

Tributes to Kathryn:

I was first introduced to MFSA and Kathryn Johnson in 2005, at a time when I felt as though something was missing from my spiritual life. Hearing Kathryn speak of the social justice work MFSA was doing, and had been doing since 1907, opened my eyes to the spiritual connection I was seeking – linking my theology and beliefs with action. The past five years Kathryn has been a personal inspiration as I seek to become more educated and engaged in the work of MFSA.

MFSA and the United Methodist Church have been blessed by Kathryn's leadership, and will be forever changed for the better. I wish Kathryn much joy and happiness as she embarks the next chapter in her life. She will be missed.

--Tara Thronson, MFSA Board Co-President

In 2001, when Kathryn Johnson became MFSA's ninth national leader, she was the first woman to hold the title of "Executive Director." She and two other women have given illustrious national leadership to MFSA in our 103 years. She has guided our work since 1998 and gone to the streets and to jail in support of our causes. She has written, spoken, and confronted evil and injustice in our church and society. She has rejoiced with those who rejoice and wept with those who weep. She guided MFSA through three General Conferences, helped us celebrate our first one hundred years, led us in our successful "Faithful Witness Campaign" for a new century, challenged and led us through board and program council reorganization, and guided our strategic plans for the future.

Along with members of the National Board, and our many members, I give thanks for Kathryn's leadership and witness and wish her well in years to come. We have been blessed!

--Bishop Cliff Ives, MFSA Board Co-President

One of my great joys in justice work has been planning, praying, and protesting with Kathryn, even when I am fading in the late hours and she is increasing in energy. As a gay man it did my heart good at the Pittsburgh General Conference when, after we had been outside in cold weather kneeling and praying as delegates passed by I heard a huff and muttering from Kathryn who was standing beside me because her knees were giving her problems. I opened my eyes to see that anti-inclusion folks had unfurled a pray-and-change-your-orientation-banner across the street from us. Kathryn's muttering ended in a proclamation "I have to kneel" and down she came on the hard cement. I found it to be one of the most faithful moments for an ally and gay person going together to God for whom all things are possible.

--Rev. Troy Plummer, Executive Director Reconciling Ministries Network

Eugene Robinson of the Washington Post concluded his article about Judge Vaughn

Walker's "crafting such a detailed and comprehensive ruling" overturning Proposition 8, with these words about Walker. "Walker stepped up to the plate and swung for the fences. He hit a home run."

KATHRYN JOHNSON HAS STEPPED UP TO THE PLATE AND HAS HIT MANY, MANY HOME RUNS! Some in the Church might seek to diminish her clout on behalf of human rights and social justice by saying that she is a "Lefty" who hits only to left field and has difficulty with anything right of center. But, I would counter by saying that the leadership Kathryn gave MFSA during her 12 years was for all of us, regardless of which side of the plate we swung from. She has been what Martin Luther King described as a "Drum Major for Justice". (Should have written "Majorette"?). Whatever, she led in a way that embraced the totality of human rights movements and social justice struggles. I, of course because of who I have been for almost 77 years, a male of African descent, was particularly impressed by her commitment to racial justice and the battle against racism in The United Methodist Church and in society.

Dick Gregory years ago made this sweeping generalization about Liberals in the racial justice struggle. "Liberals are the people who get up and leave the room when the fighting begins." My experience with Kathryn and the cast of characters who were and are part of the MFSA family has been an experience of persons who do not leave the room when the fighting begins, instead they/we started fights, some that we won, some that we haven't yet won.

The United Methodist Hymnal includes one of Alan Paton's Prayers; "For Courage to Do Justice" (#456). It includes these words; "Show me where love and hope and faith are needed, and use me to bring them to those places." Kathryn has and has helped us to have, a love that is rooted in justice, a hope that the One in whom we believe can through us, "make a way of no way", and a faith that has allowed her and us "to stand up on the inside", no matter how many times we get knocked down by the evils of injustice.

Thanks Kathryn! Go well! We will miss you!
--Rev. Gilbert H. Caldwell, former MFSA Board member

Among the innumerable outstanding contributions Kathryn Johnson has made to MFSA over the last 12 years are a few that rise to the top of the list for me. Here they are in no particular order:

- Kathryn has been a **master coalition builder**. She was able to build amazing partnerships among progressives not simply because she was keen-minded, visionary and politically savvy (although she certainly was all of these) but primarily because she was so completely trustworthy. She was known across

the church as someone who would still be there when the dust settled. She was willing to listen to and learn from others, caring not only about ideas, but about the people those ideas served.

- Kathryn has been **relentlessly innovative**. She has never been content with things as they were, but has constantly striven to invent a new future for MFSA—not a future unconnected to the past, but one not constrained by it either. The creation of the Voices of Faith gatherings, the reorganization of the board structure of MFSA and the new web site she shepherded are just a few examples of her creativity.
- Kathryn's **passion for justice** has been the driving force behind her ministry. Some people in public roles look for personal influence or power. Not Kathryn. Every important decision she has made during her time as Director has been shaped by a single fundamental question: *What is the just thing to do?*
- Kathryn has been **indefatigable in her service** to MFSA. Anyone who has labored to keep up with her at 3 a.m. at General Conference to put the finishing touches on a newsletter to hand to delegates bright and early the next morning can attest to her incomparable energy and commitment to excellence.
- Kathryn has been a **fearless teller of truth**. She has not hesitated to speak Gospel to the whole church, including some of its most prominent representatives.

