

# The Kindred Connection

Newsletter of the Parents Reconciling Network  
3801 N. Keeler Avenue, Chicago, IL 60641 773-736-5526  
**Summer, 2006 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 transgendered 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

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## ***PLEASE REMOVE ME FROM YOUR MAILING LIST***

[An e-mail received June 4, 2006. Reprinted with author's permission.]

Dear Mr. Olson,

I got the latest mailing from the Reconciling United Methodists of West Ohio, and while I'm sympathetic to your cause, there's no point in your wasting money and resources in sending materials to me. Although I was raised in the United Methodist Church, **I am no longer a United Methodist. Instead I am a member of the United Church of Christ, a denomination that affirms me as a child of God created in God's image.**

I'm glad that you and others are willing to work to reconcile the United Methodist Church towards accepting its gay and lesbian members, but I'm not willing to do that work. **I don't want to be a part of a church** where there is still endless **debate as to whether I should be allowed full recognition as a human being loved by God.** I realize, of course, that there are conservative elements in the United Church of Christ, many of whom are displeased that the UCC ordains openly gay pastors (and gives health benefits to their partners) and that the UCC advocates full marriage equality, but nevertheless the debate in the UCC is pretty much over, and in my favor.

There are other differences between the UCC and the UMC that I appreciate, one being that the UCC does not have an episcopal structure. Although our church does take stands as a denomination and does some work as a denomination (for example, our ad campaign stressing that all [including me!] are welcome in the UCC), individual congregations are not subject to the authority of the denomination or bishops. That works to the favor of some of our more conservative congregations, but it also works to the favor of our more liberal ones too. I can worship and participate in the life of my congregation without worrying that some conservative bishop will try to interfere.

So I wish you luck, but **there's no point in keeping me on your list.**

Sincerely,        David Lauri

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### **Editorial—“Where are we going?”**

In the above feature article, “Please Remove Me”, we discover what has happened all too often in the United Methodist Church—people have been leaving, in search of an open and affirming church affiliation. The more conservative folks may be glad that this is happening. This relieves conservative clergy from the task of refusing to accept LGBT folk into church membership! But there are many of us who believe that the UMC should be truly open to all persons, even straight conservatives! So we move from this article to reports from several annual conferences. The variation of experiences between these conferences is considerable. Some passed profound resolutions, others were only able to pass innocuous ones, and some were not allowed to even talk about LGBT issues. Several had Reconciling gatherings, often with the support of our progressive MFSA allies. Many had various witness actions drawing attention to the issue of inclusiveness. A common theme was that many conferences felt a need to express unity, civility, and dialogue. If these concerns allow for honest and open discussion of LGBT issues than this expression is welcome. If, however, the concern about civility and unity overrides a consideration of the historical exclusivity of our church this must be resisted. Even the representatives of the British empire were “civil” in their domination and oppression of the peoples of the Indian subcontinent! That did not make the oppression any less onerous!

The last article in this issue treats this “spectre of schism” in the church from the eyes of an Episcopalian. In the article “We’ve Been Down this Road Before” from the Summer 2005 edition of *Kindred Connection*, we noted, “The offer to have an “amicable separation” seems to me to be an invitation by the conservatives for another compromise, similar to that of the federal government in 1876 and the Methodist Church in 1939. Perhaps the conservatives are hoping that the progressives could be persuaded to put the “homosexual agenda” on the back burner for a while, in the interest of unity! ... I say that we must stand for what we believe in—that all our children are of “sacred worth,” in God’s eyes, even if not in the eyes of the church! We must not sacrifice current generations of denigrated people—whether they be African Americans or homosexuals ... If the alternatives are separation v union; justice for homosexuals v the status quo for homophobic heterosexuals; or the feared loss of membership v loss of integrity I believe that Christians must choose integrity.”

We encourage all our readers to work in the church so no more articles like “Please remove me” need be written again.

**See you at CONVO 2007—Vanderbilt  
University, Nashville, Tennessee, October 14-17.**

## **MINNESOTA METHODISTS URGE FULL WELCOME FOR GAY MEMBERS**

After passionate but resolutely respectful debate, Minnesota Methodists voted Thursday to urge the national church to fully welcome gays and to support ordination of gay clergy and gay marriage.

