

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

Amos 7:8



WITNESS

Oregon-Idaho Chapter, Methodist Federation for Social Action

March, 2017

In matters of truth and justice,
there is no difference between large and small problems,
for issues concerning the treatment of people are all the same.

Albert Einstein

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

In this new America, there is always something to demand our attention and action. There is some kind of march or rally almost every week, at least if you live in a big city or a state capitol. My inbox is filled with requests to make phone calls and write emails about: health care, environment, immigrants, women's rights, transgender rights, and on and on.



The question for me quickly becomes, "Which is most important?" and it's hard not to answer, "Everything!" But I know I can't do everything. Part of what makes it hard is the knowledge that it all connects. "Everything is connected to everything else" is one of the main principles I have in how I look at the world. But this can quickly lead from trying to do everything to losing focus and not doing anything, so it can be a real problem.

But it can also be the beginning of a deeper understanding of the world around us. No person is just one single thing. I am a woman, a European-American, a lesbian, a senior citizen. None of these identities exists in a vacuum, but each of them affects all the others. I am a mixture of these and other identities. And so is every person I encounter, each one a unique combination.

And all our issues are important and connected. If you were at the Rise Up! conference last month, you heard a lot about intersectionality. Racism is a huge factor in our treatment of immigrants, as just one example. Poverty and health care are closely connected in the lives of many people, sometimes for good and sometimes not. Climate change increases drought, which increases hunger, which increases migration. Our world is a tapestry where no one thread can be pulled without affecting something else.

This actually can be helpful in my dilemma of wanting to address everything at once. Of course, no one action addresses everything, but one action can help multiple communities. I may take time today for an action on the environment, but I know that action also relates to health and hunger and war. Tomorrow I may take an action for racial justice that can also benefit the LGBT community. And if an action for racial justice HURTS the LGBT community, I need to question whether that is an action that is really helpful at all.

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Have you renewed your MFSA
membership yet? Did you know that
you can now renew online at
www.oimfsa.org

Dates to Remember

March 15: OR/ID MFSA Executive
Board meeting, Portland

June 14-17: Annual Conference with
PNW; Red Lion on the River, Jantzen
Beach

As followers of Jesus, we are called to love our neighbors. We must judge our own actions by how they affect our neighbors in all their complex, God-given identities. And we must persist in loving, even when the demands seem overwhelming. Remember, we are not in this alone. God calls us, and God never leaves us.

In solidarity and hope,

Jan

YOU ARE INVITED

to any of our regular MFSA Board meetings! We meet every other month, usually on the 4th 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 Executive Board meeting will be March 15 in Portland.

VISIONS OF ACTION

Women's March 2017 ...



In Newport—Karen, Jan, Louise and Gretchen



In Portland—Dee and friends

Legislation in Salem



At least 8 United Methodists were among those who packed the Salem City Council meeting on Feb 27 in support of an "inclusivity resolution". Rev Arturo Fernandez was among those who testified.

OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTION IN OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

AN INVITATION TO JOIN...

Louise Kienzle, Membership Secretary

I'm offering you a special invitation to join OR/ID MFSA! 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. This year is presenting us with many challenges. We must stay strong in the efforts we make toward morality, peace and justice. The beginning of a new year is the time to begin or renew your membership in MFSA for 2017. If you have already joined or renewed, thank you.

You can go to oimfsa and send your gift using PayPal. Or, you can download the OR/ID MFSA brochure (membership form), fill it out and mail it in as directed. Oregon-Idaho MFSA also pays its share of maintaining the national organization which plays such a critical role in advocating for justice in the whole church. Be sure we have all of your correct contact information when you send in your gift.

If you feel called to be inclusive, justice-seeking, risk-taking, and wish to support and augment peace and justice ministries through and beyond The United Methodist Church, we invite you to join us in the work we continue to do. If we come together to fight for the rights of all people, we **will** be stronger.

UNITING TO ACT FOR A MORE JUST WORLD

Karen Nelson

Presidents Day Weekend – Portland, Oregon: Western Methodist Justice Movement planned a long weekend conference for people from throughout the Western Jurisdiction and beyond. Our hope was to have 100 people gather to learn more about organizing and to come away with new action networks focused on doing the work of justice.

Instead, we had almost 150 people gather for the weekend! Attendees of the conference as well as other Oregon-Idaho folks from the Portland area listened to Bishop Karen Oliveto preach on Friday evening. On Saturday, Beth Zemsky taught us about how to organize based on our values and not just on the issues around which we are passionate. Sunday and Monday, the focus was on creating action networks. Several new action networks have been created and some of the original networks have been restructured. For more information about the networks and how you can connect with them and get involved in the area of your passion for social justice, go to the WMJM website.

