regarding issues on inclusion
- trained facilitator or mediator
- meeting room
- refreshments

Prep. Time
- 2-3 months to invite others to participate
- 1 month to seek and confirm facilitator
- 1 hour meeting room setup

Instructions
A few churches and conferences have had success in starting a dialogue with people who may not share the same perspective on the inclusion of l/g/b/t persons into the life of the church. Present a program or video (see Kitchen Helps) and invite another congregation to the program. Better yet, plan a program in conjunction with another congregation and agree on the purpose, goal and groundrules before the program. Remember that if you are bringing together persons who feel strongly and believe passionately about differing points of view, it is crucial to have a trained mediator to facilitate the dialogue.

Difficult techniques
Realize that there are some who have no desire to “dialogue” and who will use any forum for demonizing your point of view. It is important not to end a program with overwhelming feelings of pain and woundedness present. End in prayer, with singing, and with handouts of additional resources. Make available pastoral counselors who are willing to process the evening with others.

The following information regards seeing from someone else’s perspective and a comparison of views of homosexuality within the church. You may want to provide the information as a handout in your planning meetings.
Seeing From Someone Else’s Perspective

Each person enters conflict with his or her own set of beliefs, biases, values, and history. These factors help create an emotional and mental view of the situation. Each person believes his or her view or perspective is right. Not only that, our society fosters the belief that if I am right, then you must be wrong. It is based on a win-lose approach to conflict.

For a conflict to be transformed, the two parties must realize that there is more than one “truth” when looking at a situation. You must connect with the other person’s story to realize that they actually might have some element of truth.

Empathy is the ability to put yourself in another person’s shoes—to stand where he or she stands and, momentarily, take on that perspective. It does not mean you agree but it does mean you understand, in part, where that person is coming from. Sympathy goes a step further, where you feel similar to the other person and have a sense of mutuality with them.

Some helpful tips for seeing from someone else’s perspective and learning to empathize:

- In order to see another point of view, we need to open ourselves and listen. If we continue to defend our own view we only become more convinced of our sense of reality.
- It helps to momentarily set aside our view and position, knowing we will come back to it later on. This requires confidence in ourselves as well as in the process.
- In order to get unstuck, one person can offer to try to see from the other’s perspective for a set amount of time on the condition that the other will reciprocate.
- Effective and direct communication are critical. After approaching and listening, often a dialogue follows where questions help clarify what we do not see.
- Once we are able to see the “truth” in the other person’s perspective, we are enriched, and our own understanding of the truth is expanded.
- Through seeing his or her perspective, we naturally empathize and connect to that person. There is greater trust and respect between the parties. Gaining trust is often the most important step in working toward a solution. Problem solving is much easier if both parties feel understood and respected.

Cooperation Skills

Cooperation involves two seemingly contradictory movements: asserting self and supporting another. One asserts one’s own needs and interests, and at the same time supports the needs and interest of others. The challenge is to do them simultaneously, since they operate like a push and pull. Many people are skillful at one of these; few are skillful at both. The combination is remarkably effective. With practice anyone can learn it.

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Supportiveness Skills: The “Pull” of Listening

Paraphrasing: Reflecting in one’s own words the essence of what the speaker has said. This is the most useful listening skill in that it demonstrates one’s commitment to understanding.

**How to paraphrase**
- Keep the focus on the speaker. “So you felt...,” “You’re saying...,” “You believe...”
- Re-state in your own words, rather than simply parroting the speaker.
- Reflect both content and feeling whenever possible and appropriate.
- Be brief, much briefer than the speaker.
- Match to some extent the emotional intensity of the speaker in your paraphrase.

**Why Paraphrase?**
- Demonstrates understanding and/or the attempt to understand.
- Clarifies the communication. (If you misunderstand, they’ll correct you.)
- Affirms worth of the speaker and encourages him/her to say more.
- Reduces defensiveness of both you and the speaker.
- Slows down a fast or angry conversation, helping to reduce the intensity of the conflict.

**Examples**
- “So you were really frightened when...”
- “You felt I was being unfair to you when...”
- “Let me make sure I’m understanding you. You’re saying you don’t want that responsibility...”

Openness: Communicating openness to receiving more information about the perceptions and needs of others, even if those may be critical or competitive. This is often important in order to clarify the situation before attempting to respond.

**Examples**
- “Say more about...”
- “Spell that out further”
- “Tell me what you have in mind”
- “Give me a specific example.”

Agreement Stating: Acknowledging where one agrees with others in the midst of a disagreement.

**Examples**
- “I agree with you that...”
- “I can see what you’re saying about...”
- “I share your concerns about...”
Assertiveness Skills: The “Push” of Speaking

I-Messages: A clear, non-threatening way to confront that focuses on oneself rather than on the other person. It communicates the impact of the situation on one’s emotions or performance.

How to Use I-Statements
- Focus on yourself and own the problem: “I...”
- Name the feeling: “I felt used...”
- Name the problem behavior: “I felt used when you put your name on the work I did...”
  Describe the impact on you: “...because I put a lot of time and energy into that project.”

Why use I-Statement?
- I take responsibility for my feelings
- Avoids blaming or accusing the other
- Reduces defensiveness and de-escalates conflict
- Expresses strong feelings in a way that preserves the relationship

Examples
- “I felt angry when you told me to meet you at noon and then you didn’t come or call, because I had changed my plans so we could meet.”
- “It’s very upsetting for me when you get your projects in late. I get behind with my deadlines and then others get on my case.”

Preference Statements: Communicating clearly one’s preferences or desires rather than stating them as demands or forcing others to guess. Defining oneself clearly also invites others to do the same.

Examples
- “My preference is...”
- “If it were just me...”
- “What I’d like is...”
- “It would be helpful to me if...”

Purpose Stating: Making known one’s intentions so others do not unknowingly operate at cross-purposes. By supplying information about your aims, a purpose statement enable others to understand what you are about and if possible, help achieve your purpose without needless misunderstanding.

Examples
- “What I’m trying to accomplish is...”
- “I’m hoping to...”
- “I was going to...”
- “My intention was to...”
Comparison of Views on Homosexuality within the Church

