

# The Kindred Connection

Newsletter of the Parents Reconciling Network  
3801 N. Keeler Avenue, Chicago, IL 60641 773-736-5526  
Summer, 2007 Edition "Without a Vision the People Perish"

Parents Reconciling Network--PRN, an extension ministry of the Reconciling Ministries Network, is an Outreach program for United Methodist parents and families of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons. "We envision a United Methodist Church which in both policy and practice accords all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, full participation in the life of the church."  
Editor: Reg Olson

## OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SHIP'S DECK

Recently we had the good fortune to take a cruise along the Atlantic Seaboard and into the Maritime Provinces. We enjoyed the good food, the entertainment, visits to exciting ports of call, and the opportunity to meet many interesting people. We returned home from the cruise with the names of new friends in our address book, great photos of our experiences, weight gained due to our overindulgence, and many new insights to ponder.

On board the ship we met and talked with several couples of men traveling together. Perhaps they were gay, perhaps straight ... who really cares? We enjoyed their company.

We met parents of gay children and persons from families with gay members. We respectfully listened to their stories and also shared our story with those who were interested.

In Toronto we heard the story of Alexander Wood, one of the first openly gay city fathers, in the early 1800's, who was a successful merchant and justice of the peace. Our tour guide did not indicate that there was any controversy about this man (although we later learned that there was). The guide shared his story when we saw his Statue and learned that two streets had been named for him too. Our guide spoke of this history in the same tone that he used when speaking of other monuments, churches, museums, a restaurant owned by hockey player Wayne Gretsky, and the BATA shoe museum. When I asked if the whole country of Canada now legalized gay marriages, the guide responded matter-of-factly, "of course."

How refreshing it was to cruise and visit in Canada. We met gay and straight people; those who spoke English and French; folks from England, Spain, Indonesia and Hungary; and residents of Florida, California, and Pennsylvania etc.

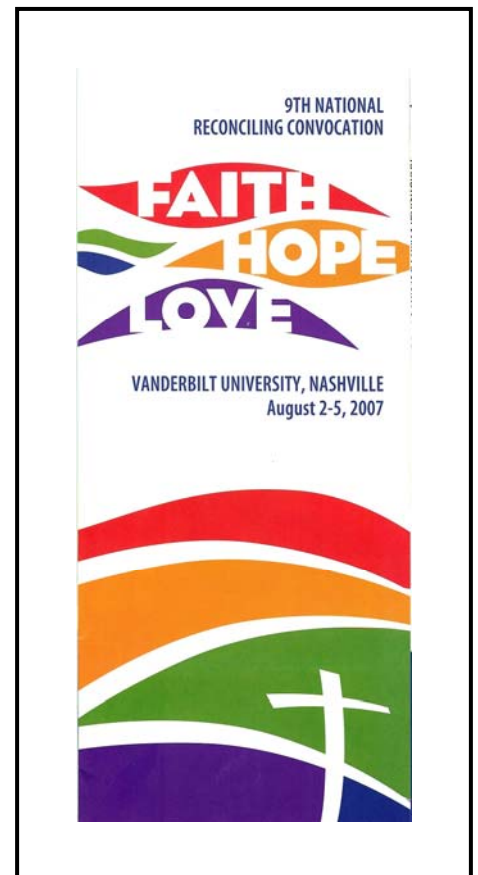
Remembering that a traditional symbol for the Christian Church has been a ship, we rejoiced that on this ship we had experienced some of the diversity of the human family, all people of sacred worth. From the deck we had a breath of fresh, crisp, clean air. Thanks be to God for all these wonderful ship mates.  
Reg Olson

## CONVO -- FAITH, HOPE & LOVE

August 2-5, 2007

The Ninth National Reconciling Convocation will be held at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee on Thursday, August 2-5. RMN Convocations are landmark experiences which energize attendees through Worship, Inspiration, Community, Play, Equipping, and Organizing.

Plan to join your reconciling family. The Hearts on Fire energy moves from Shackford Hall at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina where 600 reconcilers gathered in 2005 to the beautiful new Student Life Center on the Vanderbilt campus in 2007. Vanderbilt is located just five minutes from



downtown Nashville, Tennessee on a gorgeous 330-acre campus that is also a national arboretum. Buildings on the original campus date to its founding in 1873.

