



Methodist Federation for Social Action

Chapter Handbook

212 East Capitol Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20003
Phone: 202/546-8806 Fax: 202/546-6811
e-mail: mfsa@mfsaweb.org

<http://www.mfsaweb.org>

Revised: October 2009

Table of Contents

1. Section A: Introduction	4
2. Section B: MFSA History and Tradition	5-9
<i>Highlights of Federation History</i>	5-7
<i>A Glance at the Past</i>	8
<i>Spiritual Praxis in Federation Life</i>	8-9
3. Section C: Goals and National Organization	10-13
<i>MFSA Purpose</i>	10
<i>MFSA National Program Priorities</i>	10-11
<i>Board of Directors and Program Council</i>	11-12
<i>General Conference Witness</i>	12
<i>Chapters</i>	12-13
<i>Social Questions Bulletin</i>	13
<i>The National Staff and Office</i>	13
4. Section D: How to Start or Restart a Chapter	14-19
<i>Beginning With an Organizing Group</i>	14-15
<i>Plan an Exploratory Event</i>	15-16
<i>Things to Include in Your First Meeting</i>	16-17

<i>Nurturing Members</i>	17
<i>Building Networks</i>	17-18
<i>Chapter Formation Guidelines</i>	19
5. Section E: Chapter Life	20-33
<i>Goals and Priorities: Chapter Self-Inventory</i>	20-21
<i>Developing Spiritual Praxis in Chapter Life</i>	22
<i>Officers</i>	22-25
<i>About Chapter Finances</i>	25
<i>Worship and Spirituality</i>	25
<i>Membership Recruitment and Renewals</i>	25-27
<i>Checklist for Annual Conference Preparations</i>	28
<i>Publishing a Chapter Newsletter</i>	29
<i>Electronic Communication</i>	29-30
<i>Retreats</i>	30
<i>Actions</i>	30
<i>Chapter Social Action Awards</i>	30
<i>Jurisdictional Events</i>	30
<i>Electing General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegates</i>	31

<i>Developing a Budget</i>	31
<i>Frequently Asked Questions</i>	32
6. Appendices	34-55
1. How to Improve Your Chapter's Communications	34-35
2. MFSA Theological Affirmation	36-38
3. Pledge on Nonviolence	39
4. MFSA Statement on Reproductive Rights	40-41
5. Tips on Facing Controversy <i>by Carolyn Minus</i>	42
6. Questions Worth Pondering About Racism <i>by Gil Caldwell</i>	43
7. MFSA Model for Consensus	44-45
8. Prayer as Social Action <i>by George McClain</i>	46-48
9. Bibliography on Methodist Federation History	49
10. Praying for Institutions <i>by George McClain</i>	50-52
11. A Breath Prayer for Social Transformation	53
12. Prayer-Action Discernment Cycle	54-55

We wish to express our appreciation present and past MFSA members and staff for their principal roles in drafting this handbook.

Section A

Introduction

Introduction

The Methodist Federation for Social Action has a remarkable past, an exciting present, and a promising future.

This Handbook offers an introduction to this history, a map to engage in today's challenges, and an invitation to help build the future.

We are claimed by God as instruments of God's liberating activity in human history. The nuances of our theological language may shift and the concrete issues we confront may change with the times, but the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ has called us throughout our history to witness in concrete word and deed to the divine yearning for justice and peace within the whole creation.

If you are not a part of the MFSA network of activists, we invite you to join. If you are already, we invite you to re-commit to the historic witness of the Methodist Federation.

Why does there need to be a Methodist Federation for Social Action? Simply put, to help the church *be* the church.

Myriad forces work against the institutional church acting as the prophetic leaven in the loaf of society. The church is constantly tempted to succumb to consumerist values and to make tawdry compromises with injustice. MFSA is not, of course, immune from such compromises, but with our independence from official church structures and our history as a rallying point for those in the United Methodist tradition with the keenest social conscience we have a unique opportunity to speak prophetically to our church and to our society.

To put this in personal terms, there are many faithful doers of the Word across our denomination who find themselves lonely and misunderstood in their social vision, perhaps even alienated from their congregations, pastors, or conference hierarchy.

These persons have found in MFSA a home, a voice, and a vehicle for change. Their stories could be multiplied hundreds of times in the lives of other MFSAers. We invite your participation in enlarging this home, strengthening this voice, and making this vehicle for change more effective.

If your keenest concern is how to start or re-invigorate an MFSA chapter, you may want to begin with sections five and six and then peruse the other sections for fuller background. We consider chapters as the basic building blocks of the Federation.

Please contact us in the national office if we are able to help you – or as you discover ways in which this Handbook may be strengthened.

May God be with you as you witness to the power and the persistence of God's liberating work among us.

Rev. Kathryn Johnson
Executive Director
Washington, DC

Section B

MFSA History and Tradition

Originally the Methodist Federation for Social *Service*, the Federation was founded in 1907 by several Methodist Episcopal clergy (including Frank Mason North, author of *Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life*) to direct church attention to the enormous human suffering among the working class. Immediately, the Federation became Methodism's official rallying point for the Social Gospel and achieved in 1908 the adoption of the first denominational social creed.

Highlights of Federation History

- 1907** Methodist Episcopal Church leaders Herbert Welch, Harry F. Ward, Worthy Tippy, Elbert Robb Zaring and Frank Mason North called a meeting in Washington's Ebbitt House to found a *Methodist League of Social Service*, patterned after the Wesleyan Methodist Union for Social Service in England. On December 3rd, 25 persons founded the Methodist Federation for Social Service (MFSS), electing Herbert Welch as president. The next day the group was received in the White House by President Theodore Roosevelt.
- 1908** MFSS members authored and secured adoption of the first Social Creed by the Methodist Episcopal Church General Conference, as well as formal recognition of MFSS. Over 1,000 attended a Federation information meeting during the conference.
- 1911** Harry F. Ward began his first of 34 years as unpaid Federation executive and launched the *Social Service Bulletin (SSB)*.
- 1912** Bishop Francis J. McConnell was chosen as MFSS president and served for the next 32 years. The Federation launched a drive to encourage churches to perform community service.
- 1916** MFSS sought to "Christianize the social order," championing above all the cause of working people and organized labor.
- 1919** Bishop McConnell served on a committee investigating the great steel strike. Their report mobilized public opinion against the prevailing 68-hour work week in the steel industry. An *SSB* article giving cautious support to the Russian Revolution became a *cause célèbre*. The *Sunday School Journal* dropped the regular column by MFSS staffer Grace Scribner. Harry F. Ward was accused by a New York State investigating committee of "teaching Bolshevism."
- 1922** MFSS sponsored a national conference on "Christianity and the Economic Order," the first of its kind in the U.S.A. Grace Scribner was killed by a hit-and-run driver; and her friend Winifred Chappell, also a Methodist deaconess, became co-editor of the *SSB*. Over the next decade Winifred Chappell, Harry F. Ward, George Coe and Bishop McConnell made the MFSS the leading force for social gospel radicalism among the U.S. churches.
- 1926** A national MFSS conference on "The Preacher and the Economic Order" urged equalized clergy salaries.
- 1932** The Federation's critique of the depression-riddled social order gained a broad reception. The 1932 Methodist Episcopal General Conference declared, "The present industrial order is unchristian, unethical, and anti-social."
- 1933** *SSB* name was changed to the current *Social Questions Bulletin (SQB)*.

- 1934** MFSS membership declared that it "seeks to abolish the profit system and to develop a classless society based on the obligation of mutual service."
- 1935** As part of the widespread offensive against the Left, reactionary attacks were launched against MFSS from various quarters, including the Hearst press.
- 1936** Winifred Chappell retired from the Federation staff, though without due recognition for her great contributions. New field secretary Charles C. Webber began a successful effort to organize MFSS chapters.
- 1939** MFSS played the leading role in creating a progressive religious united front against fascism, the United Christian Council for Democracy.
- 1944** With the departure of Charles Webber, the retirement of Bishop McConnell and Harry F. Ward, and a serious financial crisis, MFSS reached out for new leadership, including Bishop Lewis Hartman as president and Thelma Stevens as secretary.
- 1945** Jack McMichael, from the southern branch of the newly-reunited Methodist Church, was chosen as executive secretary. He led MFSS' greatest period of expansion, to some 40 chapters and 5,000 members over a three-year period.
- 1947** A new round of reactionary attacks on MFSS began with a series of distorted, misleading articles published in the *New York World Telegram*.
- 1948** MFSS vice-president Walter Muelder published a vigorous defense of the Federation. MFSS' name was changed to Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA). Bishop Robert N. Brooks of the all African-American Central Jurisdiction was elected MFSA president.
- 1950** *Reader's Digest* attacked MFSA as "Methodism's Pink Fringe" in the classic style of McCarthyism. During the 1940's and 50's the FBI's surveillance of MFSA produced a 5,000-page file.
- 1952** The U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities republished previous attacks on MFSA. Circuit Riders, Inc. and other critics within The Methodist Church capitalized on the prevailing McCarthyist hysteria to secure General Conference's repudiation of the Federation.
- 1960** Lee H. Ball began a 13-year term as the paid Federation executive and pursued a vigorous critique of the U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia. He crossed the country frequently to reintroduce MFSA to the church. Mae Ball promoted MFSA through voluminous correspondence.
- 1974** George D. McClain became executive secretary. MFSA began to again organize aggressively within the denomination. Field staff Kathy and David Munson-Young provided on-site support for striking non-professionals at the United Methodist Hospital in Pikeville, Kentucky.
- 1976** MFSA published a *Daily SQB* and began vigorous lobbying at the 1976 (and successive) General Conferences. MFSA took a stand opposing condemnatory language about same-sex relationships and advocating full church participation by and with gay and lesbian United Methodists.
- 1977** MFSA began promoting a boycott of J.P. Stevens and Nestlé products across the church.
- 1980** The Federation garnered General Conference support for the Stevens boycott, and secured the addition of a new section in the *Social Principles* on "Work," which begins with the affirmation that "persons come before profits."

- 1982** MFSA celebrated its 75th Jubilee in Washington, D.C. Six new chapters joined, bringing the total to 17. MFSA launched an Emergency Peace Project, staffed by mission intern Jim Winkler, and joined an ecumenical group in developing the economic study *Must We Choose Sides?*
- 1984** MFSA sponsored the *Gospel Train* in antique railroad cars at the bicentennial General Conference of American Methodism. It also witnessed steadfastly against the exclusion of lesbians and gay men from United Methodist ordained ministry.
- 1986** MFSA led an intense struggle against the denomination's General Board of Pensions over the issue of investments in South African corporations. 37 were arrested during a non-violent MFSA protest at the General Board of Pensions offices.
- 1988** MFSA celebrated its 80-year Jubilee of the Social Creed and the Federation. Four chapters joined, bringing the total to 28.
- 1994** An MFSA delegation joined an estimated 2000 people in a march for peace and justice in Chiapas at the government building in Cuernavaca.
- 1996** General Conference, Denver CO MFSA encouraged folks at General Conference to "Raise Your Voices" and honored Bishop Melvin Talbert and Rev. Jeanne Audrey Powers with the Ball Award.
- 1997** On Sunday October 19th, MFSA members gathered in Washington DC, the place of the Federation's founding to celebrate MFSA 90th year of social witness. The celebration included a Pilgrimage of Memory and Witness.
- 1998** Rev. Kathryn Johnson became Executive Director of the Federation and the national office moved from New York to Washington DC.
- 2001** MFSA added to the staff the position of Field Organizer. Rev. Amy Stapleton was hired. The Federation had 38 chapters within the network and at least one in every jurisdiction.
- 2002** The Methodist Federation for Social Action Board of Directors after meeting in Chicago with Bishop Joe Sprague called for an immediate end to the U.S. military action in Afghanistan.
- 2003** MFSA sponsored a national gathering for progressive United Methodists "Voices of Faith" in Atlanta GA. More than 300 people attended.
- 2004** With the support of more than 200 volunteers, MFSA had a powerful witness of prayer, action and hospitality at General Conference. MFSA joined in coalition with other groups including the Reconciling Ministries Network, Affirmation, Association of Physically Challenged Ministers and leaders of ethnic caucus groups to form "Common Witness."
- 2005** The second Voices of Faith conference was held in Los Angeles. The theme of the conference was nonviolence which became a new national priority for the Federation.
- 2007** MFSA celebrates its 100th Anniversary at a third "Voices of Faith" conference, ending with a worship celebration and call for justice across from the White House in Washington, DC.

A Glance at the Past

The concern for biblically and spiritually grounded action runs strongly throughout the Federation's history. Preparation for this manual occasioned the rereading of the last chapter handbook, published in 1945-46 under the leadership of Jack McMichael. The following excerpt summarizes MFSA's enduring focus.

The Christian Imperative for Social Action

Addressing those who waited upon his ministry and professed to believe in him as Lord but failed to translate his precepts into action, Jesus demanded, Why call me Lord if you do not do the things which I say? Again today he confronts his professed followers with the same simple, direct challenge: Why, then, do you not *do* the things which I say?