Although these views are described within a religious context, they have great affect on individuals and organizations at psychological, social, and political levels as well. Being able to state another’s view is often the first step toward the diffusion of hostility within any setting or relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homosexuality</th>
<th>Transforming View</th>
<th>Reconciling View</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is an immoral behavioral choice, or, if defined more broadly, is a deep-seated social, psychological and/or spiritual deficit in need of cure or transformation. Is an unnatural condition and never part of God’s ultimate will no matter how deeply entrenched.</td>
<td>Left-handedness...a minority but natural way some people happen to be. Efforts to change someone may alter behavior but at a price of mental anguish, and unnecessary shame. Forcing change is cruel.</td>
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| Analogous to | Alcoholism...a complex physical, socio-psycho-spiritual illness or disorder (perhaps with genetic influence) to be cured (or at least controlled) through strength from Higher Power. Compassion does not equal acceptance. | Unjust discrimination, bearing false witness, and perpetuation of cruel myths and stereotypes about gay people...also, heterosexist self-righteousness and judgement. |

| The sin is | Homosexuality and, or homosexual behavior and desire...also, the acceptance of this condition as ever being compatible with God’s will...also, resultant social degradation. | To help all persons to be reconciled to God, self, and one another...to rid persons and systems of hatred, discrimination and personal/corporate shame and ignorance. Love the homophobic sinner...hate the sin. |

| The church’s healing mission is | To lovingly help change homosexuals into heterosexuals; or at least to bring them to a life of non-sexual expression (celibacy) while being nurtured by a spiritual community. Love the homosexual sinner...hate the sin. | |

| The Bible teaches | Heterosexuality is God’s universal design from creation. Lev 18:22, 20:13; Gen. 19:1-29; I Cor. 6:9-11; I Tim. 1:10; Rom. 14; and other passages all clearly condemn homosexuality as wrong. Nowhere are homosexual relationships presented in an acceptable light. Other Biblical principles and themes, including heterosexual procreation, likewise support the holiness & normalcy of opposite-sex affection. Change is possible through the indwelling of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. God sorts the “wheat from the chaff,” and not “all who call me Lord will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” Scriptural authority is as relevant today as ever, and no amount of rationalization or humanist influence can change God’s Holy Word. Jesus died for all but repentance is necessary. | Little or nothing about homosexual orientation, only certain homosexual abuses such as rape, temple prostitution, inhospitality, and idolatry. Approx. 300 texts condemn particular heterosexual behavior but that does not mean heterosexuality is evil. Other principles including Jesus’ love-ethic and his example of including and respecting outcasts, minorities and religiously persecuted folks of his day, confirm the need to look at the historical and social context. To use the bible to justify diminishment of gay persons, is akin to efforts to control, enslave, or persecute persons based on race, gender or social class...in the name of God, Jesus or Biblical authority. |

From Allan Vrieze, clergyperson in Rochester, MN and coordinator of the Welcome to the Open Door Conference held each October in Minnesota. For info on the 1999 event, call 506-292-9712 or otma@netscape.net
Wide is the Welcome - A Reader's Theater

Ingredients
- a director with a sense of humor
- narrator
- Snow White, Prince
- 24 guests including 15 speaking parts (indicated by *) Snow White's father and stepmother*; 7 dwarfs (Doc*, Sneezy*, Grumpy*, Bashful*); Hansel, Gretel, Aunt Wiechie*; Little Red Riding Hood, her grandmother*, a lumberjack*; Goldilocks*, Mama Bear*, Papa Bear*, Baby Bear*; Jack*, Beanstalk Giant; Old Woman who lived in a shoe*, Old Woman's child*
- Old Woman's children en masse (children's choir group)
- signs for character names (construction paper with chord to hang around actors' necks)
- stools or chairs for actors
- notebooks with scripts (black, 3-ring binders)
- optional props such as red cape, gold curly wig, flannel shirt (for lumberjack), gray wig (for old woman)

Prep. Time
- 1-2 hours of rehearsal time for actors (including choir)
- 1 additional hour rehearsal time for children's choir (split up over several weeks)
- several hours to gather props (optional)
- 30 minutes for set-up

Instructions
Stage a reader's theater production using the following children's story by Lori Messinger. This can be done strictly as a reader's theater with no props and little preparation. For additional humor value, use props judiciously, mix gender roles (for example: a male plays Goldilocks or the Old Woman, and a female, the lumberjack), use sound effects (loud knock, sawing noises, giggling), and have the youth group play the Old Woman's brood. Be as creative and festive as you and your audience can bear.

This is a great, all-ages, all-church activity!
Wide is the Welcome... a children’s story

[N = narrator;  P = Prince;  SW = Snow White]

Narrator: One morning in the Enchanted Forest, Snow White and Prince Charming woke up to a beautiful day. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, and the sky was as blue as the ocean.

Prince: “What can we do on this wonderful day? Should we ride our horses into the meadow and have a picnic?”

SW: “No, let’s gather everyone who lives in the Enchanted Forest for an evening feast. We could have it here at our castle.”

Prince: “A feast is a fantastic idea. But how can we cook enough for all of them to eat?”

SW: “We can ask them all to bring something to share.”

Prince: “Yes, that’s it!”

N: Snow White laughed and clapped her hands excitedly. She called to her friends, the birds and the squirrels, and asked them to invite all of the people in the forest to the great feast. The birds flew and the squirrels scampered all over the forest, spreading the news of the feast.

As the sun moved low in the sky, people started to arrive. The first to knock on the large oak doors were Snow White’s best friends, the seven dwarves. They brought bowls of fruit from their orchards and gardens: cherries, oranges, grapes, apricots, peaches, and blackberries. Dopey had forgotten to harvest any fruit, but he picked flowers for the table.

[Enter 7 dwarfs]

N: Snow White placed the fruit on the table, placed the flowers in a vase, and told them to take a place at the table.

[Snow White’s stepmother and father enter.]

Snow White’s stepmother and father came next. Her stepmother handed her an apple pie she baked, and apologized,

Stepmother: Thank you for inviting me. I am so sorry for all of the mean tricks I played on you. I was jealous of you.

SW: [hugs her parents] “Wide is the welcome, mother. Join us at the table.”

N: The next knock at the door was Hansel and Gretel, with their parents and their aunt Witchie. Hansel carried a large salad and Gretel held a vegetable lasagna. Aunt Witchie handed the Prince some of her wonderful gingerbread, still warm from the oven.

[Hansel, Gretel and Aunt Witchie enter]

Prince: [Greeting entering guests] “Welcome, all. Please make yourselves at home. Take a place at the table.”
They sat in the few remaining seats and joined in conversation with the others.
The next to arrive were Goldilocks and the three bears. They brought porridge
for all, cooked by Goldilocks and Baby Bear, who make it “just right.”

[Enter Goldilocks and the three bears]

The bears thanked Snow White and the Prince for inviting them.

N: “Hardly anyone remembers to invite bears. If it weren’t for Goldilocks, we
would hardly see anyone at all.”

Mama Bear: “I know what you mean. I am so glad that Hansel and Gretel come and visit
with me every week. I would be so lonely if I didn’t have their company.”

Aunt Witchie: “Well, we could not have a good feast without all of you here. Wide is the
welcome. Take a place at the table.”

Prince: “But, where can we sit? All of the seats are taken and there is no more room at
the table. Perhaps we ought to leave.”

Papa Bear: Snow White disagreed.

SW: “Please stay. There is room for all. This is a special table, given to me by Jack.
He made it out of the root of the magic beanstalk. Just pour some water on the
ends of the tabletop to extend the table. Sneezy, Bashful, Doc, Grumpy, can
you pour some water on the table?”

Narrator: The dwarfs poured water from their glasses on the ends of the table. It grew and
grew until there was room for all of the guests.

SW: “There we are, room for all. Please sit down.”

Baby Bear: “That is a pretty great trick!”

Narrator: A loud knock startled the guests, rattling the door and shaking the rafters.

Sneezy: “Hide!”

