



Iowa Chapter MFSA 2008 Annual Banquet

Keynote Speaker:
Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño
Desert Southwest Conference

Sat., June 7 - 5:30 p.m.
Scheman Building, ISU Campus



In 2004, Bishop Minerva Carcaño became the first Hispanic woman to be elected to the episcopacy of The United Methodist Church.

A native of Edinburg, Texas, Bishop Carcaño spent her early years of life aspiring to make a difference in the lives of persons who faced poverty and discrimination. She has served congregations in Texas, New Mexico, and California and in 1986 she became the first Hispanic woman to be appointed a United Methodist district superintendent, serving in that capacity in West Texas and New Mexico and later in Portland, Oregon.

Carcaño also was the director of the Mexican American Program at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. Not forgetting her roots and early hopes, her ministry has always involved work with the poor, with farm workers, immigrants, and refugees, even as she encourages congregations to work ecumenically and to be active in community organizing.

Social Action Awards will be given to Angela Campbell and Edwin McIntosh

Tickets: \$20; Contact Rita Carter for remaining tickets at our display table

Conference Communications plans to record Bishop Carcaño's address to MFSA. Orders can be made on the form that includes other audio CD and video DVD's that Communications makes available.



"Christ is the Host at This Table"
Saturday, June 7 - Communion at Noon

Reconciling Ministries Network congregations, the Clinton/Camanche MFSA subgroup, and MFSA Iowa sponsor a communion service at Annual Conference on the SW lawn between Hilton and Scheman.

Look for the rainbow flag.





Introduction

The first two articles in this issue of the SQB were written by two of Iowa's delegates to General Conference in April and May 2008, and are reflections on their experiences at General Conference. MFSA offers a heartfelt thanks to all delegates and volunteers to General Conference. The schedule is grueling, and we appreciate the time, energy and prayers that were freely given by all those who were there. MFSA, in cooperation with Common Witness, had an important impact on many legislative items that were considered. Though not everything went as we had hoped, there are many things to celebrate. Visit the national MFSA website at www.mfsaweb.org to review a comprehensive report prepared by Fred Kandler and Kathryn Johnson concerning the legislative actions taken at General Conference.



2008 General Conference Impressions

By Inez Dawes

As a United Methodist in Iowa, I have often been frustrated with our lack of attention and care for the matters I think Jesus frequently lifted up as critical to being faithful witnesses. Then as I step away from our conference and into the global scope of General Conference, I am reminded that while change may be slow to come in the Iowa Conference, we are often ahead of the General Conference in our capacity to change and make a difference, primarily because of our efforts toward Holy Conferencing and our increasingly efficient use of technology.

The General Conference often appears schizophrenic. On one hand, we can raise millions towards the elimination of malaria in Africa (Nothing But Nets), then we can spend hours deliberating whether or not certain groups of people can be welcomed or allowed to join United Methodist churches. Our "growth" in missional outreach may only be a cover for our lack of justice with members of the beloved community. It's often easy to be charitable, taking up one's or another's cross can be an endless struggle with little sense of joy or measurable accomplishments. The strongest leadership in some of our most charitable work is also the source of some of the most divisive activities and legislation in the denomination. The goal of many in the Southeast Jurisdiction seems to be control or destroy.

On a more positive note—

- 1) There were significantly more young adults participating this General Conference. They were visible, in leadership roles in legislative sections, at microphones on the Conference floor. And they were fully engaged! These "kids" are bright, well spoken, passionate, articulate and they care about the UMC! We must continually find ways in our churches to give this generation voice.
- 2) The Central Conferences moved more closely to full participation. More translators were available, more languages were spoken on the floor of Conference, questions were asked and motions were made. And as you know, these delegates represent conferences and churches of rapid numerical growth. These United Methodists along with the growing participation of young adults will indeed change the UMC!
- 3) Bishop Palmer and a number of other bishops led with skill and compassion. Bishop Palmer will continue to lead the Council of Bishops with distinction. He was central to the conversations and planning of the incredible witness in the final days of Conference involving 11 other bishops and the advocates representing the LGBT community.

Reflections on General Conference

By The Rev. Denny Coon

Wednesday, April 30 was the day the general conference voted to keep the line in the Discipline that we “do not condone the practice of homosexuality and find it incompatible with Christian teaching.” I served on the committee that submitted the majority report, which had removed that line. Unfortunately we never got around to discussing the majority report, as the minority report was what ended up getting discussed and passed on the floor of the conference.