“A majority of voting delegates at the annual state convention in St. Cloud approved nine petitions on gay rights issues,” said Victoria Rebeck, communications Director for the [Conference]....

“The biggest news is that we had a good, respectful discussion of these very emotional issues and people really listened to each other.” The votes were recommendations to the General Conference.

“The closest vote came on a petition to change language about marriage from ‘one man and a woman’ to ‘two adult persons’ ... The vote was 358-356 in favor of change.” ...

“The Rev. Carl Caskey of Northfield, part of a retired clergy advocating for change, said, ‘We think the future is with us’ in the push for greater acceptance of gays. Many of us are greatly concerned about the direction the [denomination] has taken toward exclusion’ he said, ‘we’ll keep putting the pressure on.’”

## **OREGON-IDAHO CONFERENCE**

The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference under the leadership of Bishop Bob Hoshibata, did not shy away from dealing with critical justice issues. The conference petitions included:

A petition to amend Paragraph 161G in the Book of Discipline to eliminate the "non-compatible" language; Continued support for right of choice and membership in Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice; A declaration of opposition to Preemptive Nuclear Strikes; Petitions calling for the Support for the United Nations and demanding the US Government close the School of Americas; and a General Conference petition to Prohibit Discrimination in Receiving Members into United Methodist Congregations. All the petitions passed.

## **WEST OHIO ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

by Reg Olson

Many people gathered to view the DVD of Beth Stroud’s sermon that was preached at Convo in Lake Junaluska. Many annual conference delegates wore

rainbow stoles. The Ministries Fair was held in a circus tent. Parents Reconciling Network had a display there, which was well attended. Several persons helped at the display including John Ball, Chet Chambers, Barb & Reg Olson, and Patience Wentworth (from the RMN Board). Later, others stood at the entrances to the conference auditorium with our lgbt silhouettes.

Four lgbt recommendations were placed before conference. A Unity Task Force had made considerable progress toward being civil and having true dialog between the Evangelicals and the Progressives. The Evangelicals had promised to support our recommendation about Myths and Stereotypes, IF we minimized the other three resolutions, only discussing them, and not taking a vote.

Several participants in the MFSA—Open Table—Reconciling coalition expressed dissatisfaction about the compromise. Others noted that “civility” in dialog with the Evangelicals and others was not threatened by our lgbt recommendations. We also noted that a momentum was building in favor of lgbt issues in our conference, as shown in the passage of the 2005 resolution on “Supporting Families of Gays and Lesbians.” We were urged not to stop that momentum.

On the last day of conference three recommendations, all of which treated the Judicial Council’s 1032 decision, were presented for dialog only, with no vote. Some background on 1032 was presented. Delegates met for about 15 minutes in small groups to discuss two questions – “What are the requirements, if any, for being admitted for membership into the United Methodist Church?” and, “Who has the responsibility to apply these standards?” Bishop Ough then facilitated some open discussion on the issues. He attempted to elicit a balanced treatment, but the forces of conservatism (not necessarily formal members of the Evangelical Movement) tended to dominate, with their comments on the alleged biblical basis for opposition to homosexuality.

Then Reg’s recommendation came to the floor. He introduced it saying, “I speak to you as a member of the Parents’ Reconciling Network. All of us are parents or friends of children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered, children whom we love dearly. I proudly wear this rainbow stole, symbolic of my willingness to embrace the diversity of God’s good creation...”

The recommendation “Negative Stereotypes and Myths” read as follows: *Whereas:* The Bible speaks to us of truth and lying ...*Whereas:* Stereotypes are untrue images of reality ...*Whereas:* the Church has, over time, rejected negative stereotypes of and myths about Italians, Germans, Asians, African Americans, Native Americans, Women, and many others. *Whereas:* the *Discipline* of the United Methodist Church says that, “homosexuals, no less ... are persons of sacred worth.” *Therefore: be it resolved* that we as People of God will reject the negative stereotypes of and myths about homosexual people.

(Examples of these stereotypes followed.) *Further be it resolved:* that we will encourage others to reject these stereotypes and myths.

During the ensuing debate the opposition made a plea that the delegates remember that “a sin is a sin”; they stated that we should *transform* homosexuals; that this was a “devious recommendation”—since we must oppose homosexuality; and that the legislation treated homosexuals as though they were members of a “minority group.”