Narrator: shouted Sneezy, pulling his napkin over his head.

Prince: The Prince rushed to open the door, and saw the enormous Giant standing in the
doorway. Jack pushed his way in front of the Giant, shouting,

Jack: “I told you that you should have let me knock. You always knock too loud.”

Narrator: The Prince laughed and invited them inside the castle.

Prince: “Come in. Come in. We were just sitting down to eat. Be sure to duck,”

N: he advised the Giant.

The Giant entered first, followed by Jack and his mother.

[GIant, Jack and Jack’s mother enter]

SW: “Your table has come in very handy, Jack. Time to extend the table!”

All: “Extend the table!”
Goldilocks and Baby Bear: “Can we do it this time?”

SW: “Why, certainly.”

Narrator: Baby Bear and Goldilocks poured water on the edges of the table. It grew and grew until there was room for Jack, his mother, and the Giant.

Little Red Riding Hood knocked in the door next, followed by her grandmother and the lumberjack. They looked at the crowded table, full of people.

[Little Red Riding Hood, her grandmother and the lumberjack enter]

Grandmother: “We bring wonderful food for the feast, but it doesn’t look like there is any room for us at the table. Perhaps we should go and have a picnic by ourselves.”

SW: “Not at all. Wide is the welcome. Extend the table!”

All: “Extend the table!”

Bashful: “But, Snow White, I’m afraid there is no more room,”

Doc: “That’s right. If we extend it any further, the walls of your house will come down.”

Lumberjack: “Actually, I can help with that. I can build an arch in the wall, so that your table can extend into the garden.”

N: Grumpy got angry and slammed his hand on the table.

Grumpy: “That will take too long! I am hungry now.”

Lumberjack: “We can do it quickly, if we all work together.”

Narrator: Snow White grinned and rose to her feet.

SW: “Let’s get to it!”

Narrator: With that, all of the guests worked together, placing supports, removing stones, and building the archway.

In no time at all, the archway was ready. They could feel the cool night air on their faces.

Grumpy: “Okay, well, extend the table already!”

All: “Extend the table!”

Narrator: Hansel and Gretel poured water on the edge of the table by the archway. It grew and grew through the archway and into the garden. The moon shone brightly on all of them and they were happy.

Then, small faces peeked around the edges of the archway. It is the old woman who lives in a shoe, along with her many children. She called Snow White aside.

[Old woman and her children enter]

Old Woman: “I have brought my children for the feast, but I am ashamed. We do not have any food to share with you.”

Grumpy: “They haven’t brought anything. Turn them away and let’s eat.”
Prince:  "No. All of God's children are welcome at this table!"

SW:  "Indeed. Wide is the welcome. Extend the table."

All:  "Extend the table!"

N:  The Giant poured more water on the table, and more seats are added for the old woman and her children.

As they moved around the table, one of the smallest children called to her mother.

Child:  "Since we brought no food, maybe we could sing a song for these fine people."

Children:  "Yes! Yes! A song! A song!"

SW:  "That would be lovely."

N:  The children all stood and sang,

Children:  *Open the doors and gather together
God's children from over the land.
Its time to share in love and rejoicing
the day of the feast is at hand.*

*No fighting or fury, no anger or strife,
let hatred and pettiness cease .
There's room at God's table for everyone
as we come together in peace.*

*Wide is the welcome! Extend the table.
There's room enough for all.
Working together, extending God's table—
There's room enough for all.*

Narrator:  When they finished singing the song, Snow White, the Prince, the dwarves, and all the rest of the guests clapped and smiled.

Grumpy:  "Yeah, yeah, that was really nice. Can we eat now?"

SW:  "Yes, we are all together. It is time to eat."

N:  With that, the feast began.
Flashy Fare  
Press and publicity strategies

Tips for Dealing with the Press

- Develop a relationship with media persons before you offer news items. Invite the local religion editor or UM reporter to lunch or coffee and establish yourself as an expert on the topic.

- Offer your resources to the reporter for the next news story and then be ready to drop everything to help get the information or provide the quote that the reporter needs. If you can be counted on to help the reporters meet their deadlines, they will call on you again.

- Develop a network of resources that you can access quickly so that you can respond appropriately to a reporter even if you don’t know the answer off-hand.

- Remember that photos always enhance a newsprint article.

- Make follow-up calls on interviews and press releases.

- Television cameras like visuals. Create an attractive backdrop and offer action shots. For example: a choir singing or persons holding signs.

- Develop a press policy for your congregation. For a press policy example, see www.brdwyumc.org/PressPolicy.html

Writing an Op-Ed or Essay

(Adapted from Communications Consortium Media Center, used with permission.)

An op-ed is an essay or guest column published in the opinion section of the newspaper. These are called op-eds because they usually appear on the page OP-posite the ED-itorial page. Newspapers receive dozens, perhaps hundreds, of submissions every day, all competing for space on the page. Most newspapers ask that submissions be limited to between 500-750 words.

Editors look for community interest or a strong local angle. Unless there is considerable public debate already, they will be less receptive to op-eds about national issues or broad, generic ideas. You need to tell a local story—about a real person, family or group and how your issues has affected them.

Before you begin writing, call the newspaper to confirm the name of the editorial or op-ed page editor and to find out any criteria for submission. Larger papers including The New York Times and The Washington Post have a special audio message that explains how to submit an op-ed, as well as the process by which you will be notified if a submission has been accepted or declined.

Some newspapers accept op-eds by fax—but ask first. You should also ask about the approval process. In most cases, the newspaper will call you to clarify some of the facts only when they’ve decided to print your piece.
10 Tips for Successful Op-Ed Writing

1. Try to reduce your point to a single sentence. For example: “Every child deserves a family,” “The United Nations needs more funding,” “Women have achieved enormous strides in the past decade.”

2. See if your sentence passes the “wow” test or the “hmmm” test; if not, the point needs sharpening.

3. Muster your best three or four supporting arguments and state each one in a single paragraph. Be as specific as possible. Avoid starting sentences with “There are.” Use an active voice rather than a passive one.

4. Raise your opponents’ best arguments and challenge them with countervailing facts, using hospitality in irony and avoiding condescension.

5. Ask yourself: What is the minimum background information a reader absolutely has to have in order to grasp this point? Write two paragraphs that summarize this information.

6. Imagine your target reader browsing through the newspaper on a workday morning, rushing to find something interesting. What kind of statement might catch this person’s attention? If you can raise questions, surprise, intrigue or baffle your reader into reading beyond the first paragraph, you stand a chance the editor will let you put the entire op-ed in the paper.

7. Now, write the piece. Draft about 1,000 words (four double-spaced pages) maximum! Restate your key points in the final paragraph.

8. Cut out half a page. Eliminate repetition. Trim words, not ideas. Check every word and see what you can eliminate. Convert passive-voice sentences to active ones. Give the piece to someone else and ask him/her to review it. If rewriting or cutting is required, you want to do it yourself, rather than leave it to the discretion of the newspaper editor.

