

The Marriage Debate: Part 2

By Executive Director, Karen Booth

Since our previous newsletter in December, the national debate over the redefinition of marriage has erupted into acts of civil disobedience, resulting in political and legal turmoil. Thirty eight states, including California, have adopted DOMA (Defense of Marriage Amendment) laws recognizing marriage as being only between one man and one woman. But that didn't stop San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom from directing the county clerk to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples on February 12. Over a hundred couples applied the first day, many of them "marrying" on the spot. By the end of the month, over 3200 licenses had been granted, including one to media icon Rosie O' Donnell and her female partner. While the California Supreme Court has recently – and perhaps only temporarily – put a stop to the licensing, several other cities quickly followed suit.

Officials in Portland Oregon began issuing licenses to same-sex couples the beginning of March, and a few weeks later, United Methodist Pastor Karen Dammann – who is currently under church charges – "married" her partner Meredith Savage. The San Jose City Council voted to recognize same-sex "marriages" done elsewhere. In Broward County Florida, 175 couples filed suit against the county clerk because the state of Florida bans same-sex "marriage." On the other hand, two Unitarian Universalist pastors in Kingston NY were themselves arrested for conducting thirteen same-sex "marriages."

The officials and couples who were interviewed tried to justify their illegal actions by appealing to the civil rights argument, one which was addressed in our previous newsletter. But several people were quite honest in admitting that their unions were mainly a political maneuver. One man said, "There is a part that doesn't feel romantic at all, but obviously it feels historic." Another woman opined, "Even people who are anti-gay marriage might shift their thinking now and realize it's most harmful to take something away when someone already has it."

Other newlyweds made a more emotional plea, maintaining that it's "all about love." Michael Silverman, whose ten year relationship is not recognized in his home state of Kansas, stated "In this society you grow up taught when two people love each other and want to commit their lives together, they get married ... It almost brought tears to my eyes when I saw the elderly couple in San Francisco getting married. I don't know how anyone with a heart could not be touched by it."

United Methodist Pastor Karen Oliveto – also currently under church charges – agrees with this argument. In an op-ed printed in the San Francisco Chronicle – "Love has everything to do with it" – she wrote: "Love moves in remarkable and mysterious ways, to bring couples together who are convinced that their lives are richer and more meaningful together than they are apart." Silverman and Oliveto's arguments fall into the



category of "emotivist ethics," the philosophical belief that choices of right and wrong are based on – or can be superseded by – purely personal feelings.

One of our TC supporters, Rev. Norman Williamsen doesn't believe that it's about marriage at all, at least as we currently understand it. In a recent letter he pointed out that the whole drive toward same-sex "marriage" isn't really about monogamy or life long covenantal relationship. He referred to several studies showing that so-called "committed" homosexual couples have not

been exclusively faithful to each other, nor on average have their relationships been particularly enduring. From that perspective, same-sex "marriage" seems to be more about an attempt to further legitimize homosexual practices and behaviors.

We urge all our readers to continue to put more thought and prayer into this matter, and to also consider taking some sort of political action in response. Dr. Warren Throckmorton's website - <http://www.drthrockmorton.com/article.asp?id=46> – once again offers a wide variety of well-written and pertinent articles.

TC is a member of the Association for Church Renewal (ACR), an ecumenical fellowship of leaders of mainline renewal and reform movements. At our March ACR meeting, the membership adopted the following statement, which was released to the press and will be given to the President and members of Congress. To date, 700+ additional Christian brothers and sisters have also endorsed it:

Marriage is the primary, essential institution of civil society. It has come under increasing attack from those who would remake marriage into the image of shifting cultural trends rather than affirm the unchanging design given to us at creation - a design recognized across cultures and history. We also acknowledge the unambiguous sociological evidence that children are best off with a mother and a father. It is becoming increasingly clear that legal measures to protect the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman are necessary to preserve the place of marriage in our society. We support measures protecting the definition of marriage, including the prompt adoption of the Federal Marriage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as necessary to safeguard this fundamental social institution from unwarranted and destructive revision.

