

# The Word is

a newsletter from the Pacific Northwest Reconciling Ministries Network



Many participants registered for the fifth annual PNW-RMN Gathering held in Des Moines Feb. 11, 2007.

Photo by Jeff Waymack

## 2007 Annual Conference Session of Vital Importance

by Vince Hart, Tacoma First UMC

When the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference convenes June 12 in Tacoma, important business will be on the table. In this third year of the Quadrennium, all thoughts will be upon the General Conference set to begin in April 2008. Petitions directed to the General Conference will be presented and debated, amended, adopted, or rejected. Delegates will be elected, and different groups, caucuses, or "factions" will be concerned to have their priorities well represented.

The Reconciling Ministries Network of PNW will be quite actively engaged in all of this. A team based at the Wallingford and Ravenna UMCs has been hard at work developing petitions to be presented for support and forwarding to the General Conference. Many of these have been based upon a set developed by the national

coordinating leadership of RMN.

The annual RMN dinner meeting on Friday evening, June 15, will focus attention on the 36-year history of General Conference debate and actions with regard to "homosexual persons" and "the practice of homosexuality." Bishop Jack Tuell (ret.), who has attended all the General Conferences in that period, has agreed to be the speaker at the dinner. At the Ministry Fair on Wednesday evening, June 13, RMN and related groups will have a major display and presence as we bear witness to the reality of God's gracious work "even" in the lives of "practicing" homosexual persons, just as God also works graciously in the lives of "practicing" heterosexuals.

Building the case for change in a broad array

of present provisions in The Book of Discipline is the core goal of the many petitions to General Conference that will be coming to Annual Conference sessions this year from Reconciling Ministries groups around the nation, just as petitions to "hold fast" or "go further" will be coming from "the other side." The debate is far from over, even if the "trend" is slowly moving toward change, as Bishop Tuell asserts.

The petitions themselves are directed toward: (1) recognition of committed unions as well as marriages, (2) removal of the "incompatibility with Christian teaching" clause, (3) equal access to church membership "regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity," (4) removal of "self-avowed practicing homosexual" from restrictions on ordination and appointment and from "chargeable offenses" against clergy, (5) removal of "conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions" from "chargeable offenses" against clergy, (6) and repeal of legislation which restricts UM funding "used to promote the acceptance of homosexuality."

One petition being presented asks the General Conference to acknowledge formally what its divided votes over more than 30 years have implicitly demonstrated: that United Methodist are not of one mind regarding "the practice of homosexuality," just as is the opinion on many other matters, and that this absence of unanimity or uniformity is normative in the long history of the Christian Church, from the days of the first apostles until now. ▼

# The Faith Journey of a Gay Man

by Claude Carlson, Hoquiam UMC

I was born in Tacoma Washington, the son of Swedish immigrants. Shortly after, we moved to Ballard, a Scandinavian area in Seattle, where we lived throughout my growing up years. I have one sister, who to this day, is one of my closest friends. Basically, my family was a working-class family, poor in money, but rich in Swedish heritage and traditions. My grandmother was the keeper of the faith (Swedish Methodist), and one of my grandfathers, the keeper of Swedish mythology, legends, and lore.



Claude Carlson, Hoquiam UMC  
photo by Carol Waymack

We lived in a neighborhood where the little church on the corner of the block was the center of all my activities. I went to Sunday school, played on the church grounds and in the church facility, and made lifelong friendships which exist to this day. When I was seven, my parents started attending church, and eventually joining. This church became the center of my life for the next thirty years, a place where we celebrated baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals, not to mention all the potluck dinners, Sunday school, youth group activities, choir, worship services, and retreats.

I entered the University of Washington right out of High School as a pre-med student. Each day for the first year was spent going to school, going to work, and then coming home to study, over and over and over. I didn't really like the field I had chosen to study, and felt alone and depressed. After nearly failing all my classes, I transferred to Washington State University. There I found I really loved Sociology and Criminology, and began to thrive. A year later, I returned to the University of Washington, studying Sociology and Criminology, graduated with my degree in Sociology, and two years later,

my Master of Social Work Degree.

