

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

Amos 7:8



# WITNESS

Oregon-Idaho Chapter, Methodist Federation for Social Action

November 30, 2013

The fall has gone by much too fast and we are in the midst of the Advent and Christmas season. In all of this, the important work of MFSA continues. There are stories to tell, information to disseminate and events to attend. Scroll through the articles or click the link to the right to learn more. Please contact us if you have questions or have stories to share.

Louise Kienzle, OR-ID MFSA Newsletter Editor



*We have transitioned to an electronic newsletter. If you have email access, please make sure we have your current email address. If you do not have email access and wish to continue receiving a paper copy please let us know. Contact Jan Nelson at [jannelson515@msn.com](mailto:jannelson515@msn.com) or Methodist Federation for Social Action, Oregon-Idaho Chapter, PO Box 134, Salem OR 97308.*

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## LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

If you are a Facebook user, be sure to like our page, "MFSA Oregon-Idaho". Also be sure to like the national page, "Methodist Federation for Social Action". Invite your friends to like us, too.

Information about upcoming events and a link to join MFSA by online payment can be found at our website, [www.oimfisa.org](http://www.oimfisa.org).

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Have you renewed your MFSA membership yet? Did you know that you can now renew online at [OIMFSA.org](http://OIMFSA.org)?

### Dates to Remember

March 22:  
MFSA Spring Event

Labor Day weekend:  
WMJM Event

April-May, 2016:  
General Conference



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## YOU ARE INVITED

*to any of our regular MFSA Board meetings! We meet every other month on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday, alternating between the Conference Center in Portland and Capitol Manor in Salem. We typically meet from 10am-2pm and you may attend for any or all of the meeting. We begin our meetings with a program of up to an hour on topics relating to social justice. If YOU or your group has an idea for a program you would like to share please let us know!*

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## SPRING EVENT SET – MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Rev. Dave Bean

The MFSA annual Spring Event is scheduled for Saturday, March 22, 9am-3pm at Portland First UMC. *Finding Justice in the Holy Land and at Home* will be explored in depth.

We are very pleased to announce our keynote speaker will be Mark Braverman, a Jewish-American who has worked tirelessly in the international church movement to support Palestinian rights. A teacher, preacher, and lecturer, Mark is the National Program Director for Kairos USA, a movement to unify and mobilize American Christians to take a prophetic stance for a just peace in Israel and Palestine. Mark was a featured speaker at the launch of the Palestine Kairos document "Moment of Truth" in Bethlehem 2009. He also serves on the Advisory Board of Friends of Sabeel North American.

Additionally, we will have an afternoon panel session of experts from other justice organizations on hand to help us learn the commonalities shared by oppressed minority groups across a range of issues. It has been noted that the United States will be a majority minority nation in just a few years so the treatment of minorities should be of importance to all of us.

We hope you'll plan on joining us at this important, one-of-a-kind event. Watch for further information and how to register on-line in future newsletters. See you there!

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## **WESTERN METHODIST JUSTICE MOVEMENT**

*Jan Nelson*

The Western Methodist Justice Movement (WMJM) was formed in the summer of 2012 by justice advocates from around the Western Jurisdiction. The purpose is to carry out the work envisioned by the Western Jurisdictional Conference in its legislative actions. It is made up of a series of action networks, each of which includes people from different annual conferences working together in a specific area of advocacy. The various networks meet primarily by conference calls. One of the most active networks at this time is the Biblical Obedience network, seeking to further the action to which we were called by Bishop Mel Talbert. All the networks are described on the website, [www.wmjm.org](http://www.wmjm.org), and all of them welcome new members.

WMJM is planning a gathering for meeting, training, and playing together on Labor Day Weekend 2014 at Lake Tahoe. It will be a family-friendly gathering, and it will give all of us from across the jurisdiction and beyond a chance to get together in person.

Put the date on your calendar and plan to join the fun!

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## **GENERAL CONFERENCE 2016**

### **Getting Ready**

*Rev. Steve Sprecher*

Have you ever been curious to go to General Conference to see it up close and personal? Well here's your chance. GC will be held in Portland in 2016. Since we are the hosts you will have a chance to see things from an insider's point of view. We will need many volunteers to do logistical tasks and to provide real northwest hospitality. Watch for future requests for volunteers, but for now get **April and May 2016** on your calendar.

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## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME**

*Rhoda Pittman Markus*

The end of the year and the beginning of a new one are prime times for renewing MFSA memberships, or becoming a member for the very first time.

Dues include several levels of giving. They are the same as in previous years. Subscribing Member - \$60; Sustaining Member - \$100; Supporting Member - \$150; Spirited Membership - \$200; Stellar Membership - \$500.

You may pay your dues online at [www.oimfsa.org](http://www.oimfsa.org) according to the above amounts. If you choose to make an additional donation of an amount not listed here, you will need to send a check to Rhoda Markus, Treasurer, 2298 N. Gray St, Cornelius, OR 97113. Please include your name, address, email, phone number and whether you are a renewal or a new member. Couples should let me know that it is two for the price of one. The Oregon-Idaho chapter keeps 20% of your dues and 80% is forwarded to National MFSA. A renewal letter will be sent out in January as a reminder to those who are not able to renew at this time.