If we really take Jesus seriously how embarrassingly simple that question becomes. Churches, societies, committees and other organizations without number; vast sums of money raised and spent; robed choirs and altars resplendent with candles; multitudes repeating the creed, "I believe...I believe, Lord of Lords"...but what does it all amount to if the things He commanded are not done?

Creeds are essential. Faith, as belief, is essential to the Christian religion. But belief which finds no expression in action is vain. Its vitality is lost and its confession becomes merely the repetition of empty words. To believe and not to act is in the end to lose the capacity for dynamic faith.

Feeling also is essential to religion. Cold prayers that do not stir the heart of the listener – how can they be expected to rise to the throne of God? But emotion that does not indicate itself in action soon degenerates into mere sentimentality. How much of today's religion becomes just that – the repetition of sweet-sounding, empty sentimental words!

The Methodist Federation for Social Service is insistent upon social action – *action*, ever more *action*. Too often, in the areas of acute social concern, involving issues on which the anti-social forces are aggressive in opposition, the churches and the agencies of the Churches content themselves with resolutions urging the study of the issues. Study is fundamental and necessary but study that does not end in definite committal and in action against injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the specific social sins in which these find expression is both futile and in itself sinful. Exhortation *to study* the social evils of our day, if it goes no further, may be merely a form of rationalization....

Spiritual Praxis in Federation Life

The integration of spiritual practice and social advocacy has long been a concern within the Methodist Federation. Walter Rauschenbusch's *Prayers of the Social Awakening* (1910) have been treasured by MFSAers over the decades. Many of these prayers found their way into a volume edited in 1936 by Federation leader and editor Wade Crawford Barclay, *Challenge and Power: Meditations and Prayers in Personal and Social Religion*, in which Barclay called for "a new vocabulary of prayer," "a veritable liturgy of the social gospel" that "challenges...the selfishness and greed embodied in our economic system and that calls upon God for the sustaining grace and inner power to resist and to overcome against all obstacles and odds."

Alongside prayers and acts of worship from ecumenical figures such as Rauschenbusch, Vida Scudder, Eugene V. Debs, Rufus Jones, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Jane Addams, and Toyohiko

Kagawa was material by leading Federation members such as Halford Luccock, Ernest Fremont Tittle, Walter Russell Bowie, Georgia Harkness and Barclay himself.

Georgia Harkness embodied the unity of devotion and social action to an exemplary degree. Of her prolific output of 37 books, one-third addressed the devotional life, while another one-third addressed social issues. One volume published posthumously in 1948 called for an independent Palestinian state.

We have increasingly seen social issues as spiritual issues, struggles between God's intention and those principalities and powers intent on subverting God's yearning.

Section C

Goals and National Organization

MFSA Purpose

The Methodist Federation for Social Action seeks to provide a fruitful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world, working primarily through the ministries of The United Methodist Church. Our objectives are:

- To witness prophetically to the biblical faith in solidarity with persons who are oppressed;
- To work to establish a society based on democratic social-economic principles, according human dignity to all without discrimination based on race, gender, age, sexual identity, handicapping condition or class distinction;
- To defend civil liberties and human rights as set forth in Biblical tradition and the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights; and
- To work to abolish nuclear arms and to eliminate war between nations.

MFSA is an independent organization of United Methodists taking action on issues of Justice, Peace and Liberation. MFSA calls upon the United Methodist Church to expand its understanding and embodiment of the radical call of the Gospel to be the inclusive, justice-seeking, risk-taking Body of Christ. We support and augment peace and justice ministries through and beyond the United Methodist Church. Through MFSA we live 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.

MFSA National Program Priorities:

Peace

Nonviolence: MFSA sponsors “Creating A Culture of Peace” nonviolence training and action seminars.

Palestine and Israel: MFSA promotes a just and lasting settlement to the conflict in the Middle East through nonviolent action. MFSA is urging UM Agencies to selectively divest in companies that benefit from the occupation of Palestine.

Poverty

Workers’ Rights: MFSA takes action to support the rights of workers, including a living wage.

Budget Priorities: MFSA advocates for adequate funding for housing, healthcare and education in the belief that security cannot be gained through military might.

People's rights

Full Inclusion: With the Reconciling Ministries Network, Affirmation and Church Within a Church, MFSA is working for a church and society that are fully inclusive of persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

Dismantling Racism: MFSA supports the work of the General Commission on Religion and Race, and has joined other progressive UM groups to explore the intersections of race, gender, sexual orientation and class.

Progressive Initiatives

Coalition Building: MFSA is strengthening and building a progressive movement of UMs through *Voices of Faith* conferences and organizing at Annual, Jurisdictional, and General Conferences.

Monitoring the Conservative Renewal Movements in the UMC: MFSA raises awareness around activities of the conservative renewal movements within the UMC, some of which are actively pursuing the option of a schism within the UMC.

Throughout our history, MFSA has worked on several justice issues that we continue to monitor today including: civil rights, restorative justice, the rights of women and workers, immigration, environmental stewardship and reproductive choice.

Board of Directors

THE MFSA Board of Directors is composed of a minimum of nine persons including four officers and five persons designated by the Program Council. The board is authorized to elect to its membership five additional directors (with special attention to historically marginalized communities including, but not limited to, young adults, laity, racial/ethnic minorities and LGBT persons), as may be necessary to provide diversity and skill composition needed to fulfill its objectives and purposes.

Ex-officio members of the board include: the co-chairpersons of the Program Council, the Executive Director of MFSA and chairs of standing committees such as the Finance Committee and Personnel Committee.

National Board Meetings: The Board of Directors meets in person at least once a year. Additional meetings may be held either in person or via electronic means.
Meets.

Program Council

The MFSA Program Council, meets at least annually and consists of one representative of each chapter and chapter-in-information of MFSA. The representative is designated by the chapter or chapter-in-information and is to be an active member of the local chapter. Program Council leadership is provided by Co-Conveners, who serve as ex-officio members of the Board of Directors, and a recorder, all of whom serve for two year terms.

This Program Council meets at least annually for the purposes of election of Nominating Committee members from the Program Council, inspiration, education, training, input and planning. This is accomplished through some or all of the following:

- hearing about the work and activities of other members and chapters
- having speakers and conducting workshops

- sharing information across chapter lines
- conducting leadership training
- receiving updates from the Board of Directors and national staff
- resourcing jurisdictional events and gatherings of the full MFSA membership
- proposing strategies for action
- advising the national staff and MFSA Board of Directors

The Program Council is responsible for electing five (5) members of the Board of Directors, one from each jurisdiction, each of whom will serve one three-year term. At least one meeting of the MFSA Board of Directors will take place in conjunction with the annual Program Council meeting.

Program Council meetings are open to all MFSA members. The expenses for the representatives from the MFSA Chapters are paid by their MFSA Chapter or by the MFSA national office if Chapters cannot afford the expense. Decisions of the Program Council will be made either by consensus or by majority vote by the designated Program Council members who are representing MFSA chapters and/or chapters-in-information.

General Conference Witness:

MFSA offers a special witness at each General Conference of The United Methodist Church, and invites volunteers from across the church to implement this witness. It usually includes the following ministries:

Ministry of Advocacy: assisting chapters in electing strong delegates, identifying issues and formulating MFSA positions and petitions, monitoring the work of General Conference committees, lobbying for MFSA's positions, coordinating with other groups and caucuses, briefing volunteers, holding daily caucus meetings, and gathering for intercessory prayer that God's yearning be fulfilled.

Ministry of Information: publishing a *Daily Social Questions Bulletin* throughout the conference.

Ministry of Celebration: inviting delegates, volunteers, observers, and the local community to a special evening of entertainment celebrating MFSA and the movement in the church for justice and peace. The Ball Award is also given for outstanding commitment to Social Justice.

Ministry of Hospitality: providing hospitality and caucus space, and a luncheon gathering place each day throughout the conference.

Ministry of Outreach: organizing MFSA's participation in any special witness events during the conference and assisting membership recruitment and chapter development.

Chapters

Chapters are the basic units of the Federation. Historically, chapters were defined by the bounds of the Annual Conference (i.e. one chapter per conference). This is still the case in many annual conferences. To allow for greater flexibility however, the decision was made by the Board of Directors in October 2005 to allow chapters to be formed in geographic units smaller than the annual conference. Thus one annual conference could conceivably have two or more chapters.

If more than one chapter exists within an annual conference, an Annual Conference Leadership Team will be established with at least one member from each chapter for the purpose of coordinating annual conference actions, election of delegates and legislation. Each chapter operates as a separate financial entity that relates to the National Office.

ALL chapters can request a nonprofit status (501c3) under the umbrella status of the National Office. All donations to MFSA nationally and locally are tax exempt with the exception of those donations rendered for goods and/or services.

The process of becoming an MFSA chapter is outlined in the next major section of this handbook.

Social Questions Bulletin

The *Social Action Bulletin* is generally published bi-monthly by the MFSA national office and is mailed to all individual MFSA members. It calls attention to special issues and actions of concern to MFSA, shares information on the accomplishments of MFSA members and chapters, announces upcoming MFSA events, and shares resources and reports of interest to the MFSA community. It is currently edited by Executive Director Kathryn Johnson, and it has been published continuously since 1911 (originally as the *Social Service Bulletin*).

Subscription to the *Social Questions Bulletin* is included in the basic membership dues. Individual subscriptions (without MFSA membership) are \$12 per year and additional copies of a single issue are \$2 each. Interested persons or groups should inquire about special rates for bulk quantities of a single issue.

The National Staff and Office

The executive director of MFSA is Rev. Kathryn Johnson and the office manager is Robert (Rob) Walty. Jennifer Mihok joined the MFSA staff for a fifteen month term (January 2009 – June 2010) through the Mission Intern Program of the General Board of Global Ministries. Virginia Lapham serves as a Middle East consultant. Additionally, MFSA has part time/contract staff for bookkeeping needs.

The address of the national office is:

Methodist Federation for Social Action
212 East Capitol Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20003
Phone: 202/546-8806 fax: 202/546-6811
e-mail: mfsa@mfsaweb.org
web address: <http://www.mfsaweb.org>

Section D

How to Start or Restart a Chapter

This section will provide you a mixture of guidelines, ideas and options for starting or restarting a chapter. A chapter may be located within a church, campus ministry, or geographic area within the annual conference. There may be more than one chapter within an annual conference. This is a new policy enacted by the MFSA Board of Directors in October of 2005 in an effort to address the ongoing chapter and organizing needs.

Where there is more than one MFSA chapter within an annual conference, an MFSA Leadership Team will be established consisting of at least one member from each chapter within the annual conference, to coordinate annual conference strategies and events. Each chapter however will operate as a separate financial entity as it relates to the National Office.

In many instances existing members within the MFSA network will decide that they want to operate as one chapter within the Annual Conference.

By the time you look at this section of the handbook, you will probably have already identified at least a handful of persons in your conference who desire to influence it toward stances, structures, resolutions and programs of peace and justice.

Beginning With an Organizing Group

As your organizing group gets together to discuss chapter formation, spend time becoming better acquainted. Don't assume that you "already know each other." Share stories about your first involvement in social justice issues or actions. What social justice issues are most important to you, in what actions have you recently taken part, what are some of the important aspects of your spiritual journey, what books and resources do you utilize, to what other organizations do you belong? If you are surprised how important it is to learn things about people you already know, consider how important it will be to spend time in all future meetings and actions allowing new and prospective members to connect with the group.

After some personal sharing, spend time talking about your particular community. What are some justice and peace issues and areas in which it needs to grow? Are there issues and areas may include the need for resolutions at the annual conference level?

You might expand the discussion a little by examining the perennial justice and peace issues in your local church, community, or annual conference: consider looking at the national MFSA statement of purpose and programs, seeing if any of those issues are also critical to you what your chapter hopes to address or identifies as concerns.

As your group discusses these, listen for where the energy is in the conversation. Try to discover a common vision for peace and justice that your exploratory group already shares. Summarize that vision very simply. A vision statement should be simple enough to share in two or three *simple* sentences. A vision is essential to the formation of any people. Don't try to worry about sounding more mainstream (*dealing with that set of issues is discussed at other points in this handbook*). Rather, let your vision statement describe both who you are and who you would like to become. What you're looking for at this juncture is a simple statement you can use in inviting other people into your exploration process, saying to them that, "We'd like to form an MFSA chapter to..."

The picture you paint should be brief, with broad strokes and with room for the potential member to say, "That's great, but what about..." This kind of open-ended invitation will help you connect with people, rather than drawing firm lines that will immediately exclude some of them.

Before you plan further, though, it is important to check commitment levels in your small exploratory group. How many of your group already belongs to MFSA? Have sign up sheets available at this exploratory meeting, knowing that you will need at least 12 current members to develop a chapter-information (*described later in this section*). This inviting action should be repeated at each meeting or event you sponsor. Few people will join if they are not invited.

Plan an Exploratory Event

As your group discusses the formation of an MFSA chapter, plan a next event, to which a wider circle of people will be invited to expand the formation process. Three questions are important in that planning process.