What didn't change was my growing self-conflict, something I didn't feel I could share with anyone. I felt different from the other young men I knew. I finally admitted to myself that I was Gay. In the sixties, one did not talk about this. No one in my family was gay. How could I be gay? My conflict, unspoken, grew.

In my last year of graduate school, I was married to Jackie, a young woman from my church that I had known since the third grade. My personal conflict was now deeply hidden, but not gone. We had a happy marriage and within three years, were the parents of a son and then a daughter. Ten years later, we adopted two little brothers, age three and four. They were abused and neglected and were eager for love, but because of their own severe problems and issues, they presented many challenges for the family.

When my older kids were both married and our two younger boys were just entering their teen years, we were hit with another blow. Jackie was diagnosed with End Stage Kidney

Disease. This put my worries about my own conflict into perspective. My Gay conflict again was hidden, as I became my wife's caregiver. Jackie passed away eleven years ago, at home, next to me, one night in our bed.

My church and my firm belief sustained me through all of this, and finally I was now free to address my conflict. My church had started a new mission program, Spirit of the Sound, a mission to minister to people of all sexual orientations, including

the disenfranchised. Along with ten or twelve others, I began attending and gaining strength. The mission grew from the original twelve to attendance of over a hundred, and was located in a different church each week (two United Church of Christ facilities, the University Baptist Church, and the Tacoma First United Methodist Church. This wonderful congregation gave me the strength to address my conflict openly. With tremendous support from both the Gay and Straight members of Spirit of the Sound, I was able to gain the strength and the faith to come out to the congregation. Coming out was truly a freeing experience. I realized that no longer did I have to live with a secret that was eroding my family, friends, and church relationships. I came out to all my children and their families, and my sister and her family, living in four different counties in Western Washington, on one Sunday afternoon.

Over the years, I have seen so much in the way of spiritual violence, people refused the church sacraments, even membership and involvement in their home churches. I feel that each of these incidents brings "another tear to the eyes of God." ▽

## Can Experience “Trump” Scripture?

by Vince Hart, Tacoma First UMC

In a 2006 expository study of the Acts of the Apostles, two scholar-teachers build the case that the canonical narrative of the beginnings of Christianity demonstrates that “the members of the church in Acts learn God by their real experiences of divine activity, which Scripture then confirms.” Anthony B. Robinson, a UCC pastor and director of a church leadership training network, and Robert W. Wall, a university faculty member focusing his work on Christian Scriptures, have teamed up to write *Called to Be Church, The Book of Acts for a New Day* (Eerdmans, 2006). Especially in their analysis of Acts 15, but also in their general “Concluding Reflections,” they lay out the biblical evidence that it is the present experience of “divine activity” which establishes the precedent, and that Scripture is used to give clarity of meaning to the present experience, in the light of what Scripture has shown to be the nature of God’s ways in the world.

“[I]t is the light of what God has done that exegetes the meaning of Scripture....New meanings of Israel’s Scripture are always revealed to the community’s teachers after the fact—in the light of those “things that have happened among us” (Luke 1:1). “The past of God narrated in Scripture confirms the presence of God experienced in the church’s mission in the world. While these new actions lead Spirit-filled interpreters to discover new meanings in Scripture that were hitherto hidden from view, the patterns of God’s activities are ever constant. Scripture does not dictate what course of action to take; God does. Scripture’s role is to confirm that the road taken has been approved by divine plan as scripted by Scripture. Experience clarifies what is a ‘divine necessity.’”

I am reminded of the earliest days of the “Charismatic Renewal” nearly fifty years ago, when “mainline” Protestants, and then Catholics, were first introduced to, and then

entered quite fully into, the full range of the “Pentecostal” experience. Seattle, indeed much of the Pacific Northwest, was a “hotbed” of this very controversial “new” experience of God. Early on I found myself in the thick of it, together with quite a few young Methodist clergy colleagues, writing interpretive documents in “defense” of what we were experiencing, even confronting our bishop, who had spoken out “officially” against the “Tongues Movement” that was “troubling” a number of congregations.