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## CHAPTERS SHARE SUPPORT OF MFSA ADMINISTRATOR

*Jan Nelson and Rhoda Pittman Markus*

This fall, Methodist Federation for Social Action hired Heather Kramer for a part-time administrative position in the national office. This position has been needed for a year, since Chett Pritchett stepped up from a similar position to be the interim Executive Director, but the position was not included in the 2013 budget. The Board of Directors voted to ask the chapters to help fund the position for the rest of this year, since the biggest part of Heather's job is to work with chapters and their leaders. The Oregon-Idaho chapter voted to send \$500 from our budget and to ask our chapter members to match that donation. If you are able to donate to the matching amount, please send your checks made out to Or-Id MFSA to Rhoda Markus, Treasurer, 2298 N. Gray Street, Cornelius, OR 97113



## PRESIDENT DAVE'S REFLECTIONS For the Love of God

*"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38 NRSV)*

Most who will read these few remarks will already be aware that at its General Conference in 2012 a measure was voted on by United Methodists in attendance as to whether anything could separate a person from the love of God. It only narrowly passed despite being lifted directly from Paul's letter to the Romans. I suspect that it was primarily those Bible-believing Methodists who voted against the measure.

How strange! *For the love of God, what were they thinking?*

United Methodist pastor Rev. Frank Schaefer was brought to church trial for officiating the same-sex marriage of his own son and his partner—over six years after the fact and after having notified his superiors of his intent to do so. He then was found guilty and will likely be defrocked. How strange such a "witch trial" could happen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *For the love of God, what were they thinking?*

Retired United Methodist Bishop Mel Talbert blessed a same-sex couple in Alabama despite objections from the presiding Bishop of that area and the public disapproval of the Council of Bishops of which he is a member. After going forward with the blessing service, that same Council of Bishops publically called for charges to be filed against Bishop Talbert with the possibility of a church trial against him. How strange! *For the love of God, what are they thinking?*

Rev. Tom Ogletree, retired professor of ethics at Yale Divinity School, currently faces charges for also officiating the same-sex marriage of his own son. Rev. Steve Heiss (NY) is facing charges for performing a same-sex marriage. The same is true for Rev. Gordon Hutchins (WA). Rev. Sara Thompson Tweedy (NY) faces charges for marrying her wife. More than thirty clergy united to perform a same-sex marriage just days before the Schaefer trial. We know what all of *these* people were thinking and in each case it is not strange in the least! Each was acting—for the love of God—in Biblical obedience to the gospel that teaches the truth that there is “nothing that can separate us from the love of God”.

The people called United Methodists are the last major protestant denomination to openly discriminate against the GLBTQ community. Sadly, given the global demographics of the UMC it seems unlikely that a change in our policy in this regard will happen any time soon. Until that day the United Methodist Church will be looked upon by those outside the church (as well as by many *within* the church!) as a dying relic and will wonder, *“For the love of God, what are they thinking?”*

Like many of you, I have been appalled, angered, saddened, and more than just a little exhausted by our church’s policies toward our GLBTQ sisters and brothers. I, too, wonder what the church is thinking in its brutish, hurtful, discriminatory, and (I believe) sinful actions. It is clearly *not* for the love of God. It is, however, discouraging. And many of us may be wondering just how long it’s going to take before we truly live fully into our church motto of “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors”.

For those of us facing discouragement, let us recall the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his speech on March 25, 1965 from the steps of the state capitol in Montgomery, Alabama. His speech would come to be popularly known as the “How Long, Not Long” speech. His words came at the conclusion of the famous march from Selma, Alabama and they came on the heels of 400 years of brutal treatment of African Americans. Among other remarks, that day King said:

*“Once more the mention of nonviolent resistance was unsheathed from its scabbard...and again the brutality of a dying order shrieks across the land...The battle is in our hands...The road ahead is not altogether a smooth one. There are no broad highways that lead us easily and inevitably to quick solutions. But we must keep going...”*

*“I know you are asking today, ‘How long will it take? How long will prejudice blind the visions of men, darken their understanding, and drive bright-eyed wisdom from her sacred throne?’ Someone’s asking, ‘When will wounded justice...be lifted from this dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men?’ ‘How long will justice be crucified and truth bear it?’ ‘...However difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth crushed to earth will rise again. How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever.’ ‘How long? Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.”*

May the peace of the Lord be with you always. May your bruised and battered souls be healed with the balm of God’s amazing grace. May you be blessed with unending devotion to the cause of justice and courage born of sacrifice. May Rev. King’s words ring loudly once again for a new generation and on behalf of a new age inspired by the gritty witness of others long-oppressed. Finally, in all these things...may they be done...for the love of God.

Blessings & peace,  
*Dave*