

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

Amos 7:8



# WITNESS

## Oregon-Idaho Chapter, Methodist Federation for Social Action

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### ARE WE SHARING THE "GOOD NEWS"? By Dave Bean, MFSA President

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4:18-19 NRSV (see also 4:16-17, 20-30)*

An unusual baptism (of sorts) took place recently that has gained national attention. Perhaps you saw it yourself on the news or the internet. The scene unfolded at a shopping mall in Pennsylvania. A woman is captured by cell phone video busily texting on her own cell phone as she walks unaware into a knee-high retaining wall and falls fully clothed into the mall water feature! It did not appear on the video that her first response upon emerging drenched from her unscheduled baptismal immersion was, "Amen!" Last I heard, in fact, was that she is looking to file a law suit against...somebody!

I mention this woman's story not to add to her embarrassment but because this episode in her life might be an apt metaphor for our (mine? yours? the Church?) life and ministry. Distracted or enraptured with the latest ministry techniques, we stumble along too often falling on our face while others look on recording our gaffes. Both we and they have phones yet do not hear each other's voices. We communicate but not with each other. We connect but not with each other. Who do we see?!

It should not surprise us that in many places church membership continues its decades-long decline. There are many wonderful, faithful, "successful" leaders who labor mightily to give new ministry tools (e.g. 5 steps or 7 steps, etc.) and technology (e.g. power point, videoconference, etc.) to help us reverse the decline. We dearly appreciate their efforts but despite our best efforts to replicate their success the decline

continues unabated.

Granted, MFSA does not typically concern itself with church membership decline, but there is a linkage between the two that should not be overlooked. In this regard, the scripture passage from Luke (above) has been speaking to me in a slightly different way than previously. Jesus did not seem concerned at all with church membership rolls, e.g. later in the passage the people drive him away because they take offense at some of his expressed views. His interest seems always to be laser-focused on building membership *not in the church* but in what he called the Kingdom of God.

Set over and against prevailing human systems, the kingdom Jesus proclaims is equitable and just, captives are released, oppressed go free, the blind see, and all of life is infused with the Lord's favor. In an existence encumbered with bad news for most, the



Rev. Dave Bean, President

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good news Jesus proclaims is, indeed, living water for all who hunger and thirst for this realm Jesus posits.

Jesus was anointed to proclaim such good news and so are those who seek to follow him. Before he is Lord Savior or Prince of Peace, Jesus is Bearer and Proclaimer of good news to people who desperately need good news. The orthodox view that the "good news" is built solely around personal salvation through sins forgiven by a crucified yet risen deity ignores Jesus of Nazareth and the "good news" he bore and proclaimed. Long before he was Risen Lord, Jesus was Revelation of new life and new possibilities in the here and now!

Are we sharing the good news now? While we ignore the reality of an often harsh and corrupt world at our own peril, have we neglected to proclaim the good news of God's ever-emergent realm to people today? Consider, for example:

Thirty-three retired bishops have made a public appeal for the church to repeal the *Discipline's* "incompatibility" clause and other restrictive language around its understanding of homosexuality. This is good news! Let us proclaim it!

Confronted with picketers from the infamous Westboro Baptist Church out of Topeka, Kansas, students at American University responded with love expressed through genuine welcoming including serving them refreshments! This is good news! Let us proclaim it!

Facing a reprise of brutality by government-sponsored thugs, Egyptian protesters responded with a non-violent sit-in that shamed the thugs into withdrawal. This is good news! Let us proclaim it!

To ensure safety while worshipping on their Holy Day, Egyptian Christians surrounded their Muslim brothers and sisters in a protective circle. Later in the week Egyptian Muslims did the same for their Christian brothers and sisters. This is good news! Let us proclaim it!

There is a great deal of wonderful ministry being done to proclaim and make real the good news that Jesus proclaimed and embodied. Churches around our Conference like Corvallis UMC, Morning-side and Salem 1<sup>st</sup> UMC, Sweet Home, Junction City, Rockwood, Rose City Park, Metanoia Peace House, Hillview-Boise UMC and other United Methodist churches and those of other faith traditions are some of the many where good news is happening. Thanks be to God! Let us proclaim it! The world around us too often proclaims the hopelessness of bad news. We are followers of Jesus so – let us proclaim the hope and the good news that is the realm of God that Jesus proclaimed!