Reg’s final speech indicated that the Conference was wisely practicing Holy Conferencing, but that it must learn to define our concepts precisely, and inquire as to the sources of the data presented. We should neither say that “homosexuals are all Christian,” or that “all homosexuals are promiscuous.” The recommendation passed, probably by a margin of 200 votes out of about 1,000 votes cast.

### **REPORT FROM NEBRASKA**

Reconciling United Methodists, June 14-17, 2006

The Nebraska RMN Group submitted a resolution (#10) to Annual Conference "To Declare Opposition to Judicial Council Ruling 1032 Regarding Discrimination in Receiving Members Into United Methodist Congregations." Earlier, Conference leadership had decided that General Conference "petitions" would not be considered until the 2007 Annual Conference.

During a lengthy vote in the Plenary Session of Saturday, June 17, this Resolution was "referred" to the Nebraska Board of Christian Social Witness to be submitted again next year as a Petition for General Conference 2008. Since the Conference Board of Christian Social Witness had been a supporting group for the original resolution, we expect this process to result in something positive.

It seems to many of the Reconciling United Methodists present at the Nebraska Annual Conference Session that the conference leadership successfully **attempted to avoid any discussion of GLBT concerns** this year. Their message seemed to be-- that discussing GLBT concerns in legislative sessions was divisive and would result in "winners" and "losers". They did not seem to understand that not discussing these concerns, in the wake of the Judicial Council's decision, was extremely hurtful to many people present.

Many of those who felt excluded and were hurt by the appeal to allow this spiritual violence to go unchallenged for the sake of unity, found their way to the RMN and Omaha First UMC display tables.

The "RMN Information and Hospitality tables" at Nebraska Annual Conference provided safe places to share personal stories of spiritual violence, rainbow symbols, honest conversation, and painful spiritual struggles. The RMN tables provided an affirming and safe place to "reach out" to those seeking God's justice and unconditional

love for ALL persons, and then to move forward with Christ as our spiritual role model and guide for empowerment in our journeys of faith.

The Rainbow Quilt Pins were sold as a fundraiser for the RMN Cloud of Witnesses Fund. This national RMN fund will provide an RMN witness at General Conference 2008. Nebraska RMN donors purchased a large quantity of the pins from the Pacific Northwest RMN that originally designed them along with their project to make Rainbow OPEN DOOR quilts.

The website for the Pacific Northwest RMN Quilt Project is: [www.pnw-rmn.org/resources/index.html](http://www.pnw-rmn.org/resources/index.html)  
Contact Bob and Betty Dorr for the Nebraska quilt pins at: [bobcdorr@cox.net](mailto:bobcdorr@cox.net)

T-shirts ordered from the NY Conference were worn by some persons on Thursday. These shirts saying-- "Closed Doors, Broken Hearts....We mind" --encouraged many meaningful conversations as well. The website for the t-shirts is: <http://www.gbmg-umc.org/asbury-crestwood/store.html>

Another resolution (#4) concerning HIV/AIDS ended with a substitution being offered that encourages churches to provide educational opportunities for HIV/AIDS at least once a year rather than quarterly, and to collect a \$1 per member for the project.

We thank Bishop and Etta Mae Mutti for their witness among us this week concerning the HIV/AIDS crisis and our call to justice/mercy actions on behalf of others in our world. Bishop Mutti was the speaker at the Annual MFSA dinner held at the Nebraska Annual Conference.

We honor Jimmy Creech's witness each year by giving a \$1,000 student scholarship from this Endowed Scholarship Fund. This is the SEVENTH Scholarship that has been given annually to a Nebraska UMC member and student active in JUSTICE work! (This fund was endowed by many friends in Nebraska and beyond!)

### **CENTRAL TEXAS CONFERENCE**

by Jerry Longwell

In Central Texas we passed a Resolution supporting the Bishops' Letter on Judicial Council Decision 1032, and calling for discussion of that letter in each local church. We also passed a resolution supporting the Global Aids Fund with a commitment of \$1.00 per member over the next two years. In addition, our new Central Texas RUM group sponsored a well-attended dinner and presentation By Dr. L. Michael White, "The Bible and the H-Word."