You can get more information or add your endorsement online: <http://www.ird-renew.org/Issues/Issues.cfm?ID=831&c=9>

Or contact the ACR at:

Association for Church Renewal, 1110 Vermont Ave, NW,
Suite 1180, Washington DC 20005
202-969-8430

Jesus Speaks About Homosexuality

By Jerry Armelli, Director of Prodigal Ministries
(Reprinted by permission from Exodus "Spotlights")

The belief of certain circles is that Jesus did not specifically speak on the subject of homosexuality and since they believe He did not, then He must condone it and even bless it. It is a fact indeed that Jesus is never quoted as saying the word homosexual or the like. I will say at this point, however that when one person of the trinity speaks they all speak.

When our Creator-Father spoke then Jesus was also speaking. When the Holy Spirit spoke Jesus was speaking too. In addition, I have always seen in God's Written Word Him protecting heterosexual monogamous marriage: God warns against adultery, promiscuity, lusting, divorce and even the coveting of another man's wife. All of these commands are directed for the protection of the heterosexual monogamous relationship. No other type of relationship is guarded by God as this one. The Lord never gives directives for a homosexual relationship (monogamous or otherwise). In fact he guards the heterosexual monogamous relationship from homosexuality!

Let's look at his perfect intentions.

Mt. 19:3 "And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"

Obviously the question is regarding divorce. Why, then does Jesus answer in the following way: *(Mt. 19:4 – 5) "He answered, 'Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'"*

Jesus is quoting Gen. 1:27 & 2:24 above. Jesus has taken their question to a deeper level. It is not just a "man" and "wife" question. Jesus is desiring to bring the topic to include the Father's intentions for sexuality. He uses the words "male" and "female" to do this.

It is in this inclusive context that Jesus continues by saying, *Mt. 19:6 "What therefore God has joined together. Let not man put asunder."* The Father is commanding us to not put the male to female union asunder. Do not divorce the male to female union He says. The Creator-Father has designed male and female for one another specifically and exclusively.

Together male and female are the greatest reflection of the image of God. *Gen. 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* God is protecting the male and female relationship (thus the husband and wife relationship). The father has put very clear boundaries on the male and female relationship. No other relationship is for the male or female. No male to male, no female to female unions, no bestiality, lesbianism, polygamy, promiscuity....

"What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." *(Mt 19:6)* Once again the Father is clearly showing us His divine intentions regarding human sexuality. The Creator Father has designed male and female for one another specifically and exclusively. (Emphasis in original)

Going back to the Pharisees original question--Jesus answers them, but only after affirming heterosexual monogamy.

Was Jesus silent on the issue of homosexuality? I think it is clear in Jesus' teaching from Matthew chapter 19 that Jesus was aware that man's sinful condition could seduce one into sexual relationships outside of heterosexual monogamy.

Jesus says no to homosexuality.

Get the Word Out

(Practical Suggestions for TC Efforts)

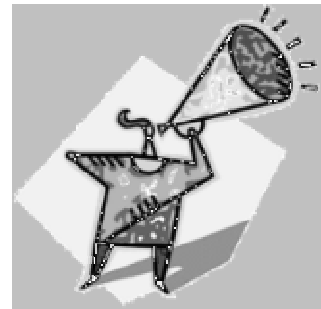
The Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church have issued a "Call to Prayer and Fasting" for General Conference. There are opportunities both on and off-site as volunteers, organizing prayer vigils, etc. For more online information, visit: www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=2513 and scroll down to the "Prayer Ministries" section. On this webpage, you can also track legislation to be more specific in prayer.

Pro-gay activists in Delaware recently donated a bundle of books promoting homosexuality to every local library in the state. Why not duplicate their efforts on a smaller scale? Donate a book or two about ex-gays or transformational ministry to your own local library. Regeneration Books have some good suggestions.

Regeneration Books
PO Box 9830
Baltimore, MD 21284
www.regenbooks.org

PFOX (Parents and Friends of Ex-gays and Gays) is hosting its second annual "Ex-Gay Lobbying Days" on Capitol Hill from May 12-14, including one evening of mandatory training and two days of visiting legislators to educate them about ex-gay issues. \$100 Registration fee includes dormitory type accommodations. For more information contact:

PFOX
Box 561
Fort Belvoir VA 22060
703-360-2225 or pfoxmom@rcn.com



Upcoming Events

"Love Won Out"

April 17, 2004 – Pensacola FL
June 12, 2004 – Raleigh NC

This dynamic one-day conference, sponsored by Focus on the Family, addresses understanding and preventing homosexuality. For more information on speakers, classes and registration, go to www.lovewonout.org or call 1-800-A-FAMILY.

