

Social Questions Bulletin

Seeking Global Justice through the United Methodist Church

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2009

ISSN: 0731-0234

Vol. 99, No. 4

Paths for Action

by Kathryn Johnson, Editor

Opportunities like this don't come around that often. The last time there was any real chance for reforming America's health care system, in the early 1990's, we failed to make any fundamental change and millions have paid the price in compromised health and shortened lives in the intervening years.

Once again we have the opportunity as a nation to fundamentally change health care, to adopt the stance that healthcare is a *right* for all, and not a *privilege* for some.

It is more than frustrating to see the misinformation that is being espoused as the health care debate continues. So much of what is being said is fear-based, making it difficult to counter with rational argument.

But counter it we must! As labor activist Joe Hill would no doubt advise, "Don't mourn, organize!" As noted in the accompanying article, caring about the health and well-being of others, particularly the poor is not optional for Christians. As followers of Jesus we are called to take action.

Below you will find several suggested avenues for action. You can find live links to these sites at mfsa@mfsaweb.org.

It doesn't matter so much which path you choose, but do choose, and do act. The health and soul of our nation depend upon it. ❖

General Board of Church and Society 10:10 challenge

www.1010challenge.org

40 Days for Health Reform

www.faithforhealth.org

PICO National Network

www.piconetwork.org

Sojourners

www.sojonet.net

Faithful Reform in Health Care

www.faithfulreform.org

Christians Called to Act on Health Care

by Scott Campbell

Some things are optional for Christians. In Maine, where I spend my summer vacations, almost every little church sponsors "bean suppahs." Bean suppahs are optional for Christians.

Some things are debatable for Christians. Whether one baptizes by immersion or by sprinkling and at what age the sacrament is administered has been a subject of endless discussion over the centuries. Christians disagree with each other about such things.

And still other things are beyond our ability to know as Christians. How can there be such suffering in a world created by a God of love and mercy? In the end all of our answers fail to satisfy our minds or our hearts. The question of suffering is the great unsettling mystery of our faith. Some things we just cannot know.

But there is at least one issue about which Christians do not have an option. It is not debatable and it is well within our ability to

understand. Christians care about health—their own and that of others. It is axiomatic. In order to be a Christian you have to care about your own physical, mental and spiritual health and that of other people. It is not a thing indifferent.

While the Bible may not prescribe specific delivery plans for health care, it is unambiguous in its declaration that the wellbeing of others is the *responsibility* of both the individual and the community. Individuals are judged by the measure of their compassion towards others. Nations are judged on the basis of how well they care for the least and lowest of their people. No small percentage of the scriptures deals with this question of well-being.

The Gospel reading on a recent Sunday morning, from the seventh chapter of Mark, contained two healing stories, each making a particular point about healthcare. In the first,

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Farewell to Amy

After eight and a half years of working as MFSA's national organizer, Amy Stapleton is ending her tenure at MFSA. Her departure leaves a huge hole, as she has served the movement so competently and faithfully.

While we are sad to see her go, we are excited for Amy as she expands her ministry in new ways. As of September 14th, Amy began work as the Clinical Services Coordinator at Shalom House, one of the extension programs of **SOME (So Others Might Eat)**.

SOME is an interfaith, community-based organization that helps the poor and homeless in Washington, DC. by providing food, clothing, and health care. Services of **SOME**

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Jamie Michaels



Rev. Amy Stapleton

Chapter News

Each year at Annual Conference, the **Oregon-Idaho chapter** honors one or more people with the Mark Chamberlin Award. Mark Chamberlin was one of the people who, during the darkest hours of MFSA's history during the McCarthy era, kept MFSA alive. Accordingly, the Oregon-Idaho Chapter recognizes persons who have demonstrated exemplary commitment to social justice over the course of their careers.

This year the chapter recognized Rev. John and Pat Schwiebert of Portland, OR and Ruth Walton of Salem, OR.

John and Pat are leaders at Shalom House in Portland where they live in community with a number of others who engage in ministries of peace and justice. John was a co-



Johns and Pat Schwiebert being presented the Mark Chamberlin Award by Rev. Paul LaRue (retired) who himself has dedicated his career to social justice.

president of national MFSA from 1983 to 1985. Among the Schwiebert's many commitments to justice and peace has been their decision to refrain from paying federal taxes that support the waging of war. Over the years, they have instead directed these taxes to local needs. Since retiring, the General Board of Pensions has complied with the request of the IRS to put a lien on John and Pat's pension funds. MFSA has stood with them in their struggle to get the policies of the GBPHB changed in this regard.

