



Social Questions Bulletin

Seeking Global Justice through the United Methodist Church

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2002 (3)

ISSN: 0731-0234

Vol. 92, No. 5

Now is the time for the Church to be Clear: We Oppose This War and Will Not Support It

by Bishop C. Joseph Sprague

On October 11, 2002 eight United Methodist bishops participated in a "Citizen's Hearing on War with Iraq." The hearing took place on the third of three days of witnessing for peace - often in concert with those of other religious and community leaders - in the nation's capitol city. The following article by Bishop Sprague served as the basis for his testimony at the hearing.

People of The United Methodist Church must oppose a war with Iraq. I stand to be counted, unequivocally, among that number.

Why? The reasons are multiple.

Our church has been consistent in calling for the lifting of economic sanctions against Iraq. (*The Book of Resolutions*, Page 682) Imposed in 1990, these severe sanctions have been the moral equivalent of war-making perpetrated against a civilian population. UNICEF has estimated that between five and six thousand children have died in Iraq each month, since 1990, as a result of these sanctions. While Saddam Hussein has not been neutralized, the United Nations has estimated that over one million Iraqis have died from the sanctions. And, now, our government is preparing to kill more innocent elderly, women, and children through a pre-emptive war. Please, not in the name of The United Methodist Church or this bishop.

Our Church is clear. "...war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ. We therefore reject war as a usual instrument of national foreign policy and insist that the first moral duty of all nations is to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises..." (*The Book of Discipline*, Page 121)

The United States government has taken most, if not all, options for justice-doing in Iraq off the table in its rhetorical stampede toward war. This is unconscionable especially when, contrary to the United Nations strictures and the ideals of this nation, a pre-emptive strike is being advocated and such belligerent behavior advanced as founda-

tional for the future foreign policy of this nation. Such chauvinistic arrogance and lack of concern for the people of the global community is idolatry of nation and must be named and challenged as such by the Church.

While pacifism affirms no war, the just war

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Voices of Faith

New Life in the Christian Church

A Conference for Progressive UMs

On **April 25-26, 2003** progressive United Methodists will gather in Atlanta to explore what it means to be people of faith in the 21st century, fully committed to justice, peace and inclusivity as we move into the future.

This conference grew out of a series of conversations among members of justice-related caucus groups in the UMC.

Sentiments expressed included:

- Progressive United Methodist Christians need to claim our voice.
- We need to get together to celebrate, worship, study the Bible, sing, hear good preaching, listen to thought-provoking speakers and connect with one another in new ways.
- Too much energy has been spent fending off attacks from the conservative

"renewal" movements within our denomination.

- Let's **stop reacting** and find new ways to **take action** together.
- The world needs our witness. We need not be timid in proclaiming the ways God works in the world.
- We need to engage in open and honest dialogue about our faith, unafraid to ask questions and to seek new answers.
- We must make room for the Spirit to move in and through and among us.
- It's time to claim God's truth as we know it and proclaim it boldly.

You will not want to miss this gathering. Turn the page to learn more.

Visit <www.mfsaweb.org> for additional information.

Voices of Faith

April 25 - 26, 2003
Atlanta, Georgia

New Life in the Christian Church

A Conference for Progressive United Methodists

Now is the time to **be bold, speak our truths** and ask **the challenging questions** of what it means to faithfully embody the radical call of the Gospel!

Where:

Crowne Plaza Ravinia
4355 Ashford-Dunwoody Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30346
(770) 395-7700

Call to make room reservations. Room rates are \$89 per room plus tax (up to 4 persons per room). The Crowne Plaza is accessible from Hartsfield International Airport via shuttle or MARTA train.

Note: If you would like to share a room, please contact the national MFSA office and we will provide you contact information for others who are also seeking to share a room. Also, please check box under "Additional Needs."

Utilize this unique opportunity to **dialogue with dynamic speakers** engaging the controversial issues facing the church today. Be a part of **dynamic worship** and **challenging conversations**. **Network with other progressive United Methodists** as we move into the future.