"Restoring the Glory: Truth and Hope for a Sexually Darkened World" – Desert Hope Ministries

April 22-24 – First Presbyterian Church of Boulder, CO.
Keynote Speaker – Janelle Hallman.
Contact information: 303-277-8358,
deserthope@hotmail.com or www.restoringtheglory.com

Information about other local and regional events can be found on the Exodus International website
www.exodus-international.org/

Homosexuality and The United Methodist Church

By Executive Director, Karen Booth

In the early 1970s, the United Methodist Church began to re-examine its beliefs and policies about homosexuality. Should the denomination continue to affirm the traditional and Biblical understanding that same-sex behavior is sinful in the eyes of God, or should it reconsider and revise that teaching in light of changing cultural norms? The debate has played out over the last 32 years at the quadrennial General Conferences, the international legislative gatherings that speak with the only "official" voice for United Methodism. But in addition to the General Conferences, "unofficial" caucuses and ministries have also developed in response.

1968 – The Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren denominations merged to form the United Methodist Church. A four year study was mandated to review the Social Principles.

1972 – Several openly gay men were onsite at this General Conference to interact with delegates and to promote the practice of homosexuality. However, the delegates voted the following policy into the Social Principles of the *Book of Discipline*: "Homosexuals no less than heterosexuals are persons of sacred worth, who need the ministry and guidance of the church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship which enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. Further we insist that all persons are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured, although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." With minor revisions, this statement has remained the official denominational stance regarding homosexuality to this day.

The first mention of homosexual unions was made, but the language used was not legally binding – "We do not recommend marriage between two persons of the same sex."

In 1975 the United Methodist Gay Caucus, later called Gay United Methodists, was formed in Evanston, Illinois. Its stated mission: to affirm that homosexual life and love are not in rebellion against the will of God.

1976 – Motions to remove the "incompatibility" teaching about homosexuality failed. Same-sex union language was strengthened: "We do not recognize a relationship between two persons of the same sex as constituting marriage." Additional legislation was adopted to prohibit boards, agencies, committees, commissions or councils from financially supporting "gay" causes, groups or projects that promote the practice of homosexuality.

Gay United Methodists renamed themselves Affirmation in 1977 and hired professional staff to "lay a foundation of education, organizing and empowerment across the church." They began to develop the Reconciling Congregations Program to network supportive local churches. Several high-ranking denominational officials revealed that they were homosexuals.

1980 – Various petitions that would have prohibited the ordination of homosexual persons failed to pass. Specific reference to same-sex unions was removed, but traditional marriage was affirmed as the "covenant, which is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman."

1984 – In 1983, the Judicial Council (our denominational equivalent to the US Supreme Court) had ruled that practicing homosexuals were not officially barred from ordination or appointment, so clergy standards took center stage at this General Conference. Delegates decided that "self-avowed

practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers or appointed to serve in the United Methodist Church," and that clergy must commit to "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness."

The day after the vote, Affirmation volunteers were on hand to distribute flyers about Reconciling Congregations. Over the next several years, local churches, campus organizations, several Annual Conferences and the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns chose to affiliate with the Reconciling movement. RCP was renamed Reconciling Ministries Network in 2000. Today they claim as affiliates 192 congregations, 26 campus ministries and 19 other communities and ministries.

In 1987, the California-Nevada Annual Conference declared itself a "Reconciling Conference." The following year, the Cal-Nevada Evangelical Renewal Fellowship held several retreats to examine the church's responses to homosexuality and to propose a more Biblically compassionate response. The Transforming Congregations movement was launched that year, and today has 101 affiliated local churches.

Rev. Rose Mary Denman of the New Hampshire Annual Conference revealed to her Bishop that she was a practicing lesbian. She was brought to church trial in 1988, lost her clergy credentials and transferred to another denomination.

