

"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 1, 2016

Greetings!

Summer is almost over and I should be back at school. Now that I am a newly retired teacher, I catch myself thinking about what or where I should be. But my 'should' is changing to where I would like to be. Like joining a community choir and doing volunteer work that offers me fulfillment. I'm hoping I can live into that.

In this newsletter, read about our Fall Event focusing on homelessness, the statement of inclusivity adopted by the clergy at Annual Conference, what other church groups are doing to reach out to the homeless, things you should know about Disability Ministries and more. Also read about our President's personal reflection on Jurisdictional Conference.

Peace and blessings,  
Louise Kienzle, OR-ID MFSA Newsletter Editor



## YOU ARE INVITED

*to any of our regular MFSA Board meetings! We meet every other month, presently on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, alternating between the Conference Center in Portland and Capitol Manor in Salem. Our meetings typically are from 10:30am-2:30pm and you may attend for any or all of the meeting. Lunch is an 'on your own' sack lunch. 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!*

Our next meeting will be at Capitol Manor in Salem Wednesday,  
**September 28**, from 10:30-2:30.

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

### Dates to Remember

September 28: OR/ID MFSA Executive Board meeting, Salem

October 15: MFSA Fall Event, Tigard UMC

## ACTION FROM OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### MFSA FALL EVENT HOMELESSNESS: RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPONSES

Jan Nelson

Homelessness is an issue almost everywhere, whether you are in a small town or a large city. The causes are complicated. Many people think they have 'The Solution,' and many others act as if there is no solution. As followers of Jesus, what are we to do?

Join us on **Saturday, October 15, at Tigard United Methodist Church**. We will spend the day looking at this multi-faceted problem from a Christian perspective. Download [this flyer](#) for more details and a registration form.

The keynote speakers for the morning session will be Paul Schroeder and Rob Justus. Paul is the founder and executive director of New City Initiative, a nonprofit whose purpose is that all people should achieve their full human potential, and whose mission is to engage faith communities in ending the cycle of homelessness. Rob founded JOIN in 1992, an organization to support the efforts of homeless individuals and families to transition out of homelessness into permanent housing. Rob has a long history working with nonprofits and church communities around the issues of homeless and housing.

In the afternoon there will be several choices of workshops, all focused on actions that have been shown to make a positive difference in the lives of homeless people.

Bring your concerns and questions. You should go home with some new insights and with ideas for how you and your church can make a difference for those without permanent places to live.

## **CLERGY ADOPT STATEMENT OF INCLUSIVITY AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

*Karen Nelson*

On the Thursday of Annual Conference, the clergy met in clergy session; while the laity met together to elect a new conference lay leader and then attend workshops.

While in clergy session, the Board of Ordained Ministry, which oversees all things having to do with ordination including the approval of candidates for ordination, shared with us a statement they had written. The Board of Ordained Ministry had decided it was time to state publicly what has already been their practice to not consider sexual orientation or gender identity in examining and approving candidates for ministry.

Our clergy session then chose to take that statement and modified it so that it spoke for the entire clergy body and not just the Board of Ordained Ministry. At the end of Annual Conference, this statement of full inclusion was shared on the floor of conference:

"We the Clergy Session of the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference believe this is a crucial time to declare how we operate in our work with those called by God into ordained ministry.

Because we have been a Reconciling Conference since 1996, because we have seen the gifts and graces for ministry in LGBTQ persons and have seen these same gifts too often denied, and because we hope to help lead change in our denomination's policy regarding LGBTQ persons in ordained ministry, we welcome all candidates as children of God as they discern God's call and claim upon them for ordained ministry.

We hold ourselves to high standards for fitness, readiness, and effectiveness in ministry. We commit to participate fully in the ministerial covenant with our colleagues of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Like our denomination, neither our own clergy session nor our own conference membership is of one mind in this statement, and so, we pray for the Spirit of God to continue to move in our clergy session, our conference and our denomination."

# BEAN COUNTERS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCATES

Dee Poujade

As chair of the Oregon/Idaho Holy Land Task Force, I am happy to report that a small group of Methodists on the “left coast” of the US, have not only embraced divestment from companies who are complicit in the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine—we are actually in the process of implementing it!

As readers may be aware, in June, 2015, the Oregon/Idaho Annual Conference voted to divest from Caterpillar, Motorola and Hewlett Packard. In the year since that vote, members of the various church financial bodies, and members of the Holy Land Task Force (or what has sometimes been described as “bean counters and social justice advocates”), formed a working group to develop an implementation plan that meets both the Church’s financial responsibilities and its social justice principles.

