

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

Amos 7:8



WITNESS

Oregon-Idaho Chapter, Methodist Federation for Social Action

September 15, 2021

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

*"Hope frees us to live in the present, with the deep trust that God will never leave us."
Henri Nouwen*

I've been thinking about hope a lot lately as the world seems to be in such turmoil. How do we hang onto hope in the midst of hurricanes, floods and wildfires? Where do we see hope as we watch people being evacuated from Afghanistan, and so many more people being left behind? What hope do we find in the rising number of COVID deaths and overfull hospitals and people refusing to be vaccinated? Where is hope at our southern borders? What kind of hope exists for those facing evictions from their homes?

Hope exists in the ways in which we respond to what is happening in our own lives and the lives of people around us. Hope happens when we take a deep breath and notice the sunrise or sunset. Hope is in the prayers we pray and the ways in which we reach out with our lives to be a prayer for others. Hope happens in the midst of the turmoil of life.

Anne Lamott writes that "love and goodness and the world's beauty are the reasons we have hope." Throughout the letter to the Ephesians, we are reminded that love, God's love, is essential to living our lives and it is in that love that we find hope. Love is what brings us together as community and it is in the building of community that we find hope.

As we watch the news of disasters and turmoil around the world, it is in the stories of the small ways in which people help one another that we see God's love. It is in these stories that we find hope, and we see community being built through God's love. We find hope when we encounter others in community, when we support others, empower them, and learn from them.

Stop, breath deeply, look around you – where are the places in your community that need more of God's love? How might you be the bringer of hope to others, and allow others to bring hope into your life? Take one day at a time, one moment and identify hope and God's love. It is not easy work. It is the work to which each of us is called as children of God.



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NOW'S THE TIME FOR ACTION

Dates to Remember

Oct. 6: Day of Truth and Repentance
for Our Children

Oct. 18:
1:00-3:00pm PT/2:00-4:00pm MT
Oregon-Idaho MFSA Executive Board
meeting, via ZOOM

January 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, with our next meeting on Monday, October 18, from 1:00pm-3:00pm PT/2:00pm-4:00pm MT.

Our 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!

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

NEWS, OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTION

NEW OREGON GUN LAWS ARE BEING CHALLENGED

Jan Nelson

The 2021 Oregon legislature passed SB 554, requiring more secure storage for guns and prohibiting all guns in public buildings such as the State Capitol building and the Portland Airport terminal. As people of faith, we believe these changes will prevent suicides and accidental gun deaths, and we are thankful for the Legislature's work.



Opponents of these changes are now conducting a signature campaign to put a measure on the ballot that would repeal this law. This campaign is in full swing with a deadline of September 25. If enough signatures are gathered, the law will be suspended until after the November 2022 election, and at that time it could be repealed. We urge that you **DO NOT SIGN the petition.**

A CALL TO TRUTH-TELLING AND REPENTANCE FROM THE NATIVE AMERICAN CAUCUS OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

August 4, 2021

Greater NW Communications



As United Methodists begin to understand the historical role the church has played in generations of colonization and harm to Native American peoples, a petition has emerged, calling on churches to tell the truth and repent for their historical role in the loss of countless lives and devastation of rich indigenous cultures.

Greater Northwest Area Bishop Elaine JW Stanovsky has signed the petition, as has Rev. Dr. Allen Buck, director of the GNW Circle of Indigenous Ministries and other leaders in the GNW Episcopal Area.

“Join with us in calling for deeply transparent exploration and truth-telling about our role and complicity in taking land, culture, resources and children from the First Peoples here and around the globe,” said Buck, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation who also pastors Great Spirit UMC in Portland. “The Church has helped build and maintain systems which prioritize and benefit ‘whiteness’ – contributing to trauma that impacts generations of Indigenous people.”

At the heart of the petition is the fact that the remains of thousands of [Native American children are located in mass burial sites at boarding schools across North America](#). Most of those boarding schools were operated by churches – including predecessors of The United Methodist Church – and served as places of abuse and terror for generations of Native American children.