**PRE-CONVO PROGRAM FOR PARENTS**

A Pre-Convo Program will be held on Thursday, August 2 from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. for parents who want to get in touch with other parents for guidance and support, for PRN Conference Coordinators and those considering this role to learn about getting organized in your conference, helping churches to become Reconciling Congregations, and establishing support groups. The cost for Pre-Convo programs is \$25, which includes lunch and snacks. Scholarships are available. Our goals for this gathering are, 1) to support parents, 2) to motivate us for constructive action, and 3) encourage our work for the 2008 General Conference. The Program Schedule will include-- Devotions, Table Introductions and Personal Stories in clusters, Troy and Sue Sharing Progress and Taking Questions Regarding the Reconciling Ministries Network, General Conference Plans, Table Talk, Eating and Sharing, Bob Swing on "What is our United Methodist Denomination Doing and Not Doing", Betty Dorr on "What Can I Do in my Church Conference?", and Open Discussion & Questions.

**IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN PRE-CONVO PLEASE DO A SEPARATE REGISTRATION USING THE FORM ON THE BACK PAGE.**

**THOUGHTS ON THE UMC BOOK OF DISCIPLINE – # 2**

The UMC Book of Discipline (BOD) chronicles the constitution and official policies of the UMC as revised every four years at each General Conference. The General Conference has defined, revised, and cancelled policies in the BOD to address the social conditions of the time. Only the constitution remains unchanged over time. You may not have access to the BOD. This series of articles is written to help you understand contemporary issues facing the United Methodist polity. The theme of our exploration is the

principle of human "inclusiveness" versus the policies that implement exclusion of some people.

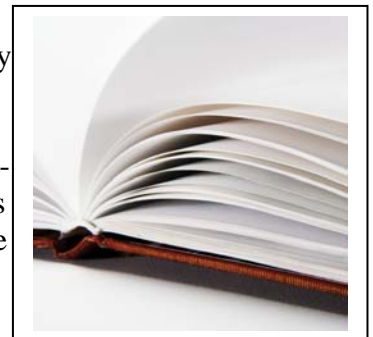
From the last PRN Newsletter we learned that: THE CONSTITUTION – PREAMBLE "The church is a community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redeemed and redeeming fellowship, in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world, and its very dividedness is a hindrance to its mission in that world."

And, we learned that the UMC Judicial Council recently supported a pastor's refusal to accept into membership, a practicing homosexual man who was making a gift of his music to the church. This is an example of exclusiveness we find unacceptable and work to remedy.

Now as we look further at the Constitution in Article IV, titled *Inclusiveness of the Church*, learn that "the Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth." The article goes on to say that this is without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, but stops there. We ask, is this just an example for inclusion of all people, or is it intended to limit sacred worth to certain "minority" or "different" groups of people?

We believe it to be the former, an example for inclusion of all persons who come to believe in God, and accept Jesus Christ as their mentor, friend, counselor, and savior. This includes our loved gay, lesbian, transgender, and bisexual children (offspring). This forms the reason for our effort, an effort to clearly open the United Methodist Church doors, minds, and hearts to all who will come to hear God's message of redeeming grace. We pray for unity in our Church, and that these short articles will assist you in your discernment of God's Will for us in this potentially divisive matter.

**A Concerned PRN Parent**



**CONVOCAATION August 2-5, Vanderbilt University**

## PRN Steering Committee Meets



At their April 22-24, 2005 meeting at First United Methodist Church, Arlington Heights, IL, the members of the steering committee participated in worship, fellowship and program planning.

Barbara opened the meeting with using a scripture passage from Jeremiah and relating his calling to our call to speak out. Faith led devotions on Monday morning, using a powerful new film, "In God's House, Asian American Lesbian & Gay Families in the Church." On Tuesday morning Reg led devotions, using the theme of justice.

Faith, Betty and Sue reported on the RMN Board Meeting. Among other things they noted that Common Witness will again be working in coalition at General Conference 2008, both in it's public statement and in active witness. RMN will play a major role in monitoring LGBT legislation at GC 2008. This is a change from previous years when MFSA had this responsibility.