### **FROM CALIFORNIA-NEVADA**

Conference passed a resolution in support of the United Church of Christ's advertising efforts. According to the resolution, the Conference will actively support protest efforts concerning the denial of the UCC ads in the California-Nevada Annual Conference television viewing

area. They also will work to preserve freedom of speech and the freedom to worship for all Americans and to keep the nation's airwaves accessible. The resolution passed with an overwhelmingly positive response from the delegates. Eighty-five percent of the delegates voted for the resolution.

## ***NEW YORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE***

by Helen Andrew

A renewed enthusiasm among RUMs in the New York Annual Conference resulted in a very strong presence at our Annual Conference ... The opening worship service was a celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Full Clergy Rights for Women. We passed out fliers reminding people that just as the church came to see that exclusion of women was wrong, so, too, must it come to see that the exclusion of LGBT persons is wrong. The flier also listed all the RMN/PRN activities taking place at Conference.

A t-shirt, designed and produced by members of the Asbury-Crestwood UMC--declaring "Closed Doors, Broken Hearts, We Mind"--was a hot item and brought lots of attention to the RMN-PRN table, despite a poor table location this year (nothing to be interpreted by this--we have had a prime location for the last three years--it was just our turn). Nearly 250 shirts were sold and worn on Friday, the designated day!

At the RMN luncheon Traci West spoke on the subject: "Repenting Our Sin: Tolerating Racism and Homophobia." As always, Traci was dynamic and challenging.

All petitions relating to reconciling matters passed, including: "Therefore, be it resolved that the NYAC joins its voice with many across the church expressing our anger, distress and sorrow at the implications of Decision 1032. We affirm the dissenting members of the Judicial Council and look forward to the day when we can indeed be the church of open hearts, open minds, and open doors." "Therefore, be it further resolved that the local churches of the NYAC recognize that the grace of God is open and available to all and the NYAC will welcome into membership all who are willing to affirm the membership vows of the United Methodist Church."

During the rehearsal for the ordination service, we held a candlelight vigil. About 100 people gathered to sing, pray and witness to our hope that this discrimination will soon end.

We, again this year, organized the "Missing in Ministry" witness at the Service of Ordination, asking that clergy and laity wear blue armbands, symbolizing tears of joy for the ordinands and tears of sorrow for those unable to be ordained because of their sexual orientation. Most of the ordinands, half the clergy, and many in the congregation wore them--and it was every bit as moving as last year! One of the most poignant moments for me was when a young father, wearing an armband and carrying a three-

year-old, came to me and asked if I would tie a band on his son's arm. As I did so, he looked the child in the eyes and said "This means that God loves EVERYBODY". Doesn't that say it all?

## **More from New York Annual Conference**

The New York Chapter of MFSA submitted ten petitions to Annual Conference addressing a broad range of issues from Judicial Council Decision 1032 to global climate change. MFSA members also mobilized against an attempt by the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) to gain a foot-hold in the New York Annual Conference (NYAC) and opposed four IRD-related petitions.

A similar petition encouraged all NYAC pastors to "minister enthusiastically to all persons regardless of race, class, ability, gender or sexual orientation." Both petitions passed with overwhelming support.

The New York Chapter of MFSA was energized by the fact that all the petitions which they had initiated and/or co-sponsored received the overwhelming support of the conference.

The four resolutions taken from the web site of the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD)—"Methodist Resolution Urging Prayerful Reflection About Church membership in Abortion Coalition (Long Version)," "Methodist Resolution Supporting Human Rights and Peace in the Middle East," "Resolution Affirming Important Ministries," and "Resolution Affirming Laws Defending Marriage" were challenged on the conference floor and misinformation and inaccurate characterizations were pointed out. The conference overwhelmingly voted them down, along with a similar-style resolution that sought to silence the prophetic witness of Jim Winkler and the General Board of Church and Society.

## ***IOWA ANNUAL CONFERENCE***

Iowa's Annual Conference celebrated "service through action." The conference included a Mission Morning during which participants did everything from building a Habitat House to clipping Campbell Soup labels for local schools.

Wearing "Closed Doors, Broken Hearts, We Mind" t-shirts, Reconciling United Methodists hosted an outdoor communion on a door-become-communion table outside the Hilton Coliseum.

