

Social Questions Bulletin

Seeking Global Justice through the United Methodist Church

JUNE - AUGUST 2006

ISSN: 0731-0234

Vol. 96, No. 3

September 26th

PLAN TO TAKE ACTION

Thousands of people across the U.S. have signed **The Declaration of Peace** pledge, a commitment to take action if Congress does not pass legislation for a comprehensive plan for peace in Iraq by September 21st.

From **September 21-28**, just days before Congress adjourns for the fall elections, Declaration signers will take part in nonviolent action to declare peace at the U.S. Capitol and in cities and towns across the U.S.

Visit the **Declaration of Peace** web site at www.declarationofpeace.org to:

- Sign the pledge
- Find media and educational resources
- Find a tentative schedule of activities for the week of September 21 - 28

September 26 in particular will be a day when people of faith make their voices heard. Stay tuned for more details.

Sign Me Up for the Declaration of Peace!

by John Dear

This summer we've seen several beautiful protests against U.S. warmaking. Friends have been fasting for peace in front of the White House under the banner, "Troops Home Fast." Others have been walking for peace through Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky. Eighty five year old Rev. Daniel Berrigan and two dozen others blocked the entrance to the U.S. mission to the United Nations, demanding the closure of Guantanamo, and were arrested and jailed. In New Mexico, we're preparing for the 61st anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima when we'll sit in sackcloth and ashes to repent of the sin of war and nuclear weapons at Los Alamos, where the Bush administration spends billions of dollars on nuclear weapons, and even wants to start pit production next year.

Hundreds will join us in Los Alamos on August 6th, including Kathy Kelly and Cindy Sheehan. Everyone is welcome.

But the killing of Iraqi sisters and brothers goes on with no end in sight, even though the polls show that some seventy percent of the U.S. public oppose Bush's war, want the troops brought home, and desire a comprehensive, concrete and rapid withdrawal plan. People from all walks of life are saying, "Bring home the troops; close all U.S. bases in Iraq; fund a peace process for a post-occupation transition; reconstruct Iraq through massive reparations; and spend the hundreds of billions of dollars used to kill Iraqis instead on schools, jobs, healthcare, and low-income housing here at home, including the reconstruction of New Orleans."

continued on page 2

MFSA Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Full Clergy Rights for Women

RECALLS AND REAFFIRMS OUR FIGHT AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

Note from the editor: Knowing that this newsletter would come out at about the time of the International Clergywomen's consultation where the 50th anniversary of full clergy rights will be celebrated with particular fervor, I was curious to look back at the April 1956 issue of the **Social Questions Bulletin** to see what had been written about the actions of General Conference giving clergy women full rights. I was fascinated to read the analysis of then director Jack McMichael of what had happened at that General Conference. I was moved and challenged to read the ways in which MFSA, even at that time, was connecting the rights of women and the rights of other minorities, particularly African Americans. Jack McMichael writes of MFSA's bitter disappointment that the segregated Central Jurisdiction was

not done away with and lays out a suggested plan of action for MFSA members to engage in to address this injustice. The entire newsletter is too long to reprint here, although I am tempted. What follows are excerpts.

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

by Jack McMichael

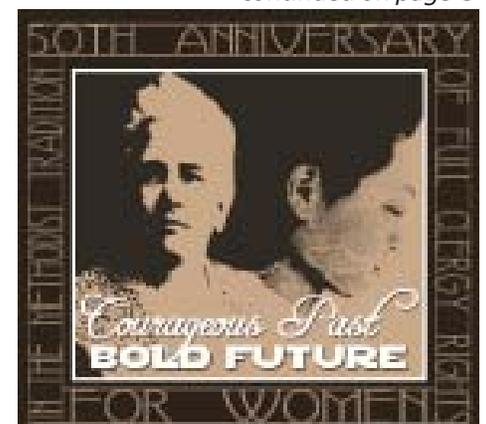
The 1956 General Conference of the Methodist church, which opened in Minneapolis on April 25, voiced its support for equality and its opposition to group discrimination.

Sex Discrimination Ended

The most clear-cut principles action

against discrimination by the General Conference was to wipe out completely all sex

continued on page 3



Faith in Public Life - A Resource Center for Justice and the Common Good

Faith in Public Life is a new resource center definitely worth exploring. The center's web site, launched just a few weeks ago, offers a menu of resources, including communications and organizing tools, in support of the American faith community. Check it out at:

www.faithinpubliclife.org

Strategic organizing and communications resources that can be found on the web site include:

Mapping Faith. Use this tool to find faith groups in your state and across the country who are working for justice and the common good. Groups can be sorted by location, faith affiliation, and policy specialization.

