

# Social Questions Bulletin

Seeking Global Justice through the United Methodist Church

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## And now we begin...

by Kathryn Johnson, Editor  
November 5, 2008

We have been thirsty for a very long time. On this day after the election, it feels good to drink at the well of justice and to bathe in the rays of hope for the future. It feels good to let the images of the American people we saw on our television screens last night wash over us, all ages, colors, ethnicities, sexual orientations, income levels and abilities. History has been made, and it feels good to know that people have chosen hope above fear.

It is not just the fact that we have elected the first African American president that brings such hope, although that in and of itself is certainly cause for tremendous celebration. But more than that, it is what this *particular* African American president-elect stands for, what he has called us to do and be as a people, that engenders a profound sense of hopefulness.

We think of his words over these last months:

- The moment in the third debate when president-elect Obama answered a question about healthcare by stating that he sees it as a human right, not just a responsibility.
- The times that president-elect Obama has challenged us as a people, saying that we cannot make things right in a country that has gone so wrong without examining ourselves and asking how we can serve the greater good, without a willingness to make personal sacrifices for the common good.
- The times that he has answered questions about national security by placing U.S. security in the global context of diplomacy, negotiations and international cooperation.
- The times when president-elect Obama has reiterated his call to end the occupation

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## MFSA Elects Young Adult Leadership Forms New Program Council Streamlines Board of Directors

Meeting at Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, TN during the last week of October, the Board of Directors of the Methodist Federation for Social Action reflected on the past and planned for the future. Looking back over the past year, the board celebrated the strength of the MFSA witness at General Conference. Looking forward, the board made major changes in the structure of the organization to make the witness of MFSA more effective moving into the future.

Celebrations from General Conference (highlighted in detail in the Mar-June 2008 SQB) included the election of a fair and competent Judicial Council; the passage of many key pieces of legislation related to social justice issues; adoption of a new Social Creed Liturgy; and a number of witness activities including the rally for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, and the anti-war *Eyes Wide Open* display of boots.

Looking to the future the board adopted structural changes that will aid in the work of MFSA both at the grassroots and national levels. The changes, a long time in coming, reflect the careful work done by the board in recent years to discern the best governance structure to support MFSA's ministries of justice within and beyond the United Methodist Church.

For many years now, the MFSA board has been composed of a representative from each MFSA chapter plus several members at large. A structure which worked well when there were fewer chapters became unwieldy over time as more and more chapters were formed.

Seeking to maintain its solid connection with individuals at the grassroots level, the representative body with representatives from each chapter has now been formed into a Program Council. A smaller body, with a maxi-

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*Rachel Harvey, Eloise Cranke and Glen Bosley-Mitchel are elected to serve as the leaders of the new MFSA Program Council*

# Go Forward America, Into Your Truest Self!

by Rabbi Arthur Waskow, The Shalom Center

Blessed are You, YHWH, the Breath of Life, the Wind of Change, Who has filled us with life, lifted us up, and carried us to this moment!

The Torah portion that Jews read this coming Shabbat begins: "YHWH [Yahh, the Breath of Life] said to Abram [and his wife Sarai], "Go forth, go forward, into your best and deepest self – to a place that I will let you see, that you do not yet know." (Gen 12: 1)

God said that to America yesterday (November 4th).

The seeming paradox — that we can go into our deepest selves only by going beyond ourselves — is given even more point and pungency by the Hebrew: "Lekh I'kha," says God. In a Hebrew where the vowels must be inserted, these two words have the same consonants. They are the very same word, written twice. The closest I've ever come to an adequate translation is: Outward bound, Unbind inward.

And that is America today. We have taken only the bare first step on that unknown path to an unknown place, the path of hope and change. But that path is the only way to uncover, discover, our truest self.

Everywhere, our media are saying this truth in regard to racism in America. The souls of Black folk, weeping and dancing at the same moment, tell us that. And there is more. There were two intertwined energies that brought us to this moment. If Barack Obama had not courageously opposed the Iraq war from the git-go, he would not have brought together the passionate commitment that made the beginning of this journey possible. And if he had not been literally the embodiment of an America – no, a world – beyond racism, he could not have channeled that promise into the Black and white votes that together made yesterday's victory.

