

"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 4, 2017

"In these days of difficulty, we Americans everywhere must and shall choose the path of social justice...,
the path of faith, the path of hope, and the path of love toward our fellow man."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

So much has been said and written about racism recently, that some people are getting tired of hearing about it. Yes, racism has always been with us in America. No, it is not going away soon, even though we did elect a black president. If you remember where many white people thought our country was four years ago, you will know that this time we can't let it go when another distraction comes along.

Many of us who are white are beginning to understand more about the problem. In a recent blog post, Bishop Minerva Carcano shared about something that happened at one of the "get acquainted with the bishop" gatherings in the California-Nevada conference. A man stood up and declared that he is a racist, but doesn't want to be, and he asked for forgiveness. The whole story is well worth reading at [calnev-email.brapp.com/viewinsite/63ce3d16226f6ab41c9b6dace8e6444e]

I would not have used his word, because I don't find "racist" to be a useful concept for an individual. Most of us think of "racist" as a description of the people marching with torches and shouting Nazi slogans, and this allows the majority of us to get off the hook. The racism that persists so destructively in our time is not primarily about those individuals, but everything that keeps the whole system slanted toward those who have always been privileged: straight, white, mainly male. And many more of us are complicit in that system, because we don't see our privilege and don't see that we have a responsibility to do something about it.

There are really two parts to what we must do. The first part is certainly individual, as each of us must confront our own unique combination of experiences and prejudices. This involves deep listening, little talking, and a willingness to begin to see where we have been blind. "I'm too old to change" and "I have friends who are people of color" are not valid excuses. Each person must do this for themselves.

The second part of confronting racism can only be done in community, and it is at least as uncomfortable as the individual work. It involves seeing the consequences, sometimes unintended, of the laws and norms of society. When we find ourselves in a church, a workplace, or a neighborhood that is all white, we must ask why and be prepared to listen and act on what we learn. We must expect that change will be slow and difficult and forcefully resisted by those who have privilege now.

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CHECK OUR IMPROVED WEBSITE

Like us on [Facebook](#)

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

Dates to Remember

Sept. 15-17: We are Called—Social
Justice Retreat; Suttle Lake Camp

September 27: OR/ID MFSA Executive
Board meeting, Salem

October 21: OR/ID MFSA Fall Event,
Bend UMC

The good news is that we don't do this alone. A loving God demands that we change, but the same loving God supports us as we do. None of us can change another individual, but together we can change the injustice of society. It won't happen overnight or with one election. But it can happen. God grant us the courage to stay in the struggle.

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 **September 27 in Salem.**

VISIONS OF ACTION

Annual Conference Social Justice Patio Event ...

OR/ID MFSA organized this multi-organization pre-conference justice event to invite people to talk and find out how they can get involved in justice work throughout the greater northwest and beyond.



Annual Conference River Blessing ...



OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTION IN OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

WE ARE CALLED—SOCIAL JUSTICE RETREAT

Louise Kienzle

We Are Called – Responding to Social Justice Issues in Today’s Social/Political Climate

**September 15-17, 2017
Suttle Lake Camp**



This weekend event offers time for nurturing your spirit in the midst of chaotic times, connecting with others who are also trying to make a difference, and exploring how to respond by framing your issues Biblically. We will begin Friday evening by grounding ourselves in faith and spend the weekend learning and sharing practices with one another for activism and nurture.

Leading through the weekend will be Jennifer Hofmann and Rev.s Kevin and Carol Seckel, who will show us how to stay on the path of social justice both soulfully and sustainably, using inspiration while also offering ways to apply the concept(s) in real life.

Cost of the event is \$135 to stay in Pioneer Lodge and \$99 to stay in simpler cabins.

Invite friends, share the flyer [www.oimfsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Flyer.2c.pdf], click here for more information and to register [www.qocamping.org/campsession/7993157]!

Exploring how to respond ♦ Nurturing your spirit ♦ Connecting with others

MFSA FALL EVENT STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND—EVEN AT HOME LEARNING AND USING SOCIAL JUSTICE SKILLS

Karen Nelson

The MFSA fall event will give us a theological grounding for why we do the work we do in social justice; take us beyond feeling like we are the only one and connect us with others who are doing the same kinds of work; and teach us the most helpful ways to have conversations with others, including our legislators.



This one-day event will take place at **Bend United Methodist Church** on **October 21** from **10 a.m. to 3 p.m.** **Cost is \$20 for the event**, which includes lunch. Register now by e-mailing your contact information to Louise Kienzle at kienzle.louise@gmail.com. You can pay your \$20 at the door on October 21.

Our presenters come from a variety of places and backgrounds and will offer us ideas as well as time to share the work we are currently doing or would like to be doing. Some of those presenters include Rev. Kevin Seckel, Rev. Carol Seckel, Rev. Karen Hernandez and Stacy Witte, chair of Homeless Outreach at Bend UMC.

