

"I am setting a
plumb line in the
midst of my people..."

Amos 7:8



WITNESS

Oregon-Idaho Chapter, Methodist Federation for Social Action

May 15, 2021

"You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result."
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

What is truth?
What is the cost of telling the truth?

Let's start with something that might seem a bit easier. Think of a time in your childhood when you were required to tell the truth. What were the consequences? As children, we may have felt that the consequences were enormous (and in some situations they were). Yet those childhood moments may seem simplistic compared to what we encounter as adults needing to discern and tell the truth.

How do we determine what is truth? What evidence is required before you believe something to be true? In the 8th chapter of John's gospel, we read about Jesus and his encounter with the Pharisees and others who do not believe him. What is truth and how can the truth set you free?

For the past few months, I have been engaged in a dialogue group on racism. We have spent several sessions looking at the history of various peoples of color in relation to the United States. And we have discovered how much of history we do not know. We are also learning to deal with the consequences of what one group of people considers the truth, while that same truth causes great harm to another group of people. Truth does not always look the same to everyone. Those of us who live with privilege because of our skin color, our economic status, our sexual orientation... those of us who live with privilege must always examine the truth before us and ask ourselves who is being harmed by this truth.

Who is being harmed when our history books tell only one side of the story of our history? Who is being harmed when our country cannot agree on who won the 2020 presidential election? Who is being harmed when people declare as truth that Covid-19 is not real? Who is being harmed when misinformation is spoken as truth about the safety of vaccines?



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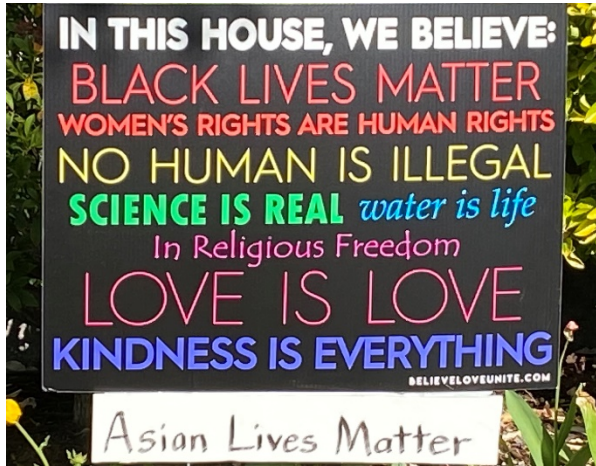
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NOW'S THE TIME FOR ACTION

And when we have determined the truth as we understand it, we must speak it to others. We must speak for those who have had their voice taken away by circumstances or by those of us who live with privilege.

What is truth?

Working Together for
Justice,
Karen Nelson



Dates to Remember

May 19:
1:00-3:00pm PT/2:00-4:00pm MT
Oregon-Idaho MFSA Executive Board meeting, via ZOOM

June 5:
3:00pm PT
Webinar about the Christmas Covenant proposal.
<https://wmjm.org/web/>

June 16:
1:00-3:00pm PT/2:00-4:00pm MT
Oregon-Idaho MFSA Executive Board meeting, via ZOOM

June 16:
6:00pm PT/7:00pm MT
Oregon-Idaho MFSA Virtual Annual Meeting

July 21:
1:00-3:00pm PT/2:00-4:00pm MT
Oregon-Idaho MFSA Executive Board meeting, via ZOOM

August 10: Newsletter submission Deadline

www.oimfsa.org
oregonidaho@mfsaweb.org



ARE YOU AN MFSA MEMBER?
TO JOIN OR RENEW, CLICK HERE.

YOU ARE INVITED to any of our regular MFSA Board meetings!

We are meeting virtually every month, on the 3th Wednesday, from 1:00pm-3:00pm PT/2:00pm-4:00pm MT.

These meetings sometimes begin with a short program on topics relating to social justice. If YOU or your group has an idea for a future program you would like to share, please let us know!

The next scheduled meeting is:

May 19 via ZOOM

If you want to join us, please contact Karen Nelson for the ZOOM link.

