

MFSA Iowa Awards Event

Sunday, June 10 – 5:00PM

HyVee Hall Rooms 319-320

Keynote Address by Tyler Schwaller

Living into the Kin-dom

By Tyler Schwaller

It is no secret that Christians often disagree. We know this especially well in The United Methodist Church. So, what is the “way forward”?

Across the spectrum, Christian rhetoric often points backward, to the beginning, to elaborate the origins of the tradition in such a way as to claim what is “authentically Christian.” Jesus called his followers to social justice, some say. The commandments of the Bible are clear and unchanging, others say. Both responses look backward to go forward.

Whatever the intentions and aims, I urge us to be cautious of turning too blithely to the origins of Christianity. Jesus taught among, served, and proclaimed justice for the marginalized and oppressed, for those living under empire, but we have received a religion of empire. When the emperor Constantine legalized and gave preference to Christianity in the fourth century CE, Christians moved rapidly from the margins to the center. And now, we in the United States are inheritors of a Christian tradition that has long been socially and politically dominant. Ours is a Christianity of power.



My talk will trace this historical shift and its implications for us today. We will consider together what it means to be Christian in a nation that is more representative of the powers and principalities than the marginalized and oppressed. What can we learn about dynamics of power when we turn to the earliest Christians?

I will take up such questions using the example of slavery in the history of the Christian tradition. My research draws attention the ways that early Christians generally accepted and perpetuated slaveholding ideologies and practices. This has had consequences that have resonated not only through American slavery but also in the racialized circumstances of our own time.

So what do we do with our fraught histories? What is our way forward in the present? What does it mean to be Christian in a nation where Christianity has long been complicit in white supremacy, misogyny, and homophobia?

My talk will raise critical questions, but it will also point toward vital possibilities for justice and reconciliation. We will look particularly to the ways slaves and other marginalized subjects throughout history have insisted on their humanity in the face of dehumanization, especially by forging bonds of enduring kinship. This, I argue, is the heart of the gospel and a model for living into God's kin-dom.

**\$25 Tickets are available from
Rita Carter**

ritaac@mchsi.com or 515-979-0605



May 16, 2018

To: Iowa Annual Conference

Once again, our friend Anna Blaedel is suffering the pain, the humiliation, the cruelty, the stress of repeated charges against her and by association, her ministry.

These repeated charges involve scrutiny of personal relationships, not the effectiveness of her ministry. Few pastors or church staff could surpass Anna's effectiveness, her faithfulness, and her commitment to the UMC. Would that all pastors and church leaders and their ministry come under the same scrutiny!

Since our response to the Gospel mandate is to be measured by our "fruits", we would hope that the apparent "fruits" of Anna's ministry would be more than sufficient evidence of her vital ministry as well as her contribution to the Iowa Conference and beyond.

Now would be the time to follow a higher law than that of the Discipline. We urge rejection of the current or any future complaint for Anna's sake, for the sake of her incredible ministry at the UI Wesley Foundation, and even more for the soul of the United Methodist Church itself.

With deep concern,

Dick Clark
Co-President
MFSA

Jean Swenson
Co-President
MFSA

Eloise Cranke
Iowa Chapter Coordinator
MFSA

cc: Bishop Laurie Haller
Anna Blaedel
Rev. Harlan Gillespie, Dean of the Cabinet

2018 MFSA Social Action Award
Ted Lyddon Hatten
Nominated by Jean Swenson

Ted Lyddon Hatten served as Conference Artist for the Iowa Annual Conference for 22 years. His work, always containing layers of meaning, challenged us to think. Ted creatively depicted each year's theme and pointed toward "the truth of beauty and the beauty of truth." Ted's works ranged from large scale to very small (21mm x 24mm) scale. He readily discussed the risks that came from working, and seeing, both sizes. Many of us eagerly awaited Ted's explanation of his art each year during the Conference session to learn if we had seen at least one meaning he had intended.

The absence of Ted's art during Annual Conference is significant. His art work enhanced the Conference experience for many of us. When attending North Central Jurisdictional Conference in 2016, I was taken aback by the art work that graced the worship and meeting spaces.



I expected to see what we had become accustomed to in the Iowa Conference, but instead saw craft projects reminiscent of what my classmates and I cobbled together in elementary school.

By choosing to address the themes of beauty, brokenness, compassion, justice and belonging in his art, Ted challenged us to build the Kingdom of God here on earth. He is a worthy recipient of the Iowa MFSA Social Action Award.