Two powerfully symbolic places brought this lesson home for me: places I know in my own soul and body:

In Grant Park – where 40+ years ago police charged and beat antiwar demonstrators to prevent their marching to meet with the Blacks of Chicago's South Side and together confront the Democratic National Convention to protest the Vietnam war abroad and racism at home – in Grant Park, more than

100,00 Americans, Black and brown and pink, joined to celebrate the election to the Presidency of an antiwar Black nominee of the Democratic Convention.

And at 14th and U Streets in Washington, the epicenter of the Black uprising of April 5, 1968 (eight blocks from where I lived), the epicenter of rage against the murder of Martin Luther King the day before, rage against the Pharaoh's age-old regime of racism in this country – at 14th and U Streets, Blacks and whites danced and cried together.

The tears, the dance, of healing.

But as Philip Roth's great novel about Portnoy says in its very last line: "Now vee may perhaps to begin. Yes?"

Now at last we can begin to walk that path into a decent future. And as Obama said last night, addressing all who worked to make this moment happen:

"This is your victory. I know you didn't do this just to win an election and I know you didn't do it for me. You did it because you understand the enormity of the task that lies ahead. For even as we celebrate tonight, we know the challenges that tomorrow will bring are the greatest of our lifetime — two wars, a planet in peril, the worst financial crisis in a century.

"This victory alone is not the change we seek — it is only the chance for us to make that change. And that cannot happen if we go back to the way things were. It cannot happen without you."

And as he added, echoing Dr. King's last speech, given the night before his death, the speech that echoed Moses looking toward the Promised Land and promised that we as a people would get there even if he could not;

"The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep.

We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America — I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you — we as a people will get there." .....

The path toward healing the earth from the damage we human earthlings have wreaked upon it, and therefore on ourselves. The path



*Rabbi Arthur Waskow (r) marches in anti-war demonstration alongside Dr. Cornel West (l)*

toward a just world economy, within America and for all humanity. The path toward not just ending the wars we are already in and the genocidal civil wars already killing people, but toward a compassionate world in which conflicts are addressed without violence and hatred.

No President, no Congress, can walk that path unless there is a community in motion - a movement - demanding and creating those changes in private behavior as well as public policy. That is our task. Let us begin.

Learn more about The Shalom Center at [www.shalomctr.org](http://www.shalomctr.org) ❖

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# A Remarkable Heritage

## The New York Contribution to the 100-Year History of the Methodist Federation for Social Action

by George D. McClain

*Remarks offered on May 31, 2008, at the New York Chapter MFSA centennial celebration and the inauguration of the George McClain and Tilda Norberg Award for Spirituality and Justice.*

Dear friends and colleagues, I am deeply moved and humbled by this award. It really belongs to all of us together. It reflects the long journey that the Methodist Federation has taken through the last 100 years seeking to do justice, love kindness, while walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8). I'm particularly pleased it's a joint award, as Tilda has indeed been my very close partner in ministry, my best friend, a tremendous source of inspiration, a pioneer in healing ministry that embraces both personal and social healing.

Our being here together reminds me how grateful I am for my 25 years with MFSA. To this day I cannot imagine a more wonderful kind of work to have been the centerpiece of my ministry than serving you as executive director. I've had the opportunity to struggle alongside you with some of the great issues of our time, and to work with you in calling upon the church to be the church. You have been the most wonderful people to work with – prophetic, competent, compassionate, encouraging, challenging – a very special cohort of the communion of saints.

Appropriate to this Centennial Year, I have been asked to speak about the New York area contribution to the life of the Methodist Federation for Social Action. I appreciate this opportunity immensely. As one who loves history almost as much as theology, one of the greatest gifts I received in becoming the MFSA executive was to be grafted onto such a marvelous history with its amazingly deep roots in the Social Gospel movement of American Christianity.

At the outset three things to be emphasized. The first is that there is no way to do this subject justice. Each of you in New York MFSA makes a contribution to MFSA and what it stands for day by day as you live out your professional and personal life honoring justice, peace, reconciliation, and the integrity

of creation. And the same is true of countless others who've gone before, many of whose good works are known only to those they served and to the mind of God. What I can do here is only to offer up a few examples from over the years.

