

# The Word is

a newsletter from the Pacific Northwest Reconciling Ministries Network



Rev. Earl Rice plays against a mountain backdrop at the 10th National Reconciling Ministries Network Convocation. Photo courtesy of Antony Hebblethwaite, RMN.

## Justice and Joy

By Amory Peck, Garden Street UMC

It certainly was a mountain top experience. Twenty-four Pacific Northwest (PNW) Reconciling United Methodists joined over 500 others at the 10th National Reconciling Ministries Network Convocation. At 8,010 feet, the stunning YWCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, Colorado, provided the perfect environment for our stunning time together.

This theme song swirled around us throughout the Labor Day weekend, *"And God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy, compassion and peace: yes, God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy."* (Shirley Erena Murray, words; Brian Mann, music)

We had joy in abundance. There was the pleasure of greeting old friends. When friendship is forged through work in the movement, the ties are strong.

There was also the enjoyment of making new connections. It was a delight to see the number of people attending for their first

time. All that new energy sparked everything we did. Those of us in the LGBT community were humbled, and delighted, by the number of straight allies attending.

We chatted through meals, and sang together with gusto. The Village People's "YMCA" was a predictable and absolutely fun-filled opening song. All of us flung our arms about with great verve and abandon.

The joy came mostly, though, through the exuberant, radically inclusive, absolutely safe environment. For those of us on continual guard against the assaults of the church, that was a blessing.

We attended three plenary sessions. The first, The Intersections, helped us examine the intersections of Racism, Sexism, Homophobia, and Classism, all of them creating positions of privilege and oppression in our society and our churches. The second plenary was on Marriage Equality. We heard both an opti-

mistic and an alarming overview of the status of same-sex marriage. The third was on Global Connections, where we heard from pastors working for full inclusion in Africa, South America, and the Philippines. All three plenaries were presented by exceptional speakers; all of them left us exhilarated and incredibly alert to the work to be done.

We chose among dozens of workshops and attended affinity groups, all of those opportunities geared towards educating and mobilizing us for action at home. Worship fed our souls, of course — picked us up, filled us up, and energized us in ways we hope will stick for a long while. But calls to justice flowed through our worship as well. We heard from Vincent Cervantes, a young adult sharing his story of ex-gay survival. Rev. Drew Phoenix (now of the Alaska Conference) talked about his experiences as a trans male. The Rev. Dr. Eunice Musa Iliya, of Nigeria, related her choice to stand in support of the demonstrations at General Conference 2008, despite the admonitions of the members of her delegation.

Those of us from the PNW were especially proud to have our own Bishop Grant Hagiya as the speaker at the closing worship service. From the moment he began by explaining he wants to make the PNW safe for our gay clergy, everyone was applauding his call for full inclusion in the church.

Monday morning we gathered as a conference to hear about, and plan for, a new initiative, "Believe Out Loud." This campaign is based on the idea that it's not enough to "just believe." If we're to grow our movement, we have to "believe out loud," to tell our stories. More will be coming about PNW's plans for our part in the program. ▽

# The Growing Tide of Intolerance

By Joanne Brown, Tibbetts UMC, Seattle

As I write this, Fred Phelps and his small band of followers have just left Seattle. It seems they come here every year to spread their gospel of hate in the name of God and Jesus. This weekend they picketed Jewish synagogues and Garfield High School. There was a rally Monday morning at Garfield sponsored by the students of the school to answer this brand of hate. I am always of two minds about protesting against Phelps. On the one hand, people need to speak up and to be clear that this is not the gospel of Jesus. On the other, showing up only brings more attention to this little band of hate-mongers.

Phelps is the extreme. It is easy to write him off. But his message is preached in other forms by many other people and organizations that profess to be Christian with devastating results. Right wing media folks join hands with religious groups to spew forth intolerant messages of hate and exclusion and prejudice. And words have an effect.