2018 MFSA Social Action Award
Dick Clark
Nominated by Carol Crandall

I wish to nominate Dick Clark for the MFSA Social Action Award. I reached out to others to share their knowledge and respect for the work he has done to further justice in our communities. I have known Dick since we were youngsters growing up together in the EUB church in Ames. As a pastor he has always maintained his quiet, yet assertive manner in approaching the issues of importance in church and community. - Carol Crandall

Dick is certainly worthy! At Walnut Hills, he teaches our Adult Progressive Sunday School class, and chairs the Social Justice Committee. He preaches whenever called upon (and ALWAYS includes a justice component in his message), adds his expertise to "Charlie's Group" and sings in the choir. He is also a member of the Reconciling Committee.

Dick has been very involved in the Interfaith Green Coalition this past year and has given numerous climate change presentations in the state since attending the Al Gore workshop. He has taught at UMW's Mission U. He serves as co-chair of Iowa MFSA. Dick is VERY special to our family.....my husband, a lapsed Catholic, pretty much wouldn't step foot into a church until we got to Walnut Hills and I introduced him to Dick's Sunday School class. Dick "took him under his wing", answering all of his questions.

Paul joined the church, and now chairs the Property Comm., and does all kinds of other stuff for the church! It wouldn't have happened if Dick hadn't been there.

– Jean Swenson

From 1987-1998, as members of the Eldridge United Methodist Church, we came to know and respect Dick Clark as a great teacher who created awareness of social justice issues while always grounding his teachings in scripture and presenting with a gentle persuasive reasoning that appealed to the best in all people. He led a multi-year "Disciples" Sunday school class discussion that showed us how our decisions should be informed by a radical gospel. Later, a class that he led on human sexuality prepared us to make the right witness to our daughter, to our community and to state legislative leaders when we learned that she is gay. The President of the Iowa Senate told us that our witness (because of Dick) influenced decisions that led to Iowa's becoming the first state west of the Mississippi River to embrace marriage equality.

– Bill and Linda Tubbs-Eldridge UMC



**Love Your Neighbor
Coalition Convocation
July 26-29 in St. Louis, MO**

For Everyone Born: MFSA Iowa Offers Two Scholarships

The two scholarships cover the cost of registration. Carpooling would be possible. Interested persons please contact Eloise as soon as possible: ecranke@mchsi.com or 515-262-5974.

There will be worship, fellowship, workshops, reports from Commission on the Way Forward members and beginning plans for General Conference. Registration cost is \$350 with breakfast (\$300 without). Other meals are included, but not housing. Information/register:

https://rmnetwork.org/foreveryoneborn/?mc_cid=4845326f32&mc_eid=834549623c

Palestine-Israel: “We All Have To Choose”
Israeli author Miko Peled Presents in Des Moines
 by Kathleen McQuillen

In recent weeks Palestinians imprisoned inside besieged Gaza have organized non-violent demonstrations at the apartheid fence to demand their internationally affirmed “right of return” to their Palestinian homes. Called the *Great March of Return*, these demonstrators were met with live ammunition from Israeli forces, leaving nearly 30 Palestinians dead, and several hundred seriously injured.

It is with that backdrop that over 100 people gathered at the Iowa State Historical Building to hear the Palestine – Israel story, this time through a Palestinian narrative. What was unique about this presentation was the presenter. Miko Peled is an Israeli born Jew, whose family was deeply engaged in the founding of Israel, and who had himself served in the Israeli military. Today Peled works in solidarity with the Palestinian people and their struggle to advance the human rights of the Palestinian people.

Peled grew up in Jerusalem relating only with fellow Jews. Though he knew the city was filled with Arab homes he didn’t think to ask of the whereabouts of the people who built them--the people who owned them.

Peled was 39 years old and living in the US when his beloved niece was killed by two young suicide bombers and amidst the grieving came the questions. To find the answers Peled decided he had to learn about the “other” and he began his journey into Palestine to learn the story he never knew.

Looking at the world through the eyes of an occupied people, and refugees and political prisoners, Peled now sees what he failed to see growing up. The stories of his youth- that Israel belonged to the Jews because it is the land of their roots, and that the Israeli army is returning Israel to its earlier glory as in the reign of King David, now ring hollow for him.



The new stories he has learned of Palestinian mass expulsions, ethnic cleansing, and massacres carried out first by the Zionist militias, and later by Israel’s army opened his eyes to new realities. He came to understand the Arab homes throughout Jerusalem, belonged to those Palestinians driven out in the creation of Israel. He came to understand that the land he was living on, now Israel, had been until 1948 Palestine.