First, what kind of event will the next one be? Groups will plan actions, studies of MFSA, etc.; but in any kind of event you will want to allow enough time for people to get to know each other, discuss and redefine the group's vision, and secure the commitment of new MFSA members. Often, the best vehicle for this formation process is a retreat setting of more than one day. This format invites people to spend the extra time necessary to explore a common vision. It also gives people a chance to unhook briefly from their ongoing schedule, allowing them time to sense those things, out of all the things that could be done by an MFSA chapter, that God may be urging or leading you to do first.

Second, who will provide leadership for the event? Bringing in outside leadership can provide the opportunity to hear common themes and leadings better. The national MFSA office will be able to either provide or suggest leaders for your meeting. Make sure that someone is responsible for securing leadership and reporting back to the group in a timely manner.

Third, who will be invited to the event? You will need to spend as much time identifying and inviting people to your first event as you do planning the event itself. Regardless of how many different media you choose to announce your meeting, always include personal contact, either face-to-face or by phone. A list of potential members should be composed from a variety of sources. Don't overlook the most obvious source: people whom your exploratory group can name who may be interested. Other possible sources are listed below:

Some can be gleaned from the conference journal lists, including members of the boards of church and society, global ministries, and Christian unity and interreligious concerns.

Members of formal conference caucuses and coalitions may be interested (e.g., women's caucus, ethnic minority caucuses, and task forces on children and poverty, peace with justice, etc.)

The Reconciling Ministries Network, Religious Coalition on Reproductive Choice, Churches for Middle East Peace, End the Occupation and Affirmation are all linked with national MFSA; and their local chapters, congregations and members will be interested in at least connecting with your chapter.

People who have spoken on the floor of your annual conference, favorable to your positions on key issues, will want to be connected with your group for support.

Each year a percentage of the classes of persons newly ordained as deacons and elders will be interested in MFSA. It is good to get them involved and committed before they become over-

committed in other areas. Some chapters make it a practice to give free one-year MFSA memberships to newly ordained members of their Annual Conference.

At your request, the national office will provide you with a list of current and past MFSA members from your conference.

Campus ministry programs, sanctuary churches, justice-centered churches, base communities, urban ministry programs and churches, etc., may be interested in participating in and announcing your meetings through their publications.

The Christian Social Involvement Chairperson of the conference United Methodist Women may be interested or know of others who are interested in MFSA.

Some college and university professors and campus ministers will have interest in chapter formation and action.

These are a few sources for potential members of your chapter. You will probably find it much easier to locate and identify potential clergy members, simply because they are often more highly visible and their names are all publicized and updated in the conference journal. However, laity are often more aligned with the purpose and desire of MFSA, and they usually feel more isolated and have a greater need for federation with others concerned about justice and peace. It is essential that your group make an extra effort to identify and recruit potential lay members. Again, at your first event, ask all new people in attendance to name other prospects for membership.

Another way to spread the word about your formation process may be in your conference and district newsletters and newspapers; although you will need to be sensitive to conference rules and the climate of your conference surrounding new or progressive social groups. Some conferences may tend to be vindictive or suspicious about groups like MFSA. For this reason, it is important from the beginning to treat lists of members and prospects with great confidentiality.

Things to Include in Your First Meeting

At your first event it will be important to get to know each other and to spend time expanding and refining your vision statement, so that it continues to be a community vision, rather than just the desire of two or three of the group. Throughout the organizing process, the more networking you do and the more input people have to the vision and process of the group, the larger and more effective the group is likely to become. Nothing can be as devastating to a group in formation as the impression among prospects that things are already decided and that the group is really under the ownership of a few. Plan ways to invite each new member and prospect into the ownership of the group.

It will also be important at your first event to plan some future action. Some groups, in addition to the study/reflection/action included in the chapter-in-formation process, will also include prophetic actions, social exorcisms, strategies around a certain issue, etc. A basic part of spirituality for social justice is the principle that forming together around action opens the door to further insight and leading from God's spirit, in a way that just talk and reflection are unable to do alone. In other words, God leads us further **as** we act, not just **so that** we can act. The more as a group that we test smaller leadings through responsive actions, the better and more open we become to greater leadings of God's spirit.

Finally, at your first event it will be important to ask those ready to make a commitment to join MFSA and to accept responsibility for some part of the action your chapter will carry out. Again, you will want to have materials on hand at the meeting to sign people up for membership and to mail in the registrations. Getting people to sign up for membership and active participation is crucial to the success of your chapter. In his organizing days, John Wesley often spoke of the twin poles of support

and accountability. When we commit ourselves to action, we become accountable to the group. The group then must both hold us accountable for our commitment and give us the support and encouragement to complete it. Wesley reminds us that support without accountability is foolish, but that accountability without support is cruel.

Nurturing Members

Most people do not suddenly become interested and active in MFSA, just as most people do not become Christian by an instantaneous conversion experience. God's spirit nurtures them along the road to justice and peace. Awareness of justice issues often grows incrementally, through involvement in actions, prayer, reading of books, discussion, etc.

As you think about the membership of your chapter, then, allow people to be at different points along their own spiritual paths toward justice and peace, and plan regular experiences which invite them to take further steps along their way.

For example, many people in your annual conference will look to your MFSA chapter to provide them with good, solid information about the justice issues facing the conference. They may never join, but they will always listen to what your chapter has to say on an issue before they vote.

Some will support you behind the scenes and even monetarily, but they will not make a public commitment. Of these, some will actually join MFSA, but they will ask that their membership information not be shared publicly.

Others will join and while they do not have the time to become involved in the everyday workings of the chapter, they will be glad for you to use their names to give the chapter credence in your annual conference, and they will represent your chapter's interests well in those other organizations to which they are committed. Of these, some will become major financial supporters of your work.

Still others will join simply because they need support. They may feel isolated in their significant work for peace and justice; and they will need the collegiality and support your chapter offers them, allowing them to continue in their work.

Finally, some will join because of their interest in doing all the actions, studies, and the nuts-and-bolts of your chapter.

It takes all of these types of people to grow into a solid chapter, so you will want to identify and cultivate people in each of these categories from the very beginning of your chapter formation process.

The ever expanding technology of the internet makes it possible for people to stay connected despite geographical distances. The national office can help chapters set up various forms of electronic communication to stay in touch with people in the MFSA network. Whether a person actually chooses to be a member of MFSA or not, it is the practice of the MFSA National Office to continue to communicate with people in the network. We are a movement and we want as many people as possible to be included!

Building Networks

Your search for potential members will connect you with a variety of justice and peace groups. Some will want to join MFSA in addition to the groups to which they already belong; and that process will weave you into the justice and peace network in your conference, community, city, or church. One

way to effect that linkage is to identify those groups and share minutes back and forth, publicizing each others' activities and offering mutual support and assistance when needed. Another way is to designate persons who belong to both groups as formal liaisons.

Networking sometimes means giving up some control, but it can also open many more doors for membership and involvement. There is a fine line between too much control, which makes it difficult for newcomers to find their niche in the group, and too much freedom of organization, in which a group becomes aimless and loses members by attrition. Striking a balance here will be important for the quality and effectiveness of your chapter.

MFSA CHAPTER FORMATION GUIDELINES

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A CHAPTER OF THE METHODIST FEDERATION FOR SOCIAL ACTION

- A. Twelve or more paid-up members of National MFSA.
- B. Support of MFSA purposes (refer to page 13)
- C. Adoption of own organizational structure.
- D. Completion of eight to twelve hours of preparation, including corporate study, action, and reflection.
- E. Approval by the MFSA National Board of Directors.

CHAPTER FORMATION PROCEDURES

1. Those in a prospective chapter share with the Field Organizer:
 - a. A statement of their desire to be an MFSA chapter;
 - b. A description of the possibilities and potentials they see for a chapter and of the needs and area it would serve; and
 - c. A list of at least twelve paid-up members of the National MFSA who would comprise the new chapter.
 - d. A statement of mission and vision that will guide the chapter's work.
2. The Field Organizer in consultation with the Executive Director and Board of Directors, designates the group as an MFSA "Chapter-in-Formation" and recommends study material for the next stage. During this time, a representative from the Chapter-in-Formation is strongly encouraged to attend national Program Council meetings.
3. The Chapter-in-Formation proceeds to develop its program of action, study and reflection, in keeping with its own needs and MFSA purposes and priorities. It is strongly urged to do corporate, disciplined study of the issue together. Contact the National Office for a list of recommended resources.
4. When the Chapter-in-Formation has completed the preparatory time together (eight to twelve hours), it reports to the Field Organizer on its progress in study/action/reflection, requests designation as an MFSA Chapter and expresses its basic agreement with the purposes of MFSA and its intention to fulfill the responsibilities of an MFSA Chapter. The Chapter should also communicate its plans for meeting its own financial needs (i.e., a budget, dues, etc.), its form of organization and officers, its nominee as a national director representing the Chapter, and its current list of at least twelve members (with current national dues paid).
5. The MFSA National Meeting or Board of Directors, whichever meets (or is polled) first, evaluates the application and is authorized to charter the Chapter-in-Formation as a full-fledged Chapter of MFSA, or to continue the Chapter-in-Formation in that category (with recommendations for further preparation), or to discontinue that designation. Requirements for becoming a full MFSA Chapter shall normally be completed within one year, with possible extension to two years.

An appropriate marking of the inclusion of the new Chapter shall take place at the next National Meeting.

Adopted 1978: revised 1980, 1986, 1991, 1992, 2004, 2009

Section E

Chapter Life

Each MFSA chapter is an autonomous gathering of people connected to other chapters and the national office by common Christian concern for justice and peace, information sharing and mutual support.

Because of their unique situations and callings, the chapters vary in organization, goals, leadership structure and style. This section will help you understand points where your chapter is invited into mutual support and accountability with other chapters; and it will suggest some ways in which you can choose to develop your own unique witness in your church, community and/or annual conference.

Five common components of MFSA chapters are:

Action

Education

Coalitions

Community

Worship/spiritual growth

A FEW EXISTING CHAPTER INTERESTS INCLUDE: addressing militarism, nonviolence training, economic justice, farm worker justice, mountain top removal, working to close the School of the Americas, addressing local labor issues, and seeking restorative justice in U.S. prisons. Our national office can put you in contact with the chapter in your conference, or provide guidelines for forming a chapter.

Goals and Priorities

The way your chapter organizes and functions will be enhanced by a clear sense of mission or calling, with goals and priorities which help you move toward them.

In a February 1993 chapter life workshop, the Board of Directors identified a series of questions designed to help a chapter identify and live out its sense of mission or calling. Some of this self-inventory also touches upon areas we will deal with in more detail later in this section. *Remember, for many of these questions there are no right or wrong answers, only choices you will make.*

Chapter Self-Inventory

The key is to identify your chapter's mission and to plan your budget, recruitment and programming on that basis.

I. Intentionality and Planning

What is your chapter's mission? (*It may be worth a whole meeting/retreat to develop an inclusive process for arriving at this*)

Program planning – how much is planned in advance and how far in advance?

How are awards recipients chosen and by whom?

Does the chapter function with a steering committee or as a committee of the whole?

What does chapter membership offer a participant? (*Why are you a chapter member? Is that why most others are members?*)

II. Finances: Budgeting and Fundraising

Budgeting: does your program drive your budget? Do you follow the same budget format each year? (*or does allocation happen by accident?*)

Fundraising: Does your chapter raise money in addition to *dues*? (*e.g., awards dinners benefit concerts, sales of goods, auctions*)

Do you raise money for the general budget or for special projects?

III. Spiritual Life and Nurture

What makes your chapter different from a chapter of Amnesty International or the Fellowship of Reconciliation?

What is the difference between an MFSA chapter and a church or annual conference peace with justice committee or board of church and society?

How do members offer support and nurture to one another?

Do you schedule meeting time for nurture, or does it happen spontaneously?

Do you have a retreat(s)? Does it function as a one-day educational and business meeting? Does it include time for rest, play and spiritual development?

How do you nurture your *chapter's* spirituality?

IV. Membership Recruitment and Retention

What does your chapter do to retain members?

What *initially* attracts people to your chapter?

Is your chapter primarily activist? organizing and consensus-building? support for isolated activists with little chapter programming? study and position oriented? spiritual study and growth oriented?

Do you have *sign-in sheets* at all events, to identify potential members? (*annual conference events, fundraisers, fairs, etc.*)

V. Communications

What do you wish to communicate and who is your audience? (*potential members, regular members or "middle of the road" in the conference?*)

Does your chapter publish a newsletter at least quarterly?

Do you issue press releases to the conference, districts or public media?

VI. Strengthening the Network

How will your chapter work with other chapters to organize for annual conference?

Will you produce a daily newspaper at your annual conference session?

Will you have joint awards or events at annual conference?

Developing Spiritual Praxis in Chapter Life

"For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

(Ephesians 6:12)

Our chapters testify to being enriched by increasing attention to spiritual praxis, that is, to the integration of spiritual practice with their action for justice and their mutual support. There are at least three areas in which this spiritual praxis is to be found.

A. Contemplative and active prayer

1. Recognizing that we as activists (and as United Methodists and Western Christians) tend to be overly busy people, many MFSAers are finding that the practice of **quiet prayer** serves to focus and center their life and ministry. One form of such prayer is a "basic contemplative practice" (found in the Appendix). One MFSAer, after experiencing this form of prayer in her chapter meeting, exclaimed, "I've been seeking the peace of God all my life and this is the first time I've begun to experience it!"