After many other acts of vandalism at women's reproductive health clinics a man came into a church and assassinated Dr. Tiller, a dedicated provider of last resort for women who found themselves with a pregnancy they just couldn't go through with for a myriad of reasons. The murder was heinous enough but in a church! And then some folks from the religious right actually commended the shooter — calling him a hero.

And a man who has been preaching white supremacy and hatred for Jews for many years walked into the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC and murdered a security guard. His intent was to do much more but he was stopped before he could wreak his intended violence. The security guard who was killed was opening the door for this elderly man thinking he needed help. He needed help alright, just not the kind this guard could give him.



By Joanne Brown, Tibbetts UMC, Seattle  
Photo provided by Author

People are encouraged by words, by convictions. It seems, according to the Southern Poverty Center which monitors hate groups, they are on the rise. And our airways are filled with the Rush Limbaugh's of intolerance, prevarication, and, yes, I will say it, hate.

We even find it in the church. I am a cradle Methodist. I love this church. I am a thorough going Wesleyan and do not belong anywhere else. But my beloved denomination has engaged in policies that are downright unchristian. In the 1930s they created the Central Jurisdiction — a way of segregating Black Methodists from White ones. The Central Jurisdiction was not abolished until 1968. Women were not granted full clergy rights until 1956. In 1972 the first restriction aimed at separating lesbian and gay Methodists from participation in the church was put into

the Discipline — the rules of our church. And every General Conference since this has become more restrictive. There are groups within Methodism working for full inclusion and equality within the church and Tibbetts is a proud member of one — the Reconciling Congregation movement.

But the damage is done. I have close friends who have committed suicide because they were turned down for ordination because they were lesbian. Young LGBT people who hear the intolerant message of exclusion and hate from their communities of faith kill themselves at a rate far greater than for the average population. People do not come to UMC churches because they hear this exclusionary message despite our national slogan of Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors — they feel the hearts, minds, and especially doors are not open. And the church's stances like this encourage discrimination in secular arenas. It is religious folk who are on the forefront of anti-gay marriage movements and movements to restrict the civil rights of LGBT people.

What do we do in this seemingly growing tide of intolerance and hate? We need to speak up with a voice strong and clear that says our God is a God of unconditional love. Our God is a God who calls all beloved sons and daughters. We have a message no other organization has — that all are treasures created in God's image, of infinite value and infinite worth. If we really believed that, then we could not hurt, murder, rape, oppress, discriminate, or hate any one of God's children.

We need to speak up. We need to challenge the hate speech wherever we find it, even if that is in the church. We need to live out this message. We need to remember that we are in the service of the living, loving God. The hate-mongers cannot have the last word. The last and most powerful word is love. ▽

## Fitting Together the Needed Pieces

by Vince Hart, Tacoma First UMC

Barbara Foster was fairly jumping up and down with excitement. It was probably the most upbeat moment of the whole RMN Planning Retreat in August. Barbara, a member of the Garden Street UMC in Bellingham, one of our newest Reconciling Congregations, was attending only her second RMN Council meeting. When participation in Convo 10 was being discussed, she let it be known that she would love to attend, but simply did not have the resources to make that possible on her own. It did not take long, however, to fit together the pieces needed to make it happen. Vince and Kay Hart had reserved the use of a resort condo unit in Estes Park for a week, with places for eight, and only seven were taken; so there was the housing component. Craig Waterbury, one of the retreat hosts, travels a great deal for business and, within a day, his Frequent Flyer miles had Barbara on the same plane with two others from Bellingham. The third vital piece was the registration expense, and a phone call to Chicago secured a full scholarship. Done!