I made a point to approach and talk to as many GLBT advocates that evening as I could. I thanked them for their witness and expressed my dismay over how the vote turned out. We had spent many hours in holy conferencing perfecting the majority report, which expressed the thoughts that we are divided on this issue but we are seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit for future reconciliation. The language was honest and hope filled.

The response from the advocates was humbling. They were disappointed and hurt. In the midst of their disappointment however, they were graceful and thanked me for representing their views. I was overcome with emotion as I looked into their eyes. I got the feeling I was staring into the face of Jesus as I listened to their stories.

The advocates had been present before, during, and after each session. They gathered at the MFSA lunch each day offering words of encouragement. They were very peace filled and non-threatening in their approach. They were Christ like in their witness. We need them in the church to help us learn how to “do no harm,” one of the Wesleyan behaviors the delegates were encouraged to practice.

On Thursday, May 1, the day after the vote, I needed a place to lick my wounds so I headed for the MFSA lunch again. Unknowingly I joined a gay elderly male couple from Texas. We were soon joined by a transgender couple. Diane, who used to be Ted, introduced herself to me and immediately began telling me her story. First, she introduced me to her partner who happens to be her wife of 47 years. When Ted transitioned, the couple decided to remain married. They are one of a few lesbian couples that are legally married. They have a biological son born

to them when they were male and female and they also have a grandchild. I was curious about a lot of things in their lives but my curiosity soon was overcome by our discussion of issues and faithful living.



My experience that day reinforced the need for us to get to know each other and break bread, which overcomes all fear.

By practicing another general conference discipline of “doing good” I forgot about Ted becoming Diane. We broke bread and ate soup together focusing on the church and its future. Honest conversation and a genuine interest in what everyone was saying helped melt away any differences or oddities we saw in the other. My experience that day reinforced the need for us to get to know each other and break bread, which overcomes all fear. That has always been my experience with those who are marginalized. Eventually we find places where our stories intersect and we become one in Christ. I wish everyone at the conference could have experienced that moment. Perhaps fear and division would not have been so prevalent as was the case the day before.

Besides this unscheduled encounter, the African Children’s Choir and the report by the youth and young adults, were the other highlights of the general conference for me. Both groups give me hope. The young adults spoke of inclusion being important. One youth reminded us we need to listen to each other because we are all children of God regardless of age, weight, height, gender, race, or sexual orientation. He encouraged us to care for each other, as that is what God expects of us. The energy of the African Children’s Choir was enough to last me for a long time. I do hope they will receive at least a sprinkling of liberation theology at some point in their lives. If we can keep them alive through our efforts to fight malaria, then their voices will surely sing us into holy living.

It was evident that both groups practiced the third Wesleyan discipline of “love the Lord.” Their joy, hope, and love were evident in their spoken and sung messages. I will focus on these faithful expressions and expect the Holy Spirit to work anew in moments of disappointment and joy.



I'll Go Back

By Angela Campbell

I represent Muhibullah. After five years of incarceration at Guantanamo Bay, Muhibullah was transferred to Block D of the Afghan National Detention Facility at Pol-e-Charki outside of Kabul, Afghanistan. I was not notified of this transfer by the U.S. government, only that Muhibullah was no longer in U.S. custody in Guantanamo Bay. This led me and other attorneys with similar goals to go to Afghanistan to investigate not only our clients' mental and physical health conditions, but also to investigate the former Guantanamo detainees' legal status with the government of Afghanistan.

We made the trip to Afghanistan in February of 2008. My law firm represents Muhibullah in a pro bono capacity, and the Iowa Chapter of the Methodist Federation for Social Action helped us fund the trip. I visited Muhibullah in Pol-e-Charki, met with government officials and lawyers, and met with a member of Muhibullah's family.

I returned from Afghanistan with at least some hope that Muhibullah would soon be reunited with his five-year-old son and family. When I returned, I started getting the typical questions about whether I could comment on the guilt or innocence of the Guantanamo prisoners, whether torture was being practiced by U.S. personnel, what I thought should be changed about American detention policy, and fixes for the lack of process given these detainees by the United States. My comments on each of these topics could fill a book. But I also started to notice a separate trend in the questions and comments I was hearing from friends, family, and others.

