

## HER HONOR: A TRIBUTE TO JUDGE JANE E. MAGNUS-STINSON

THE HONORABLE SARAH EVANS BARKER\*  
THE HONORABLE TANYA WALTON PRATT\*\*  
THE HONORABLE DORIS L. PRYOR\*\*\*  
THE HONORABLE DEBRA MCVICKER LYNCH\*\*\*\*

It is with admiration and gratitude that we come together to honor Judge Jane E. Magnus-Stinson as she transitions to senior status. In celebrating her extraordinary career, we reflect not only on her professional achievements but also on her remarkable spirit, innate grace, and enduring friendships cultivated along the way. At the heart of this tribute is the painting *Her Honor*, a poignant and deeply meaningful work by Kyle Ragsdale, commissioned by Judge Magnus-Stinson in 2020.<sup>1</sup> This stunning piece depicts the four of us alongside Judge Magnus-Stinson, capturing a moment none of us anticipated until she unveiled it in an unforgettable gesture.



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1. See Marilyn Odendahl, *'Her Honor': New Painting Reflects Strength, Diversity of Women Judges on Southern Indiana District Court*, THE IND. LAW. (Sept. 30, 2020), <https://www.theindianalawyer.com/articles/her-honor-new-painting-reflects-strength-diversity-of-women-judges-on-southern-indiana-district-court>.

2. Kyle Ragsdale, *Her Honor* (photograph), (2020).

*Her Honor* now hangs outside of Judge Magnus-Stinson's courtroom on the second floor of the Birch Bayh Federal Building in Indianapolis. During her senior status celebration on June 28, 2024, Judge Magnus-Stinson shared that she was "donating the painting to our court . . . as the permanent reflection of [her] regard and respect for women's rights and [her] treasured colleagues."<sup>3</sup> While Judge Magnus-Stinson has openly shared that the painting was inspired by the centennial of women's suffrage and honors the female judges of our court, she has also revealed that the painting speaks to larger themes: the commitment required to change history for the better and pursue justice; the beauty and necessity of diversity and inclusion in advancing that change and justice; and the unshakable bonds of friendship. These themes, woven into the painting, are equally woven into the fabric of Jane's heart, her career, and the enduring legacy she leaves behind.

In the reflections that follow, each of us offers our own perspective on this painting and the special friendship it represents. Inspired by themes in *Her Honor*, we share our gratitude, celebrate Judge Magnus-Stinson's extraordinary career, and honor the legacy she leaves—as a distinguished judge, a beloved friend, and an inspiring force for justice.

#### I. HISTORY: SARAH EVANS BARKER

The stunningly dramatic portrait commissioned by Judge Jane Magnus-Stinson and elegantly produced by artist Kyle Ragsdale, timed to coincide with the one-hundredth anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment and now on display in the foyer outside the ceremonial courtroom in the Birch Bayh Federal Courthouse, beautifully captures the likenesses of the distaff members of the Southern District of Indiana district court bench as the court was constituted in 2020 during Judge Stinson's tenure as Chief Judge.

Titled "*Her Honor*," the painting not only recognizes but imputes honor to the five women judges who are depicted there, of whom I am one. When friend Jane gathered us all together in her chambers on that afternoon to discover what had theretofore been her secret project in commissioning this portrait and to allow us to share the moment of its unveiling, we all to a person were left nearly speechless (what are the chances?! The combined impact of the beauty of the artistic rendering itself along with the sense of honor we each felt in having been included in it, shown standing side by side as robed colleagues and "sisters in law," created an unforgettable moment for us! In a fashion reflective of Judge Jane's reputation for generosity as well as her gift for friendship, she had managed once again to make an indelible mark on our lives as well as on the history of our court.

This exquisite artistic rendering will likely exist as a treasured court family portrait for decades to come. As is often true of very good art, its careful study

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3. Jane E. Magnus-Stinson, Judge, U.S. District Court, Southern District of Indiana, Address at the Senior Status Celebration in Honor of the Honorable Jane E. Magnus-Stinson (June 28, 2024).

reveals broader and deeper meanings that extend beyond the immediate reactions and, once discovered, enhance both its artistic value and its impact. Initial examination of the painting would reveal simply the impressionist figures of five women judges, shown there lined up horizontally, side by side in their judicial robes against a colorful but otherwise indistinct background. What eludes the eye is the fact that these women judges, despite their common vocation, are a wonderfully diverse group in terms of their race, religion, age, political background, and judicial rank (at the time, we constituted both Article III and Magistrate Judges). In terms of our shared professional calling, such individual differences among us don't matter, and so they remain hidden from view in the painting. In terms of our collegial relationships with one another, they are enriching and delighting details, the flavor in the stew.