Blessings & peace,  
Dave

### **MFSA Spring Event – April 2, 2011**

Portland First UMC

Doors open at 8:30 for registration, coffee and time to browse the information tables.

### **Out of the Shadows – Into the Light**

What does a just and humane immigration policy look like?

Check out the enclosed flyer to register for this event.

We invite you to publicize the spring event in your church newsletter, bulletin or website.

## LET CONGRESS HEAR YOUR VOICE by Jan Nelson

The news is discouraging these days. Local, state, and federal governments are facing depressing deficits. Conservatives in Congress seem to think their priorities are all that matters. And no one in either party seems to ever talk about moral imperatives like caring for the poor and the vulnerable. It's enough to make us want to bury our heads in the sand and stop trying.

Don't do it! No matter how broken it sometimes seems, we live in a democracy, and every one of us has the right and the responsibility to make our voices heard. Those with the loudest voices or the most money can only succeed if the rest of us give up that right.

The enemy of justice is greed, but its faithful companions are apathy and hopelessness. The few that are getting richer can have more influence than I can only if I allow myself to be either bought or silenced.

Think of Amos or one of the other ancient prophets. He spoke his message, fearlessly as far as we know, in a country where he had no hope of influencing the next election. His only hope was to influence the king through the only power he had, the power of the word of God. Maybe we get too hung up on the powers we don't have and we forget the faithful witness of those ancient prophets.

So keep watch on the Congress and the state legislature. Don't make the mistake of expecting any political party to bring about the Kingdom of God, but don't give up on the process. Let your representatives hear your prophetic voice, and spread the word to your friends. "Let justice roll down like waters..."

The enemy of justice is greed, but its faithful companions are apathy and hopelessness.

## YOUR NOMINATION FOR THE 2011 MARK CHAMBERLIN AWARD IS INVITED by Ruth Walton

Oregon-Idaho MFSA is inviting nominations for the 2011 Mark Chamberlin Award. This award is intended to recognize the honoree for faithful service in social justice ministries that stand with those who are poor, disenfranchised or excluded, and that challenge unjust systems of power in society and/or within the United Methodist Church. While nominees do not have to be members of MFSA, they do need to be a past or present member of an Oregon or Idaho United Methodist Church.

This award was established to honor the faithful witness of The Rev. Mark Chamberlin of Gresham, who served as

the volunteer secretary of MFSA National in the 1950s when the organization came under attack in the anti-communist "witch-hunts" of the time.

Nominations may be mailed or emailed to Stuart Shaw, Executive Board member, before April 30, 2011, for consideration by a sub-committee of the MFSA executive board. (Mailing address: 2559 Ojai Court NW, Salem, OR 97304-4212. Email [stubonshaw@comcast.net](mailto:stubonshaw@comcast.net)) Please include in your letter of nomination a brief biography of your nominee, including what makes this person's life, attitude and Christian commitment to justice ministries outstanding. Describe specific

ways this person has engaged in some of the forms of social justice ministries named in the first paragraph above.

Nominations will be provided to the Executive Board for selection, and the honoree will be named at the MFSA dinner during Annual Conference in June.

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## BOOK REVIEW by Stuart Shaw

*THE EMPEROR OF ALL MALADIES*

A Biography of Cancer  
By Siddhartha Mukherjee

*Cancer connects us all. From that perspective it is a social disease. It would be hard to find someone in this world who does not know a family member, a friend, or an acquaintance who has battled cancer. In my case, it is my wife Bonnie, who has gone through surgeries, radiation, and chemotherapy over the last two years, and is currently surviving for the time being on life-long drug therapy.*

This relentless presence of cancer treatment in our family led me to the discovery of the book "The Emperor of All Maladies" by Siddhartha Mukherjee, subtitled, "A Biography of Cancer." Mukherjee is a cancer physician and researcher. He is an assistant professor of medicine at Columbia University, and a staff physician at Columbia University Medical Center. He is a Rhodes Scholar with degrees from Stanford University, University of Oxford, and Harvard Medical School. He has published articles in Nature, The New England Journal of Medicine, The New York Times Magazine, and the New Republic. He lives in New York with his wife and two daughters.