Voicing Faith. Press can use this Media Bureau to identify and speak with some of the most vibrant, renowned and compelling faith voices in the country.

News You Can Use. The daily top news on faith and politics, policy and public life. Stay informed by checking here for news items of particular interest to the faith community.

Blogging Faith. Blogs have become a crucial part of the faith community's advocacy on behalf of justice and the common good. The Faith in Public Life blog contains crossposts from the brightest stars in the blogosphere, video and audio clips from media appearances made by faith leaders, guest posts from leaders in our community, and much more.

Faith Calendar. Find events and meetings dedicated to faith, justice and the common good in your community and across the country.

Case Studies. These best practices illustrate how faith groups around the country are effectively impacting public debate and policies. Check out these case studies for collaborative models of successful faith-based advocacy campaigns.

Issue Resources. Use these resource documents, organized by issue, to bolster your policy knowledge and gain exposure to some of the most effective messages being used to advocate for justice and the common good.

About. Learn more about the resources offered by Faith in Public Life, its background and recent successes. Also find facts about the Resurgence of Faith Movements for Justice and the Common Good, as well as statistical information about the American faith community.

This is an exciting time in the revitalization of collective and diverse faith voices working for justice and the common good. Faith in Public Life exists to ensure those voices are seen and heard in America's public square. Feel free to contact the staff of Faith in Public Life at admin@faithinpubliclife.org with any questions about our work or the communities we serve.

For more information, contact Rev. Jennifer Butler, Director of Faith in Public Life, 202-481-8140. ❖

DECLARATION OF PEACE continued from page one

For the past few years we have marched, kept vigil, lobbied Congress and prayed for peace in a spirit of nonviolence, as Gandhi and King would advise. But nonviolence is not passive, reactionary, or weak. It requires creativity, assertiveness, and risk-taking. It is stronger than violence, so it takes the lead. It sets the agenda, insists on truth, takes action, and sees through

Every major movement for peace and justice in our history was able to turn a corner finally when its members nonviolently and illegally disrupted the big business of war and injustice.

its goal toward new breakthroughs of justice and peace.

In the early 1980s, activist Ken Butigan launched the Pledge of Resistance in opposition to Reagan's contra war on Nicaragua. Tens of thousands agreed to commit nonviolent civil disobedience if the war did not end. We know now that that campaign became a major obstacle to the Pentagon, and helped end that war. Recently, Ken and his colleagues have started another, similar campaign. The two of us trav-

eled to New York City in May to meet with Leslie Cagan, coordinator of United for Peace and Justice, to discuss his proposal. We explained that the Bush administration will tolerate marches and vigils for years to come. These nonviolent marches and vigils are important, but, we suggested, the time has come to up the non-violent ante.

After much preliminary organizing, United for Peace and Justice and dozens of other leading groups have launched "The Declaration of Peace," a campaign to pressure the U.S. government to stop its war and occupation on Iraq, much as the Pledge of Resistance did long ago.

The plan is simple. We continue to call for the immediate end of the war on Iraq, but presuming it does not end in the next few weeks, we urge every peace group in the nation to organize nonviolent civil disobedience at their local congressional representative's office during the week of September 21-28, 2006, just days before Congress adjourns for the fall elections. We will hold our banners, demand that the troops come home, and sit in with steadfast nonviolence demanding an end to this mad war. And we will keep up the public pressure through the fall until a breakthrough for peace.

"The Declaration of Peace" Pledge reads in part as follows:

"I join with the majority of U.S. citizens, the people of Iraq, and people around the world in calling for a comprehensive end to the U.S. war in Iraq. I solemnly pledge to 1) call on the Bush administration and Congress to immediately withdraw all U.S.

troops from Iraq, with no future redeployments; 2) urge my congressional representatives to adopt a 'bring the troops home now' position, and to establish a concrete, comprehensive withdrawal plan no later than September 21, 2006, International Peace Day, just days before Congress adjourns; 3) participate in marches, rallies, demonstrations and other peaceful strategies to establish this plan; and 4) engage in nonviolent civil disobedience, as conscience leads me, if this plan for a compre-

continued on next page



MFSA national organizer, Amy Stapleton, is arrested at anti-war protest in September of last year.

hensive withdrawal is not established and activated no later than September 21, 2006."