1988 – Legislation that barred homosexuals from church membership or lay leadership was defeated. The General Conference on Ministries was mandated to conduct a denomination-wide study on homosexuality that addressed the theological, ethical, biological, psychological and sociological concerns.

In 1991, the Reconciling Board began to officially address the issue of bisexuality.

1992 – The Study Committee proposed two changes: to recognize denominational differences of opinion regarding homosexuality and to remove the "incompatibility" language in the Social Principles. These changes were defeated by a 60/40% majority vote.

When Colorado voters passed a referendum prohibiting special gay rights within the state, denominational activists requested that the site of the upcoming General Conference be moved from Denver. The Commission on General Conference disallowed the move, but gave AMAR – Affirmation, the Methodist Society for Social Action and Reconciling Congregations – permission to stage a gay-friendly witness during a plenary session.

In 1996 the Reconciling magazine *Open Hands* broke new ground by devoting an entire issue to transgenderism.

1996 – Midway through the Conference, fifteen Bishops surprised their colleagues and the General Conference delegates by issuing a statement in favor of homosexuality. The full Council of Bishops issued a statement in response that acknowledged the differences of opinion within the College and in the denomination, recognized the legislative authority of the General Conference and *Book of Discipline*, and called for a denominational unity "not based upon uniformity of mind or conscience."

Nonetheless, the delegates added language to the Social Principles to prohibit same-sex unions. The legality of this prohibition was questioned and referred to the Judicial Council, which ruled in 1998 that it had "the force of church law." Pastors who conducted such unions could be brought to church trial for violating denominational discipline and order. The 2000 General Conference moved the statement to the clergy section of the *Discipline* where it appears in a list of "unauthorized conduct."

The Judicial Council also ruled that Annual Conferences – and presumably other church bodies such as local churches, agencies, commissions or jurisdictions – may not officially designate themselves as Reconciling, Transforming or Confessing.

Prior to the 2000 General Conference, acts of church disobedience began to make front-page news:

- In 1997, Rev. Jimmy Creech performed a same-sex union for two women in the Nebraska Annual Conference, for which he was acquitted in a church trial. A year later he performed a union for two men in North Carolina. Creech was tried again and stripped of his clergy credentials.
- In 1998, Rev Greg Dell of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference performed a same-sex union for two men in Chicago. He acknowledged that over the previous eighteen years he had performed 32 such services and that this one was in direct violation of the *Discipline*. He was taken to trial early in 1999, found guilty and suspended from his duties for one year. Nevertheless, he continued to work out of his local church as the Director of "In All Things Charity," another pro-gay special interest group. Bishop Joseph Sprague – who himself had performed several same-sex unions while a pastor in Columbus, Ohio – affirmed Dell's ministry and reappointed him in 2000.
- In 1999, Rev. Don Fado of the Cal-Nevada Annual Conference, 68 of his Conference colleagues and over 80 other ecumenical representatives (in absentia) performed a "holy union" for a lesbian couple in Sacramento. Official charges were brought against the attending pastors, but the Annual Conference Committee on Investigation dismissed the charges and Bishop Melvin Talbert, upheld the decision.

2000 – Gay activists led demonstrations outside the General Conference meeting hall in Cleveland, where 191 people were arrested. A protest organized by AMAR disrupted the Conference floor proceedings and resulted in the arrest of 30 people, including Bishops Joseph Sprague and Susan Morrison.

TC representatives also attended this General Conference to share their testimonies of freedom from homosexuality. Even so, the delegates chose not to enact legislation that would have directed the denomination to develop resources for transforming ministries.

By a 2/3 majority, the delegates once again voted to maintain the current standards and to add the following statement to the Social Principles – "We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn their lesbian and gay members and friends." The General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns was directed to engage the church in a continued dialogue about homosexuality.

In 2002, Rev. Richard Zomatsky, a pastor in the Baltimore Washington Annual Conference, returned from voluntary leave of absence as Rebecca Ann Steen, having undergone a sex-change operation. Because the *Discipline* does not specifically address transgenderism, Bishop Felton May announced he would reappoint Rev. Zomatsky/Steen to a local church. After additional complaints were filed, Zomatsky surrendered his clergy credentials.