It’s the perfect time of year for a drive to central Oregon and an opportunity to meet with other social justice advocates. There will also be possibilities to spend the weekend in the area with housing at Suttle Lake UM Camp or a Bend homestay. More information about housing possibilities can be found on our website: www.OIMFSA.org

IMMIGRATION UPDATE

Claudia Roberts, Peace with Justice Coordination, OR-ID UMC

As I sit down to write this article, thousands of young immigrants are anxiously awaiting a decision by Donald Trump as to whether or not their Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status will be abolished by the stroke of a pen. These young people are understandably fearful about the consequences of this action. They will lose their work permits and access to college education. And this is after having submitted extensive information about themselves and their families to Immigration and Naturalization Services to obtain the DACA deferral. They fear they will become sitting ducks for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency and will be rounded up and deported to countries they have not lived since they were two years old.

Rather than the welcome that God and Jesus calls us to offer to the stranger, the widow, the orphan, our country will be the oppressor of these young lives whose only wish is to give back to the country who offered their families shelter from economic destitution and violence. But we do not have to stand idly by and allow this to happen. One of the most powerful things you can do is to call your national Senators and Congressional Members and tell them that you do not support the abolition of DACA. Phone calls from constituents and personal letters carry more weight than signing petitions or marching in the streets. So if you want to have the biggest impact, write or call. If you want to have the maximum impact, you can also sign petitions and attend vigils, rallies and demonstrations in your area.

Even when this crisis passes, there will be more work to do. The website for the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice in Portland, [www.imirj.com], is packed with information for everyone concerned about the plight of the immigrants in our communities.

I believe John Wesley would charge us to welcome the stranger among us in all the ways we can, by all the means we can, and for as long as we can until they are no longer strangers but our neighbors and friends.

PATIO EVENT

Jeri Silfies

We would like to thank everyone who helped us get Annual Conference 2017 off to a great start by participating in the Social Justice Patio Event. We enjoyed having a relaxed time to get acquainted with like minded folk from both conferences and to share information about MFSA as well as our ministry partners listed below. We look forward to seeing many of you next June in Boise.

Thanks to our supporting partners:

- Oregon-Idaho Reconciling United Methodists
- PNW Reconciling Ministries Network
- Oregon-Idaho Peace With Justice Committee
- PNW Board of Church and Society
- Oregon-Idaho Holy Land Task Force

RESOURCES AND RESPONSES

ANTI-BCS BILLS IN THE OREGON STATE LEGISLATURE

Thomas Beilman, Curtis Bell and Diane Dulin

Good news! We are delighted to report that all three so-called "anti-BDS" bills introduced in the recent Oregon legislative session failed to make it out of committee. For reference, see SCR 25 [<http://gov.oregonlive.com/bill/2017/SCR25/>]. The three bills are dead. No action was taken on them.

This is an important victory. It shows we can overcome serious obstacles placed in our path by the well-funded organization that issued and promoted these three pieces of legislation.

Truly, we've come a long way. Early in the campaign, a legislative aide confided to us that we were starting with a "huge deficit" and that a "stream of persons" had already visited the capital building to personally thank legislators for supporting the bills.

We believe it was the Faith Leaders Letter, with signatures of 37 faith leaders of various denominations, which gave the Senate Rules Committee pause. This letter opened their eyes to the breadth and depth of opposition to such bills. In addition to the Faith Leaders Letter, Jewish Voice for Peace also organized an e-mail and phone call campaign among its members throughout Oregon. Human rights organizations in Albany and Corvallis also submitted a jointly-signed letter. As a consequence of these concerted actions, the Oregon State Legislature is now well aware of the principled, passionate, widespread opposition to bills like these.

Our struggle continues. As you may know, federal legislation has recently been introduced which in many ways is worse than the recent Oregon State Legislature bills:

U.S. Senate bill S. 720, the "Anti-Israel Boycott Act", is co-sponsored by 46 U.S. Senators. Legal scholars are debating the peculiar wording of the bill, however the bill appears to make it a federal crime (with fines in the hundreds of thousands of dollars and up to 20 years in jail) for ordinary U.S. citizens to call for or participate in the boycott of Israeli settlements. Oregon's Ron Wyden is a sponsor of the bill, and Jeff Merkley has failed to announce any position at all on the matter. We hope you will join with us and the many faith-based and secular organizations who are working diligently to defeat this bill and a similar one introduced in the U.S. Congress.

CHECK OUR IMPROVED WEBSITE

Jan Nelson

Resources

We are in the process of adding a new feature to our website: a "Resources" page. Visit us at www.oimfsa.org and check out what's new. This new page is a work in progress. If you know of a website, book, video, or other resource that would be useful to other MFSAs, please send information and links to jannelson515@msn.com. We are especially interested in resources you have used in a group or in your church. Send a brief review with your information.

If you know something about websites, you will notice that ours is pretty basic. If you have some experience with WordPress and would like to help us make our site better, please let us know.



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.

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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