Another thing to say is that much that we claim as part of our New York Methodist Federation history can also be claimed as contributions from other chapters and other places. For instance we justifiably claim Harry F. Ward as part of NY's contribution to MFSA, but also having a claim on him would be England, his country of origin; Chicago, where he met the poor while working in a settlement house, and pastoring in the stockyards district; and also New England, for it was Boston University School of Theology which gave him his first teaching post.

The third is related. There is a remarkable magnetism that has drawn so many from elsewhere to the New York region. There is a significant proportion of us who've come from other regions to work for church agencies like the mission board, to pursue professional opportunities, to attend educational institutions such as Union Seminary, Yale Divinity School, or Drew Theological School, or for various other reasons.

As you can sense from just looking around this room, the combination of New York area natives with us migrants and refugees makes for an extra-ordinary mix and a powerful synergy. Any national organization like MFSA has the right to expect an extraordinary amount from its New York affiliate. You be the judge, but I would contend that this synergy has in fact enabled the NY area Methodist Federation to offer a remarkable contribution.

Let me then make that case by chronicling some examples of the contribution of the New York area to the national life of MFSA (originally, Methodist Federation for Social Service).

To begin with, a pre-historical contribution that may not be widely known. The year is 1904, and charges of heresy are being brought against a clergy member of the New York East Annual Conference by someone outside the conference. The target is philosopher-theologian Borden Parker Bowne at Boston University, now at the summit of a high profile career as chair of its philosophy department for 35 years, author of 17 books, founder of the philosophical-theological tradition known as "Boston Personalism". This tradition places at the center of theology the

sacred person-ality of each human being in relation to the loving Person-ality of God. It is opening the door for countless leaders in Methodism to embrace a theology which sees God working through human history for the social betterment of human life. It falls to this conference, the New York East, to try him on these heresy charges. This promises to be one of the most pivotal church trials in the history of American Methodism. A church court of fifteen peers, other conference clergy, hears the arguments. Finally the verdict is announced. By unanimous vote the church court finds him innocent on all counts. This resounding decision marks a watershed moment that vindicates progressive theology within Methodism and paves the way for the rapid advance of Methodist Social Gospel theology and practice, borne above all by the Methodist Federation, beginning with its founding three years later.

A significant footnote: An ardent follower of Bowne's, his advocate at the trial and also his biographer, is Francis J. McConnell, pastor of Brooklyn's New York Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church from 1903-1908, then president of DePauw University. In 1912 he is elected bishop, later to serve the New York Area. Most importantly for us, in 1912 McConnell is also elected president of the Methodist Federation, in which capacity he serves for 32 years, until 1944. Bishop Ives, you still have a few years to go!

A few basic facts. Four of the five Federation founders lived or worked for substantial amounts of time in the New York area.

Harry F. Ward comes from Boston in 1918 to teach social ethics at Union Theological Seminary and serves as Federation senior executive during his entire 23-year tenure at Union.

Frank Mason North, author of the well-known hymn, "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life," is a NYC mission executive, and New York Conference member.

Herbert Welch, MFSA's initial president, begins his ministry serving churches in the New York Conference for 15 years. Born in New York City, Bishop Welch dies there 105 years later.

And Indiana-born Worth Tippy, yet another founder, serves the New York-based Federal Council of Churches as its social service executive for 20 years.

Another fact: The New York area has been

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## A REMARKABLE HERITAGE continued from page three

the host for the Federation office for 72 of the Federation's 100 years. Most of the years up to 1952 it is located at 150 Fifth Avenue, along with many Methodist denominational offices, until the vicious McCarthyite attack on the Federation nearly drives us into extinction. The Federation office is then operated on a totally volunteer basis in Oregon for eight years before returning to the New York area, first for 13 years in Lee and Mae Ball's home in Ardsley NY and then for 25 years out of our Staten Island home. For nearly 10 years now the office has been two blocks from the U.S. Capitol in Washington, where the outstanding trio of Kathryn Johnson, Amy Stapleton, and Rob Walty, with much volunteer help, especially from Ginny Lapham, has been very busy engineering the downfall of the Bush regime!