"You went to Afghanistan, that must have been scary." "Wow you must really be brave." "Did you ever get scared?" "What if your client really is a terrorist?" "I would never go there." These questions made me start to wonder, why is everyone so scared? It seems that our country has become afraid of the thought of the Middle East, the idea of a woman visiting a Muslim country, and the picture of terrorism, yet very few of us have any first-hand experience to base these fears on. Haven't Americans bombed Afghan cities to rubble, haven't Americans captured and tortured thousands of innocent Afghan citizens, yet when I walked down the streets of Kabul, children didn't run from me, they embraced me. Why then should I be scared to visit Afghanistan?

Over the past few years as a Guantanamo attorney, people have asked me what they can do to "help." I used to say, "write your Congressman," "vote for an administration that is less tolerant of abuses of human rights," and "protest against injustices." But I think I'm changing my answer. You see, I've noticed that everything we do from the big picture to the small picture - foreign policy, domestic security, travel restrictions, family vacation plans - appears to be grounded in one feeling... fear.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." In so doing, King's teachings led this country to a new level of equality, justice and cooperation. I think it's time to listen to him again. The new darkness is not domestic racism; it is international racism. The new hate is not slavery, but religious oppression. How do we stop the cycle? We must embrace it. We must lower our levels of fear. Every individual must strive to learn about different

"Everything we see is a shadow cast by what we do not see."

ML. King

cultures. We must teach our children about different religions. When someone comes back from the Middle East, we must ask, "How beautiful are the mountains?" not "Did terrorists shoot at you?"

Like King said, "Everything that we see is a shadow cast by that which we do not see." How can we fix a problem if we are afraid to see it first hand? How can we bridge the gap if we refuse to visit a part of the world? How can we blame our government if we are too afraid to embrace the underlying problems ourselves? How can we "fix" other parts of the world when we are unable to self-reflect on what needs to be fixed in our own minds?

"Have we not come to such an impasse in the modern world that we must love our enemies - or else? The chain reaction of evil - hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars - must be broken, or else we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation." King's ideas are as much true now as they were in the 1960s.

And so, I agree, stepping foot into an Afghanistan prison is not the same as walking down the streets of Des Moines. But what did I learn? I can do it. It is not scary. I like Afghanistan. The people are warm and friendly. The culture is intriguing and complex. Their problems are human like ours and can be fixed.

And I'll go back.

Biographical Notes on 2008 Social Action Award Recipients

NOTE: Social Action Awards will be presented at the Annual Conference Banquet on June 7

ANGELA CAMPBELL

By Eloise Cranke

You might find her playing bass with the rock band, The Wild Bonobos, or traveling around the country with her volleyball team, or representing an indigent immigrant in a court of law, or even traveling to Guantanamo or Afghanistan to provide counsel for a prisoner, for all of these are parts of who Angela Campbell is. She grew up in Ainsworth, Nebraska, graduated from Yale University with a double major in anthropology and political science, and then graduated from Boston College Law School order of the coif and magna cum laude.

Angela moved to Des Moines in 2003 and was an Assistant Federal Public Defender until co-founding the Campbell and Dickey Law Firm in September of 2007. It was as a public defender that Angela first volunteered to go to Guantanamo to meet with four prisoners being held there. Three of the four were released with no explanation before she was able to meet with them. In her quest to represent the fourth detainee, Angela has traveled twice to Afghanistan. Since then, she has shared these experiences widely through both written articles and speaking engagements. In the spring of 2007 she generously gave of her time to travel to four Regional MFSA Gatherings, speaking on the topic, "Torture Is a Moral Issue."

In addition to her work in the Campbell Dickey Law Firm, Angela was hired by Drake in the fall of 2007 to teach Federal Criminal Law. She is a Director of the Eighth Circuit Bar Association and a member of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. These are all impressive credentials, but it is Angela's commitment to seeking justice, especially for the oppressed and those with no voice, that makes her such a worthy recipient of MFSA's Social Action Award for 2008.

Edwin McIntosh

By Hugh Stone

This year one of the two social action awards given by M.F.S.A. will go to Edwin McIntosh. Ed is a member of the Walnut Hills United Methodist Church. He lives in Clive, Iowa. Ed is being recognized for the many years he has given of his time and talents to help improve conditions for the poor, the homeless and for providing justice for immigrants to Iowa through his work on Iowa Annual Conference Committees and Agencies. Ed has served on the Hawthorn Hill Board, as chair of the Community and Institutional Committee of the Board of Global Ministries. He is currently serving as the Chair of Justice for Our Neighbors.