That is the "genius" of net-working. Everything that the Reconciling Ministries Network of United Methodists seeks to do depends on just such connecting of persons and resources. In order for that to happen

most effectively, efficient and speedy communication must be combined with an eager willingness to cooperate and coordinate. Looking back over the recent years of RMN work in this Annual Conference and nationally, it is truly amazing how much has been accomplished by so few people with such limited resources. Lots of volunteer time seems to be one key. A passion to get results is another! A third is the commitment to meet so that unexpected things can "bubble up" from the dynamic of being together: things like friendship, alliances, teamwork, bold new ideas and projects, and the sudden connecting of needed resources. A goal for the year ahead is to involve more representatives from our Network congregations and constituency in the often-unexpected fun and excitement and creativeness of our planning and other meetings. ▽

## Thanks for Your Persistent Generosity

by Vince Hart, Tacoma First UMC

At the beginning of the summer, it seemed that we might not be able to cover the costs of printing and mailing the July issue of *The Word Is Out*, yet far more than "pennies from heaven" arrived to meet the current need. Over \$1,600 in new contributions were received by early August, meeting outstanding obligations and creating a substantial balance toward obligations for the rest of the year (one more newsletter and some meeting travel reimbursements). At the end of August we had over \$800 in the bank account. If a few more contributions come in, it will be possible to close the fiscal/calendar year "in the black." ▽



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<http://approverefendum71.org/spread-the-word>

## Upcoming Events

PNW-RMN Council meetings are scheduled at noon the 3rd Saturday of January, March, May, September, October, and November. The Annual Planning Retreat is in August.

### OCTOBER

- 23–25 Film: *For the Bible Tells Me So* 7:00 pm  
 (Rev. Monica Corsaro moderator 10/23)  
 All Pilgrims Christian Church  
 500 Broadway East, Seattle  
[www.allpilgrims.org](http://www.allpilgrims.org)
- 31 PNW-RMN Council Meeting 12:00 noon  
 First UMC, Tacoma  
 621 Tacoma Avenue S  
[www.fumcot.com](http://www.fumcot.com)

### NOVEMBER

- 18 Transgender Day of Remembrance 7:00 pm  
 Ravenna UMC, Seattle  
 5751 33rd Ave. NE  
[www.seattletdor.110mb.com](http://www.seattletdor.110mb.com)
- 21 PNW-RMN Council Meeting 12:00 noon  
 First UMC, Tacoma  
 621 Tacoma Avenue S  
[www.fumcot.com](http://www.fumcot.com)

### JANUARY 2010

- 16 PNW-RMN Council Meeting 12:00 noon  
 First UMC, Tacoma  
 621 Tacoma Avenue S  
[www.fumcot.com](http://www.fumcot.com)

### FEBRUARY 2010

- TBD 8th Annual Gathering TBD  
 Puyallup UMC  
 1919 West Pioneer Ave  
[www.puyallupumc.org](http://www.puyallupumc.org)

### MARCH 2010

- 20 PNW-RMN Council Meeting 12:00 noon  
 First UMC, Tacoma  
 621 Tacoma Avenue S  
[www.fumcot.com](http://www.fumcot.com)

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Staff: Linda Gasparovic, Foster Stockwell, Vince Hart, Amory Peck. Submission of articles and photos by E-mail welcome, by the first of the month preceding publication to [editor@pnw-rmn.org](mailto:editor@pnw-rmn.org).

# Funding Our Work in “Tough” Times

by Vince Hart, Tacoma First UMC

Every volunteer organization depends upon the free gift of time, labor, and money from those who care passionately about its goals and efforts. PNW-RMN is no different. In fact, it faces a double challenge in this regard, for its “constituency,” its pool of potential contributors of needed resources, is composed almost entirely of those who also have significant roles and carry major responsibilities in local congregations. Those persons have to think carefully how best to distribute their energy and other resources to meet the needs of their local church and the RMN network. Often they are important supporters of other vital ministries and services as well.