But beyond these basic facts, I would contend that the New York-Connecticut area has made very significant contributions to the Federation and its mission in several critical areas:

1. The first is *justice-oriented spiritual practice*, the conjunction of spirituality and justice that you have highlighted in the wording of this award. The example I would lift up as our pioneer and inspiration is Wade Crawford Barclay, a Methodist missions executive best known as an historian of Methodist missions. In 1926 he authors a volume called *Challenge and Power*, in which he offers a trenchant critique of how much Christian worship and devotion ignores the justice imperative. "Religion is the opiate of many people," he writes; and "much of our liturgy of worship is deficient. It is blind to the realities of the present-day social situation." He cries out for worship that would unmask how we are unwittingly "conformed to our present evil world, partakers of its unsocial practices." He calls for a "liturgy of the social gospel...that challenges... the selfishness and greed embodied in our economic system, and that calls upon God for the sustaining grace and inner power to resist and to overcome against all obstacles and odds," sustaining us when "progress is slow, defeats are many."

His book includes 90 devotionals authored by such persons as Georgia Harkness, Jane Addams, Rufus Jones, Eugene V. Debs, Vida Scudder, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Walter Rauschenbusch. Barclay himself instructs

readers in contemplative guided prayer for a particular social or personal issue, a style of prayer that is a remarkable precursor of contemplative activist spiritual practice today.

2. The next area I'd like to highlight is *justice-based social analysis*. Major example: The Federation's regular publication, which most know as the SQB. Originally the *Social Service Bulletin* and now the *Social Questions Bulletin*, it has been published continuously for 97 years (get ready for another centennial in 2011!). Throughout the years it offers incisive social and political analysis of its editors, first Harry Ward, Grace Scribner, and Winifred Chappell, later Charles Webber, Jack McMichael, and Lee Ball. The tradition of perceptive commentary and analysis is now embodied in the very keen and graceful writing of Kathryn Johnson, ably assisted by Amy Stapleton and guest writers.

Another example: A special project in the 1980s to promote progressive social analysis involves Sheila Collins, Rose Ancona and myself as part of an ecumenical team that prepares two extensive and widely circulated study guides – *Must We Choose Sides?* and *Which Side Are We On?* An article of Miriam Crist's is included (on Winifred Chappell), as are two each by Sheila and myself.

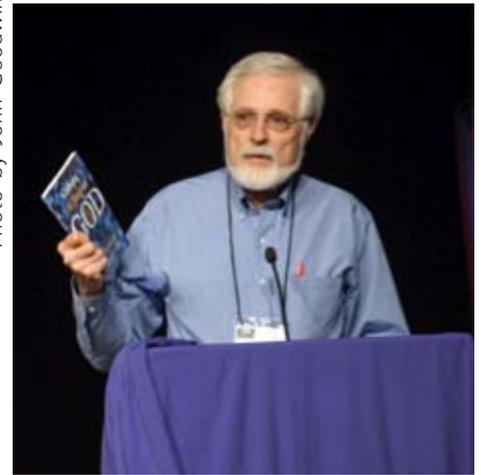
Another outstanding example, in our time, is Steve Goldstein's excellent study book on Israel/Palestine, which, not surprisingly, is the target of sharp criticism from reactionary quarters of the church.

I'd like to insert here a cameo appearance and a confession.

The cameo appearance is by Lee Ball, my predecessor as Federation executive, who in the 1960s carries MFSA mostly on his own shoulders during a difficult time when many insist the Federation is either dead, irrelevant, or toxic because of its progressive tradition. But he is tireless in traveling across the church introducing people to the Federation. One time he comes to talk with a group of students at the Michigan State University Wesley Foundation, several of the students sign up with MFSA and one of those is none other than Tilda Norberg!