Another form of quiet, or contemplative, prayer is the breath prayer adapted to the action agenda of MFSA. See the Appendix for "A Breath Prayer for Social Transformation."

2. Walter Wink stresses that "history belongs to the intercessors" and that many of Jesus' parables emphasize the importance of being persistent and insistent in prayer (the importunate widow, etc.). The Psalms (Jesus' prayer book!) provide models for this. Many of the Psalms were written as passionate cries of both personal and social distress. A way of praying for social change in the spirit of the Psalms is to invite participants to shout the Psalms after you as you line them out. Use plural pronouns instead of singular ones (this is fully faithful to the text, as in Hebrew understanding the individual often stood for the entire body). Encourage people to let the Psalm express their own sense of personal and/or social burden and distress and to put emotion into it (something we usually don't do in corporate prayers). A set of Psalm excerpts which was used in a powerful way by our Baltimore-Washington chapter included portions of Psalm 35: verses 1, 2a, 17, 22, 23, and 28.

B. Another critical area is the decision making we do in our chapters. In retreats some of our chapters have used a "Faith-Action Cycle," a set of reflective questions which assist in discerning what God would have us do. This is included in the Appendix.

C. A third important area is our development and use of creative ritual. Ritual enacts our intention and is used by God to thwart the principalities and powers (*ref. Walter Wink*) and to begin to bring into being the new reality which God seeks.

Officers

Included below is a list of potential officers for chapters. Each of these officers exist in at least one current MFSA chapter (but are not required). Following the office are some roles which can be filled by that officer.

President or Convenor (s): Presides or convenes all meetings, including executive committee if there is one. Represents the chapter to media or at events. In conjunction with other officers and members, prepares a written agenda for meetings and, when possible, distributes it in advance.

Encourages and supports other officers, committees and members. Recruits new members. Names committees not chosen by the chapter or executive committee.

Program Council Representative: Is elected by each chapter and/or chapter-in-information. Attends and participates in all meetings of the Program Council (once every year). Fills out a report on chapter activity prior to each Program Council Meeting. Reports back to the chapter the results of each Program Council Meeting. Reports to the national office any change in the listing of chapter officers. Recruits new MFSA members. If there is an executive committee within the chapter, the National Program Council representative should be a member.

Secretary: In beginning chapters, there may only be a need for one secretary. However, the larger the chapter's size and/or program become, the more different and intense will be the demands on the secretary. Some chapters have a different secretary for each of the functions listed below.

Recording Secretary: Keeps accurate minutes of all events, including a list of persons in attendance, and a record of all decisions made by the group. See that minutes are distributed soon after the meeting, with a list of "things to be done by whom before the next meeting." Keep an official record of all minutes of meetings and to pass on to the succeeding secretary. A copy of all minutes should be sent regularly by the secretary to the national office to facilitate communication.

Corresponding Secretary: Prepares letters of personal concern to chapter members in difficult situations, official chapter correspondence. Sends copies of resolutions and press releases to appropriate media and official destinations. Responds to requests from the national Board of Directors regarding legislation and actions. Copies of all critical correspondence and press releases should be sent to the national office, for possible support or for inclusion in the chapter report section of the *SQB*.

Membership Secretary and Treasurer: The experience of most chapters is that these functions are best performed by one person. If divided, it is essential that they keep in close communication and coordination. Here are the respective functions.

Membership Secretary: Responsible for securing membership renewals, keeping up-to-date membership records and mailing list (generally a chapter mailing list includes persons who are not members), and coordinating outreach to new members together with chapter steering committee. Membership reports should be made regularly to chapter steering committee.

Treasurer: Receives and deposits membership dues and proceeds from all events. Forwards the national membership portion of dues to the national office every month, along with the names and addresses of those memberships. (The addresses are to insure correct mailing of the *SQB* to all members). Disburses funds to cover costs of events as directed by the chapter or executive/steering committee. Makes a written report at each chapter meeting and a year-end report to the officers or membership. Oversees preparation of the chapter's annual budget. Completes an information form on the previous year's income and expenses and forwards the report to the national office so that MFSA may file the required IRS form 990 by February 1.

Currently (2009) the national gifts are in the following categories:

- ___ \$500 Stellar Membership Gift
- ___ \$200 Spirited Membership Gift
- ___ \$150 Supporting Membership Gift
- ___ \$100 **Sustaining Membership Gift**
- ___ \$60 Subscribing Membership Gift
- ___ \$ Set your own membership gift amount.
- ___ I am unable to give to MFSA financially at this time but would like to be a member.

** When joining MFSA the national office a person automatically become a chapter member but may also choose not to be involved or have their names disclosed to the chapter for reasons of privacy. A portion of the MFSA gift is returned to the MFSA chapter (or to help organize new chapters). All members receive the bi-monthly *Social Questions Bulletin* for free. No one is denied membership for lack of funds.

Also note that the National Office in many instances provides membership support to chapters. This includes sending out membership renewals and invitations. If your chapter is interested or has additional membership needs please let us know ASAP so that the communication between MFSA and our members is not lost or interrupted.

Membership Campaign Chairperson: This person concentrates on outreach to new members. A sample design for a new member campaign is included later in this section of the handbook.

Newsletter Editor: Works with the other chapter officers and steering committee to develop a list of who will receive the newsletter. Recommends a format and design for the newsletter. Solicits and receives articles and edits them for inclusion in the newsletter. Cares for production and mailing. A discussion of newsletter production is included later in this section of the handbook....Most chapters find it helpful to circulate a newsletter three to four times a year in addition to use of electronic communication, to provide notice of major events, news of MFSA actions and members, reminders of membership renewals (to supplement, not substitute for, personal letters), and articles, messages, and announcements of interest.

Legislative Chairperson: Coordinates the formulation of resolutions to present to the annual conference for adoption and submits them in a timely manner. Sends a copy of all proposed resolutions to the national office (they can be a resource to other chapters). Develops a plan for lobbying at the annual conference, including information-sharing at an MFSA caucus, through the chapter's regular newsletter or in its daily annual conference newsletter. Informs the national office of resolutions passed. May also coordinate the chapter's efforts to elect General Conference delegates in the years prior to those events.

*****Annual Conference Leadership Team Representative:** This person is a representative of the chapter elected to serve on the MFSA leadership team of the Annual Conference (where there is more than one chapter). Just like the National Board member their responsibility includes filling out a report on chapter activity prior to each leadership team meeting. The leadership team representative then reports back to the chapter the results of each Annual Conference Leadership Council meeting.

Other Officers: In most chapters, form follows function. Plan the officers you need based on your mission. Develop committees around the programs you want to succeed. Increasing the number and range of things to accomplish provides more opportunity for activating new people. People respond to vision. Spend time developing a vision and let meetings come from planning the road toward that vision.

About Chapter Finances

The chapter is responsible for collecting dues from its members, a portion of which will remain in the chapter.

There is no set amount for membership dues. People are encouraged to give as “sustaining members” at \$100 per year but membership gifts larger or smaller than these are gratefully appreciated.

Twenty percent of all membership gifts remain with the local chapter up to the amount of \$50 per membership gift. Eighty percent is forwarded to the national office.

A chapter usually needs some source(s) of additional income to meet its needs in the course of the year.

We strongly recommend that chapters adopt an income and expense budget prior to the beginning of any calendar year.

Depending on the number of chapters within an annual conference the Annual Conference Leadership Council may determine additional funding needs for Annual Conference events. Otherwise all chapters will remain financially independent of one another.

Worship and Spirituality

Worship and spirituality are key components of a chapter's life. It is important, however, not to become fixed on worship as simply "a 10-minute devotional at the beginning of the meeting."

The entirety of a gathering can become worship and spiritual formation. For example, an action like a picket can become spiritually formative and life-changing if the leadership pays attention to and nurtures the spiritual environment surrounding the event. Two excellent examples of this kind of *paying attention* are located in the last section of this handbook. They are the articles "Social Exorcism" by Francis MacNutt and "Prayer as Social Action" by George McClain.

Membership Recruitment and Renewal

In 1991 the Board of Directors recommend this financial plan to each chapter regarding both membership renewals and new member campaigns.

A. Develop a Case Statement: That is, spend time as a chapter deciding what you would say to potential and current members to convince them of the importance of MFSA membership. At a board meeting in 1990, the following **examples** were shared. Time determining what your chapter's **case** will help you focus your membership drive.

A Sample Case Statement

1. As an MFSA member you are part of a social action heritage directly linked to the origins and institutionalization of United Methodism's *Social Principles*.
2. As an MFSA member you are part of a prophetic community which continually seeks to make itself available to God as witnesses to the Reign of God in relation to specific human suffering.
3. As a member of MFSA you are supported as a witness to God's justice and peace and linked with over 2400 other colleagues, and a "great cloud of witnesses."
4. Over 80% of our membership are also members of one of our annual conference chapters. As part of a chapter, you are linked with others in your area, with whom you can join periodically for worship, mutual support, education and action.
5. As a part of MFSA you are able to give expression to what it means to be the church - a reconciling and justice-seeking community - in a unique way that is life-giving to both yourself and the institutional church.
6. MFSA is supported in full by our members and constituents. We receive no monies from The United Methodist Church, which assures our status as an *independent* advocate. It also means that our individual members bear a special responsibility for our financial support.
7. Because it is able to be the church and advocate for the church's social mission in a unique, independent way, MFSA deserves your support as part of your basic giving to God.

B. Aggressively Seek Membership Renewals

Recommended Timetable:

1. November 1: initial renewal letter from the chapter to all current members.
2. Monthly, thereafter, mail a different reminder letter to those who have not responded. Make each letter personal in tone and include a description of a chapter program and/or one of the "reasons" for joining from your chapter's case statement.
3. After April 1, begin follow-up phone calls to persons not yet responding.
4. Once a renewal is received, consider sending a note of thanks, or a listing of new and renewing members in each chapter newsletter.

The national office will handle at-large renewals as well as renewals for chapters which request assistance.

C. Establish an Annual New Member Campaign

1. Name a membership campaign chairperson.
2. Decide on a numerical membership goal (recommended: at least a 10-15% increase)
3. Gather names of prospective members (2-3 times the current membership) Possible sources include: friends of members, church and society members, global ministries members, campus

ministers, new clergy, lay persons in the churches of clergy MFSA members, seminary students, general and jurisdictional conference candidates, etc.

4. Develop plans and timeline for:
 - a. mailings (*at least twice to good prospects*)
 - b. phone calls (*to very good prospects*)
 - c. personal contacts (*especially at annual conferences, special lectures, big events*)
 - d. consider using an addressed return envelope (*how about a stamped envelope?*)
5. Make regular reports to the national office.
6. An excellent resource is the book *Fundraising for Social Change*. [add how to get it]
7. Consider offering a premium to new members (e.g., *Ways of Justice, Ways of Prayer*)
8. Share prospect list with the national office for possible inclusion in a national prospect mailing. (*This is **in addition to** your chapter's process*)

For some ideas about recruiting new members, please read the section on starting a new chapter, especially the parts about using the conference journal and keeping lists of all possible contacts. Do a special mailing to prospects from time to time (in coordination with your chapter membership secretary, of course!). Offer a special deal for new members: lower retreat registration, free dinner at annual conference, free book, etc. How about sponsoring a lunch, dinner, or class at pastor's school? Are there other gatherings for lay and/or clergy in your conference you could plan an event around? Publicize the discount in membership dues for new members.

The most effective invitations, of course, are the one you make personally to someone who knows you and trusts you. Get each of your core (or executive committee) members to take an issue of the chapter newsletter, statement of purpose, a new member coupon to three to six people they know each year. This is, without a doubt, the most effective way to maintain and build chapter membership. Regular activities that are visible (at annual conference, in the conference newspaper, etc.) are very important. People are more likely to want to join an organization they perceive as effective and well-organized. All events should be planned sufficiently far in advance. Brainstorm every idea possible to receive publicity and promote the event. And never sponsor anything without membership information and forms on every table

Example: The California-Nevada Chapter stays at around 100 members. But they also carry almost 400 additional names on their mailing list for their quarterly newsletter and other mailings. Each newsletter carried the membership coupon. During annual conference each year the chapter offers special half-price memberships for the remainder of the current year. This almost always results in several new members.

Checklist for Annual Conference Preparations

Display

- o Obtain literature from national office (by certain date).
- o Reserve display space.
- o Prepare an attractive display that tells something of MFSA's story that invites others to be a part of it.

Event

- o Decide on an event.
- o Plan and publicize well in advance.
- o Seek to avoid conflicts with other allied caucuses.
- o Take photos and good notes to use for future publicity (send national MFSA a copy for possible use in *SQB*).

Action

- o Develop petitions on critical issues that would otherwise be neglected. Seek support from appropriate conference agencies. In a year when general and jurisdictional conference delegates are being selected, work for a strong slate of delegates. Join with other progressive groups in this endeavor.
- o Consider a caucus meeting early on in annual conference; arrange room in advance.
- o Ask someone to be prepared to suggest some items needing MFSA attention; let other issues surface as well.

Prayer

- o Set time aside to pray for critical matters before the conference.