History has revealed that these boarding schools were used to abuse hundreds of thousands of Native American children who were removed – often violently – from their homes and families and placed in these schools in the years between 1869 and the 1960s. There were 367 government-funded Native American Indian Board Schools, according to the [National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition](#) and many of those schools were run by churches.

Children at these schools were regularly beaten, had their hair forcefully cut and their sacred traditions, languages and identities stolen or destroyed. They were abused physically, emotionally and sexually and were abused or mutilated for speaking their native languages.

[This petition calls for churches](#) to commit to discovering the locations and records of Methodist run boarding schools and search the physical properties for mass graves “by whatever means necessary” and to listen to and collect the stories from family members whose ancestors were impacted by a Methodist boarding school.

The petition also calls on The United Methodist Church to set aside October 6 as a day of remembrance as part of The Boarding School Healing Project. On Oct. 6, 1879, Gen. Richard Pratt took children from the First Nations and opened the boarding school in Carlisle, Penn. Because of this date and recent gravesite discoveries, the petitioners ask The UMC to observe Oct. 6, 2021 as a “Day of Truth and Repentance for Our Children.”

Stanovsky urges United Methodists and others in the GNW Area to sign the petition as an act of repentance and a commitment to continuing the long work of addressing the historical harms the church has caused for generations of Native Americans.

“This is just the first step in many acts of repentance we must commit to listen to the voices of Native American neighbors, to acknowledge the sins embedded in the teachings and actions of Christian churches and to repent of these sins as a Church, and followers of Christ, to begin addressing the generational atrocities the church has committed,” she said. “There is much, much more work to be done. It is about becoming trustworthy in our relationships with people whose trust has been deeply betrayed time and time again. It goes far beyond putting names to a statement. It requires deep soul searching to understand [what went wrong among followers of Jesus](#).”

Editors note: the petition is no longer available for signatures, but you are encouraged to observe October 6 as a Day of Remembrance and Repentance. As Bishop Stanovsky says, "There is much, much more work to be done."

AFGHAN REFUGEE SUPPORT IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Claudia Roberts

As United Methodist Women, we cannot see the chaos at the airport in Kabul and not feel compassion for the Afghans who are seeking to flee because they worked for and aided U.S. military and diplomats, because they believed we were creating a new future for their country. They are coming here with little more than the clothes on their backs. We are compelled by Jesus to help these neighbors.

The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services in Vancouver, Washington is already reaching out to these refugees. Here is a statement made by their CEO, David Dues.



"In the last two weeks, Lutheran Community Services Northwest has welcomed more than 40 Afghan allies with Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs). These are Afghan nationals who have worked with the US Armed Forces as translators and interpreters for at least 12 months and have a written recommendation from a commanding officer. We will be welcoming many more in the weeks to come.

Our first priority is the safety and well-being of our new arrivals. Staff are working quickly to surround each arriving family with basic needs like housing, food, clothing, transportation and monetary assistance. The Northwest is a welcoming community and we are humbled by the many offers of assistance. We will have volunteer and community engagement opportunities in the near future. To inquire about volunteering or to offer a space for housing refugees, please email siv@lcsnw.org."

Right now, the best way to extend a welcome is with a donation. Your gift will help us address the most immediate and basic needs of our new neighbors.

Please go to [this donation page for credit cards](#) and select the "I want to give to refugee services" checkbox. Or, mail your donation to:

LCSNW – Donations Lockbox #1034

PO Box 35146

Seattle, WA 98124-5146

Please write "refugee services" in the memo line.

I know that Global Ministries will also be helping churches welcome these refugees but LIRS is already doing the work locally and could use our help.

A METHODIST IN IDAHO WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Neysa Jensen

Greetings from Boise, Idaho. I've been asked to tell you about the struggles progressives face here in one of the most conservative states as we work toward justice and equality for all. We face some different challenges here than in Oregon.

