



Reconciling United Methodists and Friends of North Carolina

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2003 Annual Report

RUM-NC and Friends began the year with a series of programs about "telling our story." The group has published a collection of individual stories of people struggling with reconciling their sexual orientation with their involvement with an organized church that continues to fail to recognize us as full members of the connectional church. While we have been ostracized for refusing to be marginalized to the fringes of the establishment, we are gaining grounds for acceptance in a more inclusive church that doesn't set preconditions for full membership. We published a history of RUM-NC and shared our stories, and in the first three meetings of the year we discussed the group experience, our enrichment from the group's activities, and possible methods of developing a healthy conjunction between sexuality and spirituality.

For the seventh year, RUM-NC and Friends had an exhibit at the North Carolina Annual Conference, and more than a dozen members participated in various sessions or served at the exhibit table. In addition to a display with books and literature, complimentary food and drinks, the main attractions were the "silent witnesses" set up by Helen King just outside the entrance to the Cumberland County Arena. About 75 people attended the pizza lunch and worship service and heard the powerful messages from Bill Gattis and Rev. Dr. Gayle Felton. We added about 20 names to our e-mail list. Several of those who stopped by our table told their personal stories of concerns in their local churches and their personal situations and praised the opportunity to publicly and privately express their concerns with others. Everyone agreed that this was our best reception yet at the conference and that the winds of the Spirit were moving.

The group continued to meet monthly during the summer and fall. The highlight of the year was the "Voices Crying Out in the Wilderness" Conference held at Duke University September 27th with 125 attendees. Dr. Philip Wogaman opened the conference with a worship service in York Chapel of the Duke Divinity School. The group then split into a series of eight workshops that were repeated throughout the day so that most participants were able to attend all the sessions of their choice. These included:

- Didn't Wesley settle this 200 years ago?* A history of the struggle in the UMC by Dr. Gayle Felton.
- How Can We Shape the Discipline?* Conference resolutions by Dr. Belton Joyner.
- What Difference could I make at Conference?* Techniques for witnessing in love by Sam Isley, Helen King, and Dr. Jeane Aycock.
- How can I find out what my church believes?* Teaching "The Church Studies Homosexuality" course at University UMC, Chapel Hill.
- Pastor, my grandson is gay* Pastoral care for families of GLBT persons by Rev. Laurie Coffman.
- Has the Methodist Church ever Excluded any of God's Children Before?* Parallels between issues of race and homosexuality in the church by Dr. Houtha Hardman-Cromwell.
- What does the Bible Say About This?* An overview of biblical texts by Sue Laurie.
- The Kids are Alright* Video documentary by Triangle area GLBT teens produced by Nick Shepard.

The conference concluded with presentations by Reconciling Ministries Network Interim Director Cathy Knight and Keynote Speaker Jimmy Creech. The responses from the participants were for more sessions, more time, and more personal contacts throughout the year.

For a review of our plans for 2004, please see the report on our annual planning session.

We are the Reconciling United Methodists and Friends of North Carolina. We seek to make the United Methodist Church more inclusive of its gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender brothers and sisters.