In a manner very like the apostles in Acts in their confrontations with the “established” Jewish authorities of their day, we sought to understand, test, and come to terms with what was happening within us and among us. We were driven to careful re-examination of the Bible, Christian history, and especially the Wesleyan revival. It was that careful look into the heritage which allowed us to conclude that this “new thing” (for us) was indeed “of God,” even though for centuries strong voices in the church had declared that all such genuine manifestations of God’s Holy Spirit had long since ceased.

I believe something very similar is occurring today, as God acts graciously in the lives of homosexual persons, both celibate and “practicing,” just as God acts in the lives of “straights.” The question—as always through history, as even in our own Wesleyan revival—is how the “establishment” will respond to the unexpected “new thing” God chooses to do in sovereign grace, and also how those experiencing God in this unexpected way will be able to bear their witness faithfully in the face of hostile opposition. That was the issue in Acts; it remains the issue today. Where does ultimate authority lie, in the present actions of a sovereign God, or in the solidified witness to past actions of God as they are recorded in ancient texts? ▽

## Upcoming Events

PNW-RMN Council meetings are scheduled for the 3rd Saturday of each month at noon (with the exceptions of February June & July)

### JUNE

- 9-10 *OutSpokane's Rainbow Festival* 12-6:00 pm  
Gondola Meadows, River Front Park
- 10 *Pride Parade –Wall Street* 12-1:00 pm  
btwn Main Ave & Spokane Falls Blvd.  
Spokane, WA  
[www.outspokane.com](http://www.outspokane.com) for info
- 10 *Seattle Men's Chorus* 3:00 pm  
*Scared Faithless— God and Gays in the 21st Century*  
Port Townsend, WA  
[www.flyinghouse.org](http://www.flyinghouse.org) for info
- 13-16 *PNW Annual Conference*  
University of Puget Sound, Tacoma
- 16-17 *Capital City Pride*  
Olympia, WA  
[www.capitalcitypride.net](http://www.capitalcitypride.net) for info
- 22 & 23 *Seattle Men's Chorus* 8:00 pm  
*Scared Faithless— God and Gays in the 21st Century*  
McCaw Hall, Seattle  
[www.flyinghouse.org](http://www.flyinghouse.org) for info
- 24 *Seattle PRIDE Festival & Parade* 11am-6:00 pm  
11:00 am  
Seattle Center/Downtown Seattle  
[www.seattlepride.org](http://www.seattlepride.org) for info

### JULY

- 14 “*Out in the Park*” 2007 12-6:00 pm  
Wright Park, Tacoma  
[www.outintacoma.org](http://www.outintacoma.org) for info
- 15 *Bellingham PRIDE Festival*  
Bellingham WA

### AUGUST

TBD PNW-RMN annual retreat, Ocean Shores

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# A Minority Report: Bisexuality Is Not a Waystation

by Shannon Buzard, Ravenna UMC, Seattle



Shannon Buzard (left) at the 2007 Gathering held at Des Moines UMC.  
Photo by Carol Waymack

Recently someone asked, "Why can't bisexuals just decide?" Hmm, I thought, there are so many misconceptions and prejudices there. I was initially hesitant to respond despite being the only openly avowed bisexual in the room. Historically, a bisexual has often been regarded as someone who cannot decide, or someone in denial about their homosexuality, someone who will eventually come out as gay or lesbian. Why? Is it so hard to admit that if there are legitimate same sex attractions and legitimate opposite sex attractions there may be people that have both attractions? Instead, we try to impose a new binary that has no basis in any kind of scientific fact. And that is the positive side of the bisexual portrayal.

I, perhaps more than your typical bi person, had difficulty with coming out and understanding my own bisexuality. In part this was because of my own struggle—without any help or resources—to understand the difference between my sexual orientation and my gender issues. I suppose this happens to a lot of the gender variant; I have only talked to a few about it, so I am not sure. My own struggle with a lack of information on the subject is one of the things that drives my need to educate and make information about the differences open and available.