NEWS, OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTION

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS IN SOUTHERN OREGON

In January of 2020 over 250 people crowded into the sanctuary at Bethany Presbyterian Church in Grants Pass, OR (before COVID) for an annual community Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration. In years past the celebration was held at Newman United Methodist Church, but grew beyond the church's physical capacity to host the event. In 2019, Newman UMC partnered with Bethany Presbyterian and St. Luke's Episcopal Churches to pull off the event which included live music, key note speakers, and a panel discussion on racism in Southern Oregon.



Courageous Conversations planning team (Sarah Bristol)

As a result of this event, it became clear that the community was seeking more opportunities to engage in conversations around race and systemic oppression. These are conversations that rarely happen in predominantly white and conservative Grants Pass. Seeing this need for deeper conversation the three churches partnered up with Rogue Community College to host monthly conversations on systemic oppression, specifically as it relates to Southern Oregon, thus the Courageous Conversations Project was born.

In May of 2020 the first Courageous Conversations event was hosted on zoom and has continued monthly covering a wide variety of topics. The events are moderated by Rev. Ryan Scott of Newman UMC, Rev. Tom Berry of Bethany Presbyterian, Rev. Ernestein Flemister of St. Luke's Episcopal, Sally Snyder and Jenny Jackson of Rogue Community College.

Over the one year these conversations have been happening the group has discussed Grants Pass' history as a sundown town, the local historical and ongoing conflicts with Indigenous People, the leadership of women throughout the civil rights movement, environmental racism, and so much more. "These events have allowed us to engage with the community in an ongoing and meaningful way around issues that matter." Says Rev. Ryan Scott, the pastor at Newman UMC. "Not only are we engaging in important topics, we are building connections and relationships that will strengthen our community for years to come."

The Courageous Conversation events are varied in their structure. Some months the event includes a guest speaker and a Q&A session. Other months the moderators lead a guided discussion and then divide the group into smaller breakout rooms for further conversation. In any case participants are sure to leave with new perspectives and perhaps a new or better understanding of the issues of systemic oppression.

"The goal of The Courageous Conversations Project is to get the community talking to one another and to educate ourselves so that we can engage meaningfully with issues of systemic oppression in our community." Says Scott. On May 25th the Courageous Conversations event is titled: "Putting the Civil Back in Civil Discourse." In June, Rev. Scott will be leading a discussion on the Queer Liberation Movement for LGBTQ+ Pride Month.

The Courageous Conversations Project shows what can be done when church reaches beyond denominational boundaries and into the community. "The community response has been very positive," says Scott, "we regularly have over 60 people in attendance. Some of the participants are church members, however most of them had no prior relationship with the church. Not only has this project been a great way to engage in important topics, it has also been a wonderful tool to reach out to our community and deepen our relationship with Christ."

The next Courageous Conversations event will be held on May 25th 12:00pm-1:00pm on Zoom. Anyone is welcome to join in. You don't need to be from Southern Oregon, however, some of the conversation is specific to communities and events in the Rogue Valley region. To access the zoom link visit:

<https://web.roguecc.edu/diversity-board>

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MEETS APRIL 23-24

Rev. Steve Mitchell

Note: This summary is subject to error, as I failed to record votes on the actions as we met. So do check for the actual report from the Legislative Assembly. I apologize for any errors I made.

Action Requests and Standing Resolutions proposed by members of the Annual Conference or bodies of the Annual Conference for action by the 2021 Session of Annual Conference were considered by the Legislative Assembly on April 23 and 24. The Legislative Assembly recommends actions to be taken by the Annual Conference on each item. The Legislative Assembly also has the power to revise and rewrite proposals to be submitted in place of the items.

The Annual Conference packet will include the Action Requests and the changes and recommendations of the Legislative Assembly, and they can be found on the 2021 Annual Conference webpage at <https://www.umo.org/ac> on the Annual Conference and Rules section. At the time of writing this, the Legislative Assembly packet holds the original proposals. There is another packet of amendments to be considered at the Saturday session of the Legislative Assembly that will show additional actions taken.

Here is a summary of the Action requests and Standing Resolutions and the actions for or against recommended by the Legislative Assembly. MFSA will send out recommendations for how to vote in a later email.