It was a great weekend for learning new skills. On Sunday we also had an opportunity to listen to Bishop Karen, Lloyd Nyarota of Zimbabwe, and Nestor Gerente, a Filipino now living in California. These three presenters talked about the global nature and needs of the United Methodist Church. The weekend was also a time for networking and connecting with others who have a passion for justice work.

Our Oregon-Idaho MFSA chapter offered to support the conference by providing sponsorship for the Saturday morning hospitality room, where people could come and get a continental breakfast for free or a small donation. Several board members continued to help with the hospitality room on Sunday and Monday, along with some other people attending the conference, including our MFSA interim national director, Darlene DeDominick.

Rise Up! Uniting to Act for a More Just World started with the following goals:

1. Understand how to build and sustain a movement of people passionate about justice.

2. Learn ways to connect others for community organizing, expanding involvement and financing the movement.
3. Become aware of the intersectionalities and connections between our various justice causes and passions to move forward as Western United Methodists

We have made a start on achieving these goals and have admitted that we can't do it all in one weekend! It is an on-going process and we invite you to join in with others to sustain a movement for and about justice.

BISHOP OLIVETO INSPIRES JUSTICE EVENT

Greg Nelson

Bishop Karen Oliveto, recently elected bishop of the Western Jurisdiction and presiding bishop of the Mountain Sky Area, was the opening keynote speaker for the [Western Methodist Justice Movement](#) conference meeting in Portland, Oregon February 17-20.

Oliveto's keynote inspired the 150 in attendance as she explored the nature of the divide that currently exists in society and in churches. She described one symptom of the divide as the process of "othering" quoting sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's example that, "Woman is the other of man, animal is the other of human, stranger is the other of native, abnormality the other of norm, deviation the other of law-abiding, illness the other of health, insanity the other of reason, lay public the other of the expert, foreigner the other of state subject, enemy the other of friend." She went on to say, "This othering is most evident in a refugee ban and the building of a wall. The darker the skin, the more to be feared. The more unlike our speech or religion, the more suspect. So we build a wall to keep us in and them out. We close borders, again to keep some in and others out. Even though the apostle Paul learned that God keeps pushing borders wider, not to keep some out, but to include them in, we fail to live this out in church and society. The essential divine oneness of creation and humanity is broken into a thousand sharp shards."



Bishop Karen Oliveto
(Robin Ridenour photos)

In response to this trend, she observed that there is an empathy deficit in this country. "While the global village is shrinking through social media and travel, there is a new provincialism emerging, resulting in the inability to understand another's experience and therefore give it validity. As a result, injustice increases and communication breaks down."

Oliveto went on to share from her own experiences and learning about "othering" and discrimination in the world – of experiences she has witnessed and been subjected to. She called on conference attendees to recognize and celebrate diversity, not mistaking uniformity for unity. She concluded by extolling the conference to rise up. "It is time for us to rise up, my friends. Rise up to embrace love's power! Rise up to create beloved community! Rise up and proclaim the vision of that human connection. Rise up to proclaim the truth that our wellbeing is intimately tied to the wellbeing of others Rise up and live in justice and in joy!"

The conference, "Rise Up! Uniting to Act for a More Just World", continued for three days with participants learning about the intersections of diverse populations in justice seeking. For example, they explored how a world seeing justice for those oppressed by colonialism has elements in common with those seeking human rights and acceptance for LGBTQI communities. The intersections become apparent when the focus of messaging is on shared common values. Beth Zemsky provided training on intercultural organizational development, and WMJM leaders guided the participants into the formation of action teams that will continue to work on justice issues both inside and outside The United Methodist Church.

The Western Methodist Justice Movement was created out of a call to action at the 2012 Western Jurisdictional

Conference of The United Methodist Church. After guiding the conference members through a process of identifying values and actions that the Western Jurisdiction of the church supported, Bishop Grant Hagiya told those in attendance that the jurisdiction, with no staff and a vast geographic region, was not capable of following up on the items identified. Therefore those present would need to seek ways to move the agenda forward. The WMJM formed to do that and has continued to work since then. Most work by action teams is done via teleconferencing and email. In 2015 they held a gathering at Zephyr Point, Lake Tahoe. The Portland gathering was the second conference and was supported by a grant from the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference and the Collins Foundation. The grant provided over \$15,000 in scholarship funds to allow for a diverse representation at the event and a high level of participation by ethnic persons from around the conference and jurisdiction.



MFSA AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Jan Nelson

As you may have heard, Annual Conference will be different this year. The main difference is that we will have our conference jointly with Pacific Northwest Annual Conference. This means we will be in a different place, the Red Lion at Jantzen Beach in Portland. While there will be separate plenary sessions for some of the business items, the emphasis will be on getting to know our neighbors to the north and on sharing ideas and celebrations with each other. It also means that with at least twice as many people as we are used to having and a crowded schedule, some things we are used to won't be there.