A second award was presented to Ruth Walton. Ruth has worked tirelessly providing leadership and support for the Oregon-



Ruth Walton accepts her award from Marilyn Outslay, past president of National MFSA.

Idaho Chapter for years. One of her many contributions was her amazing skill at editing the Oregon-Idaho Chapter newsletter for many years.

The **Iowa MFSA Chapter** will hold five regional gatherings this fall focusing on the topic of "Health Care for All." Mona Shaw, Iowa's Health Care Liaison for Physicians for a National Health Plan and Healthcare-Now! will highlight some of the problems with the current health care system and focus on the kind of reform needed to insure that every person has adequate, affordable health care.

The **Iowa MFSA Chapter** statewide gathering this year will be held on Saturday, October 31st at Epworth UMC in Des Moines. The topic will be "For I Was In Prison." Johnie Hammond, Department of Corrections board member and former State Senator, will speak on "The Changing Climate for Corrections in Iowa." LuAnn Smith, a Community Treatment Coordinator for the Fifth Judicial District Department of Correctional Services will talk about "An Offender's Journey-Post Sentencing." For more information on the Iowa Chapter events visit their website at www.mfsaiowa.org.

Members of the **Baltimore Washington MFSA Chapter** engaged one another on issues related to immigration on Saturday, September 19th at Hughes UMC in Wheaton, MD. They viewed the film "Made in L.A."

followed by conversation with Bill Mefford, Director of Civil and Human Rights at the General Board of Church and Society.

The **Wyoming MFSA Chapter** is part of the Annual Conference Social Justice Network which is presenting a "Green Churches Forum" with keynote speaker, Rev. Pat Watkins. Rev. Watkins is the executive director of Caretakers of God's Creation. The forum will include worship and workshops with practical ideas for churches to "go green."

The **Southwest Texas MFSA Chapter** met on September 10 in Austin, TX. The program began with the video "When Did I See You Hungry" produced by the San Damiano Foundation. This was followed by a presentation of the vision for the 2009-2010 program focus of Embracing the Poor. The chapter plans to develop a program that will inspire and enable the Austin UMC community to take action to reduce poverty locally and globally, through education, service opportunities, and the ability to influence public policy. Through programs and activities, the chapter will focus on acts of justice to address the root causes of poverty.

On January 22-23, 2010, the **Wisconsin MFSA Chapter** will hold a chapter retreat and workshop, "Worshipping God...Just for Us or for Justice," at Pine Lake Camp in Westfield, Wisconsin. The workshop leader

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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.

MFSA National News



Workshop Leader
Phil Carver

will be Phil Carver. Phil began writing music about faith and justice while interpreting the work of urban ministries of the UMC in Des Moines, Iowa. As the "Justice Troubadour," he

traveled throughout the state and the Midwest to strengthen support for these programs that responded to the basic human needs of persons living on the edge of society. Currently, Phil is a Field Outreach Minister on the staff of the Iowa Annual Conference of the UMC. His primary responsibility is to assist local churches in their outreach to the community.

The annual **East Ohio MFSA** fall event, "Because It Matters," will be held this year on October 17th at Uniontown UMC. The featured speaker will be Bishop John Hopkins who has chosen as his topic, "Poverty and Public Education," an issue that has been at the forefront of his ministry in East Ohio.

Prior to the 2009 annual conference session in **Eastern Pennsylvania**, the **MFSA** chapter held a service to cleanse the meeting space where conference would be held. The space had housed a gun show the previous week!



Eastern Pennsylvania MFSA Service at Annual Conference 2009

ONFIRE TRIP

MFSA Mission Intern, Jennifer Mihok, will be leading a group of young adults as they travel to the US-Mexico border for a short immersion trip from October 28-31st. They will be working with BorderLinks for an educational and interactive experience at the border.