Consent Calendar for Approval, Majority Vote Needed:

- *AR 2 Revision of Board of Ordained Ministry Scholarship Policy.* To include supply pastors and raise limits to \$1000.
- *AR 5 Clarify Sexual Ethics Policy to Include Retired Clergy.* The title is pretty self-explanatory of the purpose of this Action Request.
- *AR 7 Delete Conference Rule 10.042. (Clergy Election vote percentage)* This Rule requires a 2/3 vote by clergy for election as a member and ordination, but the Discipline requires a 3/4 vote, so the rule is invalid. (This may require a 2/3 vote to change, but it is moot since it conflicts with the *Discipline*.)
- *AR 12 Amending Clergy Housing Standards and Policy.* updates and adds to the current policy. The Assembly made an addendum to the original proposal.
- *AR 13 Join the Oregon Interfaith Solar Campaign.* encourages local congregations to participate in this opportunity, or at least to study the possibility and its implications for fighting climate change.

Consent Calendar for Approval, 2/3 Vote Needed (Standing Resolutions and Conference Rules)

- *AR 1- Revision of Conference Rule 10.011.* Revision of the rule requiring psychological testing for candidates for ministry to include those applying for Certified Lay Ministry; also changes \$200 fee requirement by local church to 1/3 of the cost by entities considering the candidacy.
- *AR 10 New Conference Rule 2.041c.* This rule clarifies that Action Requests/Standing Resolutions that are recommended by the Legislative Assembly for defeat will still come to the Plenary Session for vote, even if the item does not appear on the Consent Calendar for Defeat, as Conference Rules clearly state that the Plenary Session takes the final action on items submitted.
- *SR1 Supporting Sanctuary for Immigrants and Refugees.* This renews a current Standing Resolution.
- *SR 4 Supporting Middle East Peace Efforts.* This is a renewal of a current Standing Resolution.
- *SR 5 Supporting the Right to Peacefully Address Injustice through Boycotts.* This is a renewal of a current Standing Resolution.

Action Requests Recommended for Approval but Not on the Consent Calendar

- *AR 3 Support for Christmas Covenant Proposals.* This is a proposal for General Conference to create a U.S. Central Conference, similar to the Central Conferences of other countries. Provisions would be made for

each Central Conference to determine ordination standards for ministry while also maintaining our denomination as a global church. The Action Request includes a link to a website with more information about this proposal. It is also acknowledged that there are several other proposals being made. This is one of several potential directions to be taken by the next General Conference regarding unity/separation of the denomination.

- *SR 3 Confronting Racism and White Supremacy.* A new Standing Resolution encouraging us to do this, in light of events of the past year, not to mention our ongoing history. A 2/3 vote in favor is required to establish this as a Standing Resolution.
- *AR11 Methodist Ministry on Eugenics, Neurodiversity, and Disabilities.* This was referred to a group in the Legislative Assembly to be rewritten to become a Standing Resolution, with additional changes, including eliminating it as a position on the Annual Conference Staff. See Proposed SR 6 for the proposed change. The proposed Standing Resolution #6 will require a 2/3 vote in favor.

Actions Referred and/or to be Considered at a Special Legislative Assembly Session June 15

- *AR 4 Calculating Unfunded Pension Liabilities.* This proposal offers a formula for determining the amount of pension liability a congregation choosing to disaffiliate from the denomination over its stand regarding LGBTQIA issues would have to pay (along with other items). The formula claims to be a more fair division of the liability than simply using the apportionment grade figure, by basing the pension liability on payments the congregation itself has made into the pension fund.

The above item was referred to the Conference's Board of Trustees, the Council on Finance and Administration, and the Board of Pensions for action and recommendation.

- *AR 8 and AR 9 Regarding Lay Members of Annual Conference for New Church Starts.* Referred to the Conference Rules Committee and the Conference Secretary for further work, as the Bishop questioned their legality and the Conference Secretary had concerns about certifying such members for Annual Conference participation. Watch for the report back on this.
- *SR 7 Climate Change.* The Legislative Assembly will consider this item, a renewal of an existing Standing Resolution, as it was inadvertently left out of the packet for the original meeting of the Assembly.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THE WESTERN JURISDICTION?

Rev. Karen Nelson

On April 30 and May 1, more than 100 people from around the Western Jurisdiction gathered by zoom to discuss what it means to be the Western Jurisdiction. This gathering was planned by a team of grassroots organizers from all of the Annual Conferences of the jurisdiction. Friday evening was spent looking at the values of the jurisdiction through a lens of worship. Saturday included small group work around the four primary issues from the Team of Ten report, as well as large group presentations, worship, and menti polls.