While the subject matter of the *Her Honor* portrait perforce captures a single, specific moment in time (2020) and a particular place (our court located in Indianapolis and serving the southern federal judicial district of Indiana), it inexorably reaches back to and pulls forward the history that preceded this moment and hints at the future that is yet to be. One senses a flow of this history in viewing the painting. The explicit message of the painting is that this is a picture of five judges—five women judges. And that message matters, prompting the question of what it might be about five women judges that makes their images significant or at least worthy of capture.

What history reveals in answer to that pondering is that it was not all that long ago when all women were excluded from becoming lawyers and/or serving as judges—a history recent enough that some who are reading these words will recall such experiences of exclusion from their own lived experience; others will recognize and relate to this history based on their having heard those stories from people who experienced them. Still others may have acquired a knowledge of this history from recent encounters with its continuing vestiges that crop up even now as forms of prejudice and exclusion.

Among the five of us judges depicted in the painting, this shared history is never far from mind. It contextualizes both our work as judges as well as our relationships with one another, and helps explain the existence of the close ties of admiration and affection and respect among us. This shared history is the glue that connects us to one another as women, each of whom has succeeded in securing the opportunity of being entrusted with the responsibility and privilege of serving as a judge of our court.

A brief review of some of this shared sense of history illustrates the point. In addition to Chief Judge Stinson and myself, the other judges depicted there include Judges Tanya Walton Pratt (currently Chief Judge), Magistrate Judge Debra McVicker Lynch (now retired), and then Magistrate Judge Doris L. Pryor (now Circuit Judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit). Our respective bar admission dates span nearly 35 years, beginning in 1969 (mine), followed in 1983 (Stinson), 1984 (Pratt), 1986 (McVicker), and 2003 (Pryor). In terms of history, that alone covers a pretty impressive sweep of time!

As for our respective personal histories leading up to our appointments as judges, those details were recounted succinctly by journalist Marilyn Odendahl in her September 2020 article in *The Indiana Lawyer* reporting on the unveiling of *Her Honor*; she explained as follows:

Barker was the first female district judge in Indiana. She was confirmed to the Southern District in 1984 and served for 30 years before taking senior status in 2014. Magnus-Stinson joined the court as a magistrate judge in 2007, filling the vacancy created by the retirement of Magistrate Judge V. Sue Shields, who was appointed as the court's first female magistrate judge in 1994. Magnus-Stinson was confirmed as a district judge in 2010 when the late Judge Larry McKinney took senior status. Walton Pratt was confirmed in 2010 and is Indiana's first African American federal judge.

Lynch clerked for Barker from 1986 to 1988[,] then spent 20 years in private practice before becoming a magistrate judge in 2008. Pryor was appointed as a magistrate judge in 2018, continuing a career in public service that included working in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Indiana and for the State of Arkansas Public Defender Commission. [Judge Pryor was nominated by President Biden and confirmed in 2022 to a seat on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, where she currently serves.]<sup>4</sup>

For the first 138 years of the United States, there were a total of 740 judges, all male. The first woman judge was appointed in 1928 by President Calvin Coolidge to the U.S. Customs Court; a second woman was appointed in 1934. Sixteen years thereafter, a third woman was appointed, and twelve years thereafter, the fourth. As of August 1, 2024, there are 484 Article III federal judges who are women (active and senior), comprising 33% of all sitting Article III federal judges.<sup>5</sup> The percentage of women in the U.S. population is 50.5%.<sup>6</sup>

From 1950 to 1970, only 3% of all lawyers were women.<sup>7</sup> The percentage inched up gradually thereafter: "8% in 1980, 20% in 1991, 27% in 2000 and 41% in 2024."<sup>8</sup> Today, U.S. law schools award more juris doctor degrees to women than men every year, while older lawyers—predominantly men—are retiring.<sup>9</sup> (For historical perspective, recall that Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, graduated from Stanford

4. Odendahl, *supra* note 1.

5. *Women in the Legal Profession*, AM. BAR ASS'N, <https://www.americanbar.org/news/profile-legal-profession/women/> (last visited Dec. 31, 2024).