9. Your piece should be about 750 words. Don’t forget to include your name, title, and affiliation at the end. Remember, whether this op-ed was intended as a single action or the first phase of a many-faceted media campaign, you’re on your way.

10. Submit the piece with a short cover letter that includes your name and phone number. You will be notified if your article is considered for publication. Calling and badgering the staff of the op-ed page may not help and could hurt you. Be patient, it can take weeks for a piece to appear, even an op-ed with a time-sensitive point. Stay ready to update and revise in the hours before publication.

If your op-ed is rejected, you may want to make revisions and submit to another publication. But do not despair. Try again in a few weeks or months on another topic. Your piece may have arrived during a very busy week with lots of competition. Often it is just a matter of your op-ed being at the right place at the right time.

If your piece is printed, make copies and send them to colleagues, elected officials, funders, reporters and others who can help move your issue. This can be an excellent way of getting your exact message to key influencers, helping to frame the debate. An op-ed can serve as a springboard to talk show appearances, panel discussions and a myriad of other opportunities.
Communicate and Be Counted

Letters to the editor, e-mails and interactive feedback are important means of communicating your ideas. These communications do make a difference, provided that you make your key points carefully, and are specific, concise and to the point. Newspapers and magazines often use only two or three paragraphs at most.

National television news magazine programs including CBS 60 Minutes, ABC 20/20, and NBC Dateline have a regular “letters” feature on each program. Some of these prime-time news shows ask viewers to respond via e-mail or voice-mail to a specific segment as it airs.

MSNBC and other cable networks regularly host “chat rooms” on their website with journalists and prominent newsmakers. These provide an excellent opportunity for you to deliver messages directly to the people who can best disseminate it further.

Watch, read, listen and surf (the net) for ways you can have an impact on decision-makers in the media.

Writing a Press Release

General tips

- Print on stationery that provides local connection—your local church, annual conference, etc. Get permission to do this.

- You may want to do two versions of the release: one for the church and one for secular press. Remember that the secular press doesn’t understand all our church semantics.

- The more you can provide a local angle for the news or quotes from local leaders (bishop, D.S., pastor, etc.) the more interest the release will have. Use supportive resolutions from past annual conferences, news about any local anti-gay initiatives, stories from current Reconciling Congregations (RC), etc.

- Write quotes for persons who will communicate the message you want to give (use or adapt any of the quotes in the following sample release). Remember to review the quote with the person to whom you attribute it and amend the quote to make it fit that person’s vernacular.

- Don’t name any congregations that are considering becoming RCs without getting permission in advance, so as not to cause negative repercussions in a sensitive process.

Key Components to a Press Release

- Brief overview statement of event or situation.
- One or two local quotes.
- Key information – time, places, dates.
- Explanation of the RCP and its local connection.
- Concluding paragraph including a brief summary.
April 21, 2000

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
(Your name or another contact with phone #)

Local Reconciling Congregation to Hold
Prayer Vigil for United Methodist General Conference

Susanna Wesley, a regional volunteer coordinator for the Reconciling Congregation Program, will be leading a prayer vigil with members of Eureka United Methodist Church (UMC) to pray for the General Conference of the UMC. The prayer vigil will be held May 1st at 7 PM at Eureka UMC, 233 S. Hawthorn Street in Juno.

The General Conference of UMC is the legislative body of The United Methodist Church that is gathering in Cleveland, Ohio from May 2-12, 2000. It will enact legislation within many areas of the Church, including issues of homosexuality and the church.

Eureka UMC, a Reconciling Congregation, declares itself as open and welcoming of all persons regardless of sexual orientation into the life and ministry of the church. The prayer vigil is to pray for General Conference delegates, policies and legislation that will affect gay and lesbian persons within the church. They will pray for their congregation as well as many other congregations that are seeking to be in ministry with lesbians and gay men. They will also be praying for closeted gay and lesbian persons within churches that are inhospitable and not welcoming.

“Our church is working hard to overcome decades of homophobia and declare, ‘Wide is God’s Welcome’ to all persons in our local church and community,” noted the Rev. Sara Berra, who oversees Eureka United Methodist Church. “This is about ministry and people in the pews. We turn no one away.”

Wesley states, “The United Methodist Church declares in its Social Principles, “Homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth. We hope that legislation will honor its understanding of ‘sacred worth.’ We will also pray for the end to discrimination within our denomination.”

Rev. Berra stated, “For too many years the church has been asking if someone can be gay and Christian. That is the wrong question. The true question is: Can the church claim to be Christian while keeping the ‘Table of Christ’ closed off from a large group of persons, like gay,
lesbian, and bisexual persons? We must extend the table and show all persons that God's welcome is wide!"

The Reconciling Congregation Program is a national network of 152 United Methodist congregations and 26 campus ministries that publicly welcome all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. Reconciling Congregations are part of a much larger movement of "welcoming" churches across several mainline Protestant churches. In total, there are more than 800 More Light (Presbyterian), Open and Affirming (United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ), Reconciling in Christ (Lutheran), Reconciling (United Methodist), Supportive (Brethren/Mennonite), and Welcoming and Affirming (Baptist) churches in the U.S.A.

The prayer vigil is open to all persons including those from other United Methodist Churches, from the community, and other denominations.
Table Settings

Suggestions on how to lay out the welcome table and displays

RCP Display

Ingredients

- one large, stand-up, tri-fold display board (found in craft and art stores)
- thumbtacks
- large (2 inch or larger) stick-on letters or markers
- display materials copied on colorful paper, family album (see page 5)
- photos of persons from local Reconciling Congregations
- display table (electrical outlet nearby is helpful if you’re using a light or video)
- candy, pink triangle cookies, or Fount of Blessing to entice folks to the table

Prep. Time

- 1-2 hours to shop for supplies
- 1 hour to create display
- 1 hour to fill out paperwork to request table at conference and make all the follow-up calls to confirm that you have a table (optional)

Use stick-on letters to create a large title on the display board. Around the title, tack colorful copies of RCP position papers (available from national RCP office) on the board. Be as creative or straightforward as your time, energy and talent allow.

Also, display issues of Open Hands and distribute enrollment cards for Reconciling United Methodists. Provide plenty of extra copies of the position papers on the display for people to take with them.

If you are displaying items that are rare or that you would like to remain on the table, either don’t display them or have someone staff the table. Writing “Display Copy—Do NOT Take!” on the item rarely works.

If you want to get fancy, provide a monitor with a continually repeating video (see Kitchen Helps), a computer with a multi-media Powerpoint presentation, or a fount of blessing (see below).
Fount of Blessings Centerpiece

Ingredients

- crepe paper, paper, pipe cleaners, cords, wire (whatever can be made to look like stream of water)
- bowls to use as the base of fountain
- construction paper
- goldfish snacks (optional)

Prep. Time  - 1 week

Instructions

Create a centerpiece, or centerpieces, that look like fountains, around the theme “Fount of Blessing.” Streamers can be made to look like water flowing out. Bowls can be filled with paper fish on which are written words of blessing for participants. Goldfish crackers could be nearby as snacks.