The group will meet in Phoenix and drive to the BorderLinks facility in Tucson, AZ to connect with BorderLinks. The trip itinerary will include activities such as visiting and serving at aid stations, hearing from persons working to document human rights abuses, visiting with immigrants and their families, learning about labor practices in factories along the border, and advocacy training in migrant rights.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

MFSA is well underway in its journey of strategic planning. We are excited to be working with Beth Zemsky, a consultant who helps movement organizations, such as MFSA, place our work in the context of larger social movements. It is her conviction that we are in a "movement moment" and that progressive organizations such as MFSA can become part of the new energy building within the country for positive social change.

Beth has been gathering input from a representative group of people across the country over the summer months. The MFSA board of directors, meeting in October, will take the report of this input and continue to shape MFSA's future. Stay tuned for more information.

PROGRAM COUNCIL

Rachel Harvey, co-convenor of the MFSA Program Council has taken a position with the Reconciling Ministries Network as their Associate Executive Director. Rachel comes to RMN from The Advance at the General Board of Global Ministries where she spearheaded the national launch of the B1 campaign. Congratulations Rachel!

THANKS TO SUE LAURIE

Speaking of RMN, we want to acknowledge Sue Laurie, as she leaves her position with RMN. Sue has done an amazing job as an organizer with RMN and has been a faithful witness for a fully inclusive church both within the RMN network and the larger United Methodist Church for many years. Sue is a long-time MFSA member and has been one of the key links between our two organizations. We wish Sue all the best on the next step in her journey. ❖

Rev. Greg Dell Receives Justice Award

MFSA celebrates with Greg Dell as he receives the Gilbert H. Caldwell Justice Ministry Award, given by the Church within A Church Movement (CWAC). This tribute to Greg will be part of a larger CWAC event, Living in the Now: The Journey to Justice, being held in Chicago Illinois on September 25-26, 2009.

The list of Greg's accomplishments and his local, regional and national leadership on justice issues fills page after page. His passion for justice spans a broad spectrum of issues including racial justice, full inclusion and rights for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) persons, immigrant rights and services for homeless and other marginalized persons.

Among his many leadership roles, Greg served on the national MFSA board of directors and was co-president of the board in the early 1980's. Other national roles have included serving as coordinator of the Church Within a Church Movement, coordinator of

In All Things Charity and membership on the United Methodist General Commission on Religion and Race.

Greg served as the Co-Coordinator for General Conference Legislative and Strategy for MFSA at four General Conference sessions. He served as a delegate to General Conference in 2000, where he was twice arrested as he participated in demonstrations advocating for full inclusion of LGBT persons in the United Methodist Church.

Greg is a pastor, a writer, a teacher, an organizer and a friend. The UMC and every community where he has lived and served has been the richer for his presence.

Jimmy Creech, who shares with Greg the experience of having been disciplined by the church** for performing same gender weddings, says:

"It was most appropriate for CWAC to establish the Gilbert H. Caldwell Justice Minis-

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Enjoying a light moment at General Conference 2004 in Pittsburgh



Delivering a prayer at a Code Pink anti-war rally in Washington, DC



Getting arrested in front of the White House protesting the invasion of Iraq



Meeting with the New Jersey Chapter



Visiting with Palestinian students on a trip to Israel/Palestine

FAREWELL TO AMY continued from page one

include affordable housing, job training, addiction treatment, and counseling, to the poor, the elderly and individuals with mental illness.

Amy's specific job is at Shalom House which offers affordable housing and support services for homeless and extremely low-income single adults.

Some months ago, Amy started a Masters Program in Pastoral Care and Counseling at Loyola University with the intention of moving in that direction professionally. Her new position is a first step into this new field.

Amy's contributions to the MFSA movement have been many. They have included:

- Outreach and support to MFSA members and chapters across the country
- Young Adult organizing and outreach
- Working with chapters to organize MFSA on the jurisdictional level

- Providing major leadership for our three Voices of Faith conferences
- Coordinating MFSA volunteer efforts at two General Conferences
- Supporting MFSA communications through Facebook, E-News and web
- Facilitated "Creating a Culture of Peace" Nonviolence Training
- MFSA advocacy related to justice in Israel/ Palestine and Reproductive Rights for Women
- Participated in UMC Immigration Task Force

As comprehensive as this list is, it doesn't begin to capture the spirit, energy and love Amy brought to MFSA. One of Amy's favorite lines is, "It's all about relationship." The relationships Amy built and fostered in the MFSA network and throughout the church have been an invaluable gift. Godspeed good friend. ❖

"ONCE IN LOVE WITH AMY, ALWAYS IN LOVE WITH AMY"

by John Collins

I was on the committee that interviewed Amy Stapleton several years ago. Her energy and irrepressible enthusiasm was what grabbed us the most. She said at one point, "I believe I was meant to get this job." She brought those qualities to her work as Field Organizer, traveling tirelessly, sleeping in member's homes and keeping ridiculous hours.

