

**MFSA Iowa Statewide Gathering
The Growing Climate Crisis:
Saving Mother Earth
With Keynote by the Rev. Dick Clark**
Saturday, April 2 – 10:00 AM
Polk City United Methodist Church
1421 W Broadway St., Polk City, IA 50226

A Modern Creation Myth

By Dick Clark

Keynote Speaker at April 2 MFSA Iowa Gathering

In the beginning, when Creation was about to begin, there was nothing but chaos, swirling masses of energy: earth, wind, and fire. There was a formless void and darkness everywhere. Then somewhere around 14 billion years ago there was an explosion, something like a big bang, and the chaos began to take on an orderliness. The explosion created suns and stars and there was light. Over billions of years there emerged solar systems with planets orbiting around suns, and there emerged universes, and galaxies. The original chaos was being transformed into an ordered creation.

Then on one planet in one particular solar system, the conditions were right for the emergence of life. The temperature of the planet was just right, there was an abundance of water, there was life-giving oxygen, the earth's soil was rich and verdant. So over billions of years, life began, first in very primitive forms which evolved into higher forms which evolved yet again and again. We're talking about Mother Earth, our Mother Earth.

Then somewhere around two and a half million years ago there emerged earth creatures, something akin to human beings. We were still evolving, developing larger brains with higher functioning and more intelligence. At first the earth creatures knew their place. They knew they had come from Mother Earth and they knew instinctively that she would continue to keep them alive and healthy if she remained alive and healthy.

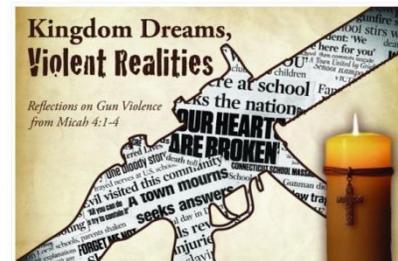
There came a time, however, when Mother Earth began to get sick. She began to have a fever; her temperature was going up. It took a long time, but finally the earth creatures began to notice Mother Earth's illness. The earth creatures used what they had learned from science over many years to diagnose Mother Earth's sickness. The earth creatures were shocked at their findings. They discovered that they were the cause of Mother Earth's illness. They discovered that if they kept on living the way they were, that Mother Earth would die, and they would die with her. But they also discovered that it was not too late to save Mother Earth if they were willing to make some huge changes in the way they lived.



“Kingdom Dreams, Violent Realities : Reflections on Gun Violence from Micah 4:1-4“ Resource Review

By Bill Steward

Bill Mefford, then Director of Civil and Human Rights at the UMC General Board of Church and Society, created this 3-session Bible study. Since its publication in 2014, it has become more relevant.



I recommend “Kingdom Dreams” as a Lenten study this year for small groups in any UM congregation. It will provide a break for your people from yet another Adam Hamilton video-based Bible study and the expenses entailed therein. I also like the 3-session format, giving busy pastors and congregants an alternative to meeting six weeks during a busy time of year. If you find you want to go longer, there is plenty of discussion material to keep going.

Each of the sessions contains a BIBLICAL COMMENTARY, a CONTEXTUAL REFLECTION that relates the passage to today's issues, a NARRATIVE (first person reflection) and QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS.

The NARRATIVES spark emotional response and help participants relate to the personal issues that sometimes get lost whenever statistics become numbing. The three narratives in “Kingdom Dreams” include testimony by:

- “Ismael Beah,” a boy who grew up in Sierra Leone, was kidnapped, drugged, brainwashed and forced to fight in the civil war during the 1990s. He tells of the brutality suffered by many children---who are valuable soldiers because of the proliferation of sophisticated small arms children can use effectively. (The UN Arms Trade Treaty meant to stop international small arms trade has been signed by 118 nations, ratified by 31(and stonewalled by guess who?);
- a son whose mother was the victim of debilitating domestic violence; and
- UM pastor Michelle Reed, Wichita, KS, advocate with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.

Download a PDF of the study from mfsaiowa.org. It's linked on the SQB page.