Key legislation included issues related to structure, staffing and apportionments. There was no legislation dealing with LGBT issues. There was honest conversation, however, during two evening sessions of "holy conferencing" and dialogue around issues of sexuality and the church.

Rev. Janet Wolf, preacher, pastor and prophet, addressed the MFSA lunchtime gathering of 200 people.

## ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS

From RMN Flashnet

RUMI (Reconciling United Methodists of Illinois) shouted, "*Hallelujah!*" The Club Room at the Peoria Civic Center sprang to life in rainbow colors, as 63 children of God of all ages gathered at the first annual RUMI luncheon. Marti Scott, Northern Illinois District Superintendent, was the guest speaker. Her message of "*not overlooking the obvious*" helped us to gather greater strength and courage for the journey. More and more people are wearing the rainbow stoles as well as asking questions. A resolution presented in an effort to encourage dialogue on the need for a fully inclusive church did pass – a first! Janet Ruckman, author of the resolution states:

"*WHEREAS* a thoroughly unscientific random sampling of a statistically insignificant number of members of the 2005 IGRC Annual Conference conducted by the author of this resolution revealed that there are very few members who felt themselves to possess a comprehensive knowledge about the theological, ethical, biblical, psychological, and sociological issues surrounding homosexuality, and even fewer who were even aware that the 1992 Report of the Committee to Study Homosexuality and its resulting curriculum exist,

*BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED* that members of this annual conference be strongly encouraged to seek out the curriculum "The Church Studies Homosexuality" from Cokesbury and to encourage their home churches to also engage in this opportunity for education and understanding."

For an annual conference that just three years ago voted to table *for the remainder of the quadrennium* any resolution that contained the word "homosexuality," RUMI shouts with joy following the luncheon, "*Hallelujah! Amen!*"

## OTHER CONFERENCE UPDATES

From Flashnet

Both the Louisiana and Holston (Tennessee) Conferences rejected resolutions which would have supported further discrimination against lesbian and gay persons.

### FACING THE SPECTRE OF SCHISM

By Maury Johnston, Spring 2006

[*This article was sent to us by Helen King*]

Maury Johnston is a member of the Church of the Holy Comforter (Episcopal) in Richmond, Virginia.

The "moment of truth" is fast approaching for the ECUSA, ... this summer [in] Columbus, Ohio... One of

the most bitter and divisive controversies of the last century may very well be put to rest with the embracing of an inclusive theological stance that stands unequivocally for justice and equality in Christ for the GLBT worshipping community. However, some centrists in the hierarchy of the ECUSA seem to believe that liberal theological apologists in our church should tone things down. To aggressively engage in heated controversy over doctrinal and moral issues is somehow seen ... as negatively divisive, and something to be avoided at all costs. Instead, they prefer to "kiss and make nice" and indefinitely prolong this dance of disagreement by endlessly proposing further studies and waiting periods before finally tackling the inevitable... We are simply expending too much energy trying to keep factions in a feigned appearance of unity when in reality we have... irreconcilable differences.

What seems to be forgotten in this pressing desire to placate Canterbury's Windsor Report and the homophobic, African ecclesiastical contingency, is that the "unity" of the Church at the expense of justice for the GLBT faithful is a compromise which will temporarily apply a cosmetic veneer of congenial cooperation but can only weaken the internal integrity of the message and mission of this church.

...The time for conversation and compromise is over; we have had over thirty years of discussions, dialogue, debate, conflicting biblical exegesis ..., and ecclesiastical haggling over whether those within the GLBT community warrant total acceptance and inclusion as full-fledged members of the Episcopal Church with all concomitant privileges of membership in the Community of Christ... There is nothing more to be said that has not already been said or studied. It is time for "Yea" or "Nay." We are being confronted with the command which echoes down the centuries from the legendary challenge of Elijah: "Choose you this day!" The Episcopal Church has a choice set before it: To fully incorporate gays and lesbians at every level of its common life with full sacramental and liturgical equality of access to its rites and ceremonies, or to grant only a limited toleration of their presence, carefully circumscribed by a curtailment of access to matrimonial rites and privileges in order to satisfy the demands of the self-proclaimed defenders of "orthodoxy."