Outreach

- o Offer half-rate introductory memberships.
- o Consider a *Daily SQB*.
- o Have a sign-up sheet at events, displays, and caucus meetings.

Publishing a Chapter Newsletter

Several chapters publish a quarterly newsletter as a way of keeping in contact with and of informing and educating members and friends. In addition, some chapters publish a daily newsletter during the annual conference session to educate the conference members, inform volunteers of important meetings and action, recruit members, and advocate for important decisions before the conference.

Since MFSA's newsletter is not official business, in most annual conferences it must be distributed to conference members outside of the established bar of the conference. The best times for distribution, then, are in the morning as members arrive or in the afternoon as they return from lunch. A pleasant greeting and a copy of a truly informative MFSA newsletter can build credibility and good will toward the chapter.

Whether in quarterly or annual conference daily newsletters, chapters should remember in each issue to invite people into membership and participation. Sometimes the participation comes first.

A few things are key to a successful newsletter:

1. Decide, as a chapter, on the purpose of the newsletter. A newsletter cannot do all things. Let your newsletter help you fulfill your mission.

2. Determine the audience for which it will be written. A newsletter for insiders will look very different from one designed to sway a middle-of-the-road annual conference audience. Quite often, an annual conference newsletter will look and feel very different from the regular membership's quarterly edition.

Making these first two decisions before any other will save a lot of time in talking about mechanics and specific articles, because those won't mean much until you are clear **why** and **for whom** the newsletter is intended. Once these two decisions are made, **every** other decision, including the editor, should reflect them.

3. Recruit an editor who is enthusiastic about the purpose and audience and will go out and get the story. Make the editor part of the executive committee and give her/him good, constant, positive feedback and leads for articles.

4. Decide on publication mechanics based on your mission. For example, you may choose either to use volunteers to print, collate, staple, label, sort and mail; or to hire some of the work done and budget for it. It all depends on where you're going as a chapter. The national office can suggest chapters who have either a quarterly or an annual conference newsletter, so that you can get samples.

Electronic Communication

The internet and other forms of electronic communication can greatly expand a chapter's organizing and visibility. The web is often the first place people turn to find out about an organization or event. With recent changes to the website of the National Office, there is now the capacity for chapters to "host" a site with a pre-designed template through the national website. Many chapters already have websites and those will also be linked to from the national website.

Websites are a great way to disseminate information and post items like photos, actions and events that give people a sense of what's happening in chapter life. Keeping sites current however can be a challenge. An out of date site often leaves people with the impression that the organization is not very active. Consider if there are people within your chapter who have the skills to create and maintain a

chapter website. In places where that skill is hard to find consider creating and using a chapter webpage through the national office. The new technology the national office has purchased allows us to upload and change content so information can be posted quickly and frequently.

Another form of electronic communication on the rise and becoming more affordable (even free depending on the number of emails you send) are electronic newsletters. Several chapters publish these monthly. Many sites provide a basic template that you can adapt to meet your chapters needs. People can always sign up or opt-out so there is no “spamming” involved.

If you are interested in exploring ways that your chapter can use technology to increase your organizing efforts and visibility please contact the national office. Also you can visit the National MFSA website and review the chapter links to see what other chapters are doing to get the message out.

Retreats

For most chapters *retreat* refers to an overnight meeting, which includes a business meeting, a *program* and time for worship and networking. However, a retreat can be designed in various ways to meet your chapter's mission. Most MFSA chapters have one such retreat each year.

The national staff is available to discuss retreat topics and design with chapters and to lead or suggest national MFSA leadership for the retreats. The chapter sponsoring the retreat is usually responsible for travel expenses for outside (the chapter) leadership and an honorarium. A retreat budget can be designed with sufficient registration charge to cover costs and generate some funds for the chapter budget.

Actions

Organized, non-violent action is a way to witness to the gospel call for justice, join in solidarity with God (who is among the suffering), and to force a community or church to decide which side it is on.

The national MFSA staff stands ready to assist chapters in thinking through components of a successful action/witness. Chapters are encouraged to inform the national office of their official actions/witnesses, so that the national organization can monitor the action for support and, if necessary, invite other MFSAers to join the action.

Chapter Social Action Awards

Many Federation chapters give annual social action awards as a way of recognizing persons, groups, or congregations. Some chapters also designate a local church with an outstanding social action witness to be a Plumbline Parish, evoking the plumb line of Amos which has become the MFSA symbol. Chapters present these awards either at their conference event or at an award celebration. These awards serve to raise consciousness about social witness, to strengthen personal commitment to justice and peace, and afford a time of celebration for the Federation community.

Jurisdictional Events

In the past few years MFSA has really strengthened the organizing efforts in jurisdictions. To find out more about how to organize jurisdictionally or to connect to your jurisdictional network, please contact the National Office.

Electing General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegates

Recommendations for Chapter Strategies

1. Begin early to develop strategies for nominating and electing the people you want to be delegates to the general and jurisdictional conferences.
2. Focus initial efforts on the nomination process. Annual conferences have varied nomination processes. In some there are different processes for nominating clergy and laity. Understand what your conference's process is.
3. Give special attention to nominating and electing laity. You may have a greater potential to effect the election of laity, and laity are very influential in the general conference process. Personal biographies are part of the election process in many conferences. Begin now to recruit laity for nominations.
4. In electing delegates, build coalitions with other progressive caucuses.
5. Know who the *decision-makers* are in your conference. Is there an obvious or visible network of trend-setters? This can be especially helpful in electing laity.
6. Be aware of *inclusiveness* in the selection process (*for example, people of color, young adults and women*).
7. Don't forget the value of electing jurisdictional conference delegates, since the top one or two elected also serve as alternates to the general conference. Also, jurisdictional delegates work with general conference delegates throughout the process and can often be seated when issues of personal interest come onto the floor.
8. Make sure MFSA members are present on the floor at the time of balloting, especially later in the process, when fewer votes are required for election. It is critical that MFSA members are present for all ballots, through the end of the annual conference.
9. Be sensitive to the fact that people resent feeling they are being manipulated. There is need for *authenticity* in the nomination and election process.
10. Plan far ahead. Detail is critical to the process. Attempt to get *committed* votes before conference, but be open and flexible as the process dictates, especially when working in coalition.

Let the national office know what has made your chapter successful in electing MFSA members to the delegations. Your feedback on the process and on these recommendations will strengthen MFSA's overall strategy.

Several chapters distribute a tally sheet to all delegates with the chapter's recommendations on the reverse side. Our national office can provide a sample.

Developing a Budget

Once you know your mission, your membership goal for the year, and the activities you will be doing to fulfill your mission, then you can develop your budget.

The Board of Directors encourages all chapters to include a line item in their annual budget for a chapter pledge to MFSA. Remember in preparing a budget that your income and expenditures balances should be the same.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Our chapter has difficulty getting some of our members to renew their memberships. What can we do?*
 - Phone calls and personal contacts consistently get the best results.
 - After sending out several renewal letters by mail or email: divide the list of those members for personal visits and phone calls.
 - If you find special difficulty securing renewals or your membership secretary is not functioning well, notify the national office of your difficulty as soon as possible. There are several things that can be done to help.
2. *We've had some complaints that our dues are too high. Why does it cost more to belong to MFSA than some other groups?*

The primary reasons our membership dues seem higher are: (1) we do not receive support from any denominational or church funds; (2) membership dues support both national MFSA (the work of the national board of directors, programs, and executive director) and your local chapter program and expenses; (3) our membership has traditionally been a very committed one, placing high value on an independent national network with competent staff; and (4) as a prophetic body, the Federation will never have general appeal and will not be a large mass organization; hence each member's responsibility is greater.

Here are some points to keep in mind:

- Recognize that for some people it may be true that our dues are too high. Remind these people that it is our policy that no one be turned away for lack of funds. Communicate this policy in all appeals and literature which concern membership.
 - Differentiate between those for whom the dues are not affordable and others for whom "affordability" is probably a statement of disinterest.
 - Recognize people's right to state their disinterest by choosing not to pay membership dues. Do not assume this means they do not support our work and will not be supportive at annual conference. It may just mean that at this point they would rather donate their resources to another group or cause.
 - Where possible, try to find out what underlying issues have contributed to the person's disinterest/disaffection. Where appropriate, communicate those reasons to the national board of directors.
 - After a reasonable number of unsuccessful attempts to renew a lapsed member, move on.
3. *There are many people in our conference who should belong to our chapter but never get around to joining. They are friendly to our priorities, why won't they join?*

It could be that they are just disorganized or forgetful or do not follow through well. These are all good reasons for making the joining and renewal process as easy as possible. It is more likely, however, that there are other reasons:

- Recognize that many people will hesitate to join an organization or pay dues until they see from results that the group is well organized and effective.
- Others will hesitate to join until they see whether or not their association with you will cause them to be ostracized. In some conferences, joining an organization like MFSA could have adverse career results.
- Most likely, however, the reason lies with the person's priorities. No matter how supportive they are to Federation issues and work, their priorities or interests are somewhere else at this

time. They certainly should be maintained on a constituency list and may well join sometime in the future. But right now their energy may be going to the Gray Panthers or Witness for Peace or an aging parent or any one of a number of other places. Remember, we all have to make choices between competing good things seeking our time and resources.

4. *Where should we focus our energy in looking for new members?*

- Begin with people you know and seek them out. Don't be reticent to ask them to join.
- Choose groups (perhaps a different one each year) to target. Consider women's groups like UMW, students, new conference members, minority/ethnic groups, peace and justice groups, etc.
- Choose an area of common priority and try to arrange to sponsor an event jointly with another board or caucus or group you would like to target.
- Make special efforts to open the chapter up, to welcome new members, and to share responsibilities. Any established group is prone to think of itself as being friendlier and more open to newcomers than it actually is. Place special emphasis on group-building activities and asking newer members to share in positions of responsibility.

Focus on issues rather than administrative concerns at chapter meetings. Some business is necessary, but have your executive committee take care of as much of it as possible. Nothing is more boring than to go to a dinner at annual conference and have to listen to more "business" or to go to a retreat to be renewed and hear an inspiring speaker and then have to sit through an extended business meeting.

And once again, remember that the best development of new contacts comes from personal contact and invitation.

5. *A large portion of our chapter's membership does not attend meetings or get involved. And only a few will accept positions of leadership. So we end up with the same few being officers each year. What can we do?*

This situation is probably not very different from just about every other group to which you belong. It is recognized in group dynamics that in any group there will be a small, active core of people who will do most of the work and a larger number of people who, because of priorities, commitments or abilities are unable or unwilling to make a larger commitment of time and energy.

- Be thankful people are interested enough to be members in the first place.
- Be intentional about nurturing and using people who express an interest in participation and greater involvement.
- Seek to be as inclusive as possible of all the groups in the conference and to reflect their range of concerns in agenda and priority building.
- Feed the whole group with educational events which will stimulate interest and spark commitment.
- Be sure to give adequate consideration to details which may limit the group (such as time and place of meetings, availability of child care) and to those things which may stimulate growth in attendance and participation (such as potlucks, media presentations, top-notch speakers, early notice of meeting particulars, etc).

Appendix 1 – How to Improve Your Chapter's Communications

This check list was prepared by the Lautman/Fund-Raising Institute under the title, "Check List for the Winning Fund-Raising Letter," and was shared at a financial development workshop attended by the MFSA executive director. It can help MFSA chapters and national office is assessing and improving the letters we write to communicate with present and prospective members. The same principles apply to fund-raising letters, membership renewal requests, and recruitment of new members. The last item is one we as Christian social activists would want to add.

- **Lead:** Does it create immediate interest? Will the prospect begin reading? Give your highest rating for a strong theme and the use of story-telling, case histories, or news (such as of a crisis) to introduce the problem. Hint: A better lead can often be found in the body copy a few paragraphs down. If you find one move it up and raise your rating as well.
- **Writing Style:** Is it easy to read, friendly, and personal? Base your rating on how well the words and ideas flow, use of emotion, and use of good transitions between ideas. Look for the absence of jargon and of complicated, overly long sentences. And look for the use of down-to-earth words that no one will have to look up.
- **Focus:** Is the focus simple and clear? Or do you try to tell too much? Base your rating on whether the letter focuses on a specific problem, or a need, or a goal – on whether it focuses less on the needs of the cause and more on the needs of the people served by the cause.
- **Problem Solving:** Does it offer solutions and hope? Rate on the basis of whether it offers believable solutions to genuine problems – solutions that are time- or money-related. Hint: Referring to a track record in past situations adds credibility to your solution.
- **Reader Recognition:** Does it make the reader feel important if he or she sends a donation? Also, is the letter written only to one person? Does it use the word "you" several times on every page?
- **Personal Benefits:** Are the personal benefits that come with a donation emphasized? Does the donor get a publication, discounts, or other services? If so, are they described effusively? If they lend themselves to pictures, are powerful illustrations used? If the benefits are exceptional, does the mailing package devote sufficient space (perhaps even a separate piece) to describe them?
- **The Request:** Have you actually, clearly asked for a contribution? Base your rating on a strong, straightforward request for a gift, without apology. Has the best case been made for why the money is needed? Is the need stated several times and in several ways before the final request?
- **Urgency:** Will the donor understand that he or she must move quickly – must get the gift back to you while it still can help. Is an immediate response urged? Hint: Offer a strong reason to give now – something like crisis, budget deficit, deadline, tremendous opportunity, whatever is true.
- **Suggested Gift:** Does the donor know exactly how much money you want? Have you eliminated any chance that the donor will wonder how much to send? Remember, you get what you ask for. Hint: Ask for \$3 more than the average gift you seek. Try using "odd" dollar figures (\$17.27, for example) for credibility.