More outstanding than these impressive academic credentials, however, is Mukherjee's ability to write a history of cancer and its treatment in language that is at once humane, humble, dramatic, and uncontaminated with technical medical jargon.

The book opens with a statement of the bald facts: "In 2010 about 600,000 Americans, and more than 7 million humans around the world, will die of cancer. In the United States, one in

three women and one in two men will develop cancer during their lifetime. A quarter of all American deaths, and about 15 percent of all deaths worldwide, will be attributed to cancer. In some nations cancer will surpass heart disease to become the most common cause of death." (p. xi).

Mukherjee recognizes that cancer is essentially about patients. So he starts his story with a patient of his, Carla, a 30-year old kindergarten teacher and mother of three who in 2004 was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia—an explosive cancer of white blood cells. At that point in time Carla's chances of survival were slim. But current cancer research was on her side: a new therapy, cytotoxic chemotherapy, was applied. After many, many sessions of that, reducing her to a virtual zombie, the tumor in her bone marrow disappeared. Every year her bone marrow was checked. On the fifth anniversary of her remission, Mukherjee went to see her at her home—an hour and a half drive through heavy traffic from his place of work. She is now happy, healthy, and full of life. He took flowers and told her her bone marrow was still clean. He refers to Susan Sontag's book Illness as a Metaphor in which she says: "The purpose of my book is to calm the imagination, not to incite it." Mukherjee adds, "So it was with my visit [to Carla]. Its purpose was to declare her illness over, to normalize her life—to sever the force that had locked us together for five years." (pp. 448-449).

Even though the first evidences of cancer date back to the Egyptian physician Inhotep in 2500 BC, who wrote that there was no helpful therapy for it; and was given the name "karkinos" in 400 BC by Hippocrates; and was described as "a suppuration of blood" by the famous Greek phy-

sician Galen in 130 AD; nothing of real significance in cancer research happened until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and most of this since 1950. It is a frustrating story with occasional miraculous discoveries. Surgery has been practiced on tumors for a long time. X-rays came along at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chemotherapy was first used in 1948. But it wasn't until the cause of cancer was pinpointed in the 1980's and 1990's that specific drugs were developed to treat particular cancers. Lowering of the death rate of cancer has also been a result of prevention research—especially as this applies to smoking and the residue of toxic chemicals. Mukherjee tells this story of cancer research and treatment as an unfolding drama with some victories and many defeats.

In summing up the history of human struggle against cancer, Mukherjee makes two significant observations:

(1) "Cancer is a flaw in our growth, but the flaw is deeply entrenched in ourselves. We can rid ourselves of cancer, then, only as much as we can rid ourselves of the processes in our physiology that depend on growth—aging, regeneration, healing, reproduction." (p. 462)

(2) "Perhaps cancer, the scrappy, fecund, invasive, adaptable twin to our own scrappy, fecund, invasive, adaptable cells and genes, is impossible to disconnect from our bodies. Perhaps cancer defines the inherent outer limit of our survival. As our cells divide and our bodies age, and as mutations accumulate inexorably upon mutations, cancer might well be the final terminus in our development as organisms." (p. 462).

I commend this book to anyone who has come face-to-face with cancer in themselves, in their family, in their friends, and as a common cause of death. It provides a compassionate understanding of a disease whose final solution is wrapped in the mystery of human life.

### Save the Date

MFSA has held several exciting national gatherings known as Voices of Faith. This year we will be joining with Reconciling Ministries Network to bring an even larger and more energetic group to **Sing a New Song**, August 23 through 26 at the Sawmill Creek Resort on Lake Erie near Cleveland, Ohio. Make plans now to meet MFSA friends and new friends from all over the country and beyond.

### SING A NEW SONG

AUGUST 25-28, 2011

Sing a New Song is an exciting partnership gathering of Methodist Federation for Social Action and Reconciling Ministries Network. It will be held Aug. 25-28 at Sawmill Creek Resort in Huron, Ohio. Sing a New Song will include opportunities to find family, create community, break bread together, share stories and mobilize for mission. Mark Miller will be the worship leader. Check out the website, [www.sans2011.org](http://www.sans2011.org) to find out more about speakers, Bible study leaders, preachers and workshops, as well as to register.