The plan calls for local and regional peace groups around the country to promote the Declaration of Peace Pledge. Our task is to recruit friends and activists and everyone we know to sign it, then to organize vigils and sit-ins at local Congressional representatives' offices during the week of September 21-28, 2006.

A few of the national organizations which have already signed on to the Declaration include: United for Peace and Justice, Peace Action, Pax Christi USA, Call to Action, CodePink, War Resisters League, and the Network for Spiritual Progressives.

I think the time has come for just such a systematic, organized national campaign to demand peace with Iraq and employ the old movement weapon of civil disobedience. Every major movement for peace and justice in our history was able to turn a corner finally when its members nonviolently and illegally disrupted the big business of war and injustice.

My first response to this "Declaration of Peace" pledge was—"Sign Me Up!" I hope tens of thousands will also sign on, spread the word, sit in, and speak out, saying loudly and clearly for all to hear: "We, the people, declare peace. Bring the troops home now!" ❖

John Dear is a Jesuit priest, activist and the author of over 20 books including most recently, "You Will Be My Witnesses" (Orbis).

To sign the pledge, go to:

www.declarationofpeace.org

United Methodist Women: Praying for Peace and Working for Justice

Every year, the United Methodist Women and the Women's Division provide excellent education and resources for the work of justice through the **Schools of Christian Mission**. This year, nearly 20,000 United Methodists will participate in these schools which prepare people for action in the world.

The 2006 studies are timely as they examine the relations between India and Pakistan; Peace from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish understandings; and Globalization.

The spiritual growth study – Shalom, Salaam, Peace – looks at the tradition and history of three faith groups, their histories of violence, and their quests for peace. Author, Alison Stokes, asks questions such as: Why does religion foment such violence? Why is God portrayed as violent in sacred scripture? Do we worship the same God as Abraham? Has God "divided" since then? What is the path to peace? Must we ignore the world and seek inner peace, or

does God call us to embody peace on this world?

The issue study – Globalization and Its Impact on People's Lives — explores the places where globalization touches the lives of ordinary people. With U.S. jobs, food, and so much of life becoming interdependent on other nations and people, this study is timely as it examines the impact of economic globalization on communications, human rights, and the social, economic, and political development of various cultures and nations.

The second-year mission study on India and Pakistan presents the richness and diversity of the cultures of India and Pakistan. It also explores selected current key issues affecting both countries, including gender issues, poverty, child labor, population, caste, illiteracy, religious extremism, and globalization. The study also examines the complexities of the border conflict over Kashmir. ❖

To learn more about the School of Christian Mission in your Annual Conference visit <http://new.gbqm-umc.org/umw/news/events> and/or contact the President of United Methodist Women in your Annual Conference.

EXCERPTS FROM APRIL 1956 SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN ON GENERAL CONFERENCE AND DISCRIMINATION continued from page one

discrimination in the Methodist ministry. Heretofore women have served our Church as ministers, but only as approved supply pastors, not as annual conference members. A woman pastor was expected to attend annual conference and bring her lay member. The lay member (either male or female) could vote on the annual conference floor; the woman pastor could not. Women were eligible for ordination and so could administer the sacraments of baptism and holy communion, could bury the dead and perform marriage ceremonies. But they were not allowed to apply as candidates for the traveling ministry, or for annual conference membership. That prohibition was contained in Paragraph 313 of the Discipline, revised by this General Conference to read:

Women are included in the foregoing provisions and may apply as candidates for

the traveling ministry, as provided for in Chapter III of the Discipline, entitled "Traveling Preachers," paragraphs 321 to 356."