Early in 2001, Rev. Karen Dammann of the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference told her Bishop and Board of Ordained Ministry that she was living in a "partnered, covenanted homosexual relationship." The Bishop filed official charges against her at the direction of the Judicial Council, but the Annual Conference Committee on Investigation and the Western Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals both voted to dismiss the charges. In October of 2003, the Judicial Council ruled that the Committee must abide by church law and that clergy who could not do so must excuse themselves from the jury. In January of 2004, the Committee voted to send Dammann's case to trail, which was scheduled for March 17, 2004.

In February of this year, Rev. Karen Oliveto, a co-Director of Reconciling Pastors, performed seven same-sex "marriages" in San Francisco City Hall and two in the sanctuary of Bethany

UMC, the church she serves. Charges were almost immediately filed against her and are still pending at the time of this writing.

2004 – General Conference will be held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from April 27 – May 7. Once again, unofficial caucuses, denominational agencies, Annual Conferences, local churches and individuals have proposed legislation that would liberalize, maintain or strengthen our current standards regarding sexuality and marriage.

For the first time this year, the TC Board of Directors has submitted several legislative petitions, full copies of which you may have by mail or email. If passed, the petitions would:

- prohibit local church funding of pro-gay groups and projects;
- prohibit the ordination and appointment of transgendered clergy;
- support the Federal Marriage Amendment;
- most importantly – direct the General Board of Discipleship to develop resources for transformational ministry.

AMAR will be onsite to represent "progressive" United Methodists and to lobby for liberalization of our policy about sexuality, including a request for a denomination-wide study on transgenderism.

TC will also have a team onsite, to network with denominational renewal groups, to interact with delegates, to bear witness to the transforming grace of God in the lives of former homosexuals, and to encourage the General Conference to maintain, clarify and strengthen our current position.

We ask you to keep our TC team uplifted in prayer – Director Karen Booth, Bonnie Doebley, Betty and Larry Baker, John and Pat Beadle, John Collier, Mark Ongley, and former homosexuals joining us from local Pittsburgh Exodus affiliates. We want to be bold with the truth. But we also hope we can be a compassionate and calming presence, modeling obedience to church authority and trust in the legislative process.

People on both sides of the issue are predicting that the votes this year will be even more strongly in favor of our current standards. But when the "political dust" settles, where will that leave same-sex strugglers?

Mark Ongley has some words of wisdom in that regard.

In a recent issue of the Western Pennsylvania evangelical newsletter he wrote the following: "While the din and discord will doubtless continue for many years, it seems this issue will be relegated to the back pew – within shouting range, but no longer front and center ... I have a nagging concern. Are our churches any more welcoming of the sexually broken now than they were three quadrennia ago? Are we any better equipped to help them find wholeness?"

We Need Your Help!!!

In addition to praying for our TC team, you can:

Contact your Annual Conference delegation and encourage them to vote in favor of legislation that would retain our current *Discipline* standards, support the Federal Marriage Amendment and direct the denomination to develop transforming ministry resources. You can get their names and contact information from your Annual Conference office.

Donate to our General Conference effort with a designated financial gift. We will incur many expenses that are not covered in our operating budget, such as travel, room and board for the team, publication of a daily newsletter, copies of testimonies and other resource handouts, honorariums to the local Exodus affiliates, etc. We ask, however, that you do not neglect your regular church or TC giving to do so.

MISSING THE MARK? by Faye Short

"Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins." --James 4:17

Weeping and heaviness of heart overcame me even as General Conference 2000 delegates "held the line" on the United Methodist position on homosexual practice and the ordination of homosexuals. Why did I feel this way, since I am an evangelical who firmly believes in the church's position on homosexuality and on the biblical witness regarding it?

I saw too clearly that we had maintained our standards—as well we should—while we had rejected legislation to be in ministry to homosexual persons. I heard too clearly the young man who had invaded the floor of General Conference saying, "We are the children who came up through United Methodist Sunday Schools, through Confirmation and who are members of this church. Why do you reject us?" My heart said, "Yes, you are—and we failed you miserably because we did not provide what you needed as you struggled with homosexuality." I felt too clearly the heart of God for these militant, demanding, hurting people who were, for the most part, sincere in their cry for acceptance.