The ultimate irony regarding anti-gay, Anglican contingents who tout their doctrinal orthodoxy is that they are actually heretical. They have substituted an idolatrous regard for scripture as statically inerrant for a balanced view of the biblical documents as time-caught records of human striving for divine insight which should only be interpreted in the light of reason, and by the dynamic of living tradition which enables us to apply its guidelines with a sense of cultural relevance and spiritual continuity. Scripture, Reason, and Tradition: [ed. Methodism adds a fourth pillar, Experience.] These triple pillars of Anglican

theology have unfortunately been trumped by what I call the Nigerian Heresy (in honor of its most vocal and belligerent spokesperson) emanating from that infamous cabal of Third World primates who have suddenly discovered *Sola Scriptura* to be their theological stance of choice, even as they vociferously proclaim an adherence to apostolic Catholicity.

It is interesting to note that in the early Church, Paul's most adversarial opponents loudly proclaimed themselves as defenders of orthodoxy--in their case, Mosaic orthodoxy, complete with its rules, regulations, and strictures dictating social and moral propriety...

Things have not changed much in 2000 years. Conservative Anglican blowhards who never miss an opportunity to demonize the GLBT community, portray our Christianity as a posturing of Satan in the sanctuary, a subversion of social, moral, and "family" values. We are seen, like Paul, as antinomian heretics intent on minimizing the relevancy of scripture and destroying the good witness of the Church, and conservative Episcopalians in the USA are now threatening schism as a result of our strides towards full acceptance in the denomination.

So what should be our reaction? More conversations? Not! More dialogue? Not! More tabling of resolutions at the General Convention aimed at bringing gays and lesbians full inclusion at every level in the common life of the People of God? Not! Do I seem harsh? Do I seem uncharitable? Do I seem assertively intolerant? I am, absolutely! And what justification could I possibly use for such a stance? The example set by the apostle Paul.

The epistles of Paul reveal that he didn't think much of the Episcopal approach of compromise and endless conversing when it came to what he considered the essentials of his gospel of inclusiveness and grace. He went so far as to say that if even an angel were to appear contradicting his message, it was to be considered accursed (Galatians 1:8-9). Nor did he hesitate to call his opponents the most uncivil of names: dogs, mutilators, enemies of the Cross, false apostles, and sons of Satan, to name a few (Philippians 3:2; 2 Corinthians 11:12-15). Keep in mind that these objects of Paul's vitriol were not Jesus-rejecting Jews or God-ignorant pagans; they were fellow Christians. They were Hebrew Christians, to be sure, who held to very Judaic forms of "traditional family/social values." Yet he did not hesitate to strike out viciously against those who would insist he compromise his gospel of full acceptance for the Gentiles and his liberation theology of freedom from the Law.

The GLBT community in the Episcopal Church can no longer afford the luxury of cowering in timidity waiting for yet another General Convention after 2006 to validate them. It is time to stand up and speak. It is time to accept no compromise with the forces that oppose us. This is a "do or die" situation coming up in the summer of 2006. ... What the General Convention will be dealing with in

Columbus, Ohio, this summer is not a mere peripheral issue, it is a prophetic imperative to gather up the sexually marginalized in the welcoming embrace of the Church in order that what was begun with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40) may come to its completion in us as a fulfillment of Isaiah 56:3-8, where those who were previously discriminated against for perceived sexual irregularities were promised a place of full acceptance in the midst of God's people.

Schism--whether within the Episcopal Church itself, or between the ECUSA and the wider Anglican Communion--is a word that makes most Episcopalians shudder, as if it is a visible sign of the failure of God's people to solve their problems, or worse yet, from an Episcopalian perspective, an unsightly "airing of dirty laundry." To which I readily respond: There has never been a time when the Church Universal--despite its talk of unity and one Lord--was not in some kind of schism... What we need to realize is that there are times when schism should not be avoided, for as Paul himself said, "There must be schisms among you in order that those who are approved among you [by God] may be made obvious" (1 Corinthians 11:19). Only in contrast with error is the truth allowed to shine for all to see.

Division is not always a dirty word. In times past, it was often encouraged by the frenzied bellowing of a prophet whose words seared a crowd's complacency, demanding, "Come out from among them and be ye separate!" It was Jesus who frankly declared, "Think not that I am come to send peace upon the earth. I am not come to send peace, but a sword [of division]." He went on to say that his message would cause the break up of family relations and close friendships (Matthew 10:34-36). He further instructed his disciples to "shake off the dust from their feet" as they separated from those who rejected his words....