This gathering was the first of several that will happen throughout the next year as we begin to discern who we are as the Western Jurisdiction and where we want to go as a jurisdiction. Resource materials that were used to guide the first gathering can be found at www.wjstakeholders.org . When you get to the webpage, click on resources to see a variety of documents. The planning team will be adding material created by large and small groups at the gathering in the coming weeks so you can take a look at what the discussion looks like so far. Future gatherings are planned for late summer and into the fall. If you are interested in participating in future gatherings, go to the website and send your contact information to the e-mail at the bottom of the home page.



WEBINAR OFFERS UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTMAS COVENANT

Greg Nelson

Western Methodist Justice Movement will be hosting a webinar on the Christmas Covenant proposal for restructuring the UMC titled *Decolonizing the Church: True Regionalization for the UMC*. Initiated by United Methodists outside the United States, the Christmas Covenant builds on the work of the Connectional Table and does not conflict with the *Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation* that has also been proposed to the General Conference.

The Christmas Covenant goal is to establish regional equity in the structures of the church for missional effectiveness while sustaining connectional unity. It is rooted in the following values: connectional relationships rooted in mission, respect for contextual ministry settings, and legislative equality for regional bodies of the church. The Christmas Covenant legislation was written primarily by United Methodists from Africa, Europe and the Philippines. In February, 2020 it was passed by the Philippines Annual Conference - Cavite and submitted to the next General Conference. The Connectional Table (CT) affirms the Christmas Covenant as an “expression of the CT’s commitment to institutional equity and to dismantling historic, systemic colonialism.”

The webinar will be June 5, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. PDT. Register online now!
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMpc-yupjstHdTIMIV1_rkkO42SIusXLu-8



JOIN OUR VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING

Jan Nelson

Enjoy an evening with justice seeking friends from around the annual conference! The Oregon-Idaho chapter will meet virtually for our annual meeting on Wednesday, June 16 at 6:00 pm Pacific time/7:00 pm Mountain time. Our guest speaker will be Bridget Cabrera, Executive Director of MFSA. Through the magic of technology, Bridget will be with us from the national office in Detroit, Michigan to share the bigger picture of MFSA’s work. We will also worship together, discuss legislation that will come before the annual conference session, and hear brief reports on membership, finance, and nominations.



Please put this date on your calendar now. Watch for more details and a registration link coming in the next few weeks. We hope to see you to celebrate justice and joy.

ACTION OF THE WEEK

Rev. Karen Nelson

A quarterly newsletter is not always the best way to share information about social justice actions that need to be taken. And the newsletter only goes to a limited e-mail list. How do we get information about important actions out to more people in a more timely way?



Those were the threads of a conversation at a recent MFSA board meeting. We are gathering together a list of actions to share on social media – one each week. Our hope is that once you take action on an issue, you will

share it with others in your congregation and circles of friends. Watch for "Action of the Week" coming soon to the MFSA Facebook page.

SACRED GROUND CIRCLE RESOURCES OFFER RACISM INSIGHTS

Greg Nelson

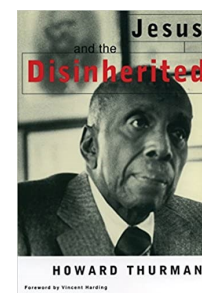
Oregon-Idaho Camp and Retreat Ministries has been sponsoring a program on understanding and fighting racism based on a program of the Episcopal church called Sacred Ground.

The program is based on watching a video segment for each session, two core books and supplemental articles. Even if you aren't doing the full program, some of the video segments can offer great learning opportunities.

Here's a sampling:

- 'American Creed' looks at what it means to be "American" from different perspectives. (86 min.) <https://www.americancreed.org>
- 'The myth of race, debunked in 3 minutes' is a video by vox.com that helps to show how race is a social construct, not a scientific one. <https://www.vox.com/2015/1/13/7536655/race-myth-debunked>
- 'The African Americans: The Black Atlantic' is available if you have a PBS Passport account (login, then search for it). It explores the truly global experiences that created the African American people and how that history predates North American colonization.
- [A Geography Lesson for the Tea Party](#) is an article by Collin Woodard in Washington Monthly magazine. It gives an insight into how regional divides affect the United States in ways more complex than just north or south, red, or blue.

