

CAROL L. NELSON BURNS, Ph.D.

As a teenager growing up in an industrial city in Ohio, I found an extended family of support and encouragement in Belmont Methodist Church. There, as at school, others saw in me what I didn't see in myself, and THEIR influence, example, and encouragement, led me to Mount Union College—small, liberal arts, and Methodist school. I still recall my awe the day I received an acceptance letter.

Collectively, the wider knowledge, vision, and leadership, of my teachers pastors, and professors created a platform for a life I could never have imagined. Later, I had the remarkable opportunity to teach for nearly a decade in Australia at a time when Australia recruited US teachers because of a teacher shortage. That not only provided cross cultural education, but propelled me into graduate studies, work with domestic violence victims, program development for special needs children and adults—all of which expanded my understanding of people identified as “other.” I retired as a professor from the University of Toledo (Ohio) where I had directed the Writing Center and taught undergraduate and graduate courses in writing, human rights, distance learning, and developing leaders following a model advanced by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

In retirement, I have served in leadership roles in the United Methodist Church at the local, district, and East Ohio Conference levels, in such areas as on the Conference Board of Church & Society, District Peace with Justice Coordinator, District Lay Servant director and trainer, program chair for the Methodist Federation for Social Action, as well as an officer and member where & when needed in UMW at the local and conference levels.

I believe my entire life has provided a platform for learning about the “outsider” and speaking, teaching, writing, and advocating to see one another as part of a much larger family in the context of our Christian, and uniquely Wesleyan, understanding of “we are one with each other...”