6. *Id.*

7. *Profile of the Legal Profession 2024, Demographics*, AM. BAR ASS'N, <https://www.americanbar.org/news/profile-legal-profession/demographics/> (last visited Dec. 31, 2024).

8. *Id.*

9. *Id.*

Law School in 1952 and joined the High Court in 1981. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg graduated from Columbia Law School in 1959 and was nominated by President Clinton to the Supreme Court and confirmed in 1993.)

When I (Judge Barker) graduated from law school in 1969, the total number of female students enrolled in JD programs throughout the U.S. was a mere 3,554;<sup>10</sup> by 1983, 1984 and 1986, the years when Judges Magnus-Stinson, Pratt and Lynch each graduated, the total enrollments of female JD students had climbed to some number between 46,000 and 47,000.<sup>11</sup> By the time Judge Pryor graduated in 2003, 65,179 female students were enrolled in JD programs. In 2014, the percentage of lawyers who are women increased from 36% to 41% a decade later in 2024.<sup>12</sup> Male attorneys still outnumber female attorneys (58% to 41%), but the gap is narrowing.<sup>13</sup>

In 1983, when Judge Stinson graduated from law school, I was serving as the United States Attorney for our district. Unbeknownst to anyone at the time, I was one year away from being nominated by President Reagan to serve as the first woman federal district court judge in Indiana, in which position I remained as the only woman judge of our court for 26 years, until 2010, when Judge Stinson was nominated by President Obama to serve as the second woman federal district court judge on our court.

Whether Jane had been paying attention to the slow pace of change on our federal district court during those years in terms of the appointment of women judges, only she could say, but, from 1991 until 1995, when as a member of Governor Evan Bayh's staff she had major responsibility for helping him identify and recruit and screen and appoint women to state court judgeships, we know she had become an expert on this subject. In 1995, about the same time Justice Myra C. Selby was appointed by Governor Bayh (presumably again with Jane's assistance) to be the first woman justice on the Indiana Supreme Court, Jane herself thereafter became a judge of the Superior Court of Marion County in the criminal division, where she served until 2007, when she was appointed a Magistrate Judge on our court.

The data referenced above well describes one aspect of this history of women as lawyers and judges. The fuller picture of these years comes from the personal stories told by the women who chose to seek entry into the legal profession when they would form both a small and often unwelcome minority. The well-documented biographical accounts of such challenges that were faced by Justices O'Connor and Ginsburg are consistent with what most other women lawyers/judges faced in their attempts to break through this glass ceiling: i.e., challenges that encompassed every aspect of their lives—the demands their work placed upon relationships within their families and marriages and with

10. *Review of Legal Education, Law Schools and Bar Admission Requirements in the United States*, AM. BAR ASS'N 20 (Fall 1968), [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/misc/legal\\_education/Standards/standardsarchive/1968\\_review.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/misc/legal_education/Standards/standardsarchive/1968_review.pdf).

11. *Id.*

12. *See Women in the Legal Profession*, *supra* note 5.

13. *Id.*

children, in their workplaces (when they were successful in securing employment), on their social status and their political standing, within their religious communities, and even on their own health and well-being. Every woman lawyer and judge has stories such as these telling of the challenges they faced. Most will also note that they were able to survive the process because of the help of other women who were supportive of their efforts. Speaking personally, I have never forgotten that when I became the first woman appointed to be an assistant U.S. Attorney in our district back in late 1972 at the very beginning of my legal career, it was the judges' secretaries who were most open and helpful in lending me a hand, sometimes simply through their kind words and other times by sending messages to our babysitter (or my husband) when the trial sessions went long, throwing off my evening schedule. (We had no cellphones or social media then, of course.)

Judge Stinson's special gift throughout her extraordinary judicial and public service career has always been her ability and willingness to place herself into the flow of history—to establish relationships that are constructive and life-giving, to “do good work” (as Garrison Keillor says<sup>14</sup>) and to apply her strong intelligence and imagination for the common good, to advocate for and to express her strong commitment to just causes and moral behavior, and to beautifully synthesize her roles as wife/mother/daughter/sister/friend with her responsibilities as lawyer and judge—in short, to make her one precious life count, to borrow the words of the poet Mary Oliver.<sup>15</sup>

Judge Stinson has been able to achieve such wide-ranging success in large measure due to her remarkable capacity to see life whole, a capacity anchored in her clear sense of and respect for the history that has preceded her and now inspires and motivates her life-long commitment to hold the door open for others—all others, men and women alike—anyone who faces obstacles based on a deprivation of fundamental fairness or on withheld justice.