It is also time for the ECUSA to take a good look around at the religious landscape; they will notice that others have already run ahead of them to lift up the prophetic banner of justice for gays, lesbians, and all God's marginalized children, foremost among them being the United Church of Christ (UCC) which has recently fully embraced the GLBT community and same-sex blessings. Far from being a disaster for the denomination, it has resulted in only a small number of congregational defections, while in the process, a significant number of new applications by churches for affiliation with the UCC have been received, including the Cathedral of Hope, one of the largest GLBT churches in the nation. By contrast, the ECUSA has given us a token gay bishop, but instead of fearlessly pressing on for full participation of gays and lesbians in every aspect of the church's common life, some are now wringing their hands over whether or not to refrain from ordaining any more GLBT bishops or even allowing official sanction for same-sex blessings for fear of further

offending conservative Anglican sensitivities...These rigid, religious iconoclasts are attempting to change directions for the good ship Grace, pointing it backwards into the stagnant moorings of religio-social anachronism, rather than allowing it to chart a new course carrying God's message of hope and acceptance to the marginalized and misunderstood. Put simply, we cannot allow them to commandeer the ship. If they do, we will have no choice but to put out in a lifeboat, and like St. Brendan of old, chart a course of faith into new territories, confident that God goes before us.

[In fact, the 75<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the USA, meeting in Columbus, Ohio, June 13-21 seemed not to please either the liberal or the conservative wings of the church. Following the election of Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori of Nevada as the church's first new female presiding bishop on June 18, the convention passed legislation # B033 which appeared to be a compromise on the issue of consecrating Gay bishops. With the passage of B033 several dioceses have sought to disassociate themselves from the church, and have asked that the Archbishop of Canterbury place them under a different prelate.]

### **A WORD FROM JERRY LONGWELL**

Jerry is the PRN Facilitator, residing in Southlakes Texas

The most common story I hear from parents is that until their child came out to them, they never really gave the issue of sexual orientation or gender identity much thought. In many cases we just accepted the conventional wisdom that society imposed upon us and didn't bother to question it. It was only when we were forced to confront it in this deeply personal way that we began to develop any real understanding.

If that is true for us, it is surely true for others and that is the reason our witness as parents is so important in the church. We do not have to be radical activists to make a difference; we just have to be willing to share our stories with those around us. As parents, we can help others in the church change their view of this issue by "putting a face on it." They have seen our children grow up in the church, have seen them baptized and confirmed there, and have known them personally. Just as in our own experience, the issue is then no longer hypothetical, it is personal.

If the church is ever to change its discriminatory practices against our children, it will be because the persons who are now in the middle call for change. Until they see the need for change they will just support the status quo. These are the persons who we can help the most by sharing our stories and providing the impetus to follow that same path of growing understanding that we have followed.

No one can tell us when it is time to start telling our stories, but I am frequently told that, once begun, it turns out to be a very liberating and uplifting experience. It has certainly been that way for Maudell and me and for many parents we know. As more and more parents reach this point, we will begin to realize the powerful influence we can be.

The Parents Reconciling Network has many needs that you might be able to meet. We need Annual Conference Coordinators, Steering Committee members, delegates to General Conference and to Annual Conference, financial support, and the list goes on. Not everyone can do these things, but everyone can share their story with those around them. In the long run, that may be the most important contribution we can make to our cause.

### ***WELCOME MARGARET MALLORY***

The PRN Steering Committee is a national leadership team of conference coordinators and at-large members. Our newest at-large member is Dr. Margaret Mallory. A former District Superintendent of the Toledo District, West Ohio Annual Conference, Dr. Mallory gave an articulate and moving presentation at the "Hearts on Fire" CONVO in Lake Junaluska 2005. She was a candidate for the episcopacy at the 2004 Jurisdictional Conference. Margaret gave an unscheduled speech in support of the 2005 West Ohio Conference resolution "In Support of Families with LGBT Children". This was a pleasant surprise for the writer of the resolution who feared that all the progressives had already left the conference! Welcome aboard Margaret!