If music is used, songs for this theme might include: “Come, Thou Fount,” “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow,” Chris Williamson’s “Waterfall,” Susan Savel’s “God is Like a River Flowing,” Miriam Therese Winters’ “Living Water, Like a Fountain,” and “Sing We, Sing of a Blessing,” “Peace is Flowing Like a River.”

Recipe from: Nancy Carter, ncarter@juno.com

Table Graces

Prep. Time  - 1-2 weeks

Serves  - Attendees at any event

Ingredients

- Colorful card stock or regular weight paper
- Resources for graces or prayers for the reconciling of God’s people, for blessings for all (see following sample pages which can be copied and separated—some into fish shapes, if desired)

Instructions

Make table tents for individual tables—enough for each participant to have one to take home that have graces and prayers and blessings written on them. You can paint colorful borders on them; use graphics and be as creative and fancy as your energy and time will allow.

Below are sample quotes that can be copied onto colorful paper and cut into table tents.

Recipe from: Nancy Carter, ncarter@juno.com
“When we ask for ‘our daily bread’ in the Lord’s Prayer, we could be asking for just enough ‘understanding’ for today. Life gives us countless experiences of dissonance, as the Psalms record. And yet we ask in return for some bread, some understanding to nourish us for this day.”

—Mary Callaway Logan

I am only one,  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything.  
But still I can do something;  
And because I cannot do everything,  
I will not refuse to do the something I can do.

—Edward Everett Hale

God’s table and nourishment of Holy Communion await us. It will not deaden the pain we are experiencing as a church divided, but it has the power to melt our stony hearts.

May all God’s children know the love of God, the fellowship of the body of Christ, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit even as the church struggles to offer these to all people.

Jesus’ command to open the ears of the one who could not hear applies equally to the church, which turns a deaf ear to the radical claim of the gospel to “be open.”

—Mary Callaway Logan

May we think and let think. So that whatsoever they are, whether right or wrong, there are no distinguishing marks of a Methodist.

—John Wesley in The Character of a Methodist

The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make God’s face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.  
The Lord lift up God’s countenance upon you and give you peace.

God is not through with creation.  
God is not through with me.

—Howard Thurman

We remember now to thank our Creator for all that we are and all that we have. May our sharing with one another embody the generosity made possible for us by the Giver of the original gift.

—from Philip Foubert in Graces

We shall have to repent in this generation, not so much for the evil deeds of the wicked people, but for the appalling silence of the good people.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.
O Holy One, I hear and say so many words, yet yours in the word I need. Speak now, and help me to listen; and if what I hear is silence, let it quiet me, let it disturb me, let it touch my need, let it break my pride, let it shrink my certainties, let it enlarge my wonder. Amen.

—Ted Loder

We shall have no reconstructed world without reconstructed individuals, and in the remaking of human life in the direction of changed attitudes and acts, prayer has a major place... Prayer is the surest road to peace in the inner life...for changing what can be changed, prayer as a source of guidance and strength is an indispensable support.

—Georgia Harkness

A follower of Jesus is a witness to life.

—Gustavo Gutierrez

O Lord, help me not to despise or oppose what I do not understand.

—William Penn (1644-1718) in Graces

O God, the Giver of life, we pray for the Church throughout the world. Sanctify its life, renew its worship, empower its witness, restore its unity. Remove from your people all pride and every prejudice that dulls their will for unity. Strengthen the work of all those who strive to seek that common obedience that will bind us together. Heal the divisions which separate your children from one another, that they may keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Amen.

—Book of Worship 505

Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?

—John Wesley
**Fount of Blessings** (may be cut into fish shapes)

Strong covenant God, save us from being self-centered in our prayers, and teach us to remember to pray for others. May we be so bound up in love with those for whom we pray that we may feel their needs as acutely as our own, and intercede for them with sensitiveness, with understanding and with imagination. Amen.

—Based on words from John Calvin

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My great concern is not whether God is on our side, my great concern is to be on God’s side.

—Abraham Lincoln

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Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

—John Wesley

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Gracious God, help us, so that as a community planning for our future, seeking to move forward, anxious to change direction, we do not do so while leaving some behind. May we all be one and may we bring each other along so that we all arrive—together.

—Amen.
Live Simply,
Act Lovingly,
Do Justice, Pray Daily,
The rest we may
leave to God
—Fred Craddock (paraphrase)

May all arrive.
May none be left behind.
May all be one.
—Quiche Indian saying

Love of God is the root,
Love of our neighbor the fruit
of the Tree of Life. Neither can exist
without the other, but the one
is cause and other effect.
—Archbishop William Temple

Thank you, O God, that you have chosen
your church to be your servant of reconciliation
where all of us, gay and straight together, will count,
not because of irrelevancies such as sexual orientation,
race, gender or status but because of our intrinsic worth
as those created in your image, as redeemed by Jesus,
as being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Bless this
beautiful church with its wonderful people and
their differences so that it will be a place of
laughter and joy, of justice and reconciliation,
of peace and unity, of compassion,
caring and sharing. Amen.
—Adapted from Desmond Tutu
Chef's Notes and Resources
Selected bibliography, resources and groups

Articles


"Straight to Hell: When Gays Go Hetero, the Consequences Can be Anything but Redemptive" by Mark Schoofs in the Village Voice: News. www.villagevoice.com/ink/news


Books

Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out, edited by Loraine Hutchins and Kani Kaahumanu.

Can Homophobia Be Cured? Wrestling with Questions that Challenge the Church by Bruce Hilton (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999) wrestles with three questions: “What if homophobia is the real sin?”, “What will the church do with the growing scientific evidence of the nature of homosexuality?” and “What will the church do as it realizes that ‘they’ are ‘we,’ those among the devoted faithful?”

Caught in the Crossfire: Helping Christians Debate Homosexuality edited by Sally B. Geis and Donald E. Messer (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994) includes writers from various points of view who deal with questions raised by persons who attempt to reconcile issues around homosexuality and church teachings.


Eating and Drinking at the Welcome Table: The Holy Supper for All People by William K. McElvaney (Chalice Press, 1998) focuses on the sacrament of Holy Communion as it informs our faith and impels us to ministries of justice with illustrations of ministries with children, the poor, refugees, women, persons of color, gays and lesbians, and persons with disabilities.


Gay/Lesbian Liberation: A Biblical Perspective by George R. Edwards (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1984) makes the case that gay/lesbian liberation rightly aligns with liberation theology, addresses pertinent biblical texts, and offers a basis for reconciliation and moving forward on this issue.

Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price edited by Warren J. Blumenfeld (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992) discusses the hidden costs of homophobia in family relationships, religious institutions, social policy, and other aspects of our lives. It includes a section on how to run an anti-homophobia workshop.

Homosexuality and the Bible by Walter Wink. This 16-page booklet, available from Fellowship Bookstore, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960 (914-358-4601), cost $1.50 including postage and handling; volume discounts. Text is on the web at www.bridges-across.org/ba/wink.htm

Is the Homosexual My Neighbor? by Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott (HarperSanFrancisco, 1994) is a compassionate and persuasive case for a fundamental shift in Christian attitudes. It looks at homosexuality from scientific, psychological, and biblical perspectives.