At each General Conference Amy did an amazing job organizing volunteers, was in constant touch with legislative sections and MFSA-friendly delegates, organizing meetings at all hours.

I will always remember the night I fell walking back to the Holiday Express in Pittsburgh. Banged up, I was escorted to the hospital by angels Amy, Dick Parker and Chick Straut. They transformed a trauma into a comedy as we captivated the nurses until they were reluctant to release me at 4 am.

Amy brought the same enthusiasm to her volley ball team, her network of friends and to her family. This year she has embarked on the adventure of motherhood. What a great mother she will make!

Thanks, Amy, for your ability to make others feel young and valuable!

A Word From Amy

TO: The MFSA membership, board, leadership, and staff

FROM: Amy

Thank you for all you do to bring about justice, peace and the kingdom of God on earth. Thank you for your prophetic witness within and beyond the United Methodist Church. Thank you for your friendship, hospitality, solidarity, support, and encouragement. Thank you for the privilege of serving as your national organizer for the past eight years.

I often repeat the quote, "Ninety percent of life is just showing up." Throughout the history of this organization you have shown up, stood up, and spoken up time and again faithfully. During my tenure on staff you have taught me, nurtured me, and challenged me. Your commitment to the issues of peace, poverty and people's rights continually inspire me in my work and my faith.

Although I am moving to another professional position and heading down another path in ministry, my heart and my passion are very much still in the struggle for justice and peace and in this organization. So, again, thank you, and I look forward to our continued work together. ❖

GREG DELL HONORED continued from page three

try Award. Gil has been a champion of full and equal rights – civil and ecclesial – for everyone throughout his life. He set a standard for articulate, active and clear-minded advocacy for all to follow.

And, no one is more deserving to receive this award than the Reverend Gregory Dell. Greg and I were classmates at Duke Divinity School. Upon graduation, I told Greg I'd learned as much if not more from him about the true mission of the Church than from any professor at Duke.

His passion for peace and justice infused his theology from the beginning, and it was contagious and inspirational to me and others. Throughout his ministry, he's been consistent and persistent in his advocacy for justice. Greg measures up to Gil's high standard and honors the award as a recipient."

** Jimmy Creech was defrocked by the UMC in 1999. Greg Dell was suspended for one year in 1999-2000. ❖

Continue to Think Outside the Bottle

MFSA has long been a supporter and partner of Corporate Accountability International (CAI), previously known as INFACT. Currently, MFSA has supports CAI's **Think Outside the Bottle Campaign**, as part of the larger effort to protect the human right to water. CAI reports the following victories in citizens retaining control over their own drinking water resources.

After a six year campaign, concerned citizens in McCloud are celebrating Nestlé Corporations' departure from their historic mill town in the Cascade Mountains of Northern California. The food and beverage giant announced recently that it is abandoning its water bottling designs on McCloud and leaving town for good.

The grassroots campaign to keep water under local control began the night of September 29, 2003. At a town meeting, officials slammed the gavel and Nestlé Waters North America was the proud new owner of the town's water for 50 years...with an option for 50 more. The five member McCloud

Community Service District board had been presented

by Nestlé to take stealth action to approve the deal. This gave the town's 1,300 residents but a few days to review and consider the proposal prior to the meeting – hardly enough time to get organized.

But get organized they did. Community members quickly formed McCloud Watershed Council (MWC) a grassroots group, working in concert with California Trout, Trout Unlimited, Concerned McCloud Citizens and other organizations to respond to Nestlé's plans to build a 1,000,000 square foot bottling plant with untold consequences for the local environment (Nestlé initially failed to conduct a requisite environmental review). Collectively, the coalition hunkered down to protect local water resources and the surrounding environment of Siskiyou County for generations to come.