The Mission of JFON is:

- To provide free, high-quality, immigration legal services and a warm welcome to immigrants in our congregations and communities and at the same time encourage cross-cultural community building.
- To promote education for ministry and advocacy as an integral part of the JFON program and to encourage deeper theological reflection on biblical imperatives that clarify the moral issues raised by US immigration policy and by our nations treatment of newcomers.

Ed is a partner in the law firm of Doris and Whitney where he specializes in medical law. All who have worked with Ed admire him for his passion for helping the poor, his intelligence, his strong Christian faith, his sense of humor and his compassion.

Reflections on Postville and Christ's blood by Jim Perdue

The correct framing of the question of the immigration raid in Postville, Iowa on May 12, 2008, is neither political nor economic. For Christians it is more urgent than that. As human beings and as Christians we share a common blood. As humans, we speak of our family as our "blood relations," meaning that we share DNA – some of the same blood courses through our veins.

But the DNA image can end up being misleading and damaging, for while it ends up uniting us more closely to some by reason of heritage, it unnecessarily divides us from others for political reasons. To say that we share DNA with someone does not mean that we share the exact same DNA, unless we happen to be identical twins. It is more important and accurate to say that, as humans, we all share the DNA of humanity.

As Christians, we share blood in a different way. We share the blood of Christ in the Eucharist. As Christ's blood becomes part of us, our blood becomes part of Christ's and part of each other's. All Christians become blood relations through the Eucharist. This makes us one in Christ Jesus, in spite of past political divisions that were constructed in order to divide humanity and make it all right for one segment of it to take advantage of another.

Most notable among those political divisions are race, nation and clan. None of these is a physical reality. None is ordained by God to stand longer than God's reign. All are temporal political constructions that benefit some and ultimately injure others.

In the Eucharist, when we hear the words "the blood of Christ, shed for you and for many," we respond in one of two ways. One way is to say "I believe" or I entrust my life to that truth. The other is to say "Amen" or may it be so. When we hear the words of

the Eucharist, we remember that, apart from all the political walls that have been and will be constructed; there is something different and redeeming about that common cup of blood.

Early on in the Christian faith, St. Paul recognized the grave danger presented when the culture began to construct its walls within the body of Christ. They were walls that gave privilege to one side and prejudice to the other. The very first wall was between Jews and non-Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised. Paul spoke of non-Jews as already guilty by law, but now made legal by the shedding of the blood of Christ. Paul said, "he has annulled the law with its rules and regulations... thereby making peace.... Thus you are no longer aliens in a foreign land, but fellow citizens with God's people...." In the same argument, he also said that Christ has "broken down the enmity which stood like a dividing wall...."

The wall rising on the southern Border of the U.S. is just a physical manifestation. As Paul might say, enmity is the real wall, a wall constructed somewhere deep within the U.S. subconscious. When people talk about the need for the wall, their voices immediately betray a deep-seated anger, crying to come out. From a historical vantage, we have hated people who speak Spanish because the English did before us, because they chose not to be a pure race and therefore threaten ours, and because they were our nation's first foreign conquest. Remember the Alamo. Today we may say that's not so, but the truth has had a nasty habit of coming out in a history of lynching, forced repatriation and now blitzkrieg-styled immigration raids. This month we saw that wall rise faster than morels in the Iowa countryside, not in the reactions of ICE, but in the reactions of some staunch

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Reflections on Postville and Christ's blood, continued

Christians who feel entitled to say, "They got just what they deserved." No one deserves what began to happen on May 12 in Postville and still is happening to over 300 undocumented people and their loved ones.

When we look at how "national security" in the U.S. has recently become little more than a kind name for harassing primarily Hispanic or Latino people, we owe it to ourselves to ask why. Why have we become like a school-yard bully who, as we know, is really just trying to mask a sense of personal inadequacy? The U.S. can't get Osama Bin Laden; we can't seem to put Iraq back together again; we can't get the price of gas to quit climbing and we can't avert the recession brought on by a corrupt marketplace that rode a housing bubble higher and higher until it finally popped. But, look at us; we can still push the Mexicans around. We are still a strong nation, right?

At this very moment the church has been transposed to a different kind of time, a time of kairos, of fundamental decision. What shall we do? On the one

hand, the stranger among us will never have the papers that will give him or her even the simplest of the rights that you and I automatically enjoy each day. Most will have only the rights that Christians choose to give them, including the rights to hospitality and community. On the other hand, Jesus never said "Hate your neighbor because it will make you feel less helpless as a nation." Neither did Moses say, "Love foreigners among you as you love yourselves, but only until the King decides he doesn't like them and ships them off."