This was not an easy task. It involved letting go of preconceived notions about “the other” and opening our hearts and minds to how we could best work together to accomplish the task that we had been asked to do, namely to develop an implementation plan that meets both the Church’s financial responsibilities and its social justice principles.

Thanks to a wonderful facilitator, Danna Drum, who sometimes utilized exercises in group dynamics to keep us focused, and to the open minds and dedication of the members of the working group, the work group (on which I was privileged to serve) developed an implementation plan that satisfied both the members of the working group and the pertinent financial and social justice entities.

This is not to say there were no bumps on the road. Early on, a couple of the “bean counters” attempted to revisit arguments against divestment that had already been discussed and voted on. And trying to read spread sheets was a challenge for this “social justice advocate,” who has always considered math as a foreign language! Nevertheless, we persevered and came up with a plan that was accepted by all concerned, and prepared a report for this year’s Annual Conference.

Then, just a couple of weeks before Annual Conference, we learned that a “late” resolution from a church in eastern Idaho asking to overturn last year’s divestment resolution, had been submitted. The rules of our Annual Conference are such that “late” resolutions are heard in a special meeting of the Legislative Assembly and, if they did not pass in that body they would not go to the plenary floor. While we were counseled to “not worry,” because it’s one of those things I do really well, I did worry! Then I gathered up the “ammunition” that I’d used for last year’s positive vote, and turned it over to God.



Breaking down barriers is a focus of divestment.



Settlement near Wadi Fukin gives impetus for divestment actions

I am happy to report that the resolution was, in fact, defeated in the Legislative Assembly by a vote of about 3-15-1; the implementation plan was jointly presented to 2016 Annual Conference (by one “bean counter” and one “social justice advocate”) and the work is continuing on the path on which it was set last June. The Global Methodist Church may not be divesting at this time, but Oregon/Idaho has joined the group of Annual Conferences that are divesting.

And we continue to look for new ways to educate our congregations about the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine!! Anyone who would like educational materials about Palestine/Israel, or would like someone to come to your church to make a presentation on this topic can contact me or any member of the Holy Land Task Force.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTION BEYOND OUR CONFERENCE

### MINISTERING TO THE HOMELESS IN OUR MIDST

*Carol Ann Seckel*

First United Church of Christ in Salem, Oregon, has tried several ways to reach out and be with the homeless population in the community. In the last year they have had four different forms of outreach; some are sponsored or developed through community connections through the Homeless Task Force and some were developed by the church. Here are a few of the things they did:

- Installation of an "Art-o-Potty" on in the church parking lot. This is one step up from a "Port-a-Potty" because it has classy art work on the outside. Obviously this helps meet basic needs for the homeless when many of the public restrooms are closed.
- Lunch handout three-times-a-week. As part of the work of the Missions Committee, church members packs sack lunches after church on Sundays to hand out three-days-a-week to those who need them—no questions asked. The sacks include individual cans of Vienna sausages, individual cans of pudding, and sometimes individual cans of fruit, also granola bars and sometimes cheese or peanut butter and cracker packets. Bottled water is available to those who ask for it. Dog and cat food are also available. Approximately 35-45 lunches are disbursed each time.
- Porch Ministry—For about 9-10 months the church lets folks sleep on the church grounds especially on their porches. This developed after a woman had been sleeping on the porch for many years and the church was worried that she would get arrested for trespassing. The number of persons sleeping on the porches varied between 7 and 20 per night. The church had two teams of volunteers working with this project. One team stayed with them at the beginning of the evening and made certain folks understood the rules—what was permitted and what was not. The second team, the "Rise and Shine" group, went to the church early in the morning to make certain that folks woke up and were moving on before the work day started. Eventually the church voted to stop the program for 2 reasons: 1) there was a shortage of volunteers, and 2) there was no way to guarantee the safety of those staying there when others would come in the middle of the night. It was with much pain that the program ended but the concern over safety of the homeless folks staying there was major. The person responsible for this program is a member of the Salem-Keizer Homeless Task Force and is trying to develop some new program to meet the need.
- Warming Shelter—When it gets extremely cold outside the church opens its doors for people to get warm and stay the night. Church members volunteer to take turns staying at the church with them. This year the church is hoping to get another church in the area to assist with this ministry so they can rotate the responsibility.