Due to the dedicated organizing of residents, the initial contract was ruled null and void by

the Siskiyou County Superior Court. But Nestlé continued to invest millions in public relations, lobbying and legal efforts to overcome this early obstacle to its bottling plans. National media exposure, continued grassroots mobilization, lawsuits, testimony before Congress and comments by the California Attorney General finally pressured Nestlé to honor the wishes of McCloud residents.

This is a watershed moment, so to speak, in the effort to restore local control over water. Earlier this summer two other community groups – the Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation (MCWC) and Protect Our Water and Wildlife Resources (POWWR) in Shapleigh, ME – secured major victories over Nestlé. Michigan Citizen's court victory against Nestlé came after nine years of legal battles and Nestlé appeals. The settlement requires Nestlé to dramatically reduce pumping during summer months at a critical well site in Northern Michigan, and prohibits the corporation from increasing pumping levels in the future.

After Protect Our Water members discovered

twenty-three Nestlé test wells in their community in Shapleigh, ME they responded by going door-to-door, gathering enough petition signatures to pass ordinances asserting the right of townspeople to control their own water and prohibit commercial water extraction.

Corporate Accountability International has played in key role as a partner to these local grassroots efforts by providing highly visible national campaigns like Think Outside the Bottle. Together they effectively challenge the abuses of the world's largest corporations.

Congratulations to the people of McCloud and to Corporate Accountability International.

To find out how you can get involved in CAI's think Outside the Bottle Campaign go to www.stopcorporateabuse.org. Source: Press Release by Leslie Samuelrich, Deputy Director, CAI ❖



TAKE ACTION ON HEALTHCARE

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the principle is established that no artificial boundaries of race, creed or nationality can be used to justify the withholding of healing.

A Syrophonecian woman, a Gentile, comes to Jesus seeking healing for her daughter. At first Jesus refuses her, appearing to favor the rationing of healthcare. He tells her that he has come first to serve the children of Israel and not the dogs of Canaan. But the woman's faithful response and her fierce advocacy for her sick daughter melt his heart. His reluctance is overcome and the principle is established that God's will is for the healing of all persons who are in need, regardless of human distinctions and categories. God's plan is for universal healthcare.

The second story is about a man unable to hear or speak clearly. Jesus unstops his ears and loosens his tongue, declaring "Ephphatha," or "Be opened." While the particulars deal with a man who is deaf, a larger message is also being sent in this story. It is a clarion call to all followers of Jesus to hear and speak the word of God. We cannot close ourselves to the call of God to honor the sacred worth of all persons. We cannot clothe ourselves in indifference to others, so long as we have what we need for ourselves. In the words of the old Spiritual, we have to "hear the word of the Lord." And once we have heard it, we need to speak it "plainly."

It is no accident that our Gospels are filled with stories of healing. Healing is a visible sign of the transforming presence of God in the midst of contemporary reality. Healing is testimony to the in-breaking of God's agenda in our lives.

As United Methodists we have long understood the link between health and our faith. Some of you may not know that John Wesley, our founder, wrote a book entitled *Primitive Physick: Or, an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*. He was greatly concerned for the spiritual and physical health of the poor and called for the prevention of disease through healthy living. The book recommended time-honored, inexpensive methods of cure and was a standard medical text in England for more than a hundred years. Wesley was way ahead of his time in terms of his approach, but his compassion followed in the footsteps of Jesus.

It is a theme that has been picked up by modern United Methodists. There are hospitals all over the world that our denomination has founded. We send medical missionaries to the farthest corners of the earth. Further, there were literally dozens of resolutions approved by our General Conference last year that deal with health issues and healthcare. We get the connection between faith and health.

Yet, the sad truth is that what we see as foundational, to the point of being beyond debate, is still not acknowledged by many around us. There are still persons who find it acceptable, if regrettable, that nearly 50 million of their fellow citizens are uninsured and many more are underinsured. They may consider it unfortunate that nearly a quarter million Americans have died as a result of inadequate access to health care since the Clinton healthcare initiatives of the early nineties were defeated. Unfortunate, yes, but not sufficiently disturbing to make the necessary changes. What we take to be a moral imperative is seen by some as a luxury we cannot afford.