The victory for sex equality in Methodist law was complete. The General Conference action was more remarkable in that it went considerably beyond any committee proposal. From the Committee on the Ministry had come a majority and a minority report. The majority report asked equality for women ministers (i.e., the right to annual conference membership) so long, but only so long, as they remained unmarried or widows. The minority report asked maintenance of the status quo, which denied annual conference membership to any woman minister, regardless of her marital status. General Conference delegates turned down both majority and minority reports from the Committee on the Ministry and substituted for both reports action which removes from Meth-

continued on page 7

The Power of Invitation

THELMA STEVENS (1902-1990)

Thelma Stevens was teaching high school at age nineteen in her native state of Mississippi when her students took her to witness a lynching.¹ Shocked by its violence she vowed to spend her life fighting racism. Stevens graduated from what is now the University of Southern Mississippi and later from Scarritt College in Nashville where she was influenced by the social gospel and by forward-thinking southerners. She met professors (particularly Mabel Howell and Louise Young) who shared her theological views that people should be treated with justice regardless of race.²

From her New Testament studies, she learned that Jesus handled criticism from religious leaders by finding a deeper authority coming directly from God. Jesus experienced God's guidance as an inner voice which helped him know right from wrong when other voices of tradition, religious authority, or society demanded conformity. This conclusion strengthened Stevens' resolve to act from inner integrity rather than social conformity or the pressure of criticism on the issue of segregation. She wrote:

*Jesus never quotes a text as having authority simply because it was found in the Scriptures. He set aside all that contradicted his own inward experience. Jesus recognized the validity of the Law and emphasized its binding character.*³

Thelma Stevens applied to be a deaconess but was refused because her doctor was of the opinion that she would not live longer than three years because of an ulcer—from which she was able to recover.⁴

Stevens served as director of Bethlehem Center in Augusta, Georgia and then joined the Bureau of Christian Social Relations, part of the Methodist Woman's Missionary Council (Methodist Episcopal Church, South). After the formation of The Methodist Church she was elected to head the staff of the Department of Christian Social Relations of the Woman's Division of Christian Service where she served until her retirement in 1968. Her work included helping with the first Charter of Racial Policies of The Methodist Church.^{5,6} Stevens had a voracious appetite for

books, newspapers—anything concerning the church, theology, social issues, etc. As a result she was able to help women in the church understand the relationship of justice, rights for minorities, and a peaceful social order. She was able to use the resolutions and declarations of other organizations that were apropos with the work of the Woman's Division. In three successive years she was able to publish significant documents in the publication The Methodist Women.⁷

In 1943 Harry F. Ward's resignation presented an identity crisis as well as deep concern about the Methodist Federation for Social Service (MFSS) and its purpose. Its reorganization resulted in a renewal of its commitment to racial inclusiveness resulting in loss of membership—the Federation's radical voice continued to



Response file photo

represent an unpopular stand within Methodism. During this reorganization Stevens joined MFSS's executive committee joining Mary McLeod Bethune and David D. Jones. She was soon elected secretary of the board. The addition of Stevens strengthened the connection between The Methodist Church's Woman's Society of Christian Service and MFSS. Jack McMichael became the executive secretary in 1944 and Bishop Brooks was elected board president in 1945 (its first African American president) indicative of its continued determination to fight racism.⁸

Eleanor Roosevelt was a friend to many who sought to extend rights to minorities. In April 1944, Roosevelt invited several Methodist church women to the White House to discuss justice issues and spend the night. Her guests on that occasion in-

cluded Thelma Stevens. Particularly through Eleanor Roosevelt, Dorothy Tilly, and Thelma Stevens, The Woman's Division of the Methodist Church (and, of course, tangentially at least, MFSA) increased her role as a liaison with federal agencies.^{9,10}

Stevens admired the courageous, forward-thinking leadership of the Federation. She wrote:

*The history of the Methodist Federation for Social Service reveals conclusively that the organization has always launched out ahead and dared to present needs and facts that were sometimes "taboo" and usually not very popular with the general church constituency.*¹¹

Unfortunately a few years later she felt it necessary to resign her MFSA position under pressures of the McCarthy era in order to continue her work with The Methodist Church. She believed that the Federation could engage in federal legislative research and research in areas of social tension, "gleaning facts" and "interpreting them in terms of church responsibility." She added, "These should be used extensively by Methodist women and other groups as basic study and action material."¹²

Stevens retired from the church in 1968 when the United Methodist Church was born. In retirement she worked against sexism and heterosexism, prejudices as deeply rooted as racism, which likewise created barriers to full human relations.¹³ It is noted that Stevens was less than pleased with the formation of the United Methodist Church in 1968. She reflected that the new church, which replaced the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and The Methodist Church, claimed for itself to have united branches of the Wesleyan heritage, did not include the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Free Methodist Church, or the Wesleyan Methodist Church. For Stevens, the task of United Methodists was not complete and ending denomination division based on race remained unfinished business.¹⁴