The PRN brochures are completed. Our sincere thanks go to Amy DeLong for her assistance. The brochures will be distributed to delegates to GC 2008, to contact persons in each Annual Conference for distribution at their Annual Conferences; at Convo; to our PRN constituents, our Reconciling organizations, and to United Methodist Bishops in the US & abroad.

We gathered information from each member to determine what issues each is comfortable dealing with as we do our story-telling with various groups.

The Steering Committee reviewed additional goals for the PRN Strategic Plan – **10. Do an annual report** of the "State of the LGBT Family". This would include UMC resolutions and policies, measures of RMN and PRN progress, reports of other denominations progress, government policies and society's hate crime figures; and **11. Become a PRN presence** in the Central Conferences. How to accomplish this is the question, given the complex

limitations of language and cultural barriers. It was agreed that we should continue to explore possibilities and take advantage of any opportunities that come up.

Helen Andrew reported that there was an enthusiastic response to the appeal for volunteers to make stoles for Convo. The deadline set is July 1.

The committee divided into two work groups: one to work on the Parents' Pre-Convo Session (see the notes on page 2); and one to begin preparations for the 2008 General Conference.

### Proposals for General Conference Action

1. Distribute PRN stoles and badges.
2. Share our personal stories,
3. Display either a billboard, or bus stop signs messages that stimulate discussion and thought.
4. Do a simple short reader's theater in the patio area.
5. Print up guidelines for dialogue and interpersonal guidelines
6. Show lgbt relevant videos and DVD's, display literature, etc. at the Common Witness location.
7. Carry 8 x 10 inch pictures of our children to attract discussion of our stories. This is like the "My Child is of Sacred Worth" badges, but it would just be a picture.

Our next Conference Call was set for Wednesday, June 27, and the next meeting will follow Convo, August 5 – 7.

## The New PRN LOGO



After much discussion and consideration of alternatives the PRN Steering Committee selected this new logo. Starting with the RMN logo that features the flames from our "Hearts On Fire" Convocation of 2005, we have placed before them four family members. They stand under the cross, receiving

strength and inspiration from the Holy Spirit. Who are these family members? They represent your family, whatever its configuration. We hope you can envision yourself here.

One thing we do know for certain-- these figures all represent persons of sacred worth!

### WE WERE AFRAID, ARE YOU?



How the rest of the family will react?

What our Ministers will think?

What our friends will think?

What we do next?

How our child (adult) will be able to deal with this?

Well, just stop for a moment and ask God what he thinks,

and what he wants you to do.

You already know don't you!

God wants you to love, love unconditionally. Your child/adult, friend, acquaintance, neighbors, friends or relatives of others, deserves nothing less than your respect for who and what they are, they do, and have become – they deserve your unconditional love and respect and assistance where needed.

That is what he has asked us to do in the mission of being a disciple for Christ. It is what will make you feel better about accepting your child/adult or others.

If that person has not received Christ as their Lord, teacher, mentor, and savior; think about how to take them to that experience or enlist others to help them there.

If this small article is not the answer you need at this moment, then let us suggest you contact any Conference Coordinator or Steering Group member, listed on the Reconciling Ministries Network website [RMNetwork.org](http://RMNetwork.org), under the heading "Parents" and let us share our experience, discernment, and path forward with you.

A Steering Group Member

### My Soul Force

This devotional by Reg Olson was shared at the PRN Semi-Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois, on April 21, 2007

*Where are we going on the lgbt issue?* Our PRN vision statement reads, "We envision a United Meth-

Methodist Church which in both policy and practice accords all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, full participation in the life of the church." But this won't happen without a struggle, for we are in conflict with people, rules, and traditions. How will this conflict play out?

Writers suggest that there are five types of conflict resolution. . . Assertive Forcing, Accommodating, Avoiding, Compromising, and Collaborating. I would like to review them to see if they offer any help for the attainment of our vision. I would illustrate these types of conflict resolution by using an example of two people who have just finished a good meal at home. They topped the meal off with a wonderful strawberry pie. One piece of pie remained, and it was not clear who would get it for their bed-time snack. Who gets the last piece of pie?

One person might eat it in the kitchen, while the other is watching the television in the living room. This is an example of "forcing." Sometimes we force a resolution without the other person being fully aware of what we are doing. On other occasions victim of forcing is very aware of having lost.