### DISABILITY MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

*Janine DeLaunay*

Did you know the United Methodist Church has a Disability Ministries Committee? The Committee consists of two persons per jurisdiction and liaison members from related organizations.

**Their mission:** through advocacy, education and empowerment, the Disability Ministries Committee will lead the United Methodist Church in creating a culture where people with disabilities are fully included in all aspects of worship, leadership, mission and ministry.

#### **What They Offer:**

- A website [www.umdisabilityministries.org](http://www.umdisabilityministries.org)
- A quarterly email newsletter

- Disability Awareness Sunday materials
- Accessibility audit tools; accessibility visits to camps, churches, and agencies
- New models of ministry
- Workshop collaboration
- Networking and advocacy
- Connections within your jurisdiction
- Resource people available to meet with you
- Inspiration and encouragement
- Prayer for your ministry
- Simple, practical ideas that you can put to use immediately!

You can support their work through **The Advance #3021054—Disability Ministry**. Your gifts help provide start up grants for churches expanding their ministry with people with disabilities.

And, according to the Book of Discipline paragraph 652, each Annual Conference is to have a committee that assists the local church with efforts toward full inclusion for people of all abilities. Oregon/Idaho has not had such a committee and there is much work to be done. Full inclusion does not need an argument, whether we are talking about people with disabilities, those who identify as GLBTQ, or any other category we have not even named yet. Our Creator God made all human beings after God’s image and likeness, not just some human beings.

I am interested in hearing from anyone with a passion to work for full inclusion in this area.

Janine DeLaunay, Pastor, Stayton United Methodist Church ▲ 503 769-5700 ▲ [jandela51@wvi.com](mailto:jandela51@wvi.com)

## PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

Jurisdictional conferences exist primarily for the purpose of electing bishops. That process tends to be rather political and often not too spiritual. But the Western Jurisdictional Conference in Scottsdale in July was for me an experience with the Holy Spirit.

Very few, if any, delegates went to this conference determined to elect a gay bishop, even though there were voices urging us to do that. Every candidate was treated seriously and respectfully as delegates worked to discern which person was the right one for this office in this time. By Friday evening, it had become clear that Karen Oliveto was that person.



We did not take lightly the prohibitions of the Book of Discipline. But neither did we take lightly the whole of the enormous job of being a bishop in the UMC, also specified in the Discipline. I am a believer in order and rules, but there are times when justice clearly calls for a specific rule to be broken in order for God’s work to be done. I trust all readers can think of many previous examples. This was one of those times.

The eventual decision seemed to be the most difficult for delegates closely connected to ethnic minority churches with large numbers of recent immigrants. In many of their cultures, the whole subject of sexuality is a difficult struggle. These delegates, after serious conversation with the remaining candidates, took a step of great faith to join in to elect Bishop Oliveto. There were amazing spirit-filled moments as those final ballots were taken. It never felt like there were winners and losers. I don’t have the words to adequately describe it, but I have never so clearly felt the presence of God in a decision-making body as I did on the night of July 15.

I have known Karen for a long time and have no doubt of her gifts and graces for this office or for her strength to face the extra challenges of being a pioneer. There are many others in this jurisdiction who are very hesitant, who need time to live into this new reality. We must be patient and nurturing, and we must do a better job of listening to those whose experiences are different from our own. There are also enemies who are working to undo the work that God is doing among us. We must stand together, strong in the Spirit's presence, to advance our vision of a church for all God's people.

I wish all of you could have been there.

*Jan*

### **Oregon-Idaho Chapter Executive Committee**

Jan Nelson, President  
[jannelson515@msn.com](mailto:jannelson515@msn.com)

Karen Nelson, Vice President/Program  
Council Representative  
[pastorkaren@gknelson.net](mailto:pastorkaren@gknelson.net)

Dee Poujade, Secretary  
[traveling.mimi@gmail.com](mailto:traveling.mimi@gmail.com)

Claudia Roberts, Treasurer  
[clarobb@juno.com](mailto:clarobb@juno.com)

#### Members At Large:

Marilyn Belcher  
Paul Darling  
Janine DeLauney  
Babs Eggleston  
Louise Kienzle  
Rhoda Pittman Markus  
Steve Mitchell  
Teresa Salyer  
Carol Seckel  
Jeri Silfies  
LoErna Simpson  
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#### Emeritus:

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### **OREGON IDAHO MFSA ONLINE**

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

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*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, P.O. Box 134, Salem OR 97308.*