Bisexuals when struggling to understand their own sexual identity often feel left out

of the gay community because if they are honest about all of their attractions, gay and lesbian folk will often shy away, thinking they are experimenters with same sex relationships, or just there to play—but not reliable as a potential partner. There is tremendous insecurity within the gay and lesbian community that the attraction of any

straight relationship and its accepted normality in wider society would always trump their same sex relationship. This often can make it difficult for bi persons to find long term relationships in the gay and lesbian communities, when often we might be happier in a same sex relationship.

Bisexuality is often hard to define in an exact way, which is one of the things that makes it hard for others to wrap their minds around bisexuality. Bisexuality is ALL of that undefined area between the binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Thus simplistic definitions are hard to come by. Some bisexuals are more same sex attracted, some more opposite sex attracted, some closer to half and half. Too many times when we are

involved in the "bi" community we feel a self imposed pressure to prove our bi credentials by dating both sexes, which can result in some forced and unsuccessful relationships. Some bi folk may date so

exclusively to one gender that they may, in a lot of interactions, be indistinguishable from any other straight or gay persons, making the claim of bisexuality a self identification issue. So even if it is not a waystation, is it just another way for us to separate our own identity from the mass mentality?

Maybe so in some cases, but most of us who identify as bi really do have that basal level of attraction. We do notice when a cute guy or a cute girl gets on our bus.

Another issue that often gets loaded on bisexuals, one also inherently implied in the "Why can't bisexuals just decide?" matter, is the issue of promiscuity. We have ample examples of monogamous homosexual couples within the church proving the lie to the often ascribed "homosexual lifestyle." But we have now created a separation between the sexual orientation of homosexuality and that of bisexuality and loaded all the promiscuity baggage onto the bisexual community, as if it is impossible for anyone to be attracted to both sexes and still be in a monogamous relationship.

If we agree that God made people with same sex attractions, why is it so inconceivable that God may have also made people who might be more or less equally attracted to both same and opposite sexes? After all, who are we to question God? ▽



Familiar faces among the faithful gathered in Olympia for Equality Day. Photo by Paul Binneboese

# Joining the Reconciling Ministries Network

by Larry Fox, Langley UMC

Becoming a part of the national Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) is a matter of making a commitment, individually and/or collectively, to the vision that the United Methodist Church welcomes the "full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities." Any individual can join the RMN by visiting [www.rmnetwork.org](http://www.rmnetwork.org) and clicking on "Join Us." Presently, there are around 20,000 individual RUMs (Reconciling United Methodists).

Collectively, there are a number of avenues for joining RMN. Initially, the RMN was known as the Reconciling Congregation Program (RCP), formed in 1983, whose primary goal was to have local congregations publicly declare their welcome. Presently, there are 13 RC's (Reconciling Congregations) in the Pacific Northwest Conference. In addition, another half-dozen are in various stages of a congregational discernment process, moving toward becoming RC's themselves. One of the goals of PNW-RMN is to provide resources to congregations in such a process.

In 2000, recognizing the growing variety of expressions of inclusion, the name was changed from RCP to Reconciling Ministries Network. Communities other than congregations have become affiliates of RMN. A number of campus ministries have declared their welcome; locally, three of those, UW, UPS, and WSU, have officially joined the RMN. Another type of community has become more prevalent in recent years—regional networks. Our own Pacific Northwest RMN ([www.pnw-rmn.org](http://www.pnw-rmn.org)) is one of those. Presently, there is a budding network of Reconciling United Methodists in the Spokane area, raising the possibility that a formal network might be formed there and eventually affiliate with the national RMN as a Reconciling community.

Finally, as the movement for inclusion grows, another form of community—the Sunday school class or some other group within a congregation—is emerging. In the PNW, such a group has been operating within the Kent UMC for the last few years under the leadership of Jack and Muriel Severns. A number of these classes/groups

have chosen to formalize their commitment by joining the RMN. These classes/groups most frequently crop up in areas of United Methodism—the south and Midwest—that are most resistant to inclusion. Even in those more resistant areas, sanctuaries for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, their families, and their allies are being created. Often these classes/groups are found in large congregations where the prospects of becoming a Reconciling Congregation seem remote. Nevertheless, these smaller communities provide needed ministry and beacons of light in the midst of the indifference and/or hostility.