Let me start with a brief introduction of myself. I have been a United Methodist virtually my entire life. I've been a member at Boise First UMC since 1990. The chief areas that I work in are homelessness and housing issues, mental illness awareness and advocacy, and LGBTQ+ causes. As you probably know, these issues all intersect in many ways.

Let me give you one example of the difficulty we have in our state. Idaho's human rights laws do not include protections against discrimination because of sexual orientation or gender identity. Since the early 2000s, activists here have pushed every legislative session for these four words to be added to our state code. (Many of our cities have already added these protections, including Boise.) Our slogan was and remains: Add the Four Words--sexual orientation, gender identity.

One year, legislators heard testimony on the Add the Words bill, as it came to be known. For three days, hundreds of people shared stories of being beaten, being evicted, loved ones dying by suicide because they were gay, and more. The whole committee room was often in tears. The testimony overwhelmingly favored those in support of adding the words, but conservative state leadership said it "wasn't the right time." They have said that every year. It is never "the right time" for them.

In the years that followed, some of us took to acts of civil disobedience by blocking doorways and being arrested. The goal was to make it inconvenient for 'business as usual'. At the same time, we marched, we met with leaders, we sang, we held vigils, but nothing moved the hearts of our legislators.

So here we are, a decade-plus later, and still, it is perfectly legal in Idaho to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. New national laws cover some areas of discrimination, but not all. We haven't given up, but many of us are losing hope and energy. As it often is for progressive causes in our state, one feels like you are banging your head against a brick wall.

Nevertheless, we persist.

ACTION OF THE WEEK

Jan Nelson

If you are on Facebook, watch our page ([MFSA Oregon-Idaho](#)) for the 'Action of the Week'. Most weeks, you will find a suggestion for an action you can take in a few minutes that will make a difference on an issue of justice. The issues and the type of action will vary from week to week. We invite you to join us as we take a few minutes each week to put our faith into action.



Allison Stevens from Christ UMC in Cedar Mill speaks at a recent rally in Beaverton to oppose the construction of Tar Sands Pipeline #3. Participants were asked to contact the White House to urge opposition to the new pipeline that threatens native lands and water by calling 888-724-8946.

Greg Nelson

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:

- AIDNW continues to serve 50+ newly release guests outside Tacoma's NW ICE Processing Center at the RV Welcome Center each day. They are in desperate need of volunteers and supplies. [Find out how you can help!](#)
- [Contact your Senators and Representatives](#) to pass common sense legislation that saves the lives of farm workers like the [Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness and Fatality Prevention Act](#).
- Call on U.S. Secretary of State Tony Blinken to [demand Israel stops all plans of illegal expulsions and forced displacement of Palestinians homes and families](#) in Jerusalem and the West Bank.
- In solidarity, [join workers demanding \\$15/hr](#) and tell McDonald's to raise wages now.
- Check out what [military acquired by your local law enforcement](#), and [sign the petition to demanding more police transparency](#).
- Contact your elected officials and [demand Congress cut funding for ICE and CBP and defund hate](#).
- Tell your Member of Congress to support the [Accessible, Affordable Internet for All \(AAIA\) Act](#), an act that can help bridge the digital divide that disproportionately impacts Black, Latinx, Indigenous, rural, or low-income people.
- Has your country signed on to the [UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#)? Contact your elected officials to support the end of nuclear weapons in the world.
- 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!
- [Sign the petition](#) to ask Congress: Include A Path to Citizenship in the Upcoming Infrastructure Budget.
- Sign the [Ban Shock Therapy on Students with Disabilities Petition](#).
- Join the [#WelcomeWithDignity movement by signing the pledge](#) to reimagine the way our country and our communities treat people seeking safety.
- [Write a letter](#) and join in the grassroots organizing for the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants.
- 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](#).
- 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.
- 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/>.

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