Throughout her grace-filled and productive life, she has gifted our state and our country, including our courts and educational and religious institutions and our civic enterprises, with her exemplary and honorable service. She has more than earned the tribute being paid to her here by her law school in dedicating their publication to *Her Honor*, and I will always be enormously grateful for and honored by the opportunity that has been mine to work side by side with her in the cause of justice.

— Sarah Evans Barker

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14. See Garrison Keillor, *The Writer's Almanac for Tuesday, December 31, 2024*, GARRISON KEILLOR (Dec. 31, 2024), <https://www.garrisonkeillor.com/radio/the-writers-almanac-for-tuesday-december-31-2024/> [<https://perma.cc/4C96-69AY>].

15. See Mary Oliver, *The Summer Day*, LIBR. OF CONG., <https://www.loc.gov/programs/poetry-and-literature/poet-laureate/poet-laureate-projects/poetry-180/all-poems/item/poetry-180-133/the-summer-day/> [<https://perma.cc/DN9K-XHB2>] (last visited Jan. 2, 2025).

## II. COMMITMENT: TANYA WALTON PRATT

Judge Jane Magnus-Stinson has inspired hundreds of women in the law and taught us that we must be responsible for our own success and unafraid to take chances. She commissioned and donated to the courthouse the painting *Her Honor*, to commemorate the achievement of women in the 100 years since the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. The 2020 painting features the women judges in the Southern District of Indiana at that time and symbolically memorializes the achievements of women in the law and envisions their continued progress. I am proud and honored to be among the judges portrayed in *Her Honor*. Judge Magnus-Stinson, the focus of the painting, stands in the center, and she has graciously included her “sisters” on the bench. Each of us is portrayed standing tall and proud, amid a vibrant backdrop representing our diverse yet interwoven paths to the judiciary. And together, we appear to stride steadfastly forward, along the limitless path that each of us has forged for all women in the law. To me, *Her Honor* is a bright, beautiful celebration of Judge Magnus-Stinson’s storied career, her efforts to uplift those around her, and her commitment to justice and the court.

Judge Magnus-Stinson has always striven to advance the progress of women in the law. Her commitment and good works have paved the way for many of the profound social changes that have altered women’s place in Indiana’s legal society. On an individual level, Judge Magnus-Stinson has been a mentor to several women in the legal community, including myself, and she has been a role model and inspiration to countless others. On an institutional level, she has contributed her valuable time and perspectives to numerous committees, conferences, and boards, always ensuring that women had, and will continue to have, a seat at the table. Her dedication to the progress of women in the law is evidenced every day by not only her own outstanding accomplishments, but also the exceptional successes of the many women she has championed.

Judge Magnus-Stinson’s dedication to justice and the court likewise defines her legacy and drives her present works. Throughout her distinguished career, her commitment to the justice system, the advancement of women in the law, and the judiciary has been outstanding. She began her judicial career in the Marion Superior Court in November of 1996 and was overwhelmingly reelected to the Superior Court twice before ascending to the district court as a Magistrate Judge. While at the Marion Superior Court, she served as an Associate Presiding Judge of the executive committee and chaired and served on a multitude of committees and task forces for a variety of judicial administrative efforts, including supervising judge of the Marion County Probation Department, the Indiana Judicial Conference Board of Directors, the Education Committee Board of Managers of the Indiana Judges Association, and Chair of the Criminal Pattern Jury Instruction Committee.

Her work for the federal court has been equally impressive. Judge Magnus-Stinson was the Chair of the Facility/Courthouse Security Committee for the Southern District of Indiana from 2010 to 2016. She is the current Chair of the

National Remote Detention Working Group. She served on the Defender Services Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States Court for seven years. She was the Chair of the Budget and Data Subcommittee for the National Pro Se Working Group for four years. She is a Member of the Seventh Circuit Criminal Pattern Jury Instructions Committee, the Seventh Circuit Advisory Committee on Rules, and the Seventh Circuit Committee on Supervised Release.