It has been the policy of PNW-RMN to make only one annual appeal for financial support. (We are not quite so constrained about going after people’s time and energy!) Only in one mailing each fall are all those on the PNW-RMN database invited to consider an annual contribution. The gifts received from this annual appeal have provided the foundation for the work of the Network in this region. In addition, offerings received at the two major events sponsored by the Network (The Gathering, and the Annual Conference Dinner) have brought in significant contributions. What has not been done so far is the solicitation of pledges for continuing contributions throughout the year, though often this would provide substantially more income. Nor have we actively encouraged our PNW member congregations and other Reconciling Ministries to make a specific annual contribution.

The constraints involved in the present approach to funding are reflected in two facts: (1) the annual appeal letter went to approximately 800 households and 350 sister congregations or groups, all of whom receive the quarterly newsletter, yet to date only 62 personal contributions have been received, and one from a congregation not yet officially Reconciling; and (2) while a number of very generous contributions have been received, the average has been \$84. In order for our PNW-RMN work to grow as

we hope it will, we need to broaden the base of support and significantly increase the total.

*Where does the money go? What does it do?*

Fortunately, we are able to function up to now without salaries or stipends, depending entirely on volunteer time, and we have not had to incur the expense of facilities, though it would be appropriate to make some contribution for space used part time. The largest recurring expense is the production and mailing of the quarterly newsletter, *The Word Is Out*, with printing and postage costing about \$1,000 each quarter for the 1140 copies now being mailed. There has been the suggestion of a voluntary “subscription” request of at least \$5.00 per year—or more to support the mailing to others. The other major annual expense is for The Gathering, though the intention is that the event be self-sustaining through its registration fee. This year it was not, because of choices (right ones, we believe) regarding leadership and the initial expansion into two locations. More careful development of the budget for The Gathering in the future should alleviate that problem. A new expense, which has made it possible for some to participate in Council meetings, has been partial reimbursement for travel costs involved. These meet-

ings provide not only important planning and allocation of tasks; but they also provide inspiration, nurture, and encouragement for leaders in our scattered RMN units.

There are also things we have hoped to do but so far lack funds to accomplish. For instance, we have wanted to provide funding for traveling teams to visit exciting and emerging Reconciling congregations and groups, to offer support and encouragement, and to strengthen the “connection” so that all benefit more fully from what each is doing. There is also the goal of developing a fund to send more people to the next UM General Conference, where many crucial decisions will be made and a strong Reconciling witness will be very important. So where do we go from here? Some very imaginative fund-raising events are being explored, but there also needs to be careful rethinking of how best to develop a more solid base of annual, quarterly, or monthly personal contributions, and a significant annual contribution for each Reconciling congregation or other unit—our core constituency. ▼



# Journey to Seattle

by Mark Cooley, Des Moines UMC

Travel is a ubiquitous theme in the Bible. From Abraham to Jonah and Jesus to Paul, biblical figures were on the move. In most cases spiritual journeys would parallel their changes in geography.

A similar transformation has overtaken me. As a lifelong resident of Tennessee, I enjoyed travel but expected to live and die within sight of the Smoky Mountains. God had other ideas. Allow me to explain.

My partner, the Rev. Ray Neal, formerly a Baptist pastor serving several churches in the Midwest and Southeast, became an ordained minister in the Metropolitan Community Churches and was the Associate Pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Knoxville. Feeling that God was calling him to again serve as a senior pastor of a church, he kept an eye on postings for open pulpits. We casually discussed several opportunities, but when we saw the ad for the Metropolitan Community Church Seattle during the fall of 2008 both of our hearts responded immediately.

Ray was elected as pastor of the Seattle MCC church in early February and we began immediate preparations to go there so he could begin shepherding his new flock on March 1, the first Sunday of Lent. It was a busy and traumatic time. My parents, who had never been without me for any length of time, took the news stoically. My friends begged me not to go. The Methodist church in Knoxville where I had played organ and piano for many years gave me a tearful reception, a beautiful keepsake, and even

helped to finance our trip.