- **The P.S.:** Is it as good as the lead? Would the letter be badly damaged if the P.S. were left off entirely? (If it would not, rewrite the P.S. so that it cannot be left out. Remember, the P.S. and the lead usually are read, even if the body of the letter is not.
- **Length:** Is the letter long enough to create interest, or state the problem, to tell the story in its most interesting form, to arouse emotion, to offer hope and the opportunity to participate in something significant, to state your credentials, to ask for the gift, and to offer attractive personal benefits?
- **Format:** Does it look like a letter? Is it typewritten? Is there good use of white space? Are short paragraphs mixed with medium length paragraphs? If it's a long letter, does it make good use of graphic devices like subtitles, underlines, indented copy blocks, and bulleted lines to increase readability? Remember, if it can't be easily read, it won't be read at all.
- **Photos:** If photos or other pictures are used, are they interesting? Are they clear enough to understand? Do they tell a story? Are they at least 2-1/2 x 3-1/2" in size? If there are captions, and you should probably use them, are they lively and descriptive?
- **Faith Connection:** Does the letter remind the reader of the faith basis for their response? Does it link MFSA's work and witness to God's healing and redemptive work in the social order? Does it elicit deeper God-inspired hope in the ultimate triumph of compassion, peace, justice?

If you want more ideas on Chapter Communications or Membership outreach/resources, please contact the National Office. We have membership packets, including sample letters that can be used for membership renewals and invitations.

****The National Office in many instances provides membership support to chapters. This includes sending out membership renewals and invitations. If your chapter is interested or has additional membership needs please let us know ASAP so that the communication between MFSA and our members is not lost or interrupted.**

Appendix 2 – MFSA Theological Affirmation

MFSA affirms the vital importance of theological reflection as the Church weighs great issues of faithfulness to Jesus Christ and the Gospel in United Methodist worship, governance and witness. We offer to following paragraphs as a point of departure for reflection and discussion.

THE GOODNESS OF CREATION

The Methodist Federation for Social Action has lived at the crossroads of church and society for over 100 years, guided by our common prayer, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done.” The vision of God’s beloved community, present here in this life, is a sacred call for us.

We affirm that God is good, and that the creation of all Being is God’s on-going good work, in which we share. God calls all Being into existence, into relationship with God and with each other. We see God, and God’s persisting image, in all creation. But we see this holy image blurred, stained and corroded by sin, individual and corporate, every time we treat each other or creation as though we are not all images of, reflections of, God.

We recognize that human systems - political, economic, religious and social - create the conditions in which people grow and thus have great power for both good and evil. It is the responsibility of the church, as the people of God, to advocate for those conditions that make possible the abundant life and to oppose attitudes and decisions that deny and distort the human-borne image of God. Racism, sexism, heterosexism, injustice, economic and corporate exploitation, and destruction of the environment are inherently evil. We pray for the openness and wisdom to recognize and resist these forces whenever we find them in ourselves, in the Church and in the social order.

In this, we believe we are following in the footsteps of Jesus, the embodiment God’s love, who taught us to welcome the outcast and to proclaim justice. We cannot do less.

SCRIPTURE

As people of faith, we cherish the rich and varied gifts of Scripture, where we encounter the Word of God. Scripture is a written record of this human encounter with the Holy, a collection of stories and histories, gospels and letters, poetry and law, allegories, reflections and visions written down over hundreds of years, collected and canonized by human councils, always the work of people inspired and motivated to express God’s will. Scripture is a long and varied narrative of God’s presence and activity with the Hebrew and early Christian peoples.

From its beginning, with two creation stories side by side, through the ever-present tension between purity and compassion, to the theologies of Luke and Paul, our Scripture testifies that God is active in human affairs in ways that we never fully understand. The many witnesses are, in their very differences, evidence of our human inability to fully comprehend God or God’s Word. We understand the rich diversity of the witness contained within Scripture to be an invitation to wrestle with God and each other about the on-going meaning of God’s presence, recognizing that we experience the presence of the Spirit in the process of engagement. Consequently, we believe that it would be a grave misunderstanding and oversimplification of Scripture, as well as a violation of our Wesleyan heritage, for the United Methodist Church to proclaim that any single creed or faith statement can reflect the “true” voice of Scripture or God on any issue.

LOVE AND LIBERATION

As the Methodist Federation for Social Action we are guided by Jesus' commandment to love one another as he loved us. Throughout the history of the church, efforts have been made to express in laws the requirements of love. We affirm these efforts so long as the proposed rules are recognized as bound to particular times and circumstances and are kept subservient to the one law of love.

Essential to our self-understanding as Christians is the proclamation of Jesus, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, release of the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." We believe that these words are key in defining the mission of the church. Followers of Jesus are those who carry on this ministry. We believe that Jesus is most present to us when we engage in his ministry of love and service, a ministry that must be redefined in each age.

THE SOCIAL ORDER

Today the widening gap between rich and poor, the increasing concentration of power in global corporations, the deification of money, the pervasiveness of racism and the rise of militarism all violate the Scriptural vision of the Kingdom of God and the beloved community. The "gospel" of unlimited growth and the increasing concentration of wealth destroys the other species with which God calls us to share the planet, renders human community less sustainable and elevates consumption above servanthood and discipleship. Economic considerations supersede all others in national policy and in international affairs. We are developing a permanent underclass, much of which we keep locked up in our prisons. In the Third World, the situation is far worse.

As we enter the new millenium the church must develop a critique of the new global capitalism that will lead to the development of new economic and political institutions that seek to share the riches of God's creation equitably among all Earth's peoples.

JUSTICE, HOSPITALITY AND INCLUSION

As the Methodist Federation for Social Action, we respond to the themes of justice, hospitality and inclusion woven throughout the Scriptural witness. We hear this theme from the initial proclamation that creation is good, through Jesus' affirmation of those who society rejected, to the final vision of people streaming into the holy city through twelve gates. We hear the call for just dealings, indeed a jubilee of justice, in Leviticus, and we are inspired by the story of God's action to bring captives out of slavery in Exodus. Scripture tells us, in many and varied ways, that we are to treat each other as children of God, bearers of the images of God, brothers and sisters all.

In particular, our commitment to the full inclusion of lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgendered people is grounded in Scripture. With Philip, we speak the promises of Isaiah 53-56, of a place within God's walls and of a name better than sons and daughters, to the eunuchs of our day. With Peter, we proclaim that God shows no partiality, that God calls the faith community to welcome those who have been called unclean. Indeed, we recognize that, had this spirit of welcome not prevailed in the early church, we ourselves would not now be Christian. We believe it is an affront to God and our predecessors for descendants of the "unclean" Gentiles to proclaim any other people too unclean for God's welcome. We work and pray that The United Methodist Church might incorporate God's welcome into church polity.

The Methodist Federation for Social Action and The United Methodist Church still stand at the crossroads in the beginning of a new millennium. As God has guided the faithful through the centuries, so God has been our guide for over 100 years. In rejoicing and communion, in the dialogue of diverse opinion and in the Scripture that invites that diversity and dialogue, we celebrate. We repent

of our role in the struggles that divide the community of faith, yet we affirm God's creative mandate of grace and reconciliation in our world as love-justice for all. We work and pray for the day when God's love, justice and welcome will be fully realized in our United Methodist Church and the entire human community. We invite all who seek to be Jesus' disciples to join hands with us in this effort.

(Latest Revision: September 2008)

Appendix 3 – Pledge on Nonviolence

Introduction

The church is committed to the teachings of Jesus as expressed most clearly in the Sermon on the Mount. Although Jesus taught that love must replace violence, the church has often tolerated and even encouraged violence against those it perceives as enemies of God. The Church has been complicit in violence. Today, the scope of violence has reached the point where the survival of the human race and of the ecosystems on which human life depend are at risk. Believing that the threat of violence has reached emergency proportions, we intend to launch a campaign to enlist thousands of people in the effort to overcome the violence in our society and in the world. As part of that effort we urge United Methodists to commit themselves individually and as churches, to the following pledge:

A Pledge of Nonviolence

Violence in its many forms, from domestic violence to systemic violence and weapons of mass destruction, is the greatest threat to the future of humanity. Violence takes place when human beings are oppressed, exploited, or condemned to a life of poverty.

Violence to the Earth takes place when the ecosystems that support all life are disrupted or destroyed for the benefit and enrichment of a few.

Believing that violence is woven into our culture from childhood, and that overcoming it must begin with each individual, I commit myself to a life of nonviolence and to working with others, of whatever faith or persuasion, who make a similar commitment. To this end, I commit myself:

- To avoid violence in my language, thoughts, actions and relationships.
- To engage in responsible consumption through the use of products and foods that have not been produced through violence to persons or the Earth.
- To seek alternatives to being part of the war machine in my own life and to support peacekeeping forces under international sponsorship such as the United Nations as an alternative to all wars.
- To work for the creation of programs of peacemaking through the United Nations and multilateral instruments such as the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto Protocol, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and the abolition of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.
- To protest systems of violence through peaceful affirmation or protest and, when necessary, through civil disobedience.
- To work in my church, synagogue, mosque or community group to advance the nonviolent teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Gandhi, and the great religious leaders of all major faiths.

Appendix 4 - MFSA Statement on Reproductive Rights

I. Sacredness of Life:

We affirm the goodness of God's creation and the sacredness of all creation. We are co-creators, with God, of life and believe it is our responsibility to care for our environment and all forms of life sharing our environment. We believe we are called to struggle for the fulfillment of God's vision of justice and peace for creation and for all of God's children.

Therefore, we do not take the question of abortion lightly. We long for a world where abortion is unknown. We envision a world where every child is a wanted child; where family planning and birth control are readily available to and practiced by all the peoples of the world; where adequate nutrition, medical, spiritual, emotional and psychological care is available to all; where meaningful employment and the means to support oneself and one's family is universal; and where adequate prenatal, perinatal, maternal, and child care is available to all. We also recognize that in an imperfect world these goals will never be fulfilled equitably for all people.

Because we regard all life as sacred, we regard the life and well being of the mother to be just as valuable as the potential life of the fetus. We recognize that there are many situations in which more than one of our most deeply held religious and moral values about the sacredness of life will come into conflict with each other. And we recognize that only the individuals most intimately involved in a crisis pregnancy can adequately weigh the factors and values in conflict and come to a decision about the most appropriate course of action.

In view of this, we support the right of a woman to choose whether to carry her pregnancy to term, keep her child, give her child up for adoption, or terminate her pregnancy. We are not pro-abortion; we are pro-choice.

II. Religious Liberty:

The right of reproductive freedom is an issue of religious liberty. Different religious traditions hold widely differing positions on issues related to birth control, pregnancy, abortion, and other issues of reproductive freedom. Because we are guaranteed religious freedom in our constitution, we believe that reproductive issues *must* remain free from government interference. We believe that for secular authority to codify any particular religious tradition or position into law is a violation of the religious liberty of all religious traditions whose teachings differ from that law.

III. Sexism and the Abortion Debate:

We believe that a large part of the current debate about abortion is a manifestation of the sinful sexism of our society. Language about the fetus is often used to disguise the underlying beliefs that women are incapable of making mature moral decisions. Focusing the discussion solely on the fetus keeps us from asking the more fundamental question of whether or not, in our society, women are fully human beings capable of making wise decisions. Women are created fully equal to men in every respect, including the ability to make difficult moral decisions.

Further, because it is the woman's body who will carry the child and, in the case of many women, the woman alone who will care for and nurture the child, bearing the full burden of the economic, emotional, and spiritual demands a child brings, we believe that women should be the primary decision makers in matters affecting their bodies.

We encourage women to seek wisdom and counsel from God, their religious tradition, men involved in the pregnancy (if available), doctors, family and friends, but we insist that the final decision whether to continue or terminate a pregnancy must be the woman's alone without any interference from the government.

IV. Economic Justice and Abortion:

Access to safe and legal abortion is being severely eroded by decreases in funding for human services. Lobbying by groups committed to overturning the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court is resulting in many publicly financed programs being unable (because of budget cutbacks or gag rules) to provide a full range of family planning programs. This has a disproportionately tragic effect on poor women and women of color. Those with the financial means will always find a way to terminate an unwanted or dangerous pregnancy. Women without these means are deprived of the right to adequate medical care and the right to make decisions about their own futures, families, and bodies. With our historic emphasis on economic justice for all people, we find any legislative restrictions on full health care for all women, including access to safe and legal abortions, unacceptable.

