

## FAQs: PVUMC Joining Reconciling Ministries Network

1. What is Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) and what are the requirements to join and remain a member? Is there a cost?

RMN is an advocacy organization that works on behalf of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Its mission statement is:

*“Living into our shared baptismal covenant, Reconciling Ministries Network equips and mobilizes United Methodists to resist evil, injustice, and oppression as we seek justice for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.”<sup>1</sup>*

For a church to become a Reconciling Church through the RMN, it would need to do the following:<sup>2</sup>

- a. Craft and adopt a statement that affirms LGBTQ+ persons – The inclusivity statement we developed three years ago explicitly welcomes people, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, among other demographics.
- b. Complete the New Reconciling Community Form – This is a one-page form that asks for our address, our website, contact information, etc.
- c. Take a high-resolution photo – This photo will accompany our reconciling statement and New Reconciling Community Form in the RMN records. It will also be shared via the RMN for anyone looking for a church via their “church locator” tool.

After submitting the above documentation and form, RMN would either accept or deny our application to become affiliated with their organization. Should we be accepted, they only ask that we keep our inclusivity statement visible.

There is no cost to this process, though RMN does accept donations to help offset the cost.

2. Why do some believe that PVUMC should join RMN? Is there an actual need to do this? Pretty much everyone believes PVUMC is already an inclusive church and markets itself as such.

It is true that our church continues to make strides towards becoming a more inclusive, welcoming faith community. Our [inclusivity statement](#) is a wonderful way

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<sup>1</sup><https://rmnetwork.org/who-we-are/mission/>

<sup>2</sup><https://rmnetwork.org/take-community-action/become-a-reconciling-congregation-or-community/>

for us to express our intention to welcome everyone. However, joining RMN would benefit us in the following ways:

- a. Give us yet another platform (the RMN website) to make ourselves known to members of the LGBTQ+ community who are looking for a church.
- b. Allow us to affiliate with a known organization, making it clear to people who are familiar with the term “reconciling” and RMN that we are a church to which they can belong. We will have resources available for us to learn from as we continue our journey of becoming a more diverse church.

3. What other churches in the Phoenix area are part of RMN and what has been the effect on their membership and attendance?

A full list of the churches that are a part of RMN can be found here:  
[rmnetwork.org/find-a-reconciling-community](http://rmnetwork.org/find-a-reconciling-community)

There are many factors that contribute to a church’s growth or decline. While there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest a wide variety of results among churches who have joined RMN, it is far more likely that it is a combination of things – not just joining RMN.

4. The RMN website says that the Desert Southwest Conference (DSC) is a member of RMN. PVUMC is part of the DSC. Is it sufficient for PVUMC to be a reconciling church through the DSC?

When the DSC became a member, there was a vote by the annual conference, as a statement of commitment. The DSC then created a “Reconciling Ministries Committee” to do Conference-wide ministry. Joining as a congregation at PVUMC would be a similar opportunity to express commitment to inclusiveness ministry.

5. What has RMN said and done in the past? Has it taken any positions with which PVUMC might be uncomfortable?

RMN has been an active advocacy organization, offering workshops, conferences and other learning opportunities. RMN has worked for full inclusion of LGBTQ+ community in our denomination, including advocating for same gender marriage and ordination. RMN has organized efforts at the past few General Conferences to advocate for the changes in our Book of Discipline that were considered harmful to the LGBTQ+ community. Some have felt those efforts were disruptive.

6. Would joining RMN have any effect on current church ministries?

It is always up to us at PVUMC to determine how our own ministries will work and the activities we want to do. RMN does not have requirements for what local church ministries should do or accomplish. Those would be up to us to determine.

7. Does RMN have required or recommended Sunday School curriculum or other resources for either children or adults? What about a sermon series? Will PVUMC curriculum change?

RMN does not require churches to use any specific curriculum within its own classes and/or sermons. The RMN website includes a comprehensive list of books, articles, and other resources for churches to use at their discretion. As is currently the case, we trust our small group leaders and teachers to choose class materials that align with the mission and vision of PVUMC.

8. Does RMN require or recommend advocacy activities? Will PVUMC participate in sexual orientation/gender identity advocacy activities?

RMN is primarily an advocacy organization, so it does recommend that member churches also work for justice for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. PVUMC has participated in both direct and indirect advocacy in the past. We created Open Tables for young adult members of the LGBTQ+ community. Our church has its own PFLAG meeting, a support group for LGBTQ+ people and allies. We have also sent members of our church to events like the Gay Pride Festival in Phoenix to work at the Desert Southwest Conference booth. Future activities would be up to us to determine.

9. Does a church have to use the RMN flag, colors and logo? Where will these be displayed? Will they replace the UMC branding?

No. There is no requirement to use RMN branding (including flags, colors, or logos) on any of our marketing material or within our worship spaces.

10. What is PVUMC doing/should be doing about inclusiveness toward other **“categories” and attracting/making feel welcome** all people?

We have had many discussions about ministries for different types of persons (elderly, disabled, etc). Sometimes we have been able to develop ministries, educational events, support, but this usually depends on whether there is interest, support and leadership emerges from our congregation. When that happens, we generally take action.

Through our Growth and Vitality Initiative at PVUMC we will also be working on our overall welcoming for newcomers and visitors to our congregation. Our larger capacity for welcoming people to worship and our ministries is a long and important effort to help our congregation to grow.

11. RMN is a one-issue organization; would joining dilute the message of inclusiveness of others?

Addressing issues of inclusiveness for LGBTQ+ persons has been among the most difficult and fractious concerns facing the church for some time and has required a consistent and dedicated effort. As we make progress on this we will certainly learn how to do a better job of inclusiveness towards all. We learn to understand the hidden barriers we have constructed at church. We learn to see through the eyes of people unlike us who are coming to our church for the first time. We learn how to respond in a more appropriate and welcoming manner.

12. **What is PVUMC's** process from this point forward and who will decide PVUMC will join RMN? What is the overall timing? This was a very divisive issue previously. How do we prevent that from happening again?

PVUMC is dedicated to maintaining unity and transparency throughout this conversation. The Church Council will seek to vote on the matter of PVUMC joining RMN at the next council meeting on June 4, 2019. However, each council member has taken the time to understand not only what RMN stands for and what it would mean to join, but is also dedicated to representing the overall congregation. By holding the informational meeting on May 19, 2019, we hope that it has allowed the conversation to be open and all questions to be welcomed. If you continue to have questions or would like to discuss any concerns, please contact the pastoral staff or a council member listed below:

#### Church Council Members:

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- **Pat Bacon**, Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee Chair, [patbacon8165@gmail.com](mailto:patbacon8165@gmail.com)
- **Karen Bloch**, Learning & Living Team Co-chair, [Bloch4@cox.net](mailto:Bloch4@cox.net)
- **Susan Bowers**, Worship, Music & Fine Arts Team Chair, [bowers.susan@yahoo.com](mailto:bowers.susan@yahoo.com)
- **Marge Dennis**, New Members Ministry Team Chair, [mamacitamarge@aol.com](mailto:mamacitamarge@aol.com)
- **Debbie Doran**, Church Council Secretary, [ddoran@pvumc.org](mailto:ddoran@pvumc.org)
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