The next time we share communion let's focus on that cup. It's full of blood shed for us, and for many, so that sins like ours can be forgiven. It is neither brown nor white. It is the blood of Christ. It is the blood of us all.

¹See Ephesians 2: 11-22. Quotation is from *The New English Bible*.

²Ibid.

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Read another compelling essay by Jim Perdue entitled "New Church Roots" based on Ephesians 2:12ff on MFSA's website: www.mfsaiowa.org

MFSA joins Iowa Immigration Education Coalition

MFSA Iowa Chapter has now formally joined the Iowa Immigration Education Coalition. Doris Knight has agreed to be MFSA's representative to the regular meetings, with Eloise Cranke attending when possible.

IIEC has support from a broad range of organizations and individuals, including The Iowa Annual Conference, West DM UMC's Social Concerns Committee and The Interfaith Alliance, among others.

Donations for Postville Immigrants

A container will be available at the [MFSA display table](#) for gifts to families who have been torn apart by the raid at Agriprocessors in Postville. Make checks to MFSA (write Postville support in the memo line) and they will be distributed to the charities and churches who minister to these families in northeast Iowa.



Visit Our Display Table!

Look for our distinctive MFSA banner to locate our display table at Annual Conference. MFSA brochures, membership materials and other resources will be available on the table. Once again we will have Putumayo Music available for you to purchase as a means to support our work in the church. CDs will sell for \$13.00. Please stop by the table to check your 2008 membership status, to browse the merchandise and resources or to just visit with our volunteers!

Peace Fair

The Annual Peace Fair celebrating the International Day of Peace, will be Saturday, September 20th, 9:00 –1:00 on the Court Avenue Bridge in Des Moines. The Fair joins in a call to communities and countries around the world to create a “culture of peace.” It will give a special focus to children’s activities, including the Peace Mobile. As a co-sponsor, MFSA will have a display table and will provide a children’s activity.



Fall Statewide Gathering Set

MFSA will hold its Fall Statewide Gathering at Grace United Methodist Church, 3700 Cottage Grove Ave. in Des Moines on **Saturday, October 11**, beginning at 10:00 AM. Keynote speaker will be **Angela Campbell**, who will talk about her most recent trip to Afghanistan. After learning that the prisoner she had met in Guantanamo had been released, she went to learn whether he had actually been released or just transferred to a prison in Afghanistan.

Share the News of Your Events

Friends, we would like to publicize **events around the state** that might be of interest to MFSA folk. However, they can’t be included if our coordinator, Eloise Cranke, doesn’t know of them. Please send information about events in your area by the last week of each month for inclusion in the next month’s E-Mail Memo. Also, please let Eloise know if your address changes; email ecranke@mchsi.com.

Blessed Are the Peacemakers Peace Conference April 17-18, 2009

Inspired by his attendance at a peace conference in Lake Junaluska in January 2008, Hugh Stone is organizing a like event in Iowa to be held at Camp Wesley Woods in on a Friday evening and Saturday in April 2009.

The featured speaker will be Dr. Ronald Stone, John Witherspoon Professor Emeritus of Christian Social Ethics at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He is the author of many books including *John Wesley’s Life and Ethics*. Dr. Tobias Winright from St. Louis University will also take part in the leadership of the Conference. The Rev. Doug Peters from Walnut Hills United Methodist Church will lead worship. Save the date!

Interfaith Power & Light’s “RENEWAL” DVD

Interfaith Power and Light’s Regeneration Project is promoting a new documentary entitled RENEWAL. The film is the first feature-length documentary to capture the breadth and vitality of America’s religious-environmental movement. Visit their website at <http://theregenerationproject.org/> to learn more or order the DVD for \$5.

Mark Kresowik spoke about global warming, Cool Congregations, and Iowa Interfaith Power and Light (I IPL) at our spring 2008 statewide gathering.

Websites, Blogs, Online Resources

Young adults (and others) check out the On Fire blog at: www.umonfire.blogspot.com You can read about David Lull’s new, updated commentary on First Corinthians, see Jim Perdue’s review of *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930’s*, Links can be found on our website to national MFSA resources, the conference banquet, and much more: www.mfsaiowa.org

Questions About Membership?

The second membership renewal letters will be mailed late in June. Not sure about your membership status? Please contact Bob Miller at 563-259-1522, or e-mail: smiller@jdv.net.