While Thelma Stevens had several pivotal experiences in her life that were transforming, one event of note occurred when

continued on next page

THE POWER OF INVITATION

continued from previous page

she invited Dorothy Tilly to lunch with her at Paine College where Stevens had lived and worked for two years. Tilly responded: "Why Thelma, I never ate with Negro people in my life!" "Well, you don't mind do you?" Stevens replied. "No, I don't mind," Tilly responded. "I just never have done it." Not only did Stevens and Tilly have a fine lunch, but Tilly's relationship with black women became collegial after that day. Stevens reported, "She was just part of the community after that."¹⁵

Stevens use of the power of invitation to work for social change was a culturally subversive action, a model of social transformation used by both Tilly and Stevens. This power of invitation persuaded people to change their attitudes by their own personal experience—a simple way of exposing others to new perspectives that evaporated their fear of the stranger and the unknown.¹⁶

by Thom Keely © July 2006

1 *They Went Out Not Knowing: An Encyclopedia of 100 Women in Mission* (Prepared by the Mission Education and Cultivation Program Dept for The Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 1968), 34.

2 Alice G. Knotts, *Fellowship of Love: Methodist Women Changing American Racial Attitudes, 1920-1968*, (Abingdon, 1996), 104-195.

3 *Ibid.*, 105.

4 *Ibid.*, 106.

5 *They Went Out Not Knowing*, 34.

6 The Woman's Division adopted its first Charter of Racial Policies. It focused on challenging legal segregation in 1952. (http://gbgmumc.org/global_news/full_article.cfm?articleid=3775)

7 *Ibid.*, 148.

8 Alice G. Knotts, *Fellowship of Love*, 134.

9 *Ibid.*, 164-165.

10 In 1947 the President's Committee on Civil Rights met with, among many others, Thelma Stevens and the Woman's Division who were working to remove forms of discrimination and to end "so called 'Jim Crow' laws that violate the basic human rights as embodied in the Constitution of the United States."

11 Alice G. Knotts, *Fellowship of Love*, 134.

12 *Ibid.*, 134. ;13 *Ibid.*, 107. ; 14 *Ibid.*, 255.

15 *Ibid.*, 262-263.

16 *Ibid.*, 263. ❖

VOICES OF FAITH 2007

What: A Gathering of Justice-Seeking United Methodists

Why: To Celebrate, Organize, Take Action and *Be The Church Together*

When: April 13-15, 2007

Where: Hyatt Regency Hotel in Crystal City, VA (just south of Washington, DC)

CELEBRATE 100 YEARS OF JUSTICE ACTION!

MFSA was founded in 1907 in Washington, DC. We will recognize and honor the leaders of MFSA on whose shoulders we stand such as Harry Ward (drafter of the first UM Social Creed), Winifred Chappell, Jack Mc Michael and others!

SING, WORSHIP AND LISTEN TO GREAT PREACHING!

There's nothing like hundreds of energized United Methodists singing justice hymns together! They'll hear us all the way across the Potomac and into the Halls of Power. Listen to great preachers, such as **Rev. Traci West**, as they speak the truth of the Gospel to the current day.

HAVE FUN!

Let the music of African American Women's a capella group, "**In Process**," and others singing songs of struggle and liberation, nurture your soul and give you strength for the journey.

RECALL OUR FAITH ROOTS!

New Testament scholar, professor and author, **Dr. Brian Blount**, of Princeton will ground us as he speaks of the soil of Biblical justice in which we are rooted.

LEARN AND RESPOND!

Workshops, speakers and resources will be available on a wide variety of **critical issues** of the day. Prophets such as **Bishop Minerva Carcaño** will call us forth to join in building a just society.

ORGANIZE!

Marshall Ganz, former director of organizing for Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers and currently lecturer at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, will help us understand how being people of faith and good organizers go hand in hand. Impressed with John Wesley's organizing skills, Prof. Ganz will help us hone our own skills as we prepare for **General**

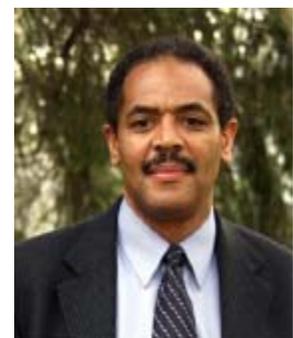
Conference 2008 where we intend to be a mighty force!

WITNESS!