20 Breakout Sessions are planned including the following:

- ❖ **Beyond Denominationalism** - Susan Blackburn Heath, Executive Council, Center for Progressive Christianity
- ❖ **Persons with Disabilities Creating Community** - Kathy Black, Professor, Claremont School of Theology
- ❖ **New Frontiers: The "T" in GLBT** - Ann Cook, long-time leader, bridge-builder, and author on GLBT issues
- ❖ **Mobilizing Progressive Students** - Eric Stone, Director of Wesley Foundation, Central Michigan University
- ❖ **Ecological Stewardship as an Expression of Faith** - Sharon Del Gado, Director, Earth Justice Ministries
- ❖ **Manifestations of the Spirit in Ecumenical Endeavors** - Jan Love, Professor of Political Science, University of South Carolina; active in Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Concerns
- ❖ **Organizing Progressive Laity** - Sally Ernst and Marilyn Outslay, outstanding lay leaders with broad experience in local, jurisdictional and general church ministries
- ❖ **Race Matters** - Workshop leaders will include Gil Caldwell, chair of United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church and Joe Agne, pastor and co-chair of Methodist Federation for Social Action
- ❖ **Journalism: Progressive Voices in Print** - Steven Swecker, Editor, Zion's Herald
- ❖ **New Directions in Seminary Education** - Phil Amerson, President, Claremont School of Theology
- ❖ **The Church at a Crossroads: Is it Time to Shake Off the Dust?** - Greg Dell, Pastor, Broadway UMC

Plenary Speakers



(Chung) Hyun Kyung, Associate Professor of Ecumenical Theology at Union Theological Seminary.



Hal Taussig, United Methodist pastor, professor and founding member of the Jesus Seminar.



Traci West, Associate Professor of Ethics and African American Studies at Drew University Theological School.



Minerva Carcaño, District Superintendent in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church



John Cobb, professor emeritus of theology at Claremont School of Theology and founder and co-director for the Center for Process Studies at Claremont Graduate University in CA

SPONSORED by The Methodist Federation for Social Action
in Cooperation with the Reconciling Ministries Network

Schedule

Friday, April 25th

- 8:30 a.m. Registration
- 10:30 a.m. Welcome and Worship
- 1:30 p.m. Plenary Session & Dialogue
- 3:30 p.m. Workshops & Breakout Sessions
- 6:30 p.m. Celebratory Dinner & Program

Saturday, April 26th

- 8:30 a.m. Opening Worship
- 9:30 a.m. Dialogue: Plenary Speakers
- 11:15 a.m. Resources for the Journey
- 1:30 p.m. Being the New Church
Anywhere & Everywhere
- 2:30 p.m. Concluding Conversations
- 3:00 pm. Closing Celebration and
Worship
- 4:00 p.m. Sending Forth

Worship Leadership



Barbara Lundblad - Associate Professor of Homiletics at Union Theological Seminary.



Jorge Lockward - Global Praise Program Coordinator for the General Board of Global Ministries



Mark Miller - Director of Music and Instructor of Church Music at Drew Theological Seminary



Barbara Day Miller - Marcy Assistant of Worship and Lecturer in Liturgical Practices at Candler School of Theology.

Voices of Faith Pre-Registration Form

(Complete a separate form for each participant. Please Print or Type. Photocopies OK)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

- Additional Needs:
- Sign Language
 - Dietary Needs
 - Room Sharing
 - Wheelchair Transportation
 - Other _____

*Limited scholarship help is available. Contact the National MFSA Office for more information.

**CEU (Continuing Education Units) are available. If interested, contact the National MFSA Office.

Registration Fees	By Feb. 15	After Feb. 15
Conference Registration	\$165	\$195
Student Rate	\$100	\$125

Registration does NOT include lodging, transportation or meals, with the exception of Friday's Celebratory Dinner.

Registration Fee \$ _____

Donation toward Scholarship Fund \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

or charge my __ Visa __ Mastercard \$ _____

Card Number _____

Exp. Date ___/___/___ Signature _____

Send completed registration form and fee to:

MFSA
212 East Capitol St., NE
Washington, DC 20003

You will receive a confirmation letter with information about the breakout session choices shortly after we receive your registration form and fee.