It is legitimate to debate the merits of various healthcare proposals. It is entirely appropriate to carefully consider the implications of any specific plan. Law makers are duty bound to reflect wisely and carefully on the implications of any new approach. But for Christians the standard by which every proposal must be judged is how that plan will extend affordable and sustainable healthcare to all persons. It is not morally acceptable that there should be persons in the wealthiest nation in the world who are denied healthcare because they lack the resources to obtain it.

Sojourners, a religious community advocating for social justice, and PICO, a network of faith communities engaged in community organizing, have published a guide for Christians concerned about the healthcare debate. In it they claim that churches have an important role to play in the conversation. They call for faith communities to:

- **Lift up a moral standard**—They must remind elected officials that health care is not just about dollars and cents, but "is a profound moral issue of life and death."
- **Be a force for reason:** "Every debate over health care reform over the past quarter century has been driven by the 'fear factor.'

Those with health coverage are pitted against those without. The debate is presented as a choice between the status quo and a dysfunctional government system that denies needed treatment." Churches can help to refute these fear tactics by making sure that people are not scared by interest groups into believing lies and misrepresentations. Church people need to be well informed communicators.

- **Be a voice for the vulnerable:** There are thousands of lobbyists who descend upon Capitol Hill every day to represent the concerns of corporate America. Churches need to marshal their power to speak for the voiceless and the marginalized. While Christians may not have the financial resources of the large corporations, they can deliver votes.

The guide then goes on to cite five hallmarks of a values-based, common sense approach to healthcare reform. Such an approach, the document claims, should stress:

- **Affordability:** Health care must be affordable for everyone.
- **Coverage:** Health care must cover all Americans
- **Stewardship:** The cost of health care reform must be broadly shared and placed on a sustainable foundation.
- **Protecting the poor:** Lower-income children and families must be protected by strengthening Medicaid and protecting preventative and diagnostic benefits that keep children healthy.
- **Religious liberty:** The values of beliefs of health care providers must be honored.

There is much room for debate about how we should reform our system. What is non-negotiable, however, is that we, as Christians, are not indifferent to the problem. We care about the health and well-being of all of God's people. As followers of Jesus, we are called to take action. We can differ about how we should go about our task, but we cannot be divided over the fundamental premise that God cares deeply for each person and we are called to do the same. The present inequities and gaps in care simply cannot be allowed to continue. We Christians must lift our voices compassionately, vigorously and persuasively. We cannot pretend we do not hear the voice of Jesus on this issue. Nor can we keep silent in this critical time. *Ephphatha! Be opened!* ❖

United Methodist Guidance on Immigrants and Healthcare

One of the most hotly contested elements of health care reform efforts is the question of whether persons in the country without legal documents will be eligible for health insurance and health care.

The top decision-making body of the United Methodist Church, General Conference, gives us some helpful guidance in the resolution excerpted here:

"WELCOMING THE MIGRANT TO THE U.S." 2008 UNITED METHODIST BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS

Throughout Scripture the people of God are called to love sojourners in our midst, treating them "as the citizen among you" and loving them as we do ourselves (Leviticus 19:33-34). Love for the sojourner is birthed out of the shared experience the Israelites had as a people in sojourn searching for the Promised Land. The attitudes and actions required of God's people were to emanate from the reflection of their liberation from slavery by God's hand. As the people of God were liberated from oppression, they too were charged to be instruments of redemption in the lives of the most vulnerable in their midst: the sojourner (Exodus 22:21; 23:9; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19; 16:12; 24:18; 22).

Continue to contact Congress and the president to let them know you support health care for all, regardless of one's legal status. ❖

