

June 15, 2005

Dear RENEW Network Friend in the Southeastern Jurisdiction—

Recently, a friend in Washington State alerted us to an event scheduled for Labor Day Weekend at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. This letter comes to pass this information on to you and invite you to respond by praying, or by writing a letter or e-mail.

The event, “Hearts on Fire,” is being sponsored by Reconciling Ministries, a caucus within the UMC that advocates for the acceptance of homosexual practice. The RM web site (<http://rmnetwork.org>) displays this mission statement:

*Reconciling Ministries Network is a national grassroots organization that exists to enable full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life of the United Methodist Church, both in policy and practice.*

The “Hearts on Fire” event brochure states as one part of the gathering: “Together, we will be... Singing out *God of Rainbow, Fiery Pillar, leading where the eagles soar* as a rainbow community of faithful lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and heterosexual disciples committed to justice!” (You may view the brochure at the Reconciling Ministries’ web site by clicking on “Convo information page.”)

Speakers include two active bishops, Bishop Minerva Carcano and Bishop Susan Morrison, and one retired bishop, Bishop Richard Wilke. Also included in the speaker listing is Beth Stroud, a lesbian clergywoman from Pennsylvania who declared herself “self-avowed and practicing,” lost her credentials, and then had them reinstated upon appeal. This case has been referred to the Judicial Council for a final disposition.

The Rev. Karen Oliveto will also speak. She is the clergywoman from San Francisco who performed eight same-sex ceremonies, seven at City Hall and one at Bethany United Methodist Church, during the time that the City Council ruled such marriages “legal.” A complaint was filed against Rev. Oliveto, but was considered resolved when she left her church to become assistant dean for academic affairs and director of contextual education at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.

Reconciling Ministries expects at least 400 people of various sexual identities to attend this gathering.

Some may say, “well, we can’t do anything about it—they are just another caucus group, like Good News.” This is simply not true. Good News and other evangelical caucuses are *actively supportive* of the Disciplinary stance with regard to homosexuality. Reconciling Ministries is *actively working to undermine and change The Book of Discipline*. There is a vast difference.

If Reconciling Ministries can hold an event that is supportive of practice contrary to church law at Lake Junaluska, why not at Epworth-by-the-Sea, or Simpsonwood—or the conference assembly in *your* annual conference.

We need to alert lay and clergy in our conferences of this coming event and encourage those concerned to speak up by writing their bishop and district superintendents, and by writing the Executive Director at Lake Junaluska, Jimmy Carr at: SEJAC Office, P.O. Box 67, Lake Junaluska, NC 28745; [info@sejacumc.org](mailto:info@sejacumc.org).

Our letters or calls need to be courteous and respectful, but clear in our desire that groups that support and advocate violation of disciplinary standards not be allowed to meet at official church facilities. We can voice our support of the statement in the *Discipline* which affirms that all persons are of sacred worth, while identifying homosexual practice as “incompatible with Christian teaching.” (Par. 161, Pg. 101)

RENEW would welcome your response to this informational letter by mail or e-mail, [www.renewnetwork.org](http://www.renewnetwork.org).

Sincerely in Christ,

L. Faye Short  
President

NOTE: Since the time this letter was mailed, four additional bishops have consented to be a part of the “Hearts on Fire” event. They are: Joseph Sprague, Melvin Talbert, Sally Dyck and John Schol.