Peled challenged the group to use their moral compass and choose. Do we choose justice or oppression?

We in the US do not get to choose the fate of the people of Palestine-Israel, but we do have a role and a responsibility. Our government has *chosen* Israel at a cost of now \$4 billion annually and thousands of Palestinian lives. We can choose differently. We can choose to support international law wherein:

- refugees are allowed to return to their homes (or be compensated)
- the siege of Gaza is lifted
- the occupation of Palestine is ended and the walls and checkpoints come down

We can choose to support the sovereign rights of all the people of Palestine-Israel, wherein the human, civil, and equal rights of all are respected.

“But time is short. The patient is dying.” It is time to act.

Iowa's Drone Command Center by Rev. Josh Steward

Drones kill. Did you know that there is a drone command center in Des Moines at the Iowa Air National Guard? During President George W. Bush's administration, the United States began using armed drones to strike at suspected terrorists. President Bush authorized approximately 50 drone strikes that killed 296 terrorists and 195 civilians in Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia. President Obama expanded the program. By January of 2016 – the most recent number I could find - Obama had authorized 506 strikes that killed 3,040 terrorists and 391 civilians.

The 2011 U.S. drone killing of American Muslim cleric Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen highlighted doubts about the legality of armed drones used in counter-terrorism operations since due process is circumvented, i.e. people are assassinated, rather than captured for questioning and trial. "The targeted killing program violates both U.S. and international law," ACLU Deputy Legal Director Jameel Jaffer said in a statement at the time. "...this is a program under which American citizens far from any battlefield can be executed by their own government without judicial process, and on the basis of standards and evidence that are kept secret not just from the public but from the courts." Pressure mounted for fuller disclosure about who is conducting drone attacks, how targets are selected, and the accuracy of those strikes. These strikes have undoubtedly fueled anti-American sentiment, particularly among the Pakistani populace, and increased tensions between the U.S. and the Afghan and Pakistani governments.

Cited:

www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/01/12/reflecting-on-obamas-presidency/obamas-embrace-of-drone-strikes-will-be-a-lasting-legacy
Ibid.

www.cnn.com/2011/09/30/politics/targeting-us-citizens/index.html

For statistics in paragraph see: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/23/us-air-wars-trump>)

Under President Trump, the use of drones has only increased. There have been more than 10,000 coalition airstrikes in Syria and Iraq. According to statistics compiled by the Airwars watchdog group, there were nearly 50% more coalition air strikes in Iraq and Syria in 2017 compared with the previous year. Civilians death rose by 215%. The coalition, almost all US planes, dropped 20,000 bombs on Raqqa. By the end of the five-month campaign, 80% of the city was declared uninhabitable by the UN, and 1,800 civilians are thought to have been killed. Airwars estimates 1,400 of those deaths were caused by coalition air and artillery bombardment. The Trump administration declared regions of Yemen and Somalia to be areas of "active hostilities". As a result, there were more US strikes on Yemen in 2017 than in the four previous years combined.

As Iowans and United Methodists, we must speak up and insist that the drone command center in Des Moines be closed. We would not tolerate foreign powers using drones to kill on our soil and we cannot tolerate Iowa doing it in our name.



<https://airwars.org/>

The Social Principles state, "We believe war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ" (Book of Discipline, paragraph 165, C). Let us continue to pray and work for a day when war is not necessary and swords can be beaten into plowshares (Isaiah 2:4).

MFSA Iowa Chapter Coordinator:
Eloise Cranke ecranke@mchsi.com

Visit mfsaiowa.org for SQB archives,
monthly events memo and more.

[Facebook.com/MFSAIowa/](https://www.facebook.com/MFSAIowa/)
is our new Facebook page –
like us and get the latest events and news

MFSA Iowa Membership and Support:

Membership includes National MFSA & SQB newsletter subscription. To join, contact our membership secretary Mike Biklen. No dues are required, but any gift is greatly appreciated. 80% of your membership donation goes to fund the work of National MFSA. Please support MFSA Iowa financially through any or all of these three funds:

- **Organizer Fund:** Supports the work of our coordinator Eloise Cranke.
- **General Fund:** operating budget expenses.
- **Memorial Fund:** Gifts given /designated Donate by mailing a check to MFSA Iowa c/o Mike Biklen 515 E. 11th St., Muscatine, IA 52761-3920 or via PayPal at mfsaiowa.org.

