

**MFSA Iowa Fall Gathering**

**Saturday, October 30 – 9:30 am**  
**Walnut Hills United Methodist Church**  
12321 Hickman Rd., Urbandale, IA 50323  
(virtual option will be provided)

**Keynote:**

**Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Thompson**

**Stand Up and Speak Out:  
Moving from Silent  
Non-racist  
to Brave Anti-racist**

Jacqueline Thompson is an ordained Elder in the Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church. She

earned the Master of Divinity from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary and currently serves as pastor to Burns UMC and St. John's UMC in Des Moines. She co-chairs the Order of Elders and serves on the Board of Ordained Ministry, is treasurer and board member of the Iowa United Methodist Foundation and is a member of Des Moines Metro Opera Board of Directors.

Jacqueline is a community activist in the areas of racial justice, affordable housing, food insecurity, climate justice, refugee/immigrant support services, and public education. She is a member of the Des Moines Faith Committee for Peace, the Des Moines NAACP, and MFSA.

Prior to being called to ordained ministry, Jacqueline owned the Potpourri Fine Arts Academy in Ottumwa, was a rostered teaching artist with the Iowa Arts Council, and directed the Elementary Honor Choir for the Ottumwa Community Schools. A native of Dayton, Ohio, she earned the Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Dayton and both the Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from the University Conservatory of Music & Dance. She also holds a permanent teaching certificate from the State of Iowa.



**Reflections on 20 Years**

by Eloise Cranke

What an amazing almost 20 years it's been! Our Coordinator position was created in response to the rise of the IRD (Institute on Religion and Democracy) which was trying to change the essential nature of the United Methodist Church and other mainline Protestant denominations. My initial role was to shore up the Chapter and to inform congregations about IRD. Over the years the work grew and expanded, addressing many persistent MFSA concerns.

**So many great (and some painful) memories:**

- Weekend retreats at the Perry church in early days
- Not one, but two great bus trips to Washington, D.C. to protest war
- Wonderful speakers at A.C. banquets, many attendees claiming our event as their #1 Conference highlight
- Who could have imagined the brouhaha at ISU when Rev. Jeremiah Wright spoke?
- Dozens of hate e-mails I received from everywhere when keynoter, Janet Lahr Lewis, dared advocate for Palestinian human rights.
- Jurisdictional Gatherings and National Convocations; the surprise I saw on Chet Guinn's face as he received MFSA's highest honor, the 2015 Lee and Mae Ball Award.

*More on page 2....*





## Reflections on 20 Years

By Eloise Cranke, continued from page 1

- The honor of standing with Anna Blaedel when she came out on the Conference floor, along with the disappointment and anguish of seeing how the UMC hurt and abused her and many others—and continues to do so.
- Regional and Statewide Gatherings to address issues of peace and justice.
- Late night caucusing for legislation on important Annual Conference issues, sometimes passing!
- Walks for peace and social justice at A.C., led by our bishops.
- Working in coalition/intersection with many peace and justice organizations on issues important to us all; our support often requested by those organizations.
- Joy in working with so many talented and dedicated people across the Conference, but especially on the Executive Committees over the years. (Way too many to name!)
- Knowing the pride and responsibility of being one of the strongest US MFSA Chapters.

Yes, we still have much work to do as we strive to become fully inclusive anti-racists. We need more young adults to help us make the future. We need to do much more to raise and address the threats of climate change and nuclear annihilation.

Viability hangs in the balance for the UMC, still awaiting 2020 General Conference. Whatever happens, I believe MFSA's work must and will continue; actually, more vital than ever.

It has been an incredible gift to be a part of MFSA these past 20 years! I'm forever grateful to those who befriended and supported me/MFSA. Whatever the challenges along the way, you, our members and friends were there for me and for MFSA. From the bottom of my heart, I say THANK YOU! MFSA will always be a passion and will continue to be in my prayers, growing ever stronger in our witness for justice and peace.