V. Therefore, we, the Methodist Federation for Social Action

- a) affirm the sacredness of all creation, including the sanctity of human life, and
- b) believe that when and whether to bear a child is a woman's private decision, and
- c) claim the right for women and men, regardless of economic condition, to have full access to adequately funded family planning services and to safe and legal abortion as an option, and
- d) support the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision of the U.S. Supreme Court legalizing abortion, and
- e) actively oppose all legislation, administrative action or regulations by any government entity that would deny women access to safe and legal abortion, and
- f) actively oppose any attempt, legislative or otherwise, to reduce the availability of safe and legal abortions for poor women, including reduction of Medicaid, family services, or other current social services, and
- g) affirm the need for adequately funded health and day care services for those women who choose to raise children.

March 28, 1992

Appendix 5 – Tips on Facing Controversy

These "Baker's Dozen" Tips for effectiveness in working with conflict and controversy in church and society ministries are adapted from a piece from the General Board of Church and Society.

1. Schedule regular times and places to talk about social issues as a matter of course. (No "conspiracy of silence!"). If a particular conflict arises, provide a proper forum for all parties to meet together. Confront difficult issues openly and honestly, without defensiveness.
2. If you feel ignorant about an issue under discussion and/or unable to communicate your point of view effectively, do more research and learning. Talk to people who are more knowledgeable in the relevant area. Do your homework.
3. Don't try to pretend you know more than you do about a subject. Acknowledge when you don't know something factual, but always be inquiring. Questions are fair game.
4. Assume a "we" rather than a "they" stance. Rather than turn a conflict or disagreement into a win/lose situation, look for areas of agreement and common ground. Look for ways to cooperate rather than compete. Affirm the integrity and humanity of those with whom you are in opposition.
5. In the church, become prepared to speak on social issues, and about your actions, based on the context of your faith commitment and of growing in faith. Many people assume social activists are acting on values that are somehow removed from religious commitment.
6. "Walk a mile in others' moccasins" before you criticize or reject ideas. Practice active listening. Be intent on really understanding what another person is saying rather than thinking about what you want to say next. Be conscious of non-verbal communication clues (body language, etc.)
7. Talk directly with those involved. Avoid "he says...she says...." If, as is often the case, you hear about a conflict from a third party, try to emphasize that you cannot confront an issue openly and effectively without being able to talk directly with the conflicted party.
8. Be specific. Name sources. Stop rumors.
9. Be ready to grow and change yourself. There is a difference between tenacity and stubbornness in commitments.
10. Pray. Open yourself so that your spirit is willing to listen to God's communication to you. Recognize that God may be able to teach you something through another person as well as vice versa.
11. Respect minority/lonely/marginalized voices. Even if you do not necessarily agree or understand (such as an issue of inclusive language) it is important to respect the wishes of others. Recognize that a failure to understand is more likely an indication of your lack of empathy or insight (certainly not intentional!) than an indication that the issue is trivial or invalid.
12. Recognize flexibility in people's positions on varying issues and strategies for change. Don't "box people in."
13. Remember some of the changes in your life. Most of us would be embarrassed if people had never allowed us to change our beliefs from other times in our lives. Striving to perfection as United Methodists assumes what is not unchangeable!

Appendix 6 – Questions Worth Pondering About Racism

When Gilbert Caldwell, a former district superintendent, pastor, Ball Award Winner and Associate General Secretary of the Commission on Religion and Race, spoke to MFSA's national board as early as 1993, he raised some questions for Federation members and leaders to ponder. They are well worth our continuing reflection. Among them:

- How does the struggle for racial justice and the creation of an anti-racist environment interface with the priority agenda of MFSA?
- Is there a concern that pro-active leadership on racial agenda items may interfere with people of color's quest for self-determination and leadership?
- How do we explain/interpret the absence of people of color in active participation in the progressive sector of the United Methodist Church?
- How can we avoid duplicating the disappearance of people of color in the leadership of the UMC that the nation experienced during and following reconstruction?
- How does MFSA understand, accept and work at re-configuring "white privilege?"
- Are there some creative and helpful ways/methods to assist white United Methodists to discover that confronting their racial ignorance and insensitivity is a way to move toward their own "wholeness?"
- What are the areas of greatest misunderstanding/fear among whites and people of color at this moment in our history?

Appendix 7 –MFSA Model of Consensus

The national board of the Methodist Federation for Social Action has at times conducted its business based on the consensus model of decision making. Rather than making decisions by majority rule (as in *Roberts' Rules of Order*) we at times work toward an agreement in opinion by all or most members of the group. Sometimes making decisions by consensus takes longer than voting. It certainly requires each participant to take a more active and responsible role in the group process.

Much has been written on consensus style decision making. The purpose of this brief introduction is to alert you to the basics. It is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject.

In order to accomplish the vast amount of work we need to accomplish in a short time, then, please keep the following guidelines in mind.

- 1. We gather together to accomplish our tasks in an atmosphere of love and trust.** We do not need to mistrust others' motives or turn disagreements into win-lose contests. Even when we disagree, we can all agree that we want to do what is best for the Federation and the causes our commitment to God's justice and shalom lead us to get involved in.
- 2. The focus in a consensus style model is shifted from the leader to the group.** The group is the center of attention. The facilitator, while attempting to follow an agenda, be sensitive to group and individual needs, and keep us moving, does not bear the responsibility for accomplishing the work. As a member of the group, you are just as responsible for participating and seeing that the decisions are made wisely and tasks are accomplished well.
- 3. To be sure everyone in the group is clear on the issues we are discussing, we ask that every agenda item be presented for discussion in the form of a proposal.** It is most helpful if the proposal contains specifics: who is going to do what, to what extent, by when? "I propose that the executive committee find out each chapter's most successful fund-raising programs and present a compilation of them to us at our next national board meeting." At times, it encourages the widest possible range of alternatives being envisioned for the person presenting the agenda item to state the parameters of a problem or issue, possibly but not necessarily including a suggested plan of action or range of alternative actions.
- 4. Successive speakers share their insights and ideas, placing strong emphasis on areas of common intent and purpose with previous speakers.** The emphasis is on arriving at the best group decision possible, not on which argument is best and will "win."
- 5. Every member of the group must take responsibility for her/his own opinion, insight, and wisdom.** If you find yourself disagreeing with the consensus that seems to be emerging out of the discussion, you have a responsibility to share what you think. Do not assume your opinion is not important. And do not assume that someone else will bring up your point.
- 6. At the same time, every member of the group has a responsibility to the whole group.** Not every person has to be in total agreement with every proposal to reach a consensus. Otherwise every difference of opinion would block action. If you share your objection and find that you are the only one who is objecting, you could withdraw your protest. This is called "standing outside the consensus" and allows the group to move ahead. The exception to this is if the emerging consensus violates a value so important to you that you are not willing to compromise. In that event, it is appropriate to block consensus. There are several methods of resolving blocked consensus and the group needs to agree on preferred methods. Blocked consensus often means the issue needs time to mature. The group can table the decision. A small group can be assigned

to bring back more information or a recommendation. If it is an item that requires immediate action other resolutions are available.

7. **Do not be uncomfortable with long periods of silence.** Silence can be one of the most effective tools to allow us to collect our thoughts, reflect on positions already stated, dream alternatives, pray or meditate, etc. Do not be afraid to ask for a time of silence if you feel it would be helpful.
8. **Listen. Hear what others are really saying.** Do not pre-judge what others might say or consider anyone's contribution to be less important than another's. Do not concentrate on what you want to say next. Listen for the Spirit working through the contributions of each member of the group. And remember that one of our common justice values is that each person is equally valuable.
9. **If someone has already expressed your opinion, do not express it again!** Not every member of the group needs to say what they think unless it represents a point of view that has not been heard.

For more information, there are many excellent resources available. Among them are :

- Virginia Coover, Ellen Deacon, Charles Esser and Christopher Moore. *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution: A Handbook of Skills and Tools for Social Change Activists*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.
- Brian Auvine, Betsy Densmore, Mary Extrom, Scott Poole, and Michael Shanklin. *A Manual for Group Facilitators*. Madison WI: Center for Conflict Resolution.

Appendix 8 – "Prayer as Social Action"

"To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world"

– Karl Barth¹

Much is made of an alleged separation of spiritual life and social action within the church. True, there have been two different poles; one end being those whose focus is only the life of prayer and devotion and the other being those who have focused on enacting and witnessing to the world transforming power of the gospel. True, also, that many if not most of us in the social gospel camp have tended to emphasize the latter, often to the diminishment of the former.

But I would suggest that the days of this bifurcation of the whole gospel—personal and social, inward transforming and outwardly transforming—is coming to an end.

One of the ways this is happening is as those of us who have emphasized Christianity-in-action become more aware and nurturant of our inner, deeply personal journey with God which is a part of, and sustains in us, our ministry of social action.

A number of years ago I participated in a course on contemplative prayer at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington D.C. At first I was apprehensive. Were there others among my classmates who cared for and had a history of social action involvement, or was I awash in a sea of inward-looking Christians unaware of the socially transforming thrust of the Gospel?

The answer came soon. By the time our first week together was over I had discovered that not just one but two of my colleagues, one a Presbyterian pastor, the other an Episcopal priest, were former members of Students for a Democratic Society, one of the most radical and creative student organizations which emerged in the 1960s. And they, as well as many others in the course, continued to witness to the social power of the Gospel.

Another reason this action/prayer split is being overcome is the growing awareness of social activists that in our efforts for institutional change we come up against entities which are not simply material and human, but also spiritual in nature.

During the Persian Gulf War, as we struggled to keep alive a gospel witness in the face of the idolatries of rabid nationalism and vicious militarism, we could join the writer of *Ephesians* in acknowledging that

*our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh,
but against the rulers, against the authorities, against
the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against
the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (6:12)*

We experienced these idolatries as having an aggressive, predatory, virulent evil power of their own, which threatened to engulf whole populations, whole communities, and whole institutions, including churches. We all know so many normally level-headed, committed Christian people who got caught up in this frenzy, seemingly against their best intentions. This is but one example of an increasing awareness that the great struggle for justice and peace in which we engage is spiritual as well as material.

Yet another factor helping us bridge this gap is that, as Walter Bruggemann puts it, God is at work in our era to dismantle the Enlightenment world view.² That is, the only rationalistic, controlling and dominating characteristics of the Enlightenment heritage are now being corrected by recognition, within and beyond the church, of the importance of the numinous, the non-rational, the mystical, the self-surrendering, thus opening us to a greater appreciation of the role of prayer, spiritual discernment, and the everyday activity of God in our lives.

¹Quoted in *Weavings*, March/April 1990, p. 41.

²Walter Bruggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile*, Fortress Press, 1986, pp. 17-18.

Certainly our experience across the Methodist Federation is that the alleged separation of spiritual life and prophetic action is being bridged. More and more, we are finding ways in which prophetic action, earnest prayer, and powerful worship are inextricably blended.

Let me suggest one way in which prayer and social action are coming together for us. This is in the experience of *prayer as social action*.

In a way, this should come as no surprise. In the prayer Jesus taught, we are asked to pray: "Thy kingdom [reign] come, thy will be done on earth....Give us this day our daily bread....Deliver us from evil."

Even without our being much aware of it, I am sure there has been powerful social effect from the uttering of these petitions, which join our spirits with the Spirit of God to envisage, herald and enact the New Realm of God, which is "at hand." (Mark 1:15)

What I plead for is for us to grasp that, while prayer can be *preparation* for action, and prayer can be an important *accompaniment* to action, prayer can also itself *be* social action. Let me share how this has emerged in MFSA life.

Over the last several years, as Methodist Federation representatives have in an advocacy capacity regularly attended meetings of certain United Methodist agencies, we have found ourselves led to engage in very concrete forms of prayer. This occurred first as we gathered at meetings of the General Board of Pensions, where MFSA has repeatedly and earnestly encouraged that board use, on behalf of the whole church, the great economic power inherent in the \$4 billion it holds.

At its most basic this prayer took three forms:

- 1) Entering the meeting room ahead of time and praying that God would make that room a holy place free of any spiritual "static" interfering with the Holy Spirit's work;

- 2) Praying also for God's Spirit to rest upon each of the meeting participants and visitors (sometimes actually praying at each chair in the room for its eventual occupant); and

- 3) Then continuing during the meeting in intercessory prayer, seeking to "pray without ceasing" for the committee and its members.

I can say our prayer seemed to make a perceptible difference. I am certain that it made a very real difference for those of us MFSAers engaged in this prayer-as-action ministry. It opened us to the pension board members as persons; it awakened Christian love in us toward them; and it enabled us to be more centered, articulate bearers of the message we shared. But I think our prayers also effected the committee's decisions, which have gradually become more and more favorable toward active social witness.

More recently, MFSA has engaged in a similar prayer-as-action ministry with the United Methodist Committee to Study Homosexuality. There we have engaged in the three kinds of prayer mentioned above, as well as guided meditations on behalf of committee meetings prayed at a distance.

In addition two special retreats were held prior to the first two "listening post" hearings the committee conducted in each jurisdiction. Let me share what happened in the one I experienced.

The night before the first "listening post" held by the study committee to elicit experiences from the church, MFSAers gathered at a retreat house near the hearing site for an overnight retreat, including a Eucharist-prayer-healing service which continued in impromptu fashion for over four hours. A year later, one participant exclaimed, "I had no idea United Methodists of today could even pray for four hours – let alone social activists, but that's what happened."