Thus, the movement for inclusion thru the RMN continues to grow. More and more creative ways are being found to be the welcoming communities of faith which God is calling us to be. The Holy Spirit continues to inspire individuals and communities to step out and witness to the inclusive ministry of Jesus. The question for you, the reader, is: "How is God calling me to follow the Spirit and witness to Jesus' "love for all?"



Now is the time to start planning a trip to the south. The 9th National Reconciling Convocation will be held August 2-5, 2007, on the campus of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee.

The brochure promises that the convocation, "Faith, Hope, Love," will be a time to "nurture our spirits, connect with new and long-time colleagues in the movement, and

## Faith, Hope, Love

by Amory Peck, Garden Street UMC, Bellingham. WA

strengthen our witness for a truly inclusive United Methodist Church."

Speakers for the event include Dr. Miguel De La Torre, associate professor of Social Ethics and Director of the Justice and

Peace Institute at Iliff School of Theology, and Dr. David Myers, Hope College, coauthor of *What God has Joined Together: The Christian Case for Gay Marriage*. Worship will be led by composer, artist, and activist Julian Rush, and the preachers will include Rev. Grace Imathiu, ordained elder in the Methodist Church of Kenya and author of *Words of Fire, Spirit of Grace*.

In addition, we'll enjoy *Mrs. Man of God*, a humorous musical portraying life through the lens of the gay partner of a pastor within a denomination that is not fully inclusive.

More details on "Faith, Hope, Love" can be found at this address:  
[www.rmnetwork.org/convo2007/convo.asp](http://www.rmnetwork.org/convo2007/convo.asp).

On Labor Day, 2005, nearly twenty of our PNW-RMN members attended "Hearts on Fire," the 8th National Reconciling Convocation. The gathering, held at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, was surely a life-changing time for all of us. Let's be certain the Pacific Northwest is again an enthusiastic, bold, and prophetic presence.

# Obama Supports Gay Rights

by Paul Beeman, Des Moines, WA

[Editor's note: Whereas it is against our policy to support any individual political candidate, Obama has made a definitive statement in agreement with our position in regard to acceptance by the church of homosexual persons. We would be interested in publishing the views of other candidates regardless of their political affiliation who also support our position.]

A leading presidential candidate is making gay rights a significant part of his *Audacity of Hope* (book published by Crown Publishers, NY, 2006).

Some say Illinois Junior U S Senator Barack Obama is too young to run for President; others that he lacks experience; still others that he has no knowledge of international relations.

Born of a white mother from Kansas and fathered by a black student from Kenya who became an economist, some fear he can't understand the American blacks who descended from slaves.

In his best-seller, subtitled, "Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream," I find a grasp of American political history, comprehension of our society's malaise, a humble sense of his own fallibility, and more than enough sense of direction for him to be taken seriously as a candidate. And I just happen to agree with most of his positions.

With self-effacing humor, he told Oprah Winfrey of the exciting day his first bill passed in the Senate. When he called his wife, Michelle, with the great news, her response was, "Great! But we have ants. On your way home stop and buy some spray." "She keeps me anchored," he smiled.

His central thesis is the notion of a public life based on "the simple idea that we have a stake in one another, and that what binds us together is greater than what divides



Senator Barack Obama

us." He adds, "Not far beneath the surface, I think, we are becoming more, not less, alike."

While Obama is clearly an articulate Democrat in a previously tongue-tied party, in many ways he seeks friendship and dialogue across all lines, whether political, economic, racial or national. His goal is not Democratic power, but the betterment of American society.

For example, Obama finds the opposition to homosexuality by some conservative Christians to be "troubling, particularly in a society in which Christian men and women have been known to engage in adultery and other violations of their faith without civil penalty."

His rationale is quite personal. "Perhaps I find the ways of the human heart too various, and my own life too imperfect to believe myself qualified to serve as anyone's moral arbiter."

Speaking from his Christian perspective regarding homosexuality, Obama notes he is unwilling "to accept a reading of the Bible

that considers an obscure line in Romans to be more defining of Christianity than the Sermon on the Mount."