The confession: It must be said that the early women editors of our *Bulletin* have never received due recognition. Nor has the indispensable role of the Methodist deaconess movement, of which they were a part. Alice Knotts is helping to correct that by documenting in her new book *Lifting Up Hope, Living*

Photo by John Goodwin



Rev. George McClain

*Out Justice* the extraordinary contribution of five particular Methodist deaconesses to the implementation of the Social Gospel in Methodism and to the birth and life of the Methodist Federation. Two of them, Grace Scribner and Winifred Chappell, serve as co-executives of the Federation and co-editors of the Federation *Bulletin* (and probably were its primary writers). Growing up in the poverty of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and then training as a deaconess, Grace Scribner serves effectively in these capacities with MFSA for twelve years. I recall a meeting with a long-time MFSAer Brad Webster who insists that his life-long commitment to social activism goes back to the profound personal impact her summer conference presentations had on him.

Tragically, in 1923 Grace Scribner is killed by an automobile while crossing Broadway in front of Union Seminary. Her friend Winifred Chappell, a native of Iowa, an instructor in the deaconess training school in Chicago, comes to New York to replace her. Between herself and Harry Ward, Winnie, as she is known, may actually be the more radical of the two. Of her it is said, "everyone on the left knows her."

3. The third contribution is in the area of *transformative theological and biblical interpretation*. The best theology often comes out of the harshest repression; so it is with our MFSA history. Over time we experience three such periods. During the Red Scare of 1919-20 the FBI begins a file on Harry Ward, and Grace Scribner's weekly column on social application is dropped from the Sunday School Journal.

In 1934-35 the Hearst newspapers run a series of syndicated articles calling upon the

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Methodist Episcopal Church to rid itself of the “red incubus” of that “McConnell-Ward-Chappell radical aggregation”. Church critics suggest that the Methodist Federation for Social Service change its name to the Marxist Federation for Social Strife.

During the 1940s and 50s the FBI compiles thousands of pages of files on MFSA, and on its executive Jack McMichael; HUAC publishes an 88-page government publication purporting to document the Federation’s subversive nature; and the 1952 General Conference censures the Federation and disaffiliates itself from the Federation, demanding that we leave the Methodist Building at 150 Fifth Avenue and drop the word “Methodist” from our name.

What I want to stress is how Federation leaders in New York and Connecticut responded in a way we have later come to call contextual theology, liberation theology, and transformative biblical interpretation. As early as 1919 Ward declared that although “The champions of Mars and Mammon openly declare that they, and they alone, can save us,” Jesus himself “is today empowering persons in human society as never before...to bring the new Heaven and the new Earth.”

In 1946 Federation Jack McMichael acknowledges that it is an age of crisis, tragedy, and peril; but that “The Eternal God, who moves in history, has not abdicated. The Magnificat of Mary is not out of date. The common people of God, of all races and nationalities, can yet still come into their own.” “We have never assumed,” he says, “that the forces of imperialism and reaction would give up without a battle.” “We believe that the God of history...assures ultimate triumph” and that the Federation’s “life-giving roots [are] in the driving passion to cooperate with God and our fellows in the creation of a new society...” (Jan, May 1946)

After the 1952 condemnation by the General Conference then MFSA president Loyd Worley, a Hartford, CT, pastor, declares in reference to the Federation, “Nobody kicks a corpse” and invokes the words of the Apostle Paul: “God has chosen what is foolish to shame the wise...God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.” (Feb 1954)

Closer to our time, in 1973 as Federation women are assuming leadership in the feminist movement, Sheila Collins authors a groundbreaking feminist theology mani-

fest, *A Different Heaven and Earth*. Even more recently, Nancy Carter writes a liberationist study of Matthew for the Women’s Division.

4. Finally under the category of *social action for justice and peace*, New York area MFSAers have made extensive contributions. A few examples: .

- As civil liberties are coming under brutal attack in the 1920s, Harry Ward helps to found the American Civil Liberties Union.

- Leading up to the unification of three branches of Methodism in 1939, the Federation and only two annual conferences, the old New York and New York East, stand virtually alone among white Methodists in opposing the pact with the devil which buys unification at the price of creating the all-Black, segregated, Central Jurisdiction.

- Federation executive Jack McMichael goes before the HUAC in 1953 to challenge their accusations of Communist subversion with such telling references to the ministry of Jesus that an aggravated committee member shouts, “Can’t we leave Jesus out...” Jack replies that he absolutely can not, adding that “In a situation like this, where guilt by association seems to be the principle on which you are operating...I am sure [Jesus] himself would have long ago been hailed before this committee!”