<https://washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/novdec-2011/a-geography-lesson-for-the-tea-party/>



Videos like these, and the two core books, *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Howard Thurman and *Waking Up White* by Debbie Irving make for an excellent viewing and reading, even if you are not in the course.

https://www.amazon.com/Jesus-Disinherited-Howard-Thurman/dp/0807010294/ref=sr_1_1

https://www.amazon.com/Waking-White-Finding-Myself-Story/dp/0991331303/ref=sr_1_1

To see all the videos (some are not available without a course password) and fully participate in the conversation, consider joining a future Sacred Ground Circle. See Todd Bartlett's invitation in the camping e-news for more information. <https://umoi-email.brtaapp.com/viewemail/2954011>

NOW'S THE TIME FOR ACTION

Now is the time to continue to push for broad systemic change. Here are a few ways you can take action to seek justice:

- The [Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice](#) (IMiRJ) will host **IMiRJ Advocacy Nights** on the 2nd Monday of each month from 6:00-7:30pm. [RSVP here](#) and invite your friends to join you! We also invite you to [add your name to this letter to our Oregon State Legislators](#), as we urge them to practice accountability, defend democracy and advance justice alongside us.
- Write to the leadership of the township of Fairfield, CT to contact Sturm Ruger, the largest firearm manufacturer in the United States with headquarters in Fairfield, and [demand the company suspend weapon and bullet sales to Israel](#).
- [Hold President Biden accountable to his promise to restore refugee resettlement](#) by contacting your members of Congress and amplifying this call on social media with the hashtag #RestoringWelcome.

- ❑ [Sign the petition to call on the Biden administration to rescind Title 42](#), a Trump era policy still in place that expels asylum seekers back to their home country without any chance to seek protection.
- ❑ Tell President Biden and Vice President Harris to hold Israel accountable to its obligations as an occupying power and [insist that Israel provide COVID-19 vaccines equally and fairly to Palestinians living under its occupation](#).
- ❑ [Contact your elected officials to take an intersectional response to the incidents of AAPI hate](#) and to center the needs of those most impacted, Asian American women and elders.
- ❑ Manufacturing in an illegal Israeli settlement is a war crime. Tell General Mills to stop making Pillsbury products on stolen Palestinian land by [signing the petition](#), [sending an email to the CEO](#), and [#BoycottPillsbury](#).
- ❑ Join the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and students around the U.S. and [send an email to major U.S. food delivery services to "stop doing business with Wendy's"](#) until the hamburger giant ensures enforceable protections for farmworkers' human rights by joining the Fair Food Program."
- ❑ Learn how you and your ministry can truly embody open hospitality by [enrolling in Be A Disciple's courses and getting a Certification in Ministry with People with Disabilities](#).
- ❑ Check out the [BDS Toolkit](#) and learn what economic actions you can take to fight along the side of Palestinians and their struggle.
- ❑ The pandemic marginalizes those already most marginalized in society. [Host a virtual Card Writing Party](#) to write and mail **letters to immigrants** in detention via [The Casa Mariposa Detention Visitation Program](#).
- ❑ [Sign the petition](#) and join [Palestinian Cry for Hope: a Call to Decisive Action](#), a global movement set by **Kairos Response** that "rouses churches to action and awakens civil society to the reality of Palestinian suffering."
- ❑ Grow in your personal learning or as a community with a **group study** by taking advantage of [free online university courses on systemic racism](#).
- ❑ Advocate for immigrants. Find ways to take action at <https://unitedwedream.org/>.
- ❑ Call your legislators (202-224-3121) and **advocate** for permanent federal paid sick leave, expanded unemployment benefits, SNAP increases, and a moratorium on evictions, utility shut-offs, and payments.
- ❑ Find **other actions, acts of gratitude and more** at [Checklist - Americans of Conscience](#).



OREGON-IDAHO MFSA ON THE WEB

For information about MFSA and our chapter, current news, resources and more, go to www.oimfesa.org.

Contact Oregon-Idaho Chapter MFSA, at oregonidaho@mfsaweb.org or P.O. Box 134, Salem OR 97308.



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