Her substantial service to the United States District Court as its Chief Judge lasted from November 23, 2016, to March 20, 2021, and her term was remarkable. She began her term serving as “chief comforter” as she helped the court family face its collective grief over the sudden and unexpected back-to-back deaths of two of its most beloved jurists: Magistrate Judge Denise LaRue passed away on August 2, 2017, and a little over a month later, on September 21, 2017, our beloved Senior Judge Larry McKinney passed away. While navigating the court through this emotionally difficult time, Judge Magnus-Stinson also resolved any uncertainties for court personnel by devising a plan to sustain the services of the late judges’ law clerks and staff and to acquire a new Magistrate Judge position for the court.

Judge Magnus-Stinson never hesitated to ask why things were done a certain way and to determine if there was a better or more efficient way to do things. As Chief Judge, she was determined to get our busy court the resources it needed to efficiently serve the public. Her advocacy resulted in our district receiving an additional Magistrate Judge position and securing additional staff attorney positions, increasing the size of the court’s staff attorney office—which assists in our *pro se* prison litigation—from five to fourteen lawyers. She was also able to acquire a Social Security law clerk position as well as modest caseload support from federal judges in Wisconsin and the Northern District of Indiana. Her tenacity and effectiveness in getting our district these much-needed resources were critical during those times when the Southern District of Indiana had the seventh-highest weighted case load in the country.

Judge Magnus-Stinson not only saw the court through several threats of sequestration and government shutdowns, but she also navigated our court family through uncharted waters when the nationwide pandemic struck in 2020. She found innovative ways to keep the court functioning, keep cases moving through the system, keep staff working through a very difficult and uncertain time, and maintain quality service to the public. For anyone who knows Judge Magnus-Stinson, it is easy to see the pride, dedication, joy, and unwavering loyalty embodied by *Her Honor*. On behalf of the entire court, and the thousands of citizens that you have served, Judge Magnus-Stinson, thank you for your absolute commitment to justice and to the judiciary.

— Tanya Walton Pratt

## III. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: DORIS L. PRYOR

Mid-afternoon, I sometimes take walks through the courthouse to allow my mind to rejuvenate and refocus on the tasks ahead of me. The halls are adorned with plaques, murals, and other works of art that serve as reminders of the importance of the rule of law, fairness and equal access to justice—principles that are foundational to our democracy. I view the art as a call to action for all judges and courts commissioned to protect our American liberties and sacred rights.

Invariably, my walks include a stop to view the painting *Her Honor*, displayed on the second floor of the courthouse. The piece takes me back in time to when I received the phone call from then-Chief Judge Magnus-Stinson's office, requesting my presence in chambers. Unbeknownst to me, Jane would surprise us with the unveiling of *Her Honor*, which she had commissioned to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment. Standing in a semicircle around the covered art, Tanya, Sarah, Debra, and I watched with great anticipation as Jane removed the fabric panel. Immediately, we gasped with delight, simultaneously humbled by the significance of the moment. The artist had made the deliberate decision to not focus on the differences of height, age, or color of his five subjects—who are adorned in beautiful hues, basked in black robes, and standing as equals—but to draw the audience to their commonalities. Kyle Ragsdale, with the stroke of a brush, had masterfully captured the pathbreaking force these women played in ensuring fair, equitable, and bias-free justice.

It is only fitting that, after viewing *Her Honor*, my walk back to chambers leads me past Judge Magnus-Stinson's courtroom. I reflect on my time as a magistrate judge with the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, when I watched then-Chief Judge Magnus-Stinson lead our court through challenging and unsettling times. She led our courthouse during a time of racial reconciliation following the murder of George Floyd. She guided and supported the court family following the loss of two legendary jurists: Judge Larry McKinney and Judge Denise LaRue. She paved the way in ensuring our courthouse remained accessible during an unprecedented global pandemic. All the while, she continued to strive for fair and equal justice under law in her courtroom by ensuring all voices are heard, and all people feel welcome; and by serving as a valued mentor and friend of young lawyers. Throughout her tenure, Judge Magnus-Stinson has remained a forward-leaning voice on issues of diversity and inclusion, criminal justice reform, and the access to justice pipeline.