For more in-depth conference information, check the MFSA website: www.mfsaweb.org
email at <mfsa@mfsaweb.org> or call (202) 546-8806

Preparing for Pittsburgh - MFSA Leaders Emerge

Shortly after General Conference 2000, MFSA began to put a leadership team in place to prepare for GC 2004 in Pittsburgh. As part of this team, two outstanding church leaders, Marilyn Outslay from Portland, Oregon and Sally Ernst from Western Pennsylvania, have agreed to serve as co-coordinators for the MFSA Legislative Task Force. Marilyn and Sally bring a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to the ministry of the church to this task. Both have been involved in a broad range of leadership positions within the UMC locally, jurisdictionally, and nationally.

Sally, currently living in the Western PA conference, served as a Director of the General Board of Global Ministries for eight years as well as President of the Women's Division. She has been involved with COSROW (Council on the Status and Role of Women) and has been a delegate to several General Conferences. When asked about the significance of the 2004 General Conference Sally stated, "One of the reasons I have been involved with MFSA is because {we} seek to pursue justice for all. General Conference 2004 will test how the church will respond to the many many justice issues that we have before us."

Marilyn Outslay of the Oregon Idaho annual conference currently serves as a member of the conference and jurisdictional Episcopal committees. Marilyn has also been a delegate to several General Conferences and in 2000 was the chair of the Oregon Idaho delegation. Reflecting on her experience in Cleveland Marilyn said, "People left 2000 disenfranchised. In 2004 I hope we can correct decisions that exclude people." Her experience within our denomination includes working with the General Board of Global Ministries and Women's Division.

MFSA is fortunate to have outstanding leadership as we prepare for our presence in Pittsburgh. ❖



So, You Want to be a Delegate to General Conference

By Marilyn J. Outslay

I wish I could list for you, step by step, the best procedure for election as a General Conference Delegate. Unfortunately, there is no "one size fits all" model. Each conference has its own rules on campaign and election procedures. You must be very clear about the rules in your conference before you begin the process and you need to talk to many persons about your interest, especially past delegates and key conference leaders.

The first step is to examine your own heart about your motives for wanting to serve in this capacity. Are you really feeling that God is leading you to this challenge, or is it simply a status symbol? Do you think that you can help bring about desired changes in our church, or will this just be an exciting adventure and learning experience for you? If your desire to serve in this role seems to be an important part of your spiritual journey then I would encourage you to begin the process now, and I will try to help you with a few suggestions.

You must have a broad knowledge of church structure and polity in addition to maintaining good working relationships with Annual Conference members. Learn the rules about election in your conference. In some conferences those seeking election are allowed to campaign and spend considerable funds to do so. In other conferences there are strict rules against campaigning. Likewise, in some conferences candidates are allowed to give speeches before elections take place, while in other conferences there may only be introductions made. The clergy often have their own designs in place for elections, but for the laity good networking, knowledge of issues, name familiarity and a good image in the conference are extremely important.

Do not be a one-issue candidate but study all the issues coming before General Conference. If you should be elected, chances are that you may not be assigned to the committee of your first choice. Be willing to listen and learn, but stick to your convictions. Your election may depend on where you stand on specific controversial issues. While some might think it wise to play the political game by only saying what you know those questioning you want to hear, I firmly believe in total honesty. While

it is important to hear both sides of issues and occasionally make some compromises, you must be willing to stand for what you believe God is calling you to do.

Become familiar with the issues by reading from a variety of resources. I think that the main issues will be:

- Church re-structure
- Homosexuality and Ordination
- Financial challenges related to health care costs
- Church's response to war, terrorism, violence, nuclear weapons

The new membership formula for General Conference Delegates has created some inequities, and if you are from a conference with the minimum representation, networking with other conferences and jurisdictions is a must, both for strategy and moral support.

The Survey of Delegates to the 2000 GC reveals some interesting statistics:

- 70.01% were over the age of 50
- 12.4% were African American, 3% Asian American, 81.5% European American, 2.22% Hispanic American, and .93% Native American
- 8 out of 10 reported incomes of \$50,000 or more
- Clergy tend to represent churches of 1,000 or more members at the expense of small churches

When delegates responded to the question about their role perception, only 25% agreed with the statement, "I feel obliged to support the resolution passed by my annual conference." I don't think this is an accurate statement. Many delegates come with their mind already made up and always vote as a conference or jurisdiction block.