The two hungry persons might, however, discuss who should get the last piece of pie. If one humbly gives it to the other, saying, "I insist" this would be an example of "accommodation." However, the parties may be stubborn, each insisting that the other eat the pie. Because of this indecision the pie sits there on the counter for a day or two, and either the dog eats it or it is spoiled. This is called "avoiding."

Rather than risk the loss of the pie, the two might "compromise" and cut it in half, both sacrificing full satisfaction. If they are really ingenious one party might offer to go to the store and buy another pie, so each can have even more than they originally wished for. This "win-win" solution is a result of "collaboration."

Now we are not talking about something so simple as a food issue. We are talking about attaining justice for lgbt's. What method of conflict resolution do we use on the lgbt issue? Again, different possibilities present themselves.

We could **accommodate** and adopt the transforming "resolution" pretending that the homosexuals have been converted to heterosexual preferences. We might accept the approach of the Virginia pastor and refuse membership to gay persons. Even worse, we might purge the rolls of any clergy or

laity who are outed, or even suspected as “practicing” homosexuals.

Staying in the closet as lgbt’s or the parents of homosexuals is a form of **avoidance**. Similarly we might heed the appeal of those on the Right who say, “we are so tired of talking about this issue,” and “it is so hurtful to talk and argue about this.”

Some have suggested a **compromise** on the issue of the ordination of homosexual persons like the Methodist Church in New Zealand has done. They can ordain homosexuals, but they let the local church decide whether or not to accept a gay pastor.

**Collaboration** might mean educating people on both sides to understand the other side, and maybe work out a “win win” resolution, but that takes a long time, and, to some, it looks like avoidance.

Assertive Forcing might mean passing legislation (like civil rights laws) in church and society to make discrimination against gays illegal! Imagine a talk-show host being fired because he or she used the “F” (fag) word.

Last year at my annual conference some “progressives” decided that we should sacrifice two pieces of proposed anti homophobic legislation in order to please the Right in the pursuit of dialog, balance, and peaceful co-existence. I discussed this with several people and noted that I usually consider myself to be a conflict resolver. I know the merits of compromise, and collaboration. But when it is a matter of life or death, assertive forcing, or taking a strong stand is the only way. I mentioned that we don’t compromise or collaborate with a Hitler, once he starts toward his “final solution” of exterminating the Jewish people. We don’t say, “you can take three million Jews, if I can keep three million alive.”

Is lgbt inclusiveness in the life of the church a life or death issue? How many more Matthew Shepards, and teen age suicides, must we endure and condone through our church’s homophobic stance? Even if there is no physical death, what about the death of the spirit and soul? Many blithely say “peace, peace, when there is no peace.” But there is no peace without justice.

We say we are concerned about church growth, or at least stemming the tide of membership losses. An estimated one million people have already left the United Methodist Church because they think it has been callous to the needs of the lgbt community. How many more losses from the church, and from the family, must we endure?

Still, some say, “Be patient, compromise, because

change takes a long time.” We are told, “Look at the Civil Rights movement.” Prior to the Civil War blacks were considered to be property, maybe 3/5’s human. Then in 1862, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation which said the slaves were free! But a long and ugly system of Jim Crow laws and segregation soon was in place.

It took until 1947 for Major League Baseball to integrate, with Jackie Robinson. Our nation’s military was not integrated until July 26, 1948, by President Truman. Public schools were finally integrated in 1955, with the landmark Supreme Court decision of Brown versus the Board of Education. And public facilities were finally integrated by the civil rights laws of the mid-sixties.

What about the integration of the United Methodist Church? Full racial integration came late in the United Methodist Church, only when the Central Jurisdiction was abolished in 1968. We’ve been down this road before. When faced with issues of profound social injustice the Church (as contrasted with individual church men and women) has not, for the most part shined the headlights of social change, but its dimly blinking taillights have followed social trends. “Be patient”, we are told.

Where is the real essence, the very soul of a person located? I have been intrigued by the different answers that have been given by various cultures. Some say it is in the brain, others the heart. Some speak of the “umm of your navel”, and others speak of the bladder—the source of very intense feelings!

Wherever it is located, for me full lgbt inclusion is a soul issue. I don’t just mean that I am in coalition with SoulForce and Mel White, although I appreciate their work very much. Opening the doors of the United Methodist Church is an issue that boils intensely within my gut. I feel that I am called by God to help the church respond to grace and openness.

