

MFSA Fall Statewide Gathering Saturday, October 14



9:30 a.m. First United Methodist Church
1001 Pleasant Street, Des Moines

light brunch / plenary and election of officers

11:00 a.m. Islamic Center of Des Moines
6201 Franklin Avenue (www.islamiccenterdm.com)
Panel of speakers / tour of center

For those of us who grew up in rural Iowa, we knew there were other religions in the world, but we didn't have the opportunity to meet people of other faiths until we went to college. Even then, if we didn't venture out of the state, we were limited in the number of people we met who did not grow up in the Christian tradition. As the world has "gotten smaller" thanks to travel and technology, we are becoming more aware of folks who practice different religions, but there are still misconceptions and curiosity surrounding the people who practice a faith other than Christianity.

Our fall gathering will provide a great opportunity for learning about the Islamic faith and

our Muslim brothers and sisters. After our plenary session and brunch, we will move to the Islamic Center of Des Moines, a re-purposed former elementary school. We will be met there by a panel of men from the Center who will share general information about Islam and the traditions of their faith. Following their presentation, they will answer our questions and lead a tour of the Center. They have extended a welcome to their 1:00 prayers, if anyone wishes to stay (Our meeting will conclude at 12:30.).

When visiting the Center, you will be expected to remove your shoes, but it is unnecessary for the women to wear scarves, unless you so choose. Come, learn, grow with us.....and bring a friend!

Last March, this same group of men from the Islamic Center, were the featured speakers at a Sunday morning Social Justice Forum at Walnut Hills UMC. The crowd for that event was standing room only and was inter-generational (teens through 90's). All who participated wished the forum could have lasted longer and several expressed interest in visiting the Islamic Center. Walnut Hills later learned that the Islamic Center had been the target of a hate crime the previous night. Hate speech had been spray painted on the building. These men, despite the pain and violation they must have been feeling, met their obligation to Walnut Hills that morning, with no mention of what had happened to their community.

By Jean Swenson, MFSA Co-Chair

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) "DREAMers"

By Rev. Josh Steward

Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced on September 5th that the Trump Administration is ending Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). DACA protects nearly 800,000 undocumented immigrant young people - or "DREAMers" - from deportation. It helps them with legal status and work authorization. The impact on Iowa is significant: 2,800 young people have been able to pass background checks, live here legally and work. Their protection has been renewed nearly 2,800 times. The Iowa economy would suffer nearly \$188.5 million in annual GDP losses.**

DACA was established by executive order by President Obama in 2012, so President Trump has the power to take this action. However, the decision crosses a moral line. Biblical principles of hospitality and justice are being abandoned:

- Genesis 12:10 – "Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land."

- Exodus 1:15-2:10 – Pharaoh orders all the Hebrew boy babies to be killed, but Moses is hidden and is saved by Pharaoh's daughter.
- Leviticus 24:22 – "There shall be one law for the native and for the alien who resides among you."
- Deuteronomy 14:28-29 and 26:12-13 – Tithing was begun, in part, for resident aliens.

The scriptural rebuke of the Trump administration is much longer than I have room to review.

Since 2012, the United Methodist Church has stood in solidarity with the "DREAMers" (DREAM Act, 2016 Book of Resolutions, #3164)

By the time you read this, I hope you have already had time to pray, to speak, to act, to organize,

to seek assistance, and to assist in any way you can on behalf of DACA and the impacted youth who share our belief that Iowa is, can be, and should be a great place to live, work, and raise a family.



**Iowa DACA info:

www.iwj.org/resources/state-by-state-daca-fact-sheets

The Plight of Palestinian Children

*By Christine Anders, Minister of Discipleship,
First United Methodist Church, Des Moines*

The children of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem live every day not knowing if their home will be destroyed or when they, their parents or siblings will be harassed, imprisoned, injured or killed by Israeli soldiers or settlers. It is no wonder that 82% of Palestinian children suffer moderate to acute levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The day to day stress of living under occupation is difficult especially for children.

- Many live in poverty (25% of all Palestinian children, 78% of those in East Jerusalem. 80% of the residents of Gaza depend on humanitarian aid to survive). Poverty itself brings a whole host of issues, especially malnutrition.
- Children often have no access to education and if they do, the schools are sometimes under threat of demolition. Because the children are so stressed, they have difficulty concentrating and learning. Many of these children ask "if there is no hope for the future, why do I need an education?"
- Like adults, children are greatly affected by the restrictions of checkpoints, which affect attending school, visiting family and friends and often prevent them from obtaining medical care.
- Encountering and being confronted by Israeli soldiers in full combat gear or a group of angry settlers is frightening. This is something many Palestinian children face every day.
- Since October of 2015 the number of Palestinian children arrested by Israeli forces has more than doubled. These children are often arrested during terrifying night raids of their homes, are taken illegally out of the Occupied Territories into Israel where they have no access to lawyers and no adult protection...Israeli law allows imprisonment for any child over the age of 11 and often sentences children to years of imprisonment for throwing stones.