Joy, peace, and much love to All! *Eloise*



### MFSA Iowa Membership and Support:

Membership includes membership with National MFSA & SQB newsletter subscription.

To join, contact membership secretary Mike Biklen. Please support MFSA Iowa through any or all of these three funds:

- **Organizer Fund:** for our coordinator Eloise Cranke
- **General Fund:** operating budget expenses
- **Memorial Fund:** Gifts given / designated

Mail a check or donate via PayPal at [mfsaiowa.org](http://mfsaiowa.org).

**MFSA Iowa**

c/o Mike Biklen 515 E. 11<sup>th</sup> St.

Muscatine, IA 52761-3920

Know someone who wants to receive a digital SQB? Share this SQB and ask them to email [ecranke@mchsi.com](mailto:ecranke@mchsi.com)

- **MFSA Iowa Chapter Coordinator:** Eloise Cranke [ecranke@mchsi.com](mailto:ecranke@mchsi.com)
- Visit [mfsaiowa.org](http://mfsaiowa.org) for SQB archives, monthly events memo and more.
- [Facebook.com/MFSAIowa/](https://www.facebook.com/MFSAIowa/)
- **MFSA National** <http://mfsaweb.org/>

**MFSA Social Action Awards for 2021****Alejandro Alfaro-Santiz**

Submitted by Jean Swenson,  
Irene DeMaris, and Sean McRoberts

We nominate Alejandro Alfaro-Santiz for the 2021 Iowa MFSA Social Action Award. Pastor Alejandro has been a leader in the Iowa United Methodist Church and in the Des Moines community for years, but his commitment to social justice during the pandemic was second-to-none. Not only did he find safe creative ways to interact with his congregation (Trinity Las Américas) during the pandemic, but he also continued to witness on behalf of immigrants and serve those trying to navigate our very broken system as they faced deportation, court dates and red tape. Alejandro was present through-out the Black Lives Matter/Black Liberation Movement demonstrations and protests and has continued to hold the Des Moines Police Department accountable with a small group which gathers for daily vigils protesting the injustices perpetuated by the department. He helped to organize a local Lights4Liberty event, focusing on the inhumane conditions and treatment of the children at the border. Alejandro also spent time at the Iowa capitol advancing voting rights legislation, lobbying against the many LGBTQ+ bills introduced in the legislature in 2021.

At present, Alejandro chairs the Conference Board of Church & Society and serves on the board of the Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice, as well as the Executive Committee of Iowa MFSA. His voice is respected by many justice organizations, including the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa where he served as a board member for their Action Fund. He finds time to balance his spiritual life with his social justice life. In the fall of 2019, he completed the Living School, a two-year program from the Center of Action and Contemplation.

Alejandro is partner to Maria, and dad to Luca and Mateo. Mochi, the Weimaraner, completes the family.

**Kate Milligan**

Submitted by Inez Dawes

Kate Milligan is a remarkable woman.

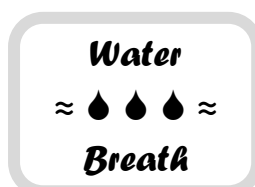
She is a disciple ever aware of the needs of those around her and possesses a deep compassion and understanding of needs and pains of people everywhere. She remains very committed to the vitality of local churches and gives generously of her time and exceptional skills. Kate has an eye for opportunities to engage in justice work and community care which she readily shares with her faith communities. She's also dedicated to the quieter work of presence and accompaniment.

Her work has always moved beyond charity, seeking justice for individuals and families in the Trinity Las Américas community and beyond. She helped a Japanese-American author finish a book, designed the cover, formatted the manuscript and worked toward publication. Her heroic effort enabled her friend's book on WWII resistance in Japan and makes public a relevant and necessary historical perspective.