The Psalmist said, “My soul longs, yea faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the Living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they who dwell in thy house, ever singing thy praise. “ (84: 1-4) In God’s house there is no racial segregation or discrimination against homosexual people. There are homosexuals in heaven!

What if our issue was that of racial justice, and we were working for freedom from prejudice and discrimination? How would we respond to calls to quit

harassing the church with an appeal for integration? Would we just talk about it? Would we quietly let others do the work? Would we be likely to accept a compromise on racial justice?

Dr. Martin Luther King Junior liked to quote Amos and say, "Let justice roll down like waters." Dr. King's words, ominously ring as true today as the day in 1965 when they were written more than forty years ago. [I quote Dr. King] "'Let Justice roll down like waters in a mighty stream,' said the Prophet Amos. He was seeking not consensus but the cleansing action of revolutionary change. America has made progress toward freedom, but measured against the goal the road ahead is still long and hard. This could be the worst possible moment for slowing down."

Today, we are challenged, like Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. to use Satyagraha, or Soul Force to actively fight for human rights, for full inclusion of lgbt's in the church and in society. Let us do no less.

**COULD YOU BE AN ACC?**

PRN accomplishes much of its work through the dedication and efforts of its Annual Conference Coordinators (ACC). These persons help to organize the ministries of PRN throughout their annual conferences. This outreach varies according to the needs and abilities of the church people of the respective conferences. While some church people have little understanding of and sympathy for the problems faced by lgbt persons, others are highly sophisticated in their commitment to opening the Hearts, Minds and Doors of their United Methodist churches.

A list of the annual conferences which currently have no Conference Coordinators is found below. If you are in one of these conference and would like to be considered for the position of PRN Annual Conference Coordinator please respond to this appeal by contacting Reg Olson, through RMN at [rmnetwork.org](http://rmnetwork.org) or by e-mail at [reginald.olson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:reginald.olson@sbcglobal.net).

There are 64 annual conferences in the United States. We have 34 conference coordinators. We need 31 more for the following conferences:

- |                      |             |                     |
|----------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Alabama-West Florida | Iowa        | Peninsula- Delaware |
| Alaska Missionary    | Kentucky    | Red Bird Missionary |
| Baltimore-Washington | Louisiana   | Rio Grande          |
| California-Pacific   | Memphis     | South Carolina      |
| Central Pennsylvania | Mississippi | South Georgia       |
| Dakotas              | New Mexico  | Tennessee           |

- |                       |                    |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Desert Southwest      | North Alabama      | Texas              |
| Florida               | North Georgia      | West Virginia      |
| Greater New Jersey    | Northern Illinois  | Western New York   |
| Illinois Great Rivers | Oklahoma Ind Miss. | West. Pennsylvania |
|                       |                    | Wisconsin          |

**THE TIDE EBBS AND FLOWS**

I yearn for the warmth  
of a soft caressing sea  
like the gentle waves of the surf  
as the tide ebs and flows  
kissing each tiny grain on its shore  
only to recoil back  
lingering traces left in its path  
like the rounded edges on glass  
that can no longer cut ---Aus

Condensed from an article "Evangelical Preacher Rejects Hell, Spreads Gospel of Inclusion" by Deb Price, Creators Syndicate and Detroit News, May 14, 2007.

Carlton Pearson was a gifted African-American preacher, raised in Southern California, educated at Oral Roberts University, where he later served on the Board of Regents, host of a three-hour gospel TV show, and builder of a mega-church.

But God spoke to him in a new way, and he stopped believing in hell. He started preaching a gospel of inclusion, saying, if Jesus is the savior of the world, then the world is saved."

After being shunned by conservative evangelists Rev. Pearson was approached by Jews and gay students at Oral Roberts. They were amazed that he was now preaching an inclusive gospel, including even them.

When a lesbian pastor washed his feet he said, "Oh my God it was one of the holiest moments in my whole Christian life. That female gay woman with all these gay people weeping and singing and loving this (so-called) heretic and washing his feet. The people I had once denied and denounced were now my only friends."

Pearson has committed himself to serving the gay community. He lobbied Congress to protect gay and transgender people from hate crimes and job discrimination. He challenged the National Black Coalition to launch a "Faithful Call to Justice" and reach out to the gay community. He is now helping the Black Church to open its doors.