Petitions to General Conference 2019

Sean McRoberts has submitted the petitions at right to the Iowa Annual Conference for our endorsement as petitions to the General Conference 2019. The first petition will remove the discriminatory language from the Book of Discipline that dehumanizes Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people, bars LGBTQ people from full engagement in the United Methodist Church, and prohibits ministry with our LGBTQ congregants and neighbors. The second will strengthen our constitutional statement on inclusion by adding sexual orientation, gender identity, age, gender, ability, and marital status.

Please consider speaking for and supporting these petitions, which will put our church back on a road toward justice and mercy after decades of institutional discrimination.

Petitions to General Conference 2019, continued

Total Number of Pages: 1

Suggested Title: End Discrimination;

Discipline ¶161, ¶304.3, ¶341.6, ¶613.19, ¶806.9, ¶2702.1;

General Church Budget Implications: None;

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶161(c) by deleting the last sentence, which begins, "We support laws in ..."

Amend ¶161(g) by deleting the second paragraph, which begins, "Although all persons ..." and ends "... heterosexual marriage." and by deleting the sentence, "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching."

Delete ¶304.3

Delete ¶341.6

Delete ¶613.19

Delete ¶806.9

Amend ¶2702.1 by deleting "a heterosexual" after "celibate in singleness or not faithful in" and by deleting "(b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies"

Total Number of Pages: 1

Suggested Title: End Discrimination;

Discipline ¶ 4;

General Church Budget Implications: None;

Global Implications: Yes

Amend ¶4, by deletion and addition as follows:

After "all persons" delete "without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition". After "because of race, color, national origin," delete "status," and add "ability, sexual orientation, gender identity". At the end of the paragraph, add "nor shall any member be denied access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church because of race, color, gender, national origin, ability, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or economic condition."



**ANNUAL CONFERENCE EVENTS
FRIDAY, JUNE 8**

Laity Session

"The Care and Feeding of Clergy" The Session begins at **6:45PM**. Bishop Laurie will greet folks, and those who have completed the School for Lay Ministry will be recognized. The Session is open to all, whether or not they are members of Annual Conference.

SATURDAY, JUNE 9

SQB - Volunteers are needed to pass out SQBs on Saturday; meet at the MFSA booth at **7:45AM**. Contact Josh Steward if you can help revjosh@hotmail.com or 515-991- 6368.

Iowa JFON Luncheon

Justice for our Neighbors luncheon meets **12:15PM** at Trinity Las Americas UMC 1548 8th Street, Des Moines, 50314 The new Executive Director, Sol Varisco, will welcome attendees. Contact: Frank Camp Fscamp77@msn.com or 319-899- 3585



Awards/Graduation Reception & Ceremony 5:10PM at the Iowa Events Center - Rooms TBD. Contact: Barb Mann barb.mann@iaumc.org

MFSA Iowa Caucuses – June 8, 9, 10 held at the close of the Session **Friday and Saturday, June 8 & 9** Wesley UMC, 800 E. 12th Street, DSM, **Sunday, June 10** at Chet Guinn’s Fire Station

SUNDAY, JUNE 10

United Methodist Women Event

Kelsey Smith, Anita UMC, will speak on “Swedish Childcare and Family Policy Study.” Wesley UMC, 800 E. 12th in Des Moines. The speaker will be one of the recipients of the 2017 Theresa Hoover Community Service and Global Citizenship Award. Kelsey studied family and child care in Sweden, which may help lead to an affordable, high-quality child care policy in the US. This is so fitting because Theresa Hoover, the first African American chief executive of United Methodist Women for over 20 years, was an advocate for women and children. Tickets are \$10.00 (checks to Iowa Conference UMW). RSVP to Myra Bowman: jmkbowman51@comm1net.net or 641-843-4086.

MFSA Iowa Annual Awards Event - 5:00 PM - Hy-Vee Hall (see page 1)



Iowa Annual Conference
Walk for Peace and Social Justice

MONDAY, JUNE 11

Walk for Peace and Social Justice

12:15PM Walk will be led by Bishop Laurie Haller, and will go from Hy-Vee Hall to the Peace Garden in Cowles Commons. The theme of the brief prayer service is, “What Is Justice?”

SUNDAY, JUNE 10

Bishop’s Fitness Walk 6:00-8:00AM

Join the 5K walk/run to raise monies for The Bishop’s Fit Challenge. Principal Riverwalk Trail along the Des Moines River in downtown Des Moines. \$15. REGISTER ONLINE at www.iaumc.org. Kae Tritle: bktritle@msn.com