Many people were amazed that I was willing to cross the country with a man who was not a blood relation nor legally bound to me. I reminded them of Ruth and Naomi and the concept of "whether thou goest...." I couldn't imagine having to spend the rest of my life without him, and God's call was palpable.

The trip was one of Biblical proportions, the details of which would take far too much space to relate. I would, however, like to applaud my cat, P.J., who had never traveled farther than the vet, complaining bitterly all the way there and back. By trips end she seemed quite content to spend the day with me in the truck. I think she missed her calling as an 18-wheeler cat.

The spiritual climax of the journey occurred in the cold wastelands of Wyoming and Montana. To put this event into proper perspective I should now tell you that I was raised Baptist, was saved at age 8, and was active in my church. In my late teens I began playing organ and piano for the neighboring Methodist Church. As an adult there have been times when my faith was not solid. In essence, I wanted proof of God's existence, even though we all know that faith is "the evidence of things not seen."

Somewhere in the boredom that is Wyoming, God and I had heart-to-heart talk and we were perfectly content and secure with each other. Thus was I prepared for the miracle in Montana.

On that bitterly cold Thursday afternoon we were reminded of the limitations of meteorology. The predicted "light" snowfall became a blizzard and the interstate was rapidly freezing over when Ray advised me by cell phone to down shift when going uphill in icy conditions. He didn't mean right that moment, but that is what I did.



Mark Cooley. Photo by Charles Crust.

The truck jumped like a vehicle possessed and crossed the shallow median into oncoming traffic. Since I had just reached my rapprochement with God I did not freak out as a Tennessean normally would have on icy roads, but rather took the wheel back, avoiding another truck by inches, re-crossed the snowy median, back to the western bound side where Ray was waiting dumfounded. With shock setting in, we limped to the next exit 25 miles away and found a hotel to wait out the weather.

Without the peace of knowing that I was in God's hands I would not have had the presence of mind to survive that incident with everything in the truck bed perfectly intact. Even Pastor Ray looks at me skeptically when I tell this story, but I know a miracle when I am in one.

God confirmed my spiritual journey to Seattle by providing us with one full time and four part-time jobs, including being organist-pianist at Des Moines Methodist Church. Sometimes I miss Tennessee terribly, but we both know that we are exactly where God wants us to be and we wouldn't have it any other way. And PJ is also doing fine. ▽

Scenes from the "Justice and Joy" Convocation in Estes Park, CO. Photo composite by Linda Gasparovic. Images courtesy of April Herron, Jeff Waymack and Antony Hebblethwaite of the RMN.



## Two Movie Reviews

by Bartholda Manderville, Kent UMC.

**Milk**, directed by Gus Van Sant and rated R, length: 2:08.

If you missed seeing Milk in the theaters, it is now out on DVD and can be rented in most mainline video stores.

This academy award-winning film is based on the true story of Harvey Milk, the first openly gay man elected to public office in California. Sean Penn and Josh Brolin both were outstanding in their portrayal of the main characters in the movie.

Harvey Milk (Sean Penn), was a brash New Yorker who drove west to San Francisco and became a local politician and a martyr for gay rights. In 1977 Milk made a powerful appeal to closeted gays to come out to their families, friends, and co-workers so that the straight world would stop demonizing.

Josh Brolin plays the part of Dan White, a fellow board member of the Board of Supervisors with Harvey. White is a Catholic who

said homosexuality is a sin and campaigned with his wife, kids and the American flag. His homophobic obsession got the best of him and on Nov. 27, 1978, he walked into City Hall and assassinated Milk and Mayor George Moscone.

Harvey Milk's life changed history and his courage changed lives. Sean Penn shows Harvey Milk to be an ordinary man, kind, funny, shrewd, flawed, idealistic, yearning for a better world. Penn subsequently received an Oscar for best actor. Dustin Lance Black's Oscar was for best writing. Gus Van Sant was nominated for best director, and Josh Brolin received a nomination for best supporting actor.