On Sunday afternoon we will travel to the **White House** and raise our voices in song, prayer and witness, bringing our message of peace, justice and liberation as we challenge the current administration to live up to the highest ideals of the Gospel and of our nation.



Dr. Marcia McFee will serve as worship leader



Dr. Brian Blount will keynote opening evening

Watch the MFSA Web Site www.mfsaweb.org for updated information on the Voices of Faith 2007 Conference. By fall we will have on-line registration in place on the web. For now – save the date – tell all your friends – and stay tuned!

Presbyterians Stand Firm Against Occupation

Editors Note: In October 2004, MFSA called on the General Board of Pensions of the United Methodist Church to explore the possibilities of using selective divestment of United Methodist funds in companies that profit from Israel's unjust and illegal occupation of Palestine. Several Annual Conferences, in many cases with MFSA Chapters providing leadership, have passed resolutions calling on the General Board of Pensions to do the same. Some of these Annual Conferences have already begun to participate in selective divestment to bring pressure to bear.

*When the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church was held last June, therefore, we watched with interest to see what actions they would take related to similar initiatives in their own denomination. Shortly after the General Assembly ended, we began to receive emails and see articles about the ways in which the media had distorted what happened at the General Assembly. We therefore share this following article, adapted from an article by **Jewish Voices of Peace**:*

From Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP):

We here at *Jewish Voice for Peace* headquarters have been absolutely stunned by the Orwellian headlines and poor reporting about this week's Presbyterian General Assembly vote to use economic pressure to end the occupation. It's an almost exact replay of the 2004 General Assembly when most media outlets got the Presbyterian decision wrong, falsely proclaiming that the church had voted to divest from Israel. In a sense, this misrepresentation builds on the earlier one.

In 2004 the Presbyterians voted to begin a process of phased corporate engagement, including investigating selective divestment, from companies that profit from the occupation. The General Assembly has reaffirmed that vote. They did not rescind it, as has been reported. Nor was the 2004 vote a decision to embark on a divestment program, as was reported back then. It was a decision to investigate the various ways the PCUSA could use economic pressure to help bring about a just peace in Israel-Palestine.

TAKE ACTION FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Go to the web site of End The Occupation

www.endtheoccupation.org

FIND OUT WHAT UNITED METHODISTS ARE SAYING AND DOING

Go to the following web sites:

<http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=5829>

www.mfsaweb.org (Click on the **MENUM Tab**)

LISTEN TO VOICES FROM THE REGION

Go to the web site of Sabeel, Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem

www.sabeel.org

Judith Kolokoff, a member of the Seattle Chapter of Jewish Voices for Peace who was present at the General Assembly reported, "I have great respect for PCUSA because they did not back down from their traditionally principled positions in spite of the horrendous attacks against them organized by the 12 powerful Jewish main-line organizations who totally misrepresented their actions in the 2004 assembly. I know that the alternative voice of the American Jewish community (our voice) as well the voices of our allies from Israel and Palestine were heard...and ultimately the loud voices of justice were able to prevail."

What the 2006 General Assembly vote did NOT change

Clearly, the Church has no intention of backing down from making a powerful moral judgment about the occupation. Despite overwhelming pressure to rescind their vote, the Presbyterian GA reaffirmed their policy of using economic pressure to help bring an end to Israel's occupation in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, a policy that JVP has long supported both in other groups and with our own shareholder activism with Caterpillar. The PCUSA voted overwhelmingly to continue the same process of corporate engagement they started in 2004. This means, as in 2004, the process could still end in a vote for divestment in 2008, and, just like in 2004, that is a measure of last resort. They also reaffirmed their opposition to the portions of the wall being built on pre-1967 territory, and their commitment to ending the occupation not only in Gaza and the West Bank, but also in East Jerusalem. It's difficult to imagine why many organizations that work overtime to block critics of the occupation are crowing about this as a success. But perhaps the truth

just hurts too much.

What changed

One of the most striking changes was the inclusion of an admission that the decision in 2004 had "caused hurt and misunderstanding among many members of the Jewish community and within our Presbyterian communion.... We are grieved by the pain that this has caused, accept responsibility for the flaws in our process, and ask for a new season of mutual understanding and dialogue."

Relating to divestment, the most significant change was in language used to describe the longstanding Presbyterian process used to pressure companies linked to human rights abuses in various countries.