What to do? I returned home thinking that the church *must* begin ministries to homosexual persons that affirmed their sacred worth yet called them to a transformed life. Following another incident in my own conference that showcased again our failure as a church to be *in ministry* to homosexual persons, I approached several prominent pastors in my conference, and my own district superintendent, offering researched information that included excellent resources for our use in such a ministry. Most agreed that the need was there. None took it beyond the discussion level.

As we face General Conference 2004, is it any wonder that the homosexual issue is still with us—still threatening the whole tenor of this upcoming UM Church conference? Will we hold the line again? I hope so. But, will that line say, "Keep Out!"—or will it say "Come on in through the shed blood of Jesus Christ that transforms us all from sinners to saints"? It is past time for legislation that initiates the process of making transforming ministries a hallmark of United Methodism. What a challenge in today's permissive culture! But, if God is for it—dare we be against it?



Director's Report

Since the beginning of the New Year, I have had so many opportunities to share the message and ministry of Transforming Congregations: I served

as Team Spiritual Director at **one of the largest youth rallies on the East Coast**. Over 4000 youth and leaders heard about the love and salvation of Jesus Christ, and how He calls them in faith to sexual purity. TC had a display there, and by the second day kids and adults came looking for it. It was great to meet and talk with so many people, to answer questions, field objections, and give out some very needed resources. I also did some intensive "one-on-one" counseling with several older teen girls and one of the workshop leaders.

TC did a program for one evening of a **week long "Mission Fair" in a church near Lancaster, PA**. Board Member Bonnie Doebley ("Out of the Depths" ministry) and a man from Day 7 Ministries in Lancaster joined me to share their testimonies of transformation. We also showed the "Introduction to Exodus" video and information about how to become a transforming congregation. An informal breakfast on Saturday allowed us to answer more questions and interact with the other missionaries.

The next Sunday I did a similar presentation in Reading, PA for the **Evangelical Lutheran Confessing Fellowship**, a renewal group within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ECLA). Over a hundred pastors and laity came out to hear how they might take a "transforming" approach in response to their own denominational struggle with homosexuality.

I preached at four local churches in Delaware and Pennsylvania, and also spoke to pastors and laity at two gatherings on my District. Most of the attendees responded well, but I also encountered some unconcealed homophobia. We have much work to do in order to overcome the deep-seated fear and rejection of same-sex strugglers.

Networking with other renewal groups and leaders took a great deal of time and promises to bear much good fruit.

The **Good News Board of Directors** met me for the first time. They were very gracious and also generous with a financial gift to our ministry. Most of our time together was spent strategizing for General Conference.

I am a member of the **RENEW Network Steering Committee**, and it's always a joy to fellowship with the gifted and faithful women there. We have an exciting **book project "in the works" with Bristol House** – "Women at the Well" – stories of women who have healed from female sexual sin. Look for it some time in 2005.

TC is also a member of the **Association for Church Renewal**, a fellowship of leaders from mainline reform and renewal groups. In addition to issuing a statement about traditional marriage, we encouraged and challenged each other to "keep on keeping on." (See front page article.)

Transforming Congregations had a great deal of **media exposure** this quarter. I was interviewed by three newspapers, a Philadelphia TV station and the *United Methodist Reporter* and asked to comment on traditional marriage and the church disobedience of Rev. Karen Oliveto. As a result, ministry contacts have increased: counseling with family members of strugglers, providing resources for a Christian college student doing a paper on same-sex marriage, helping someone speak "truth in love" to his Reconciling church family.

We are so pleased to welcome **Barbara Hicks as the newest member of our Board of Directors**. Barbara is a lay minister at Windsor Village UMC in Houston, TX, where she is a vital member of the congregational prayer team and Director of a new sexual healing ministry called "Metanoia." Please pray that God will bless Barbara and her ministry and that her service with TC will be fruitful and fulfilling.

Finally, please keep **our financial situation** in your prayers, and if you are so led, we would greatly appreciate your donation. First quarter giving is typically low; and while we entered 2004 on solid footing, our donations are not keeping up to our regular operating expenses. Our special General Conference efforts will call for even more.

Blessings ... Karen