He declares, "I have little sympathy for those who would enlist the government in the task of enforcing sexual morality." He reasons, "Like most Americans, I consider decisions about sex, marriage, divorce and childbearing to be highly personal--the very core of our system of individual liberty." Furthermore, he admits, "I have no interest in seeing the president, Congress or a government bureaucracy regulate what goes on in America's bedrooms."

In defense of limited government intervention, he says, "I am not willing to have the state to deny American citizens a civil union that confers equivalent rights on such basic matters...simply because the people they love are of the same sex...."

But Obama's social criticisms sting both conservatives and progressives. "One purpose of both right and left," he charges, "is not to persuade the other side, but to keep their bases agitated and assured of the rightness of their respective causes--and to lure just enough new adherents to beat the other side into submission."

Reminiscent of John Kennedy, Obama calls for individual service and sacrifice, noting, "Regardless of what we tell ourselves..., if we aren't willing to pay a price for our values, if we aren't willing to make some sacrifices in order to realize them, then we should ask whether we truly believe in them at all."

Obama is convinced that the major problems of our society, including minority rights, "are rooted in societal indifference and individual callousness...." His appeal is for all sides to move beyond "the smallness of our politics," reaching toward "the magnitude of our challenges." ▼

# Reconciling Fellowships in Eastern Washington

In order to instill life in the United Methodist motto, "Open hearts, open minds, open doors" for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) folks in the far reaches of the Conference, the PNW-RMN is supporting the organizing of "Reconciling Fellowships" the purposes of which are to: 1) study the issues of orientation and gender, 2) seek guidance from Scripture by an in-depth study of the full meaning of God's revelation as regards inclusion and justice for all, 3) look at the implications of the motto, "Open hearts, open minds, open doors," and 4) be a non-confrontational witness within local churches by participating in study and discussion of GLBT issues in the local church.

Tom Martin, at a recent meeting with laity and Pastors on the Spokane District, emphasized that the goal is not so much to form Reconciling Congregations as it is to begin the conversation about inclusion of all, which includes GLBT members. This may be accomplished by providing a group of dedicated Christians within a congregation the opportunity to study the teachings of Jesus, cultural history, church history, and any topic that will bring light to an issue that congregations as a whole are unwilling to touch.

Martin claimed that belief often becomes an end in itself rather than a moving on to faith, i.e. radical trust in what one believes. The hoped for result of Reconciling Fellowships will be to form faithful and faith-filled followers of Christ who will, by the witness of their lives, encourage justice and compassion in their communities of faith.

The Reconciling Fellowships may take the form of a Sunday Adult Bible Class or midweek breakfast or luncheon groups, some meeting in churches, others in homes, and restaurants.

The frequency may be weekly, twice a month, once a month, whatever fits the needs of the particular Fellowship. Tom shared ideas about forming such a group and guidelines for discussion. To get the Fellowship going, he recommended the Annual Conference docu-

ment, "The Call," and the National Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) study, "Claiming the Promise." The former is found in the 2005 PNW Annual Conference Journal on pages H6-H9. The latter is available from RMN, 3801 North Keeler Avenue, Third Floor, Chicago, IL 60641-3007. An exhaustive bibliography will be available in the future. The larger communities such as Spokane, Walla Walla, Yakima, Wenatchee, Vancouver, have

speakers available from County Health Departments, Colleges and Universities, and Christian GLBT persons as well as Conference clergy and laity involved in the Conference HIV program, "Strength for the Journey."

Those interested in meeting with Tom for more information may contact him at XNTYUUMETH@AOL.COM or 253-759-4156.



## Books Worth Reading

***Loyal Opposition; Struggling With the Church On Homosexuality***, by Sample & DeLong, editors, Abingdon Press. Essays by fourteen prominent United Methodists who disagree with the denomination's stance on homosexuality, but stay to work for change from within.

***My Son Eric: a Mother Struggles to Accept Her Gay Son and Discovers Herself***, by Mary Borhek, Pilgrim Press, is a classic account of a mother, from denial to reconciliation, to activism. A touching and courageous true story, particularly useful for parents whose religious background condemns homosexuality.