The 2004 language was this:

"7. Refers to Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee (MRTI) with instructions to initiate a process of phased selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel, in accordance to General Assembly policy on social investing, and to make appropriate recommendations to the General Assembly Council for action."

The new language is this:

"7. To urge that financial investments of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as they pertain to Israel, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank, be invested in only peaceful pursuits, and affirm that the customary corporate engagement process of the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investments of our denomination is the proper vehicle for achieving this goal."

As you can see, the vote was an affirma-

continued on next page

PRESBYTERIANS

Continued from previous page

tion that the "customary corporate engagement process", which opens the door to divestment, "is the proper vehicle for achieving this goal." It should also be noted that the GA voted this year to use this very same corporate engagement process in the context of Sudan.

To be sure, this is a softening of the divestment language, and it means the push to get the PCUSA to apply firm economic pressure to end the occupation needs to intensify. But it is also a far cry from revoking the 2004 decision, as the media and some pro-occupation groups are portraying it.

Jewish Voice for Peace applauds the Presbyterians for standing fast to their principles while also showing that they are willing to go the extra mile to maintain positive relationships with Jews across the spectrum of our community. The vote this week means that the issue of economic pressure will almost certainly come up again in 2008. We are urging all of our members and supporters to engage with their local Presbyterian churches and with friends, colleagues and associates who are Presbyterian. Tell them that an end to occupation that leaves Palestinians viable territory and a real chance to build their own future is in the best interests of Israelis, Palestinians, and Jews and Arabs the world over. Urge them to support even-handed and fair-minded methods of economic pressure to bring about an end to this awful conflict that has wasted so many lives. ❖

This article, in its original form, can be viewed at www.jvfp.org.

The **SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN** is published bi-monthly by the **METHODIST FEDERATION FOR SOCIAL ACTION**, an independent fellowship founded in 1907. The Rev. Kathryn J. Johnson is Executive Director and Editor. The national office is at 212 East Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC 20003 (202/546-8806). E-mail: mfsa@mfsaweb.org. Individual subscription rate: \$12 per year. Additional copies @ \$2. Inquire for quantity rates. Periodical postage paid at Washington, DC. ISSN: 0731-0234. Postmaster: Send address changes to Social Questions Bulletin, 212 East Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC 20003.

EXCERPTS FROM APRIL 1956 SOCIAL CONFERENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

continued from page three

odist church law all sex discrimination in the Church's ministry.

In the prolonged floor debate which went from a morning session through a subsequent afternoon session, there was introduced one compromise after the other which maintained some discrimination against women ministers. It was proposed they be allowed annual conference membership, but the Bishop and cabinet be freed from giving them an appointment if that turned out too difficult. Another proposal would have let each annual conference make its own rules and restrictions, if any, concerning the entry of women ministers. Another proposal would allow entry into annual conference membership for women, but only by a 3/4 vote. All these compromises were defeated, and the majority gave support only to the proposal which gives complete equality in church law, to women ministers. Finally, after the substitute was adapted, it was moved the delegates adjourn and postpone final decision. This action also lost. The majority determined to see the issue through victoriously. They did.

Factors In the Victory for Sex Equality

Since other battles for equality in the Church still remain to be won, it may help to seek understanding of the clear-cut victory in this one.

1. The highly effective pre-conference organization, agitation, and social action. For this the Woman's Society of Christian Service deserves major credit. There were 4986 memorials or petitions received by this General Conference, and considered by its committees. Of them, 2716 dealt with the one issue of full clergy rights for women, and the great bulk of them were in favor.

2. The more effective strategy in floor debate on the part of equality advocates. In the last two General Conferences the burden of debate for full clergy rights for women was carried by women. They made great speeches but did not muster the needed votes. This year, in another predominantly male General Conference, men carried the major burden of the debate for full clergy rights for women. That was much better strategy and it paid off.

3. The shortage of trained and qualified ministers in The Methodist church, and the splendid record of numerous women who have been serving the Church as approved supply pastors.

4. The general desire of Conference delegates to move against discrimination in all forms, as evidenced in their separate, less decisive actions on race. Presiding officer in the afternoon session at which this matter was finally and properly settled, was Bishop King, Negro. After the session he told this Editor, "We minorities need to stick together." There was considerable recognition one battle front for equality is allied with another.

5. The example of other denominations. The Presbyterians preceded us in granting full clergy rights to women, for example. But it was even more significant for Methodists. For under our appointive system ministers in the membership of annual conference have the right to, and guarantee of, an appointment or job each year. This right and guarantee do not pertain in the congregation system of other denominations, and are now available in Methodism to women as well as to men.