- Angered by the pervasive stereotypes of girls in UM church school literature, Federation feminists, namely Tilda Norberg, Miriam Crist, Ann Grant West, Sheila Collins, and Barbara Menzel, document this sexism so compellingly that the denomination’s curriculum editorial staff pays their way to Nashville, Tennessee, to hear them out – and the editors begin immediately to work on abolishing gender stereotypes.

- At one point Paul Abels, pastor of Washington Square UMC, is outed as a gay man in the *New York Times*. Our New York Conference bishop and cabinet propose to lift his appointment and his appointability. This needs to be approved by the clergy session, but their recommendations are almost automatically approved. Federation adherents, however, are galvanized and vigorously rally around Paul’s cause, organizing for a tense floor battle. When the session convenes, the debate goes on and on, late into the night. Finally in the most memorable moment for me at any conference session, a majority of Paul’s fellow clergy actually dare to vote to

reject the recommendation of the bishop and cabinet and insist that Paul has every right to an appointment.

- Some of you will personally recall how in the 1980s New York MFSAers support our bishop Dale White as he authors, and leads the Council of Bishops to adopt, the historic document, “In Defense of Creation.”

- As the Federation begins to raise concerns about our church pension funds bolstering apartheid in South Africa, it is NY MFSA people who first press their way into a GBP directors’ meeting to challenge the board on this. Though told that we are ill-informed, meddling incompetently in a technical field and that the Board would never give in to such pressure, we vow then and there to launch the Federation’s ultimately successful campaign to get pension investments out of supporting apartheid. Today we can smile quietly as we read the Board annual reports, which inevitably trumpet its role in socially responsible investing.

The examples are endless: John Collins and Ginny Lapham leading Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam; Finley Schaeff’s transformative ministry at Washington Square UMC, founding the first (then illegal) abortion counseling clinic in the country and leading the church to becoming one of the first peace churches and then sanctuary churches; Finley and Nancy hosting Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega at Park Slope UMC; MFSAers taking vigorous leadership in the Reconciling Network and MIND; John Carr’s advocating almost single-handedly for UMs with handicapping conditions; Beth Capen offering leadership on the Judicial Council; many serving our national church through its boards and agencies, such as the two Randys, Nugent and Day and our current chapter president Kevin Nelson. Think of those who’ve served as national MFSA officers: John and Sheila Collins, Ginny Lapham, and Joe Agne, as presidents, with Chick Straut currently as national treasurer. And recall those innumerable chapter meetings and caucuses to write annual and general conference legislation, to elect progressive delegates and bishops, and to support causes with action and funding.

Each of you Federation friends here could write a compelling account of the Federation action you’ve been a part of in the past. And to move from past to present, I want to celebrate the contribution each of you is mak-

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## A REMARKABLE HERITAGE continued from page five

ing to MFSA and what it stands for as you, day by day, reach out to empower the marginalized, heal the wounded, strengthen the weak, and cry out against violence. You care for the poor, the inmate, the grieving, the abused, the wounded, the troubled, the stranger and the estranged – all the while participating in God's work to unmask domination attitudes and to convert the structures of domination. In so doing you are fulfilling the prophet Micah's injunction to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

Now come with me to the recent General Conference for a concluding set of images. On the last day twelve precious minutes are set aside for a brief celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Methodist Social Creed – our Federation creation. I have no idea what is to come, but I am really eager to witness it. I am thrilled, and proud, that the first speaker is Jim Winkler, general secretary of the Board of Church and Society and our one-time Federation intern. I flash back to when we'd talk politics and Federation affairs as we took regular noontime breaks to play basketball in the driveway. Next I am startled and moved to identify as the next speaker MFSA's own executive Kathryn Johnson, certainly the first MFSA representative to speak from the General Conference podium of power since General Conference declared us anathema in 1952. Holy cow! I think, brushing away the tears. Finally our conference's own Jane Middleton, now bishop, steps behind the podium to introduce the new Litany of the Social Creed which she has had a leading role in creating. Bishop Jane, with whom I had once walked the streets of Cuernavaca, Mexico, on a Federation retreat, declares that this creed "serves as a plumb line for us in discerning God's yearning for us...." (Recall that the plumb line is our Federation logo – credit Amos.) The tears continue to flow. I think: The Marxist Federation for Social Strife has come a long, long way.