**"Sing! Sing a new song! Sing of that great day when all will be one! God will reign and we'll walk with each other as sisters and brothers united in love."**

*From We Are Called by David Haas*

### MFSA Chapter Submits Legislation for Annual Conference in June

Several pieces of legislation are being prepared for submission to the Legislative Assembly that will meet April 29-30. The Executive Board has chosen to submit or renew standing resolutions on the following topics: rejection of war as foreign policy; climate change; consumer rights and health care; capital punishment; clergy compensation; campaign finance; and using non-violent language. The Board is also working with the Oregon-Idaho Reconciling United Methodists group to consider the submission of petitions from the national MFSA board on "manifesting God's hospitality to all persons."

### Check out our chapter website at [OIMFSA.org](http://OIMFSA.org).

A recent posting to the website is titled: What NOT to do about immigration. This posting includes links to bills before the Oregon legislature, as well as UMC positions on immigration that can provide helpful background information on this topic. Petition forms are available for those who are ready to take action.

Check out the national MFSA website at [mfsaweb.org](http://mfsaweb.org).

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### CHOOSING DELEGATES FOR GENERAL AND JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCES by Karen Nelson

This year at Annual Conference session we will be choosing our delegation for General and Jurisdictional Conferences. We elect an equal number of lay and clergy delegates to represent our Annual Conference.

In the big picture, our delegation to General Conference is pretty miniscule. We get one lay and one clergy voting delegate as our share of the almost 1000 delegates gathered. But our presence and participation is more than our votes.

The Oregon-Idaho delegation of delegates and reserves has traditionally worked with others from the Western Jurisdiction and other coalitions to monitor, influence and promote legislation. In addition the elected delegates and reserves make up the core of the nomination pool for representation and leadership in General and Jurisdictional Conference Agencies and Committees.

At the 2008 General Conference, a Common Witness agenda was set forth by MFSA and other progressive groups working together. A Common Witness agenda for GC 2012 is being prepared at this time. The 2008 Common Witness document states:

**WE ARE** people committed to following Jesus Christ as we embody God's love and justice through The United Methodist Church. At a time when we are often defined by our differences, we embrace one another on common ground and claim our unity in Christ. We join together to provide a Common Witness on the following vital areas of discussion within our community of faith. Ever open to the surprising movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst, we proclaim the following:

We believe

In a church that passionately works for racial justice.

In a church that is doctrinally open.

In a church that embodies full inclusiveness.

In a church that celebrates both women and men as equally created in God's image.

That engaging in respectful interfaith dialogue realizes the vision of the church.

While this document is much more detailed, it is the basis for a list of qualities and characteristics to be considered in selecting candidates for GC and JC that was prepared by the New York Annual Conference's MFSA chapter.

Following are some of the characteristics that might be helpful to consider as we select our delegation this June:

- Progressive and supportive of and committed to agenda of Common Witness — is this

someone whose actions match what they say they stand for?

- Willingness to speak up, advocate verbally and speak to others and try to sway opinion in both public and private settings
- Broad-based knowledge/expertise about the breadth of most important issues at GC
- Experience in leadership
- Cooperative/team-player
- Able to keep up with pace of work at GC and keep working even when you are exhausted and no longer feeling in top shape — having spiritual stamina
- Commitment to preparation — attendance at delegation meetings, reading all the necessary volumes of material, pre-conference networking.

You may find this broad list helpful in thinking about those who should be a part of our delegation. If you are not a voting member for your church at Annual Conference, consider sharing this list with your lay and clergy members to Annual Conference.