I remember my own reaction, namely, that somewhere in the middle of that service all of my anxieties and concerns for the next day's hearing, which had been accumulating for months, suddenly evaporated. I knew God was at work and that the next day could be entrusted entirely to God. Finally I was at peace. Then that next day 90% of those testifying called for a sweeping change in the church's condemnatory position, some in the

most eloquent and moving and self-revealing ways. This pattern continued throughout the subsequent five hearings across the church.

Who knows what assistance our Methodist Federation prayers, together with our other forms of advocacy, have played in this?

George D. McClain
Former Federation Executive Director.

Appendix 9 – Bibliography on Methodist Federation History

- Craig, Robert H., *Religion and Radical Politics: An Alternative Christian Tradition in the United States*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992. See pp. 177-199 on "Reinhold Niebuhr and Harry F. Ward."
- Gorrell, Donald K. *The Age of Social Responsibility: The Social Gospel in the Progressive Era 1900-1920*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988. Contains excellent description of the beginnings of the Methodist Federation.
- Inter Religious Task Force for Social Analysis. *Christian Commitment for the 80's: Vol. 1 – Must We Choose Sides (1979). Vol. 2 – Which Side Are We On? (1980)*.
- Kindwoman, Jan and Ron Ozier, eds. *Journey Toward Justice: Commemorating the 80th Anniversary of the Social Creed of the People Called Methodists*. Staten Island, New York: Methodist Federation for Social Action, 1988.
- Link, Eugene P. *Labor-Religion Prophet: The Times and Life of Harry F. Ward*. Boulder, CO: Westfield Press, 1984. Only biography of the long-time Federation executive and inspiration.
- Radical Religion*, V, no. 1 (1980). Edited by McClain, George D. Entire issue devoted to Methodist Federation history.
- Social Questions Bulletin* (published originally as *Social Service Bulletin*). 1911-present. MFSA regular bulletin, currently appearing bi-monthly.
- United States Federal Bureau of Investigation. Harry F. Ward Dossier, file #100-29509. Jack McMichael Dossier. Methodist Federation for Social Service Dossier. Drew University Library. FBI files on Federation executives and the organization, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.
- Ward, Harry F. *Which Way Religion?* New York: Macmillan Co., 1931. Federation leader addresses the religious issues of the Depression era.
- Crist, Miriam J. "Winifred Chappell: Everybody on the Left Knew Her," in Hilah F. Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller, eds. *Women in New Worlds*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981.
- McClain, George D. "Social Ministry and Surveillance: Harry F. Ward and the Federal Bureau of Investigation." In Russell E. Richey and Kenneth E. Rowe, eds. *Rethinking Methodist History: A Bicentennial Historical Consultation*, 212-19. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1985.
- Knepper, Jeanne Gayle. "Thy Kingdom Come: the Methodist Federation for Social Service and Human Rights, 1907 – 1948. *Doctoral Dissertation*. 1996.
- _____. "Pioneering Social Gospel Radicalism: An Overview of the History of the Methodist Federation for Social Action" in Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe and Jean Miller Schmidt, eds. *Perspectives on American Methodism*, 371-385. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1993.
- _____. *Pioneers in the Faith: The Methodist Federation for Social Action at 100 Year, 1907 2007*. This book was compiled by MFSA's 100th Anniversary History Committee in April 2007.

Appendix 10 – Praying for Institutions: Obstacles and Possibilities

Dear friends,

The work of New Testament scholar/theologian/activist Walter Wink is, I believe, of critical importance to those of us engaged in the transformation of institutions. Wink has described for us how biblical language about human institutions and structures addresses them as spiritual entities, possessing an interiority, a unique spirituality of their own.³ The principalities and powers (p) have both an outer, visible manifestation (o) and an inner spirituality (i). Hence his basic formula, $p = o + i$.

Praying for Institutions

Recognizing the spirituality of institutions is of central significance to Christian social activists, as it opens the way for us to claim our vocation as *religious* change agents. We have a special vocation as those who are called by the Spirit to address not only the "o," the outward, physical aspects (budgets, leaders, members, policies, buildings, etc.) of wayward institutions, but also their "i," their inner spirituality (customs, attitudes, allegiances, self-image, etc.) We are called to nothing less than interceding for the *souls* of institutions.

Institutions often turn from their God-given vocation of serving the common good to serve idolatrous ends, such as exploitation, self-preservation, and image-polishing. Like everything in our capitalist culture, institutions are under constant pressure to serve the consumerist way of life and the classist, racist, patriarchal power structures which sustain it. As some veteran community activists say, institutions, left to their own ends, "'eat' people."⁴

Praying for an Annual Conference?

For us in MFSA the idolatrous institutions we often confront most directly are church institutions. Recently leaders of one of our chapters were bemoaning the astonishingly conservative character of their annual conference. They spoke of a climate of intimidation and fear, which, for one thing, was keeping many natural friends of MFSA from joining. These co-workers would promise support for what the Federation stood for – but only from a distance. It was easy to feel resentment at these non-members and their seeming betrayal of what they stood for.

What is the calling of an MFSA chapter in a situation such as this? I suggest that the chapter's central calling may be to engage in prayer, first for the cleansing of its own motives and vision, and then for the ministries of those fellow travelers of MFSA who are being blocked from open participation. They too are victims of the conference's turn toward idolatry and denial of Jesus' way. Finally the call may be to earnest prayer for the very soul of the annual conference.

For me, the basic link in integrating spirituality and justice is prayer. The more I think about it, the more I believe the question of our time is how, as activists, to be people of prayer, to be contemplatives in action.

³ See his *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Fortress Press, 1984) and *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Fortress Press, 1986).

⁴ Arthur Gafke, Bruce McSpadden, *The Pastoral Vacation: The Pastor as Activist*, 1992).

Addressing Obstacles in Prayer

Many of us, myself included, have lived for some time with a sense that prayer ought to be more central to our lives than it actually is. Though prayer has become increasingly more important for me, I still experience a lot of resistance to the consistent practice of prayer. This has led me to reflect on the very real obstacles which stand in the way of our intentions to pray.

We are all affected by the consumerist capitalist culture in which we live. It is to us as the air we breathe, so taken for granted that we are often unaware of it. Yet it exerts a powerful force upon us, including our spiritual lives.

Capitalist culture tends to make a commodity, an object, of everything. All elements of life tend to be valued for what they can do to enhance our status or financial well-being. This undermines true prayer and surrender before God, for such prayer may not "pay off" at all in conventional ways.

Prayer may even be counter-productive to our status or financial well-being. It may lead us to give more to the poor, to spend less, to work less. True prayer is "not good for business." As John Kavanaugh says, "There is an economics to prayer and solitude: they are financially worthless."⁵

Alongside this, capitalist culture would have us be constantly active, either producing or consuming. Most of us in the Federation are "doers." We tend to feel we ought to be engaged constructively, that is, in a way in which there is a tangible achievement. But prayer isn't necessarily productive, and often does not result in some "achievement."

The Tyranny of Style

Further, under modern capitalism surface appearance, "fashion" and "style" have become the central focus.⁶ The interiority of everything is devalued, ignored. What is valued is how things look, how they can be manipulated and marketed, *not* how they can be viewed with awe and wonder, discovered, sensed. True prayer by definition deals with a Reality beneath the surface appearances.

Prayer is also a victim of a scientism which reduces all to quantifiable, observable phenomena and laws, and then infers that that which cannot be so reduced is not real. As John Kavanaugh says, "Extreme observation, measurement, numbers, respectability, are held in awe."⁷ Such a definition of the "holy" makes so much of religious belief unintelligible: faith, hope, love, justice, commitment, non-violence, worship, and certainly prayer. Though this view of science has been discarded by most serious scientists, it still has a powerful hold on the common mind.

Another discouraging factor is that we have so often witnessed the abuse of prayer and devotion. Prayer has been used to ask for the success of "our" soldiers in war, no matter how imperialistic, for "our" way of life, no matter how idolatrous. Often those who have advocated prayer most stridently have been those who have used it most blatantly to buttress the structural oppressions of our society and to further personal fame and gain.

Beyond "Non-Religious" Christianity

Finally, many of us have been deeply influenced by the currents of "non-religious" Christianity popularized by Harvey Cox in *The Secular City* (1965) and John A.T. Robinson in *Honest to God* (1963) and institutionalized in the Ecumenical Institute founded by Joseph Matthews. On the positive

⁵ *Following Christ in a Consumer Culture: The Spirituality of Culture Resistance*, rev. ed., (Orbis Books, 1991), p. 61.

⁶ See Stuart Ewen, *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (Basic Books, 1988).

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

side, this Christianity gave us a stirring challenge to overcome the gap between the sacred and secular and between the church and the world; it stressed that Christians must become engaged in the world. But in the process of discerning God in common life through this "worldly holiness," the sense of God's otherness virtually dissolved in the world's secularity.⁸ (Some, taking it to an extreme, created a "God is dead" theology.) We have had to reclaim a sense of God, not only as present in everything but at the same time uncontrolled, unlimited, full of mystery, and active beyond our ken. And we have had to reclaim the discipline of prayer as a distinct means of grace.

To be aware of these cultural and theological obstacles to prayer can, I believe, help us not to be ultimately deterred by them. With this awareness we are free to face our own deeply personal obstacles to prayer: the clinging to a sense of our own autonomy, the protection of our attachments, our fear of encounter with the mystery and unpredictability of God.

Then we may be graced with the authority and strength to address the principalities and powers, to pray that God may quicken the souls of the institutions we care about just as God is quickening our own depths in remarkable and mysterious ways. We may even be able to pray for the soul of an annual conference!

George Douglas McClain
from July-August 1993 *Social Questions Bulletin*

⁸ See E. Glenn Hinson, "Seeking a Suitable Spirituality in a Sect Becoming Catholic," pp. 152 ff. in Tilden Edwards, ed., *Living With Apocalypse: Spiritual Sources for Social Compassion* (Harper & Row, 1984).

Appendix 11 – A Breath Prayer for Social Transformation

1. First offer a silent prayer that in this prayer exercise you may be fully present to God (without this intentionality the act of prayer may be a hollow shell).
2. Slowly take in a full breath; then hold your breath for several seconds before slowly exhaling. After exhaling, pause again. Then repeat the process over and over again.
3. As you breathe in, consciously breathe into yourself that which is of God; and as you exhale, breathe out of yourself that which is not of God. Let God guide you into any specific content for this prayer as breathing in the fruits of the Spirit, or breathing out anxiety or the desire to control, etc. Continue for 5-10 minutes.
4. Then imagine a specific, problematic situation you face (like a social issue, a challenging meeting, or an abrasive interpersonal relationship). Bring this situation to mind, and as you do so follow the directions in number 3 above, for another 5-10 minutes, breathing into that situation that which is of God and breathing out that not of God. Leave the rest in God's hands.
5. Close your prayer time with your own prayer of thanksgiving and intercession, as you may be led.
6. Finally, you might find it helpful to record in a journal something of the inner movement you experience in this prayer time.

Appendix 12 – Prayer-Action Discernment Cycle

I. Awareness Phase

Pray for the light to know which of your feelings and thoughts are promptings of the Holy Spirit.

- a. What is happening and to whom in relation to the issue you have identified?
- b. How do you find yourself responding – in 1) behavior, 2) feelings, and 3) prayer?
- c. What is your personal stake in the issue?
- d. Who are the poor and oppressed relative to this institution and context?
- e. When you consider this issue, are there any people or groups you tend to leave out?
- f. With whom do you lack personal relationships?

II. Social Analysis Phase

Pray that you may recognize the "signs of the times" (in a biblical sense) and the sources of creativity and hope.

- a. What are the traditions and history surrounding this issue and the institution(s) involved?
- b. What are the operative assumptions?
- c. What are the social relations (class, racial, gender, etc.) involved?
- d. How is power being exercised? Who makes decisions? Who benefits? Who bears a cost?
- e. What will happen if the situation continues as it is now?
- f. Are there any seeds of new life?
- g. What relationships do you have with key persons?
With whom do you need to build relationships?

III. Faith Reflection Phase

Pray to be aware of the reality and presence of God in this situation.

- a. For what in this situation ought one offer thanks to God?
- b. What are the gospel values and church social teachings which relate to the situation?
- c. What theological affirmations are involved?
- d. As you reflect prayerfully about the issue being considered, what event in Christ's life or scripture passage emerges for you?
- e. What turns away from God, what is sinful regarding this issue? What forces of evil seem to be at work?
- f. In what way have you turned from God in this situation?
- g. What is opening to God, what is graced in this situation?
- h. Have there been any conversion/transformation aspects to your experience with this process so far? Any insights, understandings? Any turning to God?

IV. Action Phase

Pray to discern the best course of action.

- a. Did any concrete actions suggest themselves to you during the Faith Reflection?
- b. What are the action alternatives you can identify?
- c. Which of them would be most effective? Which seem to arise most clearly out of, or lead to, an inner freedom?
- d. In what way does the power of God need especially to be invoked? How can this be done?
- e. Who would be involved in carrying out the action?
- f. What means will be used to evaluate this action?

Pray for the strength and courage to move into the decisions and actions that have emerged.