Kate's commitment to advocacy and justice can be seen in her support of MFSA. Again, quietly behind the scenes, she designs and maintains the MFSA website often adding events and information, calling attention to various issues of justice, and connecting us with other peace and justice groups within the UMC and beyond. She maintains the MFSA Facebook page and creates and proofs the layout of the SQB.

Kate lives her passion for social justice daily and intentionally seeks a deeper spirituality. She truly embodies Social and Personal Holiness. She is one of the finest examples of a servant leader you will know. We would all do well to follow her lead if anyone can keep up with her!

Indeed, you should really have a cup of tea and conversation with this remarkable woman!





## **The Arrogance of Power**

**By Hugh Stone**

In Matthew 7, Jesus famously warned his followers about arrogantly judging others. "Do not judge, so that you won't be judged... Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but don't notice the log in your own eye?" In the wake of World War II Reinhold Niebuhr referenced this prophetic passage, "We have become so deluded by the concept of our innocence, that we are ill prepared to deal with the temptations of power that now assail us."

William Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in 1966 published *The Arrogance of Power*, with some sentences very nearly interchangeable with those from Niebuhr. Fulbright defined arrogance of power as "a psychological need that nations seem to have in order to prove that they are bigger, better or stronger than other nations..." There is a "tendency of great nations to equate power with virtue and major responsibilities with a universal mission." Fulbright suggests that America's arrogance of power drew her into an unwinnable war in Vietnam. After nine bloody years Saigon fell (April 1975) as the last American helicopter left the US embassy.

The withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan after 20 years reveals the arrogance of power defining our presence. We invaded Afghanistan after Al Qaeda attacked the twin towers and Pentagon. When the Taliban protected Osama Bin Laden, we drove them out of Kabul and from power. We spent two trillion dollars over two decades trying to defeat them militarily. When President Biden decided it was time to withdraw our military, the Taliban came out of hiding, quickly seizing control of the country.



If we (President George W. Bush) had foreseen the war lasting twenty years, would we have

pursued it? Jesus urges disciples to count the cost before rushing off to war. "What king going out to wage war against another king will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand, If he cannot then while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace." (Luke 14)

If we had known that the war in Afghanistan would cost over \$2 trillion, lives of 4000+ Americans, 100,000+ Afghans and 51,000+ Taliban would we have invaded that land of desert, mountain, and ice? Over 20,000 of our soldiers were wounded in Afghanistan and 72 journalists and 444 aid workers lost their lives.

What of our legacy? After 20 years we spawned the world's 5<sup>th</sup> most corrupt government, an opium market supplying 90% of the world's heroin, guards taking bribes, death squads executing children and an Afghan army useless without American drone and air power. The *Washington Post* posits that much money sent to purchase supplies for Afghan forces ended up in officer's pockets.

The British Empire lost two wars in Afghanistan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fighting to a draw in 1919. The Soviet Union fought there for ten years, leaving in 1989. The United States fought their longest war ever, before quitting. The question remains, does the United States finally realize the danger and arrogance that accompanies great power?

Perhaps the words Niebuhr wrote at the conclusion of *The Irony of American History* describe our plight: "The strength of a great nation was derided by eyes too blind to see all the hazards of the struggle and the blindness would be induced not by some accident of nature or history but by hatred and vainglory." Niebuhr said the wealth and power of the U.S. presented "special temptations" to vanity and arrogance which mitigate against our moral prestige and authority as we need a sense of modesty about the virtue, wisdom, and power available to us for the resolution of history's perplexities.

Before we encounter another temptation to war, we must consider the arrogance of our power and look for peaceful and moral ways to settle our differences with others. Those who profit from perpetual war will soon seek another even though negotiation and compromise might bring peace, not war.

Contemplate words of our 2<sup>nd</sup> president, John Adams, "Power always thinks it has a great soul and vast views beyond the comprehension of the weak and that it is doing God's service when it is violating all His Law." While Adams alludes to the British Empire of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, his words surely apply to the American Empire of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well.