<http://www.mfsaiowa.org/uploads/6/3/7/7/6377270/kingdom-dreams-violent-realities.pdf>

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MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD

By Brian Carter, Team Coordinator
Iowa UMC Legislative Advocates

Here are three issues being considered at the State Capitol which need education of the public. Please discuss these issues with church and legislators.

MASS INCARCERATION in the U.S.—a set of reactive practices began in the 1980s, when Congress instated long sentences for nonviolent, particularly drug-related, crimes and required judges to impose mandatory sentences regardless of the particulars of a case. These sentences fall heavily on people of color. Later “tough on crime” bills have lengthened sentences for robbery, domestic abuse, sex crimes, and others, without allowing judges to consider circumstances. At the same time prisons have become the default placement for persons with mental illness.

T.V.D.L. (Temporary Visitors Driver’s License): The Department of Transportation of the State of Iowa does not issue driver’s licenses to undocumented or short term visitors from other countries. This is a hardship on those families as it prevents them from driving legally to doctors, work, or school. It is a Public Safety concern (see IowaSafeRoads.com website for law enforcement endorsements). Making a driver’s card available to immigrants in our state will help make Iowa’s roads safer by getting everyone tested, licensed and insured.

RACIAL PROFILING: “Profiling/discriminatory policing practice” means: any law enforcement action against an individual by a law enforcement officer that relies, on any degree, on actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, immigration or citizenship status, language, disability, HIV status, housing status, occupation, or socioeconomic status in initiating law enforcement action, . . .” These actions alienate the communities that are being served; violates the rights and freedoms of individual citizens; and compromises public safety. Such actions (or similar) are prohibited by law in approximately 30 states, but not in Iowa.

The Legislative Advocates will also be seeking to Ban the Box (asking for previous felonies on job applications), in-state tuition for immigrants graduating from Iowa schools, bills to reduce gun violence, developing a children’s mental health plan, enriching early childhood education, providing services for survivors of human trafficking, reducing gambling in the state, protecting all Iowans civil rights.

To receive updates on legislation, or more information on these and other issues, SIGN UP for LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY ALERTS by sending name and e-mail address to: briancar@dwx.com or felicia.coe@iaumc.org

MFSA Iowa Chapter Coordinator: Eloise Cranke ecranke@mchsi.com
Membership and Donations: Mike Biklen wmbiklen@hotmail.com
Visit mfsaiowa.org for our position paper and petition on Laser Tag at Wesley Woods UM Camp. Also find SQB archives, the monthly events memo and more.

How You Can Build a Better Peace

By Colleen McRoberts

1. Quit watching the news.

Whether you get your news online, from the TV, out of a local newspaper or via NPR on your commute, just turn it off. If you can't quit cold turkey, limit exposure.

2. Pay attention to your metaphors.

Phrases such as “hit the spot,” “on target,” and “aim high” are extremely common. Simply notice how many of these you hear. Intentionally choose away from them in your own speech.

3. Speak up for the humanness of people.

Speak up for the humanness of groups and the humanness behind actions when others refer to them as evil. When the rhetoric is high on your Facebook feed, simply remind folks of their shared humanity with the Democrats or Anglicans who drive them crazy.

4. Pray for someone you actually don't like.

No one has to know you are doing it. It can be just between you and Divinity. In whatever way it is meaningful, pray for a person who simply rubs you the wrong way.

5. Volunteer.

- Volunteer as victim advocate for the court system or with your local domestic violence and sexual assault service center.
- Find out what it would take to be a Stephen Minister for the local police department.
- Provide ongoing assistance for a family with a member in prison. Contact Women at the Well to find out how.
- Deliver care packages to those working in the ER at 2:00 a.m.
- Eat one meal a month at a soup kitchen and get to know someone there.

6. Lead a book or movie conversation group.

What are some of the topics which seem to divide people around you? Find a movie or a book which addresses those topics and lead a discussion group. The United Methodist Church provides many materials to help people lead these kinds of groups: [Selma Immigration](#) or [The Invisible War](#) (website PDF for links)

7. Form an intervention group.

Gather a group of other peacemakers. Get trained in intervention. Not sure where to start? Look into Soulforce, the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center or contact Alan Feirer at Group Dynamic

8. Join a singing group.