Yes, by God's grace, we've come a long, long way. But there is a long way ahead that stretches out into the future – a future which is in our hands – and God's – and which we begin crafting today. ❖

## Bruce Hilton Remembered

The Rev. Bruce Hilton, a long-time member of MFSA and a United Methodist minister who preached social justice as a civil rights activist, author, journalist and pioneering medical ethicist died earlier this year. As we celebrate All Saints Day we remember him here with gratitude and thanksgiving.

Guided by moral convictions and compassion for others, Bruce was a steadfast advocate for human rights. He joined civil rights marches in the 1960s, championed gays and lesbians in the church and was an early advocate for medical patients' rights.

In books, interviews and lectures, he urged change through education, respect and peaceful resistance. Meanwhile, he supported his family as a journalist and wrote a syndicated newspaper column on bioethical issues.

He began his ministry in the 1950s as a fair-housing activist in segregated neighborhoods in Dayton, Ohio. In 1965, he moved his family to Greenville, Miss., to work for Delta Ministry, a civil rights group that registered black voters, trained black political candidates and organized Head Start committees. He wrote a 1969 book, "The Delta Ministry," about the group and the opposition it met in the segregated South.

"He said that evil in life is usually in shades of gray, but this was the first time people had faced a clear and present evil," said his son, Paul Hilton. "They were threatened by Klansmen."

Bruce was strengthened by a family tradition of social activism. His father was an Evangelical United Brethren preacher who opposed mobsters trying to open a distillery during Prohibition. His wife, Virginia, who died in October, was a pioneering United Methodist clergywoman.

Another calling emerged after one of the Hiltons' sons came out as a gay man. The

couple co-founded Parents Reconciling Network – a national support group for United Methodist parents of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people – and joined a group of 67 pastors who risked being defrocked for blessing a 1999 union of two Sacramento lesbians. Bruce also wrote a book, "Can Homophobia Be Cured?" and marched in gay pride parades in California.

In 1971, he began exploring bioethical issues as an editor at the Hastings Center, a medical ethics think tank in New York. Buck-

ing the conventional view that doctors know best, he argued for greater control by patients over their medical care and founded the National Center for Bioethics. He lectured widely for more than 30 years and served on ethics boards at six California hospitals.

"He was a pioneer in bioethics and never faltered in his contributions," said Derek Humphry, a right-to-die expert and founder of the Hemlock Society. "He was a very decent person,

and it was that decency that brought him to bioethics."

Bruce was born in 1930 in Plymouth, Wis., one of three sons reared by a preacher and homemaker. He married Virginia Young, a pastor's daughter, in 1952.

He earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from Indiana Central University in 1953 and a master's degree in divinity from United Theological Seminary in 1956. He received a doctorate in divinity from Indiana Central University in 1975 and an honorary doctorate from Westmar College.

After a distinguished career in journalism and writing, Bruce retired and moved in 1989 to Sacramento, where his wife was a pastor at Faith United Methodist Church. ❖

Source: Sacranebto (CA) Bee



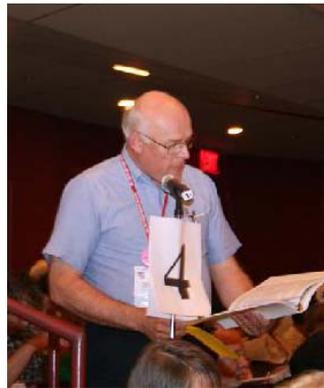
**MFSA ELECTS NEW LEADERSHIP**  
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mum of 15 members, has been elected to serve as the Board of Directors.

The vote to make this change was unanimous and a major portion of the meeting was then spent on electing leadership for the new structure and discussing the substance and nature of the work of the two new bodies.