**Breakfast with Scot** rated PG-13, length 94 minutes.

This Canadian film was screened at the 2008 Seattle International Film Festival and also played at the Varsity Theater in the University District last Fall. It came out on DVD in May.

**Breakfast With Scot**, a comedy, is about two partnered gay men living in Toronto. Eric (Tom Cavanagh), is an ex-hockey star, now sportscaster, and his partner, Sam (Ben Shenkman), is a successful lawyer. A new roommate comes to live with them — Sam's 11 year-old nephew, Scot (Noah Bennett). Scot is to be with Eric and Sam for just a few weeks. Scot changes this gay couple's perspective about children, and children who may be gay forever. This is a very funny and entertaining movie with some tender moments thrown in.

*Blockbuster* and *Hollywood Video* do not have this movie yet, although Scarecrow Video on Roosevelt Way in Seattle does. I have a copy of the movie, however, and would be willing to mail it to anyone in the Conference who can't get to Scarecrow, but would like to watch it. Call me at 206-870-8540, or e-mail: [bartholda.wesleyhomes@gmail.com](mailto:bartholda.wesleyhomes@gmail.com) ▼

## Naming Jennifer

by Shannon Buzard, Ravenna UMC, Seattle

Last year at a Transforming Faith: Divining Gender Conference in Portland (an interfaith transgender conference) I had the opportunity to meet two gay men — Scott Rice and Steven Lane — who had produced a documentary the likes of which I had never seen. Instead of the trite and voyeuristic clichés about transfolk that typically populate transgender documentaries, this film stirs empathy in all but the most jaded for its subject.

What makes this film truly moving and unique is the way the story is told. The subject of the film — Jennifer Pate — appears only in the film in a few old photographs. The entire story is told through a set of interviews with Jennifer's family and friends. In

those interviews, the viewer is introduced to Jennifer from a very young age and the interviews are edited and intertwined so that you follow Jennifer's life chronologically as she grows up and attempts to discover and define who she is in an environment that has no knowledgeable support or information about transgender people in either the medical or psychological spheres that are called in to help her. Yet throughout all of this struggle, a vibrant young woman emerges with friends and family around her that love her.

If the movie ended there, it would have been a wonderful story and documentary, but sadly the reason her story was filmed at all was because of what happened after that. Jennifer died a brutal death. Despite strong evidence

that she was purposefully killed, the law enforcement community of Missoula, Montana, did not investigate her death in any meaningful way.

The first part of this film will endear Jennifer to your heart, and what happens to Jennifer after will rend your heart to pieces. It is a moving and authentic view of a transwoman and her life, and if you have the slightest interest in learning about transgender people, you could not find a better way to understand our struggles growing up, and sadly all too frequently how some of our lives end. Showings of the film Naming Jennifer can be arranged by contacting Scott Rice or Steven Lane at [scott.rice@yahoo.com](mailto:scott.rice@yahoo.com) or [learyson@hotmail.com](mailto:learyson@hotmail.com). ▼

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## On the Subject of Trans Documentaries

*by Shannon Buzard, Ravenna UMC, Seattle*

Last month ABC Prime Time ran a special transgender documentary, titled "Family Secrets" that included a section that has been called the "transgender drinking game." Now some might find it flip or unappreciative that we in the transgender community are so blatantly negative regarding many of these "documentaries" on transgender people, but you have to understand that we do not see this type of documentary as either affirming who we are, or even terribly authentic as to who we are. We mostly regard these as poorly disguised hatchet jobs and voyeuristic intrusions set to emphasize and support specific preconceived notions and prejudices against transgender people, and of the sort that ABC did, they are egregiously misogynistic to boot.