It is an honor to be elected to General or Jurisdictional Conference, but also an awesome responsibility. You must be physically, mentally and spiritually fit for this task. If, after prayerful discernment, you decide that you are not ready for this responsibility, please be a mentor for someone else. That could be the best strategy of all. If you are the person elected, may God be with you on this journey. ❖

Participants in UN Conference Demand an End to the Israeli Occupation of Palestine

MFSA was one of more than 100 international organizations (NGO's) whose representatives met at the United Nations on September 24-25, 2002 to urge an end to the occupation of Palestine. Most vocal among the two dozen speakers were four Israeli and two American Jewish leaders who stressed the crisis nature of the situation that threatens both Israeli and Palestinian lives and world peace. A spontaneous protest emerged on the second day of the conference to protest the U.S. support for one of the longest and most repressive occupations of the modern world. The conferees sent a letter to the U. N. Secretary-General who was meeting in the same building with the Security Council. By the end of the conference, the non-governmental and civil organizations committed to joining efforts and resources to uphold international law, end the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and provide international protection for the Palestinian people.



Attendees at the NGO Forum on Palestine bring their message to the streets as they march in front of the United Nations.

Striking Departure from Respect for the Rule of Law

The following remarks were delivered by Anthony Lewis, columnist emeritus for The New York Times, at morning prayer services at Appleton Chapel, Harvard University, on October 2, 2002. Mr. Lewis has given us permission to reprint his remarks in the Social Questions Bulletin.

"The terrorists who struck on September 11 were evidently motivated, in part at least, by a profound hatred of American values. If so, they achieved a considerable success. For in the last year this country has retreated significantly from two of its core values: protection of civil liberties and commitment to the rule of law.

What has happened to our faith in freedom can be indicated by a single example. In the view of the Administration, anyone in this congregation could be picked up by federal agents and detained indefinitely in prison—without an indictment, without a trial, without even the right to speak to a lawyer.

All that can happen if the President says that you are an "enemy combatant." If he does, you are an enemy combatant. You cannot challenge that designation in any court. You just remain in prison, probably in solitary confinement, until some president declares that the war on terrorism is over: years or perhaps decades from now.

What I have just described is not a theoretical scenario. Two American citizens are now being held in military prisons under just those circumstances: alone, not allowed to see a lawyer. And the United States Government asserts that no court may examine the lawfulness of their detention.

It seems to me extraordinary that an American Administration's lawyers would argue for presidential power of that character – something close to absolute power over an individual citizen. To consider only the right to counsel, it is the most basic of American rights, engraved in the Constitution in 1791 in the Sixth Amendment.

That is by no means the only assertion of sweeping presidential power that has been made in the last year. In the teeth of a great decision of the Supreme Court in 1866, *Ex parte Milligan*, holding that no one may be tried for a crime by military tribunal while the civil courts are open, the president ordered military tribunals to try non-citizens suspected of terrorist connections. The Justice Department detained hundreds of aliens, keeping secret their names and places of detention.

Those steps, and others, are not only in derogation of long-observed civil liberties. They are a striking departure from the vital American tradition of respect for the

rule of law.

The same disrespect for law can be seen in some to our government's actions abroad. It has refused to comply with the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war. It is working to destroy the new International Criminal Court, set up to try those suspected of genocide and crimes against humanity.

These are not just narrow questions of legality. They are matters of the spirit. Each of us is responsible for keeping alive the spirit of law that is at the heart of the American vision. It has made us the envy of less happier lands. We give it up at our peril." ❖

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.

The "Annual" MFSA Retreat in Mexico Returns!
A prayerful encounter with Third world realities and the
Gospel in a stunningly beautiful setting in Cuernavaca.
January 7 -16, 2003



No Spanish Required

Limited Space

All Inclusive Cost : \$550 plus air travel to Mexico City

After spending a day in Mexico City, participants will travel to Cuernavaca - the city of eternal spring. Experiences will include worship, sharing in the life of the poor, and exposure to the culture of Mexico. Leadership by Benedictine Sisters in Mexico.

