

## **RENEW NETWORK RESPONSE TO RECONCILING MINISTRIES CLERGY “OPEN LETTER”**

**By Faye Short, President, RENEW Network**

Read the following Scripture passages: I John 1; Romans 1:18-28; Jude; II Peter 2; II Timothy 3:1-5; Ephesians 4:17-19, 5:3-4. These passages affirm our understanding of God’s Word regarding those who move outside the bounds of Christian faith and practice and help to clarify our thinking in light of God’s requirements for humankind.

**The following is a response to the “Open Letter” recently sent to Dr. James Heidinger of Good News by Reconciling Ministries Clergy:**

**Opening greeting:** We are “sisters and brothers in Christ who share the Good News” only if we are in compliance with I John 1:6&7, *“If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”*

**Paragraph 2:** What constitutes being a truly “faithful” United Methodist? Baptism is based upon the confession of faith and our membership pledge “To renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of the world, and repent of their sin.” The scripture from Matthew 10:40 is totally misapplied in this paragraph.

**Paragraph 3:** “Hospitality” is not the “Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

**Paragraph 4:** We point people to the Reconciling Ministries web site not only for accuracy and openness, but because those who hold to the historic teachings of the Scripture regarding homosexual practice, and those who agree with the UMC’s current doctrinal standards, will have the spiritual discernment to see the obvious departures from truth when they read the web site.

**Paragraph 5:** We *strongly* hold to our conclusion that Reconciling Ministries should not be allowed to host an event at Lake Junaluska Assembly because the position taken by RM on human sexuality and homosexual practice are not in compliance with Scripture or the *Discipline*, and appear to violate the Junaluska guideline which states, “Groups using our facilities should have a mission compatible with Lake Junaluska Assembly and The United Methodist Church, its Discipline and Social Principles.”

**Paragraphs 6, 7 & 8:** The Reconciling Ministries position is in defiance of Scripture, over 2000 years of Church teaching and the *Discipline* of the United Methodist Church.

**Paragraph 9:** The bishops who have chosen to participate in this event are in equal defiance of all of the above and are not fulfilling their charge to “guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church.”

**Paragraph 10:** What is identified as a “gospel of radical hospitality” is none other than an attempt to sanction a behavior that is incompatible with Scripture and with Christian teaching.”

**Paragraph 11:** Unfortunately, “Hearts on Fire” will not provide a space for “healing the brokenness in the individual lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and heterosexual persons” for it will not offer the saving grace of Jesus Christ that will lead to repentance and forgiveness of sin and to the wholeness Christ brings to human sexuality.

**Paragraph 12:** We will always “differ strongly” on the issue of homosexuality when there is a call to change the standard of the church and of scripture to accommodate a practice that is “incompatible with Christian teaching.” Many General Conferences have affirmed the position of the United Methodist Church—in increasingly larger percentages. Those who are “divisive” are those who refuse to accept the decision of General Conference on this non-negotiable issue. As for Bill Hinson’s speech at the Good News breakfast at General Conference 2004, he spoke only of what already existed—an irreconcilable difference that is tearing at the soul of The United Methodist Church, threatening to destroy it.

**Paragraph 13:** The Holy Spirit of God *will not* move among those who refuse to be convicted of sin and come to repentance. How could this conference possibly have a “profoundly unifying effect.” This is a pipe dream predicated on a false view of Christ and His Church and denying the sexual purity to which God calls those who are His.