There's a story about a little boy walking through his village with his father. The boy asks his dad, "which is more powerful, the warrior or the legacy of the warrior?" The father, without missing a beat, looks around, kneels down to his son, and whispers: "the legacy of course." You see, it's the legacy that lives long after the warrior has taken "senior status." Jane's legacy is the power of one woman using *her* voice, *her* influence, and *her* place to shape the country that

we all want, the community that we all want to live in, and the legacy that we all strive to leave behind. She lives out the charge given to us by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a great person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in.”<sup>16</sup>

Some conceptualize diversity as being invited to the party and inclusion as being asked to dance. Jane personified this concept when she formed and led the court’s first diversity, inclusion, and equity committee. She did not restrict involvement to district judges; rather, she invited individuals from all divisions of our courthouse to contribute to the committee’s work, including magistrate judges and employees working in the probation and clerk’s offices. Most importantly, Jane worked to ensure that regardless of position, every person would be heard and every voice equally valued, cultivating an environment in which we all felt comfortable sharing our perspectives. We thank you, Judge Jane Magnus-Stinson, for letting us dance with you. We commend you for your exceptional professionalism, integrity, and service to our judicial system. And I personally thank you for all you have done to ensure that this courthouse and our legal profession reflect the unique community that we serve.

As jurists, may we continue to strive for fair and equal justice under the law. Thank you, Judge Jane Magnus-Stinson, for your remarkable service to our nation and to our Indianapolis community.

— Doris L. Pryor

#### IV. FRIENDSHIP: DEBRA MCVICKER LYNCH

*Her Honor*, like most good paintings, captures both a moment in time and some larger, transcendent themes or qualities. Discussions of art typically focus on the transcendent, but I would like to begin by describing the moment in time this painting captures for me, because that moment reveals much about Jane Magnus-Stinson’s incomparable friendship, the friendship among the judges of our court, and the connection between friendship and justice.

The subjects of *Her Honor* did not pose for the artist, and its creation was a complete surprise to us. Thus, the moment in time it captures occurred a bit later. In June 2020—at the height of the pandemic—Judges Barker, Pratt, Pryor, and I received a curious summons from then-Chief Judge Magnus-Stinson to appear in her chambers on the prescribed date and time. And of course we did. This was, as we became so accustomed to hearing, an “unprecedented time.” The work life of judges can be solitary in normal times, but we were now vastly more isolated. We had not interacted in person with colleagues, staff, lawyers, or litigants for months.

When we arrived at Judge Magnus-Stinson’s chambers, we found that she had set out individually wrapped snacks and drinks, hand sanitizer, and five

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16. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Address at the Youth March for Integrated Schools, Washington, D.C., (Apr. 18, 1959), in 105 CONG. REC. 8696–97 (daily ed. May 20, 1959), available at <https://www.congress.gov/86/crecb/1959/05/20/GPO-CRECB-1959-pt7-1-2.pdf>.

chairs (all six feet apart, of course) arranged in a semi-circle surrounding the painting, which had a black cover over it. The painting was then revealed to just the five of us, and a long, lively conversation and catching-up among these five friends ensued. The painting, and this gathering itself, created a splash of color during the monochromatic days of the pandemic.

Judge Magnus-Stinson also gave us each a smaller print of the painting, and mine is framed and on my office wall at home. Every time I look at this print, that gathering resounds in my memory. The painting is a celebration of, among other things, the hundredth anniversary of women's suffrage and the number of women on our court—quintupled since Judge Barker was appointed in 1984. But what I recall most vividly is the celebration of the friendship of the women judges depicted in it. Busy professionals understand that thriving friendships require some planning and facilitation, and Jane Magnus-Stinson is a consummate planner and facilitator of friendship. Kyle Ragsdale was the painter, but the artist behind that celebration of friendship was Jane.

If we asked twenty casual observers of the painting to describe its transcendent themes or qualities, I suspect that approximately zero would mention friendship. That is perhaps because the robes draw attention to what we *do*, and friendship is not perceived as an essential feature of judging. The reality, though, is that the friendship among the judges of the Southern District of Indiana—and among the women judges in particular—sustains us and enhances our work. But beyond that, the transcendent qualities of friendship are modeled in the administration of justice. Justice, like real friendship, is not transactional, self-serving, or indiscrete. Faithfulness, compassion, service, and attentiveness are as important to doing justice as they are to “doing” friendship.

That Jane Magnus-Stinson would conceive of the *Her Honor* project, oversee its completion, share it with her dear friends depicted in it, and finally, gift it to the court, reveals exactly what sort of friend *and judge* she is. Though the painting itself has abstract elements, there's nothing abstract or ambiguous about how she approaches both friendship and judging: faithful, attentive, constant, energetic, compassionate, and generous. Unparalleled friend. Unparalleled judge.

— Debra McVicker Lynch