6. The impact of a world in revolutionary ferment now on the move against discrimination based on race, color, national origin or sex. This factor was seen in the effective speech of Ashok B. Singh, delegate from Bengal:

We from the far-flung ends of the world look up to America for inspiration and guidance in matters of progress and forward movement. I am amused at myself by the fact that I should come from the back woods of Bengal to champion the full clergy rights of the all-powerful American woman. (Laughter).

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE ON METHODIST RACIAL SEGREGATION

After the 1956 General Conference, glaring and un-Christian racial segregation remains a part of the structure and Constitution of The Methodist Church. When three branches of Methodism united in The Methodist Church in 1939, the Church was divided into jurisdictions. All of them were geographical save one. That one (euphemistically called "Central") is not geo-

continued on page 8

EXCERPTS FROM APRIL 1956 SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN ON GENERAL CONFERENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

continued from page seven

graphical at all, but strictly racial – for segregated negroes. The Constitution of our united Church specifically calls for this strictly racial, segregated, Negro jurisdiction, along with the geographical jurisdictions.

We (MFSA) asked the General Conference to submit to the annual conferences of Methodism an

amendment to the Constitution deleting this provision for a segregated Negro jurisdiction. That memorial (petition) and others like it were not acted on by the 1956 General Conference. All such memorials dealing with our Church's jurisdictional structure and the racial segregation therein, were passed on to a four-year Commission to Study and Recommend Action, set up by the General Conference.

Early in the General Conference it appeared Conference deeds on Methodist racial segregation might be exhausted when it set up such a four-year study commission. The Bishops of the Church in their Episcopal Address had united only on that recommendation that the General Conference set up a commission to spend the next four years "studying the jurisdictional structure of the Church, its philosophy and its effectiveness and that it report its findings with recommendations to the 1960 session of the General Conference." The Bishops did not state specifically whether

they considered it right or wrong, tolerable or intolerable, Christian or un-Christian, to have within the organizational structure or constitution of the Church provision for a strictly racial, segregated Negro jurisdiction. They did say: "Notable

One must wonder if our great Church would be engaged in resolute action against its own racial discrimination and segregation if it confined itself to setting up a commission to make a four-year study of the matter.

advances have been made under our present organizational structure." They did express the belief "that within the organizational framework of the united Church is to be found effective procedures for the development of Christian brotherhood." In saying that, could they possibly have forgotten "the organizational framework of the united Church" had deliberately included from the beginning a strictly racial jurisdiction – for segregated Negroes only? The Bishops in the 1956 Address fortunately quoted the far bolder 1952 Episcopal Address (delivered and largely written by a southern white bishop) which called for resolute action towards "a Christian brotherhood in the Church that will be free from racial discrimination and segregation." One must wonder if our great Church would be engaged in resolute action against its own racial discrimination and segregation if it confined itself to setting up a commission to make a four-year study of the matter.

The Episcopal Address was delivered on the opening night, April 25. At the beginning of the April 26 session, Dr. Harold Bosley introduced a resolution providing the four-year study commission recommended the night before by the Bishops.

He moved reference of his resolution to the Committee on Conferences, to which were referred all

resolutions or memorials dealing with the Church's organization or jurisdictional structure. The Conference voted to refer Dr. Bosley's resolution, after vigorous opposition from New York Conference layman Chester Smith, who said:

There is no more need to study this question by a commission for four years than there is to appoint a commission to study the Ten Commandments.

Mr. Smith called rather for General Conference action to submit to *the Annual Conferences of the Church an amendment to the constitution which if adopted by the necessary two-thirds would abolish the Central Jurisdiction, put the annual conferences now in the Central Jurisdiction in such remaining jurisdictions under the plan of union as might be mutually agreeable to those Annual Conferences the remaining Jurisdictions.* ❖

Note: The full article can be found on the MFSA web site at www.mfsaweb.org.

SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN

Methodist Federation for Social Action

212 E. Capitol St. NE, Washington, DC 20003

Nonprofit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1748
Washington, DC 20003

In this issue:

- September Actions for Peace
- 50 Years of Full Clergy Rights for Women: What MFSA had to say in 1956
- New Resource Center
- UMW Schools of Christian Mission
- Presbyterians Stand Firm on Occupation