The newly elected leadership includes:

Tara Thronson, a young adult layperson from Southwest Texas, currently living in Sacramento, California was elected to fill the position of outgoing co-president Marilyn Outslay. Tara will share the leadership of the board with Bishop S. Clifton Ives who is entering his second two-year term as Co-President.



Tracy Merrick  
Treasurer



AnnaBell  
Secretary



Tara Thronson  
Co-President

UMINS Photo

The co-conveners of the new MFSA Program Council are Rachel Harvey and Glen Bosley-Mitchel. Rachel, a young adult layperson currently lives in New York City and works for the United Methodist Advance. Glen, a

pastor in Tampa, Florida is convener of the Florida MFSA Chapter. The third person providing leadership for the Program Council will be Eloise Cranke from the Iowa Chapter who will serve as the recorder for the council.

Filling out the slate of officers for the Board of Directors are Rev. Anna Bell from Desert Southwest who will serve as secretary and Tracy Merrick of Western Pennsylvania who will serve as Treasurer. ❖

**New Section added to the MFSA by-Laws creating a Program Council**

There shall be a Program Council, consisting of one representative of each chapter and chapter-in-formation of MFSA. The representative will be designated by the chapter or chapter-in-formation and should be an active member of the local chapter. The Program Council will elect Co-Conveners and a recorder for two year terms. The Co-Conveners of the Program Council will be ex-officio members of the Board of Directors. The Program council may establish committees as needed. This Program Council will meet at least annually for the purposes of election of Nominating Committee members from the Program Council, inspiration, education, training, input and planning. This will be accomplished through some or all of the following:

- hearing about the work and activities of other members and chapters
- having speakers and conducting workshops
- sharing information across chapter lines
- conducting leadership training
- receiving updates from the Board of Directors and national staff
- resourcing jurisdiction events and gatherings of the full MFSA membership
- proposing strategies for action
- advising the national staff and MFSA Board of Directors

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

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

**And now we begin...**  
**continued from page one**

of Iraq and to realign our priorities as a nation.

- The times when president-elect Obama has spoken of the need to restore the basic civil rights that have been chipped away over these last years.

Some of the hopes and dreams that we hold today will be tarnished as they are exposed to *realpolitick* in the days ahead. And yet, these are hopes and dreams rooted in a vision to which we have held fast for lo these many years. We must not let the inevitable disappointments that lie ahead cause us to lose sight of the possibilities that have opened up before us in this transformational moment in history.

Today we have reached the starting line of the race which lies before us. It is a race where we will have the opportunity to join Barack Obama in realizing a vision for America that includes many of the values which we hold dear.

It is not a sprint, not even a marathon. It is a relay race where each of us must play our part, pick up the torch when others tire, and carry on. ❖

# MFSA Christmas Gifts



## MFSA MUGS

Deep, translucent blue glass, with white MFSA logo, Amos 7:8  
Scripture verse, national MFSA web site address and tag line "MFSA  
- an independent voice for justice since 1907"  
Cost (includes shipping): 1-9 mugs(\$12.00 ea); 10 or more mugs  
(\$8.00 each) **Call or email the MFSA office to order mugs!**

## GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

Looking for ideas for meaningful Christmas gifts? Give a gift  
subscription or make a donation in someone's name to the MFSA!  
Mail, fax (202-546-6811) or email (mfsa@mfsaweb.org) the national  
office with the following information.

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address and Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) and addresses of person(s) to whom you are giving a  
gift membership:

- Send card directly to gift recipient.
- Send card to person giving the gift to present to  
the recipient in person.



## SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN

Methodist Federation for Social Action  
212 E. Capitol St. NE, Washington, DC 20003

## Bring More of What I Dream

O God,  
who out of nothing  
brought everything that is,  
out of what I am  
bring more of what I dream  
but haven't dared;  
direct my power and passion  
to creating life  
where there is death,  
to putting flesh of action  
on bare-boned intentions  
to lighting fires  
against the midnight of indifference  
to throwing bridges of care  
across canyons of loneliness;  
so I can look on creation,  
together with you,  
and, behold,  
call it very good;  
through Jesus Christ my lord.

by Ted Loder in Guerrillas of Grace; Prayers for the Battle

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