More than Welcome: Learning to Embrace Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Persons in the Church by Maurine C. Waun. (Chalice Press, 1999). This book offers the compelling story of a pastor’s journey toward greater affirmation of g/l/b/t persons in church and the stories of the person she encountered on this journey.

Of Sacred Worth by Paul A. Mickey (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991) takes a traditional stance on the subject of homosexual practice while affirming the personhood of gays and lesbians. He deals with AIDS and both sides in the interpretation of scriptural passages.


Reconciling the Broken Silence: The Church in Dialog on Gay and Lesbian Issues by Sylvia Thorson-Smith (Louisville: The Presbyterian Church (USA), 1989) contains several questionnaires poems, hymns, and meditations to use with study groups and the like.


Stranger at the Gate: To be Gay and Christian in America by Mel White. (Plume Penquin, 1994).

The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart by Peter Gomes. (NY: W. Morrow, 1996).


We Were Baptized Too: Claiming God’s Grace for Lesbians and Gays with a foreword by Desmond Tutu. By Marilyn Alexander and James Preston. Challenges the church to take seriously its understanding of baptism and communion as a means of grace, justice and liberation.


Groups

Affirmation: United Methodists for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Concerns
address: P.O. Box 1231, Evanston, IL 60204
v-mail: 847-733-9590
e-mail: umaaffirmation@yahoo.com
website: www.umaaffirm.org

CORNET: Covenant Relationships Network
website: www.umaaffirm.org/cornet

MFSA: Methodist Federation for Social Action
address: 212 E Capital St. NE, Washington, DC 20003
phone: 202-546-8806
fax: 202-546-6811
e-mail: mfsa@olg.com

PFLAG – Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
address: 1101 14th Street NW, Suite 1030, Washington, DC 20005
phone: 202-638-4200
e-mail: info@pflag.org

RCP – Reconciling Congregation Program (United Methodists)
address: 3801 N. Keeler Avenue, Chicago, IL 60641
phone: 773-736-5526
fax: 773-736-5475
website: www.rcp.org
Speakers


Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Speakers Bureau of Boston. P.O. Box 2232, Boston, Mass 02107. 617-354-0133.

Most P-FLAG local chapters maintain a list of speakers available in your area. For the chapter in your area, check their web site at www.PFLAG.org

Videos

All God's Children, a documentary (26 minutes) about the Black Church's embracing of African American lesbians and gay men as dedicated members of the spiritual family. Prominent religious, intellectual, and political leaders, family members, and activists speak out about the role of the church and the importance of a commitment to equal rights and social justice for all people. A discussion guide is available. From Women Vision, 1-800-343-5540 or fax: 201-652-1973.

Straight from the Heart: Stories of Parents' Journey to a New Understanding of their Lesbian and Gay Children. 1994, 26 minutes. Motivational Media, 8430 Santa Monica Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90069; (800) 848-2707.

We Love Our Children: Parent of Gays Speak Up. 1995, 28 minutes. Film Ideas, Inc. 308 North Wolf Road, Wheeling, IL 60090. A multi-ethnic group of parents whose children are gay share the difficult process of understanding and accepting their children for who they are. (800) 465-3456. email: filmid@ais.net.

Web Sites

www.binet.org
Site with bi-sexual resources

www.glaad.org
Gay and lesbian alliance against defamation site

www.PFLAG.org
The national site for Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; also contains a great resource list at www.pflag/store/resource/daughters_sons

www.soulforce.org
Site related to non-violent resistance by Mel White's organization, Soulforce

www.unaffirm.org/cornet/mbiblio.html
Cornet's list of resources, some general, some specially regarding covenant ceremonies

www.whosoever.org
An online news journal for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Christians
Kitchen Helps
Non-violent confrontation principles

This section is not meant to frighten, but everyone should be aware that in response to our reconciling efforts, churches, pastors, and laypeople have received threatening, hateful and uninform responses in the form of threats by phone, letter, flyers left on cars during church services, picketing and letters/articles in local papers. Some of these efforts have been very frightening, and we encourage you to contact your local police for assistance with any perceived threats. Other efforts, while not presenting physical threats or danger can be upsetting to the congregational members when confronted with hateful messages or suggestions that “God hates…” Be prepared to respond with firmness, truth, and hospitality to these encounters.

Mel White warns us against answering the uninformed voices that have attacked gays and lesbians and inclusive church movements with the same angry words and colorful soundbites that characterize their rhetoric. He offers instead four soulforce principles of relentless nonviolent resistance as taught by Jesus, Ghandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.:

1. We must see our adversaries as children of the same loving God who created us, our brother and sisters in Christ, members of our own family. Our goal is not to triumph over them but to be reconciled with them.

2. When untruth threatens, we respond with truth. We must hear the what they are saying carefully, answer any untruths with truth and accept, even if painful, when they speak the truth.

3. When untruth threatens, we respond with truth in love. We must love as Ghandhi defines it, as refusing violent actions or violent words, even violent thoughts about our adversaries. We must demonstrate the truth about homosexuals by the way we respond to the war of words being waged against us.

4. When untruth threatens, we respond with truth in love relentlessly. We must be aware of the most frequently used untruths and do our homework, preparing our answers to each untruth carefully. Then we must ask them to join us at the table in a mutual search for truth and a time of community together.

Adapted from “A Soulforce Response” by Mel White in the Fall 1998 edition (Vol 114, No. 2) of Open Hands: Resources for Ministries Affirming the Diversity of Human Sexuality. Contact the Reverend White via e-mail at RevMel@aol.com or visit his website: www.soulforce.org

Elane O’Rourke, who coordinated the Circle of Love in support of the holy union in Sacramento, offers the following advice when forming a public witness.

- Remember—it’s legally considered a protest, no matter what you call it.
- Get in touch with the powers that be and get them on your side—obtain permits, guard rails, caution tape, whatever will reassure them. Write polite letters. Have nice phone conversations with police, government officials and community liaisons. Meet personally with everyone involved and emphasize that you plan to be loving and hospitable in your
actions. Ask for cleanup guidelines and for toilet locations and distribute toilet paper if your group is large.

- Make sure the powers that be understand that you are concerned about outcomes, both arrests and violence, and ask for help in keeping things calm. You may want to overestimate the number of participants enough to be taken seriously, but not so much as to appear panicked.

- Arrange for your own monitors and train them. Provide a team of two monitors for every 20-30 people. A forty-five minute training session, using the following guidelines, should be sufficient. Give the police officers in charge copies of the nonviolence materials ahead of time for their review, and ask what they need from you. (See below for guidelines which should be distributed to all participants).

- Arrange for a portable sound system (two is preferable—one for emergencies and one for the coordinator to lead worship and cheer on the crowd).

- Make sure there is one contact person, period. This way, if a problem starts, the police or the monitors can radio or locate the contact person and the contact person can try to handle things first, before the police get involved. Have a very clear line of authority, and make certain that monitors understand that they don’t have to handle it all. Also, reinforce to the police that you’d prefer to handle things first.