"I have never experienced the power of god as deeply as here."

- a past participant

Reservations are needed by Novemer 15, 2002

For more information and to register, contact James Veatch via e-mail: vea@earthlink.net or phone: (718) 749-3629

The Human Face of War

The following are excerpts from testimony given by Earl Lems at the "Citizens Hearing" held on Capitol Hill on October 11, 2003. Mr. Lems is the Iraq program Assistant with the American Friends Service Committee.

The path towards peace and security in the Middle East will not be achieved through the continued economic violence of sanctions and more war.

We know the face of war.

We have partners and staff in Iraq. We know the destruction, despair, and poverty that war brings. We know that sanctions have caused a humanitarian crisis, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths due to contaminated water and inadequate medical systems. The government's inability to pay civil servants has led to a steep decline in the Iraqi education system, denying an entire generation the right to a better life through education.

In June 2002, I was part of a delegation of Quakers and AFSC staff that visited Iraq. We went to see a water treatment center whose reconstruction we will fund.

We met with UN and NGO representatives who testified to the on-going humanitarian crisis and vulnerability of the Iraqis. Pointing out a collective fatigue as people attempt to cope with the hardships

of life under sanctions. UNICEF found that from 1990 – 2000 Iraq suffered the worst change in mortality levels among children under age five of any of the 188 countries surveyed, the inability to rebuild its water treatment facilities has effected Iraq's most vulnerable.

Every Iraqi depends on the ration system under oil-for-food. That system provides a food basket to every person in Iraq. But it is precarious and has no reserve. There is no room for error. If the food distribution network is interrupted by an attack from the United States we were bluntly told that famine would result. For the majority of Iraqis, over half their family income is the food basket.

In Basrah, the largest city in the south, where the US military used more than 300 tons of depleted uranium, doctors report dramatic increases in cancer and congenital birth defects. Sanctions are denying them the resources for adequate research and documentation as well as the medical supplies for appropriate treatment.

The impact of the threat of war is already being felt.

In June, one US Dollar would purchase 1,700 Iraqi Dinars. Today, one US dollar will purchase 2,900 Iraqi Dinars. That means that the Iraqi currency has lost al-

most half its value since the escalated threats of war. This has an immediate and devastating impact on the ability of individuals and families to purchase what meager goods they need.

Quakers unite around the desire to take away the occasion for war. We have heard the discussion about acceptable and unacceptable violence, just and unjust war, and concerns for the people of Iraq.

Conflict and misunderstanding are an inevitable part of the human condition. The political and spiritual challenge is to find non-violent solutions and develop and support processes for carrying them out.

Since the UN first imposed sanctions in August of 1990 and the first bombs were dropped in January 1991, what has been happening in Iraq is nothing less than war. This war, led by the United States, has been waged on every front: economically, militarily, politically and socially. The price paid by the people of Iraq has been enormous. Dismantling this complicated apparatus of war against Iraq will require an equally comprehensive solution.

The first step must be to move away from a relationship of threats and ultimatums and engage in the more difficult challenges of dialogue and diplomacy. ❖

Oppose this War continued from page 1

theory, embraced by most Christians as a way to embrace some wars as just, when applied to a war against Iraq, clearly cannot justify such unjust behavior on the part of the US. The just war theory holds that seven criteria must all be met before the Church can affirm any war as just. A war with Iraq fails to meet these ethical criteria in at least six of the seven categories. For example, last resort and proportionality. The failure of United Nation inspections and diplomacy to do what needs doing in Iraq has not been established. The opposition of the rest of the world to the Bush agenda, save the Blair government in Great Britain, attests to this fact. And "collateral damage", meaning innocent civilians, would again be the primary casualties, if war were perpetrated. It is right that we mourn the three thousand victims killed in the United States on 9/11/01. But what about the **five to six thousand children now being killed in Iraq monthly**, by the present sanctions, not to mention the additional carnage that a war would produce? This would not be a just war, but an evil enterprise. This bishop, for one, will protest against it from now until US swords are reshaped into humanitarian plowshares for the poor of the earth, including the suffering poor of the Muslim world.