These are just a few of the traumas faced by Palestinian children. The world should be ashamed for turning a blind eye to what is happening. Rita Giacaman, professor of public health at Birzeit University reminds us "There is a cycle of trauma imprinted on Palestinian consciousness, passed down from generation to generation. Despair is also handed down. It's hard for children to see a future. The past not only informs the present, but also the future."

What is the future of these children? Is there any cause for them to hope? Are you willing to be a voice for them?



(Art work by Rev. Steve Braudt, founder of
The Art Project, Palestine)

**Attend the symposium in Des Moines:
"Unheard Voices from the Heart of Palestine"**

Saturday, September 30 8:45 am – 4:30 pm
First United Methodist Church 1001 Pleasant St.
Sponsor: Middle East Peace Education Coalition (MEPEC)
Registration details: www.mfsaiowa.org/memo.html

Whether you are new to the issue of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict or you have studied the topic for years, this symposium is for you.

Come and learn about:

- . America's role in the Occupation Faith perspectives on the conflict
- . Becoming active in peacemaking
- . The Middle East Peace Education Coalition (MEPEC) is guided by a belief in the worth of every individual.

Our mission is to work toward a just peace in Israel/Palestine by:

- . Changing US policies that have supported and continue to support the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands
- . Affirming the human rights of all people to self-determination and to security within identified borders
- . Recognizing the right and responsibility of the people of the region to decide on the governance of their state(s)
- . Committing to the principle that international law must be the framework for resolving the conflict.

If you are interested in becoming a part of our work, contact: Christine Anders
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Book Review: TEARS WE CANNOT STOP: A SERMON TO WHITE AMERICA by Michael Eric Dyson (NY: St. Martin's Press: 2017)

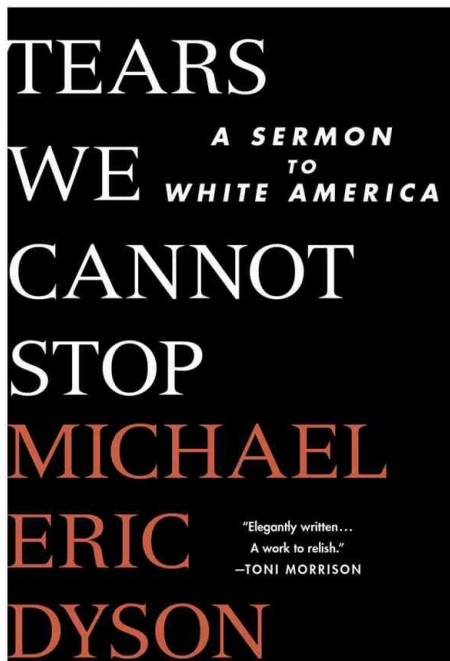
Michael Eric Dyson is a professor, social activist, cultural critic, MSNBC commentator and Baptist preacher. In this new book, Dr. Dyson says the truth he felt called by the Spirit to communicate could only be proclaimed. Preached as a sermon (a jeremiad, he calls it).

He casts this sermon in the form of a church service, adopting “the voices of the worship and prayer leader, the choir director, the reader of scripture, the giver of testimony, the preacher of the homily, the giver of benediction and the exhorter to service, and the collector of the offering plate.”

The subject is the devastation white racism and privilege continue to reign on black lives and the willful ignorance/self-serving denial of white America to this reality. How else could so many of us have been so shocked, shocked at the election of Donald Trump?

Dr. Dyson uses all the skills of a great black preacher: eloquence, literary references, personal and family testimony, calls for repentance and reparation, and current issues commentary (On police violence, hip hop lyrics, affirmative action, Black Lives Matter, Colin Kaepernick, the election of Donald Trump and more.)

He is unsparing in his honesty about the power of white racism and the resulting black anger, humiliation, rage, violence and tragic deaths.



Consider: “My father was a hulking man known for his brawn and his blue-black skin...After he was laid off from the factory, my father worked as a janitor and all-around utility man at a local pharmacy. I saw how the white owner of the store eyed him. The man valued my father’s epic strength. But at the same time he infantilized my father. I even heard him once say to my father that he acted like a boy. I half expected my father to lay him in his tracks and prayed he wouldn’t do so. Yet I was angry that he hadn’t done so to preserve his sense of dignity and manhood. This same black man who was so tough on us kids didn’t say a word. It gave me a hint of the psychic costs of black manhood, of thrusting and parrying with the cold facts of white dominance that hushed one’s rage and yet encouraged it to flow against one’s family.”

Dr. Dyson ends his book with a CLOSING PRAYER:

“O God, the hour is dark. The suffering is great. But we will not give up. We will not surrender...We are going nowhere. We are your children too. We will survive. We are America.”

Review by the Rev. Bill Steward

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