- Keep the tone of the event as friendly and quiet as possible—even if you’re facing something unpleasant. Remember there will likely be angry people included in your group also, so asking for quiet prayer and keeping it a celebration with a positive focus is important. If there are people who start to express their anger inappropriately, tell them they will be asked to leave if they continue. Cheering needs to be in support of the cause, not against anyone else.

- Smile a lot and keep thanking everyone.
Sample guidelines for non-violence resistance at a planned event

Taken from the Holy Union in Sacramento. Adapt to your program.

Please Read — Important Information and Guidelines

Today we celebrate love and courage in [list purpose of event]. Though some may oppose, we are here in peace and compassion. While we are not responsible for the actions of others, we are responsible for our own. Express your support during today’s events by maintaining a prayerful and centered witness.

IMPORTANT: We are coordinating our efforts with those of the Sacramento Police Department. Please cooperate with any police officer, Circle Monitor, or Organizer (wearing Circle of Love t-shirts) as requested. [Name of coordinator] is the main contact for the event.

Please abide by the following nonviolence guidelines.

To the best of our ability, we will center ourselves to help make this event both a prayerful and powerful witness. We will:

- Convey through word, symbol, and action an attitude of openness, friendliness and respect toward all whom we encounter.
- Acknowledge the humanity of all others especially when we don’t agree with them.
- Follow the directions of the designated monitors (we may be asked to leave, to get help, or to sit down quietly, for example).
- Use no violence, verbal or physical, toward any person. We will use no threatening or affronting gestures.
- Refrain from insulting anyone. Strive to see all people, including those opposing our activity, as our sisters and brothers.
- If confronted with verbal hostility, we will not respond in kind. Instead, we will try these “creative disengagements”:
  1) Be a silent presence, standing firm on this holy ground.
  2) Introduce ourselves by name in a conversational tone of voice and ask who s/he is and where s/he is from, and engage in “active listening.”
  3) Gently share what we feel about the day and the event (e.g. happiness about the ceremony, sadness that it is so rare, or that there is such opposition to such a human decision, etc.)
- Damage no property and carry no weapons.
- Refrain from running — it can create panic.

Please note: Bathrooms are available
[State locations and where additional toilet paper can be obtained.]
Seven Ways to Deal with Other’s Emotions
by Mark Chupp, with contributions from Carolyn Schrock-Shenk and Jim Youssy-Albright

1) **Create a safe space.** Build trust, eliminate surprises and go in with a willingness to work on an emotional level. While this is not therapy, transforming conflict requires working through both the emotions and “substance” of the conflict.

2) **Observe body language and listen “beneath the words.”** Listen for what the person might be feeling but is not aware of, or has not been able to say.

3) **Connect with the feelings.** When strong emotions are preventing a person from moving forward you can connect with that person by matching their emotional state. You show you are committed to work at the problem if you can engage at a similar emotional level. You can empathize without sympathizing with them.

4) **Name the feelings.** When you have connected with the person, and when they are ready, summarize or reflect back what you have heard. Invite them to name or describe their feelings. Ask open-ended questions. Let them respond and allow them time to talk and clarify their feelings.

5) **Discover the roots to strong feelings.** Sometimes people experience strong emotions that have little to do with you or the conflict at hand. These have roots in deeply personal experiences of the past, and have been “hooked” into awareness by some aspect of the conflict. If possible, ask the person to explore from where the strong feelings might be coming. Ask for example, “Is this the first time something like this has happened to you?” If not possible, simply recognize internally that you might have “hooked” them and try not to take personal offense.

6) **Validate the emotions.** Express to the person that it is appropriate and natural to feel this way under the circumstances. While not necessarily agreeing with them, you can affirm them for their willingness to express how they feel. You may have to do this more than once; most people feel guilty, apologetic, or embarrassed to express strong emotions.

7) **Move on.** Make sure that the person is ready to continue and direct them on to other concerns that need to be addressed. The ideal balance means you neither skip over nor obsess over the feelings. Emotions and interests both need attention.
Five Ways to Deal with Your Own Emotions

Many of the steps for dealing with someone else’s emotions can serve you in dealing with your own feelings. Here are some additional ways to face your own feelings.

1) **Give yourself permission to feel.** Working constructively at conflict does not mean you face the other with clinched teeth and a strict commitment to be 100% rational. Allow yourself to have both positive and negative feelings toward yourself and the other person.

2) **Check yourself.** Are your feelings brought on, or exaggerated, by previous personal experiences unrelated to this person and conflict? What are the primary feelings that might be masked by your secondary feelings? For example, are you covering hurt with anger?

3) **Do your inner work.** Journal, meditate, go for a walk, or whatever helps you find the inner strength to face and work on your emotional issues. It is tempting to blame the other person for how I feel, thereby not doing my part to become emotionally healthy.

4) **Talk with someone outside the conflict.** Discuss how you feel with a trusted friend, a colleague, counselor, etc. to help you gain some perspective. Be careful not to triangle that person into the conflict.

5) **Be appropriately honest about your emotions.** Once you have prepared yourself it’s helpful to let the other person know how you are feeling. When others are repressing their feelings, be more open with yours to get the process started. When others are overwhelmed by emotionality, try to rein in your own feelings for a time. Remember, even if you have worked through many of your emotions, the other person needs to hear it for the conflict and relationship to be transformed.
Organizing Values of the Reconciling Congregation Program

by Mark Bowman for the RCP Visioning Retreat held in September, 1998

The key values that underlie the organizing work of the Reconciling Congregation Program (RCP) have crystallized gradually over the fourteen-year history of this movement. These values have been revealed in praxis—in a dialogical process of work and reflection, revisions to work and then reflection again, and so on. These values have not been lifted intact from another source; but have been borrowed from several different groups and methodologies. These values have been learned and not taught.

The foundation of these values is the message of the RCP. This message is simple, although it may be stated in slightly different ways: “God loves everyone.” “Everyone is welcome in the church.” “God’s love is total and unconditional.” “The doors of the church are open to everyone.” This basic message permeates everything that the RCP does and is reflected in its style of organizing.

1) Welcoming

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him

—Luke 15:20

I visited a United Methodist congregation in another city several years ago. I arrived at the appointed hour for Sunday morning worship and discovered no one around the front door and no sign directing me to the sanctuary. I wandered around the building a bit and finally followed the faraway sound of some voices that led me to the room where the congregation was gathered for worship. Now if you walked into a restaurant and no one offered to assist you and you saw no sign with directions, you would be quite offended and probably leave. But such inhospitality is too often acceptable in churches.

While the roots of the RCP are in the church’s inhospitality to lesbian, gay and bisexual persons and their families,

Reconciling Congregations have discovered many ways in which churches are not welcoming to many different persons. Being welcoming is more than being friendly; it is creating spaces, events and activities where anyone can participate fully and freely.

Consistent with the awesome wonder of God’s unconditional love, the RCP seeks to practice radical hospitality—to extend invitations and hospitality to persons in new and unexpected ways. At RCP convocations the Hospitality Committee is asked to greet participants when they arrive at the airport. When a committee member asks why they should do this since most conventions don’t, the reply is “that’s exactly why the RCP does it!”