I was in Afghanistan in June 2002. I now realize, in part, why the Muslim world hates the West. The West is seen as imperialistic, materialistic, militaristic and hedonistic. A pre-emptive strike against Iraq will only further solidify anti-US attitudes and behavior patterns in the Muslim world. War-making by the US will increase, not decrease, the long-term propagation of terror. Drive people, already suffering, into utter hopelessness by the terror of war and chaos will follow. From that chaos legions of terrorists will emerge. Muslims are God's people, too. In the name of God and the great traditions of this nation, it is time to stop, rather than increase, the killing of innocent Islamic people by the West.

How in the name of common decency can this nation plan to spend at least fifty billion dollars in fighting a nonsensical war in Iraq when one in five children in the US lives in poverty, our health and education systems are in disarray and the faltering economy, manipulated by the wealthy for their own gain, has sent deep shock waves across the

retirement plans and monthly budgets of the working people of this nation? Such needs demand empathetic leadership, not rhetorical jingoism.

Now is the time for the church to be clear: We oppose this war and will not support it. This bishop is clear about his opposition to this

immoral and politically unwise step toward chaos. ❖

Practical Tips for Advocates Effective Communication with Congress

Anne Ewing, an MFSA Member from First UMC of Germantown in Eastern Pennsylvania, recently posted the following practical tips for MFSA activists on the MFSA list serve. In these days when it is easy to become immobilized, Anne gives some very concrete and helpful suggestions for writing to members of Congress:

I get an average of twenty hand-written letters a week at church during coffee hour. One person or another then takes them to the office the next morning and faxes them to the home district offices of their Congresspersons. This is because:

- (1) postal mail to DC offices takes 4-6 weeks because of current "security procedures"
- (2) staffers in the local offices have more time to pay attention to constituent mail
- (3) nobody pays any attention to e-mail

A couple of people who are partly disabled take lists home and make telephone calls since they find handwriting difficult.

Note 1: It took me a couple of hours to compile the list of all the local addresses and phones and faxes from various WEB sites, and the Library of Congress web site <http://thomas.loc.gov>, but it is now in my computer, easily altered as necessary and even more easily printed in multiple copies to take in on Sundays, and to store in the Soapbox (see below).

Note 2: We created something we call a Soapbox. It is a plastic file box with a few file folders that contain the addresses of all relevant State, Local and Federal officials, a ream of paper, a box of business-size envelopes, a bunch of inexpensive ball point pens. I created a folding signboard that says "SOAP BOX" in large letters, and people can post a note with their issue on the sign. It stays at the church and anybody connected with Social Concerns (or who can convince Social Concern folks to agree) can reserve it for a Sunday or more. It means all the supplies are there. All you have to bring is your idea.

Note 3: It seems most people really don't want this war on Iraq, but they are buffaloeed by the sweeping pressure of the Bush Administration. They are glad for a chance to express themselves in a community setting.

Note 4: Letters should be short. Remember they are not read by the official, only by low-level staffers. Write three short ones instead of one long one. State your desired action (e.g. vote against war, support the U.N.) in the first line. They won't read to the bottom of a long text. ❖

A Gift from the Heart

Looking for ideas for meaningful Christmas gifts? Look no further! Give an MFSA membership to someone you love this Christmas. All of your loved ones already belong to MFSA? Even better, make a generous donation in someone's name! By connecting friends and loved ones to the MFSA network you are providing them with meaningful information, resources and connections to colleagues across the country with whom to be in ministry.

At the same time you are supporting the national witness of MFSA at a time when the voice of progressive Christians needs to be heard.

Simply fill in the attached form and send or fax it to the national office (address just below). An email will work as well (mfsa@mfsaweb.org). Let us know the name and address of the person to whom you wish to send the gift and we will mail a card out the same day announcing the gift. Let us know if you would like the card sent directly to the recipient or to you so you can present it to them in person.



A gift membership for an individual is \$50. A family membership is \$75. Low income/student memberships are \$25 or less. (Please note: No one is ever denied MFSA membership for lack of ability to pay).

SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN

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