MFSA will be there! We will be at the Ministry Marketplace and would love to talk to you there about what justice work is happening where you live. We will make recommendations about legislation that the members will be voting on; watch for that in our next newsletter. We will have some kind of event where all of us can meet and talk with each other. It will not be a meal; there simply isn't enough space for that. We're still working out the details, so watch for more information and look for us when you arrive.

This conference will be an opportunity for us to let our northern neighbors know about MFSA. There has not been a chapter in the PNW conference for a long time, if ever, so this is a great chance for us to spread the word about the important work of justice in the church and the world. Please help us educate and maybe recruit some new members.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE LEGISLATION

Dee Poujade

MFSA will join the Holy Land Task Force in presenting two resolutions to the 2017 Annual Conference. One will ask individuals, congregations and other church bodies to give prayerful consideration to extending the Church's commitment to justice in Palestine/Israel by boycotting Hewlett Packard products from their office equipment purchases, thus joining the "HP Free Churches" campaign.

Two years ago this Annual Conference passed a resolution to divest from Hewlett Packard (along with Motorola and Caterpillar) until it had ceased to allow its products to be used to continue the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine. This resolution, which is supported by United Methodists for [Kairos Response](#) (UMKR) and Friends of Sabeel, adds our voices to those of Christians across the globe.

The second resolution is asking that we, as Christians and as caring human beings, oppose any actions on behalf of lawmaking bodies to pass so-called "Anti-BDS" Legislation, which, despite clear violations of free speech, would

stifle those who would promote Boycott/Divestment and Sanctions – all of which are actions that have been used by thoughtful Christians for decades to fight a variety of social injustices.

When we initially proposed this legislation, a comment was made, “Well, the legislators in Oregon probably are too liberal to consider such a thing.” Wrong! I have learned only this week that, not only has a bill been proposed in the [Oregon Legislature](#), my liberal, Portland state senator (Ginny Burdick) is one of the co-sponsors. I understand similar legislation has also been proposed in Washington State. The passage of our resolution will show our Christian values and give us one more tool in this ugly, divisive fight.

Please let me know if you want more information on this legislation – and please be prepared to speak in support of it at Annual Conference!

RESOURCES AND RESPONSES

FAKE NEWS ... GOOD NEWS

Dee Poujade



Shortly after the election, Rev. Jeremy Smith of FUMC, Portland, conducted a Sunday School class titled “Fake News, Real News and Good News.” Much of the information shared in that class will be helpful to those of us trying to work our way through the mire of what we see in the various forms of media –and how to make sense of it all!

For purposes of the class, we categorized news as “Real,” “Persuasive,” “Satirical” and “Fake.” We then looked at journalistic criteria such as real facts, standard journalistic practices, describes reality, contributes to the common good or cater to a market segment. We concluded that even Biblical stories could be so classified (Herod’s slaughter of the innocents was because he believed that a newborn king would supplant him, while the shepherds in the field needed to see first-hand what the angels were telling them).

Editors note: Check later on our website for a handout used in this class.

HOLY LAND TASK FORCE WELCOMES ALEX AWAD

Dee Poujade

The Oregon/Idaho Holy Land Task Force is delighted to announce that Rev. Alex Awad and his wife, Brenda, are now residing in Eugene, and Alex has joined the Task Force!

Rev. Alex Awad became a refugee when his family was evicted from the Jerusalem home that had been theirs for generations in the 1948 “Nakba.” He lost his Palestinian citizenship in 1967, when the Israeli government denied Palestinians who were not ‘home’ at the time of the 6 Day War the right to return to their native



Eventually, Alex and his wife Brenda became missionaries with the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries, and were able to return to Palestine in that capacity, with Alex working as the Dean of Students at Bethlehem Bible College and Brenda working as development liaison officer for the college. Upon their retirement in 2015, they moved to Eugene, Oregon, to be close to children and grandchildren.

Rev. Awad's story – of loss and pain and renewal – is not by any means unique in the narrative of that bit of land that three faiths call "Holy." Throughout his life, he has written and spoken of his story – the story of the Palestinian people. He is the author of *Palestinian Memories; the Story of a Palestinian Mother and Her People* and *Through the Eyes of the Victims*. Both books discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the perspective of a Palestinian Christian. Rev. Awad is also the author of numerous articles on the conflict and on Christians in the Holy Land, theology of the Land, Christian Zionism and interfaith dialogue.

The Awads are eager to meet their new neighbors – to visit churches and share their stories. Anyone who would like to talk to the Awads about speaking to their group can contact him at: alexeawad@yahoo.com or call 541-525-2085.



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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.

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.

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 or Methodist Federation for Social Action, Oregon-Idaho Chapter, P.O. Box 134, Salem OR 97308.

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