This list could go on for pages, but there is no need. Those who have been privileged to work with Kathryn already know all these things, and those who have not will continue to be blessed by her contributions long after today has passed. That is the real measure of a leader.

--Rev. Scott Campbell, New England Chapter, former MFSA Board member

General Conferences: **Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Fort Worth**
Reconciling Ministries Convocations: **Tacoma, Lake Junaluska, Estes Park, and Nashville**
Greg Dell's Trial: **Downers Grove**
Clergy Women's Consultation: **Chicago**
MFSA Board Meetings: **Nashville**
A Kairos CoMotion Event: **Madison**
MFSA National Gatherings: **Atlanta and Washington DC**

Among Kathryn's many travels these are most of the places where I was blessed to have my path cross hers. Locations on a map which hold specific memories for me ...

- Sharing a hotel room in Wisconsin, Kathryn's hairless head wrapped in a scarf, the effects of chemotherapy.
- Late night creating, a Bloody Knuckle Petition emerges, gay people tired of knocking on locked doors.
- Fiery strategy sessions, wondering how to make the most impact, praying to be heard, to be understood, to be known.
- A quiet moment in Nashville, sitting among books, talking, giggling, amused with ourselves.
- Migraine headache, searching for CVS Pharmacy, GPS's declaration, "Bing, you have arrived." Wrong. Police finally pointing the way.
- A "light lunch" on Hennepin Avenue, collecting thoughts about a looming church trial, grieving its reality, hoping it will matter.

I have consistently found, in all these encounters, a woman who is fierce and tender, seasoned and sanguine; who carefully carries in one body the sting of disappointment and the audacity of hope; who is grounded in seriousness, yet ready to laugh; who manifests a kin-dom vision with sacred certainty.

Kathryn, thank you for "getting it." Thank you for giving all you have. Thank you for showing up, again and again and again. Thank you for your steady persistence in the face of fearsome stumbling blocks. Thank you for the difference you've made, and are making, and will make in the future.

To close ... the chorus from folk singer, Ann Reed's, *Every Long Journey*:

And we cannot know what you go through
Or see through your eyes,
But we will surround you with pride undisguised,
In any direction, whatever you view,
You're taking our love there with you

With all my love and blessings on your future,
Amy DeLong, Executive Director, Kairos CoMotion

I remember the elation I felt one Sunday morning in 1998 at Dumbarton UMC when Larry Metzger announced that Kathryn Johnson had just been appointed Executive Director of MFSA. Twenty-Five years earlier, I was on the MFSA Board when George McClain was hired and couldn't imagine anyone else as Director. But now I could. Kathryn was a terrific person for the job, I thought. I knew her best from the Disciple Bible Class we attended at Dumbarton and felt she was exactly the right person for MFSA. In 2001, after retiring from Georgetown University, I called Kathryn and asked if she could use a volunteer. For nearly nine years, I have worked with Kathryn on

everything from Middle-East issues to preparations for General Conferences and greatly admire her many abilities that made her such a successful leader of MFSA. When Kathryn told me in the spring that she was planning to leave MFSA, I couldn't imagine MFSA without her at the helm. I wish her much success in her new position at the National Breast Cancer Coalition .

--Ginny Lapham, MFSA Board member and Special Projects Consultant

The work of justice is never easy. What makes the impossible seem possible is partnering with people who see beyond what is to what can be. Kathryn brought that ability to MFSA. Her leadership and voice will be missed.

--Amy Stapleton, former MFSA Field Organizer

There are many words one could use to describe Kathryn's tenure at MFSA's helm, but the first one that comes to my mind is "dedicated". If ever someone was true to the social justice cause, it is Kathryn. I have known her to write me emails from the office at 1:30 in the morning!! She worked tirelessly on General Conference preparation – and not just her own, but to publish information for others to help them make their own informed decisions. She would prod me to be sure to do all my homework in preparing for appeals. Her attention to writing everyone in the Faithful Witness Campaign to welcome them with our appreciation was unflagging. She made me work hard for the 100th anniversary Voices of Faith Celebration in Washington in 2007 and that helped me connect with so many fine MFSA people many of whom I have come to know so much better over the four years I have been here. And she did it all with good humor and a supportive, collegial attitude. I wish her well on her new path with the National Breast Cancer Coalition and I know she is contributing to that cause with the same dedication she has shown with MFSA.

--Rob Walty, MFSA office manager

My first interactions with Kathryn occurred via Skype shortly before the end of my time in Germany as a mission intern. The possibility of working at MFSA arose quickly, and I'd hardly had time to digest it before finding myself on a phone interview with Kathryn. Kathryn's approachable manner put me at ease, and her enthusiasm for the work was contagious. Despite my very limited experience in social movements, I knew this was a place I wanted to be. Her support and encouragement continued onsite as I jumped into (what was for me) a whole new world of Methodism. Kathryn welcomed me into discussion around the constitutional amendments, sent me to annual conferences, and allowed me to take leadership early on in my time in DC. I seldom felt like "just" an intern, leading to a smooth transition as I joined the staff this summer. Kathryn, many thanks for your leadership, inclusiveness, and the confidence you placed in me. It won't be the same without you.

--Jennifer Mihok, MFSA Outreach and Communications Coordinator