***A Place At the Table: The Gay Individual in American Society***, by Bruce Bawer, Simon & Schuster, strips away stereotypes and provides a very sensible assessment of the gay rights movement. Bawer debunks the myth of a monolithic "gay lifestyle," showing that homosexuals' politics, tastes, beliefs, and sexual tendencies are as diverse, and their values as mainstream, as those of heterosexuals. "He charts a path out of the swamp."

***Science, Scripture and Homosexuality***, by Alice Bellis and Terry Hufford, Pilgrim Press, is the collaborative work of a biblical scholar and a biology professor addressing understanding the scripture passages relating to homosexuality, and gives recent developments in the science of sexual orientation. It explains the foundation of genetics and the growing evidence suggesting an organic basis for sexual orientation.

***Scripture and Homosexuality. Biblical Authority and the Church Today***, by Marion Soards (Prof. of New Testament at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary), Presbyterian Publishing Corp., looks at what the Bible actually says and does not say about homosexuality. Soards reflects on the meaning of biblical texts and subsequent Christian history.

***This Far By Grace: a Bishop's Journey Through Questions About Homosexuality***, by J. Neil Alexander, Cowley Publications, tells his personal view of his changing outlook, "From fear to love, from conditional to unconditional, from judgment to mercy."

***Uncommon Calling: a Gay Christian's Struggle To Serve the Church***, by Chris Glaser, John Knox Press, tells his personal story of coming out to family, friends and church and to self. He tells how the church reacted, and his "uncommon" calling that led him to devote his professional life to reconciliation between the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community and the church.

***What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality***, by Daniel Helminiak, Alma Square, a basic overview of recent insights of seven biblical scholars, shows that those who perceive Bible passages as condemning homosexuality are being misled by faulty translation and poor interpretation. Father Helminiak's words bring hope to many who feel God has rejected them.



# Global U.M. Young People's Convo Affirms Inclusiveness

abridged from article by Kathy Gilbert, United Methodist News Service

Young people from around the world worked on legislation ranging from social issues to representation in The United Methodist Church during a first ever global event held Dec. 28-Jan. 1 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Global Young People's Convocation and Legislative Assembly was sponsored by the Division on Ministries with Young People, United Methodist Board of Discipleship. The denomination's Book of Discipline states that a global convocation of young people will meet every four years "for the purpose of celebrating the mission and vitality of young people in the United Methodist Church."

Voting delegates from the five jurisdictions of the United States and from the seven central conferences in Africa, Asia and Europe considered 44 pieces of legislation to send to the 2008 United Methodist General Conference, which meets April 23-May 2, Fort Worth, Texas.

General Conference, the denomination's top legislative assembly, approved the creation of the Division on Ministries with Young People at its last meeting, in 2004.

The legislation approved in Johannesburg was translated into French and Portuguese,

and in order to pass, had to receive a two-thirds majority.

The two-thirds majority was important to Devin Mauney, a member of Christ Church United Methodist, Tucson, Ariz.

"We wanted to accurately represent the voice of young people at this convocation," he said. He noted there were two main streams of legislation: young people's representation in the church and statements on social issues.

"On the other side we had a lot of statements on social issues," he said. "We had one on war and peace that was very important. Young people came out with a very strong voice on issues of homosexuals' involvement in the church - what rights and privileges they have."

The youth passed legislation to ensure no person will be denied membership or ordination in The United Methodist Church



*The Africa University Choir, Mutare, Zimbabwe, provided spirited inspiration through song during the Global Young People's Convocation.*

*A UMNS photo by Kathy L. Gilbert.*

"because of their differences." The denomination's Book of Discipline forbids the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals.

"We had an opportunity to sit down and talk with people with whom we disagree," said Bryan Plummer, Tempe (Ariz.) First United Methodist Church. "While we passed a lot of legislation that will be turned down, I hope General Conference looks at this and sees where the future of church leadership is. I hope we can start looking at ways right now where we can reconcile where we are and where we are headed as a church." ▽

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## Pacific Northwest Reconciling Ministries Network Spring 2007



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