2) Reconciling

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you... For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?...And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others?

—Matthew 5:44-47

In the process of becoming a Reconciling Congregation, it is not uncommon for a small group within the congregation to resist the decision to become reconciling. This is often quite frustrating for the congregation’s Reconciling Task Force since the resisters usually don’t come to forums or meetings about the RCP and seem willing to engage in dialogue. In exasperation, members of the Reconciling Task Force may say: “I wish those folks would just leave the church so we could move ahead and vote on becoming a Reconciling Congregation.” Does such a statement reflect the RCP message?

Being reconciling is not just a goal, it is also the process to reach that goal. It is incongruous for the RCP to proclaim God’s unconditional love as the basis for welcoming gay, lesbian and bisexual persons and their families into full participation in the life of
the church and then to turn around and exclude other persons. Changing the terms of exclusiveness cannot be the means to inclusiveness.

Building bridges with those who oppose the RCP is downright difficult and is not something to be done out of the goodness of our hearts. God has initiated the act of reconciliation by embracing each of us in spite of all that makes us unworthy. We are then impelled to extend that reconciliation to others. Reconciliation does not mean that we agree with others on all matters of faith and practice, but that we stay together at God’s table and, when necessary, agree to disagree.

3) Good News

The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.”

—Luke 2:10

A common organizing strategy used by many groups in our society today is to portray oneself as a victim in order to elicit support. We regularly hear messages through the public media and receive mailings from groups of all ideological perspectives that invite our support because this particular group is being attacked by their opponents. The playing out of this strategy becomes like a volleyball game—one group protests apparent attacks by its opposition, which is in turn perceived as an attack by the other side—the ball is shot back and forth, back and forth. This negative style of organizing is often effective in the short term—it brings in increased support and money from a group’s core constituency. But over the long haul such a negative style of organizing leads to an ever-widening social gulf and a spiraling level of hostility. Portraying ourselves continually as victims eventually leads to hopelessness and powerlessness for individuals and to fractured relationships and distrust for society.

The RCP uses a positive style of organizing—to proclaim the good news that the RCP brings to the church and society. “We are creating a radically new model of the church where everyone—truly everyone—is welcome to participate fully. Won’t you come and join us?” This style is invitational—always extending a hand to others to join us on the journey.

Realistically trying to convert or attacking those who strongly oppose the RCP serves no useful purpose in attaining our vision of a truly inclusive Body of Christ. Practically the RCP operates out of a 25-50-25 model—believing that about 25% of the church and society affirms lesbian, gay and bisexual persons, about 25% oppose this, and about 50% have not yet come to a clear conclusion. The RCP’s message is directed to the 50%, the “loving middle.” and invites them to join the movement to open the doors of the church to all persons.

4) Action

And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

—Mark 1:17

Another common organizing fallacy which is found particularly among liberal groups is that “if we only educate everyone, the problem will be solved.” This is often stated as: “We have a problem; so let’s offer a workshop.”

The fallacy of this strategy is revealed when you ask a group of persons to raise their hands if they learned a second language in school. Then ask how many of these persons can still speak and read that language well. Why are so many persons who learned another language no longer able to use it? The answer is because they did not regularly use it; because it never became integrated into behavior.

An organizing formula of the RCP is:

Education + Action = Change

Effective education ends in action. It is not enough to teach ideas and thoughts. Social change happens only when behavior is changed.
The genius of the RCP is that the whole program is built around inviting action.

- Persons are invited to enroll as Reconciling United Methodists.
- They are asked to enroll others as Reconciling United Methodists.
- They are encouraged to work with their churches or campus ministries to make a reconciling declaration.
- They are offered the opportunity to help their congregation live out its reconciling commitment.
- They are invited to give money (our society’s supreme act of commitment) to support the RCP.

Inviting action permeates everything the RCP does. At every RCP encounter or event—invite others to act!

5) Grass Roots

Jesus also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, she does not know how.
—Mark 4:26-27

Common catchwords in organizing today are empowerment and enablement. Many organizations identify their mission as empowering or enabling others.

However, a closer scrutiny reveals that most of these groups—liberal or conservative—don’t truly practice empowerment. They really operate in a top-down, hierarchical manner. A group of leaders gets together to develop an agenda or a plan of action for the followers to follow. A common example is the way The United Methodist Church “helps” its members address social concerns by passing resolutions at Annual Conference sessions. Such top-down empowerment is like cheap grace—it avoids the nitty-gritty work of building relationships and developing ownership and broad-based support among the whole constituency.

The RCP uses a completely different approach to organizing by using a model that is truly grassroots empowerment. The RCP’s model is remembered by the acronym CART:

- We CONVICT persons that homophobia and discrimination are wrong.
- We ASSURE persons that they can affect change through the RCP.
- We RESOURCE them with tools and ideas for creating change.
- Then we TRUST them to discern and act on God’s will.

This trusting part is not easy; we think we know the right way it should be done. The RCP staff gets calls from folks who say: “Such and such a church is really not being a true Reconciling Congregation; you should take them off your list.” Or folks will ask us: “What’s the agenda we’re buying into when we become a Reconciling Congregation? What will we have to do?”

In a church and society when plans and agendas are always being laid upon persons, it is hard for us to conceive that we could be trusted to discern and carry out the will of God as revealed to us in our community of faith. But the RC movement is evidence that God’s Spirit is at work through human creativity. This grass roots RC movement is unleashing a broader, more passionate, and more creative torrent of faithful testimonies and actions than if everyone was asked to fit into an agenda.

Welcoming...

Reconciling...

Good News...

Action....

Grass Roots

These five values undergird and inform all of the ministries and activities of the Reconciling Congregation Program. When one understands and internalizes these values, then it becomes easier to discern how to carry out God’s will in the RC movement.
Thoughts on the L/G/B/T Religious Movement
(by Mark Bowman, previously published in Open Hands, Fall 1998, Vol. 114, No. 2)

In physics we learn that every action produces what?
   An equal and opposite reaction.
When you try to drive a car forward or change the direction of a moving car, what creates resistance?
   Inertia.
When a plane tries to take off, what force resists?
   Gravity.
Are inertia and gravity unusual phenomena?
   No, they are natural phenomena.
In social change, where do you find resistance to change?
   In religious institutions.
In the conflict over homosexuality, where is the most resistance?
   The so-called religious right.
Is the religious right an unusual phenomenon?
   No, it’s the natural resistance to change.
As the car tries to move faster, what is the effect of inertia?
   It appears stronger.
As the plane tries to fly higher, what is the effect of gravity?
   It appears stronger.
Now, if you are trying to make the car go faster, what do you do? Attack inertia?
   No, you give the car more forward power.
If you’re trying to make the plane fly higher, do you attack gravity?
   No, you give the plane more lift power.

What we should be doing now is increasing power and lift—cultivating allies, creating networks, and building a movement that will overcome the church’s resistance to change. We must engage in positive, forward-looking movement, inviting folks to join us on the plane as it soars upward with confidence.