#### MFSA – Who We Are

***The Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) is an independent voice for justice within Methodism since 1907.***

***MFSA unites activists within the United Methodist Church to take action on issues of justice, peace and liberation in the church, nation and world.***

***MFSA works primarily through the ministries of the United Methodist Church, supporting and augmenting peace and justice ministries at the local, conference, and national levels. As an independent organization, we call our church to expand its understanding of the radical call of the Gospel to be the inclusive, justice-seeking, risk-taking Body of Christ.***

***MFSA lives out our belief that to be faithful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to be involved in the transformation of the social order.***

## Methodist Federation for Social Action Membership Application, 2011

Please enter my 2011 MFSA membership in the following category:

\$500 **Stellar** (\$50 remains for Chapter work)

\$200 **Spirited** (\$160 for National MFSA and \$40 for Chapter)

\$150 **Sustaining** (\$120 for National MFSA and \$30 for Chapter)

\$100 **Supporting** (\$80 for National MFSA and \$20 for Chapter)

\$60 **Subscribing** (\$48 for National MFSA and \$12 for Chapter)

\$\_\_\_\_\_ Set your own membership amount

In addition to my membership dues, I enclose an extra contribution for the work of the Chapter in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

I am unable to join at the present time, but wish to receive *Witness*, the Chapter Newsletter. I enclose \$10 to cover costs.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Church name \_\_\_\_\_

New membership       Renewal

Your tax-deductible membership supports the work of both the National MFSA and that of the Oregon-Idaho Chapter, and includes subscriptions to the National MFSA's *Social Questions Bulletin* and the Chapter's newsletter, *Witness*.

Make checks payable to MFSA, OR-ID Chapter.

Mail to Membership Secretary Janet Farrell, 594 SE Conifer Court, Madras, OR 97741. (No one is denied membership for lack of funds. Please contact President David Bean, e-mail [revdave@hotmail.com](mailto:revdave@hotmail.com), telephone 503-635-0173, or Janet Farrell, at 541-460-0199 or e-mail [revjanet@clearwire.net](mailto:revjanet@clearwire.net) if you have questions.)

### 2011 General Board of Church and Society Legislative Priorities includes Just, Humane Immigration Reform

The United Methodist General Board of Church & Society (GBCS) has set its 2011 legislative priorities for the 112th U.S. Congress. The six priorities include several holdovers from 2010, including health-care and immigration reform. The priorities support social justice stances approved by The United Methodist Church's highest policy-making body, General Conference. The priorities are based on the denomination's "Social Principles" and its *Book of Resolutions* and are aligned with focus areas of the denomination approved by General Conference, which meets every four years.

The six legislative priorities for 2011 are:

- **Just, humane immigration reform;**
- Ensure the highest level of funding for foreign assistance to overcome global poverty;
- Reform the U.S. health-care system;
- Fully fund international family planning;
- Advocate for a clean energy future; and
- Address the jobs crisis.

**Just, humane immigration reform is the focus for our MFSA annual Spring Event on April 2, 2011. Check out the enclosed brochure and register today.**

"In responding to the Scriptural call to welcome the sojourner to our land," said Bill Mefford, GBCS staff member, "we call on Congress to pass immigration reform that will provide a pathway to citizenship to undocumented immigrants, reunite immigrant families, and protect the rights of all workers." For more details, contact [Bill Mefford](mailto:Bill.Mefford@umc.org) at (202) 488-5657.



**OREGON-IDAHO MFSA  
WITNESS**

Methodist Federation for Social Action  
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**This newsletter is sent to all Chapter members and to other OR-ID United Methodists we think might appreciate it. If you know someone who would like to get, let us know.**

“Occasional Memos” about timely issues, actions or events are sent by e-mail. If you are not receiving them periodically, send your e-mail address to Ruth Walton, e-mail list tender.

**If you do not want to receive either publication, be sure to let us know so we do not clutter your mailbox.**

When you change your address, please let us know in advance. It saves the Chapter postage costs.

**Information for church newsletter/website inside**

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## **CODE TALK**

Membership dues are paid on a calendar year basis.

The code on your address label indicates your current membership status. If it says 12/10, your membership is no longer current. If it says 12/09 or before, your membership expired on December 31 of that year. NM indicates that you are a non-member friend. CNT says you are a non-member contributor, and ORG indicates a contributing organization.

Your dues and contributions are what underwrite the work of MFSA. Thank you so much.

If by chance you are “coded” in error, please contact Janet Farrell, Membership Secretary.