Bishop Melvin George Talbert Leadership Institute Launched

By Pamela Crosby

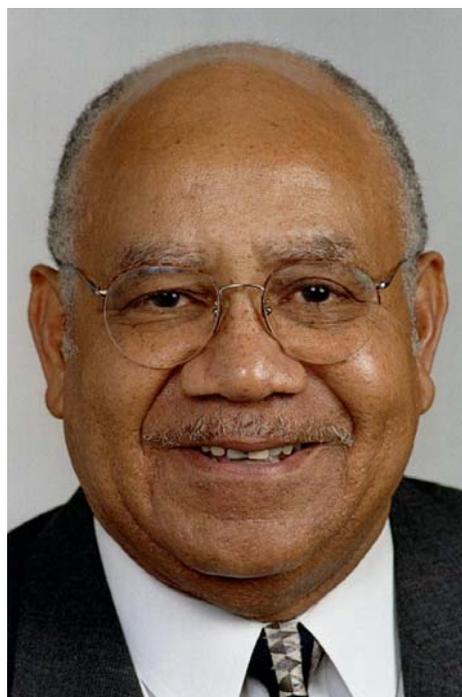
This past summer, Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Inc., (BMCR) launched a new leadership institute designed to engage young leaders—laity and clergy. Known and highly regarded for his gifts of leadership and bold witness, Bishop Melvin George Talbert's name is given to the institute. Talbert has led The United Methodist Church in creative leadership and bold witness as mentor, pastor, conference staff member, district superintendent, general secretary and bishop.

The institute, conceived and authorized by the National BMCR Board of Directors at its 2008 annual meeting, will engage young lay and clergy to enhance their leadership and administrative potential through knowledge and praxis in scholarship, interpersonal relations, skill development, strategic thinking and planning, using an "incubator approach."

Former BMCR Chairperson Cheryl Walker said the institute will foster greater awareness of United Methodism and the distinctiveness of our Wesleyan heritage by "collaborating through and with United Methodist seminaries and universities/colleges, with historically UM Black colleges, and other partnering with agencies of our church."

Talbert is known for his prophetic stands for inclusiveness and justice and for being an outspoken advocate for the oppressed, the marginalized and for peace. He has fought

long and hard to help The United Methodist Church and society address racism. He is committed to racial, gender and sexual orienta-



Bishop Melvin Talbert

tion inclusiveness, believing there is room at God's table for everyone.

He has led or been involved in ecumenical delegations to Africa, Armenia, China, Cuba,

Cyprus, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, North Korea, South Korea, Palestine and Russia. In 1991, Talbert was one of 18 religious leaders who visited the Middle East in an attempt to avert the Gulf War. In 2003, he was one of 13 leaders who went to Iraq, trying to avoid unilateral US military action against that country.

Recently named Dean of the Bishop Melvin George Talbert Leadership Institute, Bishop Alfred Johnson told the audience and Bishop Talbert, "I enthusiastically look forward to being a part of a cast of players who will design a new drama that extends the good work God has done in you, Bishop Talbert, and in a leadership development process that reflects your witness in being bold, filled with passion and compassion, and with an unquestionably competent, effective and transformational model of ministry."

A design team, led by Johnson, will develop strategies, encourage bold witness and oversee the development of the institute. The proceeds from the launch brought sufficient funds to begin the development plans. For updates on the Talbert Leadership Institute and other BMCR programs, visit www.bmcrumc.org

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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

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Prof. Harold Koh

Harold and Howard Koh Confirmed

Two men who grew up in the UMC have just been confirmed by the Senate to high positions in the Obama administration. Harold Hongju Koh, former Dean of the Yale Law School and authority on human rights and international law, was confirmed by a vote of 62-35, overcoming strong Republican opposition. Prof. Koh serves as the State Department's top legal adviser.

Dr. Howard Koh, Harold's brother, and on the medical faculty at Harvard University, was confirmed unanimously as the Assistant Secretary for Health in the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Koh brothers are sons of Dr. Hesung Koh, a scholar in her own right and Founder/Director of East Rock Institute, which is devoted to the preservation of Korean history and culture. Dr. Koh is a member of First and Summerfield UMC in New Haven, CT. Both Harold and Howard grew up in that church, where they held leadership positions as teenagers.

Congratulations to the Koh family!



Dr. Howard Koh



New to MFSA?

MFSA is a movement at the heart of the United Methodist Church that mobilizes clergy and laity to take action on issues of peace and justice. We are an unofficial organization composed of United Methodists across the country, organized into 35 chapters.

Get involved!

We'd love to welcome you to the MFSA network. Please visit our web site at www.mfsaweb.org to find out more about the MFSA movement and ways we can connect with one another.

Ways to Give: The new MFSA website www.mfsaweb.org makes it convenient and easy to **give to MFSA online.**