After the documentary, I had a series of email exchanges with a friend in Oregon (nontrans) who observed that the questions asked seemed to be seriously lacking to naive, particularly for a major American news organization that is supposed to be informed on the subject and attempting to educate the public with a documentary! My take on this is that if it quacks like a duck.....well you know the rest. The truth is that most such documentaries are exploitive on some level and they only mitigate that if they are genuinely educating. They are

knowingly exploiting transwomen to garner an audience — both of social conservatives, who are then appropriately appalled, and also the hundreds of thousands of closeted straight men seeking a peek at trans women. Believe me, ABC is not naive when it comes to numbers. They know it's a \$3 Billion a year business and you can believe that every time they make one of these they have that audience in mind. You don't get to run programming at a major network by being stupid.

It seems that by using these clichés that they are specifically trying to make the point that transgender women are not and cannot be considered just women, and that transgender men are not and cannot ever be considered just men. They never show successful transgender people who are fully integrated into society as their new gender, with only the people they tell knowing their gender history. To give you just such an example, I point you to David Weekly, pastor of Epworth UMC in Portland, who just came out recently as being transgender. He has been a transitioned transgender man and has been an ordained elder in full communion for 27 years in the UMC, pastoring many congregations without anyone knowing his gender history until he decided to tell everyone.

The sad thing is we don't have a formal "trans education class" that all those planning transition are required to take. We so often are completely or mostly isolated when we transition and any attention seems to be a good thing in terms of educating other trans. The result of that "attention" is often a film of you during a period when you probably didn't look that good, and you end up with male pictures of you out there on film and the web that never go away. At some point in time most of us just wish to disappear into normal lives and society. We don't want to walk around with a red T branded on our forehead for the rest of our lives, and I have heard more than one transwoman bemoan doing a documentary like that because that is effectively what it does to you for the rest of your life. Chloe from the ABC Prime Time documentary will always be known as trans-Chloe to part of the population that meets her in the future just because of that documentary. Five years from now she will probably soooo regret doing it.

Filmmakers don't do documentaries about normal people living normal lives. The interest for them lies in the "odd," the "unusual," and particularly the titillating. Otherwise, all the documentaries made for TV would be about divorced men yearning for their kids, and frazzled soccer moms. Not gonna happen. ▽



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## Report on the Planning Retreat

by Vince Hart, PNW-RMN Convener

The Annual Planning Retreat for the Pacific Northwest-Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN-PNW) is always something like a mystery gift wrapped in "plain brown paper." What will actually be revealed when it is opened up? While the stated objective is to have representatives from all the twenty or so Reconciling congregations and other units participate, what actually happens is never nearly that comprehensive. While the prepared agenda seeks to give "logical" order to "what needs to happen," what actually does occur is an awesomely creative flow of a process that seems directed only by the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes much time is consumed on matters expected to engage only minutes. On the second day of this year's retreat that happened because of a reference to the possible need in the near future to budget for funds committed to administrative and storage space. Up to now, all such space has been voluntarily provided, mostly in the homes of Network members. Another "out of nowhere" (not on the planned agenda) development led to a commitment to host a regional RMN training event in the Pacific Northwest. (More about that as details develop.) A third unexpected happening was the

coming together of resources to send one more person to Convo 10; see the editorial for that story.

Of major importance will be the work in developing a strong and exciting GATHERING event, expanding attendance at the western Washington location, and building on the 2009 "foray" into eastern Washington. In evaluating the effectiveness of the other key event of each year, the RMN presence at the Annual Conference session, it was decided to petition the Bishop and the Annual Conference session planning team to return to the option of session-long ministry displays in place of, or in addition to, the quite "jammed-up" two-hour Ministry Fair of the past several years. The Fair simply does not provide adequate time for personal conversation and meaningful exchange; it limits communication almost entirely to handing out printed materials.

On the other hand, the RMN dinner at Annual Conference has become so popular

that the largest available space can no longer accommodate all who want to attend. ▽



Members of Magnolia United Methodist Church say farewell to Pastor Ruth Geiger at the retirement potluck held in her honor June 14th.  
Photos by Patricia Lang

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