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"But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead."  
—Isaiah 26: 19

**Parents Reconciling Network Steering Committee**

Helen Andrew, Sleepy Hollow, NY  
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Faith Buss, Minneapolis MN  
Financial Secretary  
Betty Dorr, Omaha, NB  
Helen King, Lake Junaluska, NC  
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Barbara and Reg Olson, Monroe, Ohio Coordinators  
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Joy Watts, Uniontown, OH

**Consultants**  
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Bishop Ray Chamberlain, Winchester, VA  
Bruce & Virginia Hilton, Sacramento, CA

**Northern Outreach Coordinator RMN**  
Sue Laurie, Chicago, IL

**Newsletter Editor** Reg Olson

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A Cover Letter for PRN Brochures Distribution

*Are You Coming to CONVOCATION August 2-5, Vanderbilt University? It will be a great opportunity to meet families of lgbt persons, to learn about what can be done to help the church to grow in its understanding of lgbt people.*



**Registration for Parents Pre Convo Meeting**

**Pre-Convocation Meeting August 2, 2007** Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee **10: AM to 4 PM**

For parents who want to get in touch with other parents for guidance and support. Also for PRN Conference Coordinators (and those considering this role). Learn about getting organized in your conference, helping churches to become Reconciling Congregations, and establishing support groups.

Please register for Pre-Convo and CONVO separately. You may mail them together. Both are needed for planning for each event.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Local Church \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conf. \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) as to appear on your name tag(s) \_\_\_\_\_

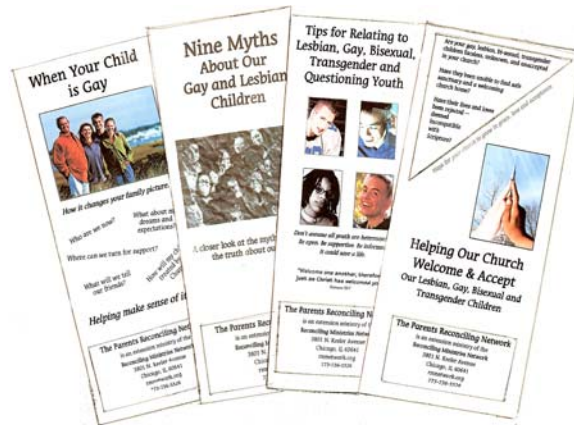
\_\_\_\_ Please send me a scholarship application  
Please include \$25.00 for Pre-Convo registration costs  
for lunch and snacks.

Return this to

Make checks payable to  
“Reconciling Ministries Network.”

Parents Reconciling Network  
3801 North Keeler Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60641  
Fax 773-736-5475

## A Cover Letter for PRN Brochures



Dear Shepherd of the United Methodist Church,

We send greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is calling each of us, especially pastors, to give counsel to parents and other family members of persons who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (lgbt). For this reason we offer a resource to enable them and you to give pastoral guidance.

Enclosed are packets of several brochures recently published by PRN, the Parents Reconciling Network, of the United Methodist Church. PRN is an extension ministry of the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN). We are parents and friends of persons who have discovered a personal sexual orientation that is not heterosexual. Our purpose is to minister to the needs of such persons, and to deal with the challenge of homophobia. We define homophobia as discomfort with the issue of persons' differing sexual orientations. We have each been called by God for this important ministry of reconciliation. (For more information about PRN and RMN, please consult our website [rmnetwork.org](http://rmnetwork.org)).

Please read and share these brochures with others. Additional copies may be downloaded from the website. If you know of any families in need of this ministry please pass their names on to us for future contact.

Please also assist us in bringing our message to people in the Central Conferences of our great church, by sharing with us names of faithful persons who might become part of our ministry.

Regardless of how each of us interprets the Holy Scriptures on the issue of homosexuality, we all agree that, like heterosexual persons, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons are children of God, and are "persons of sacred worth." We pray that the United Methodist Church can faithfully respond to the challenge of homophobia, even as it has responded to the challenges of slavery, racism and sexism.

We remain in ministry with you and the whole church.

Reginald and Barbara Olson,  
Coordinators of the Parents Reconciling Network