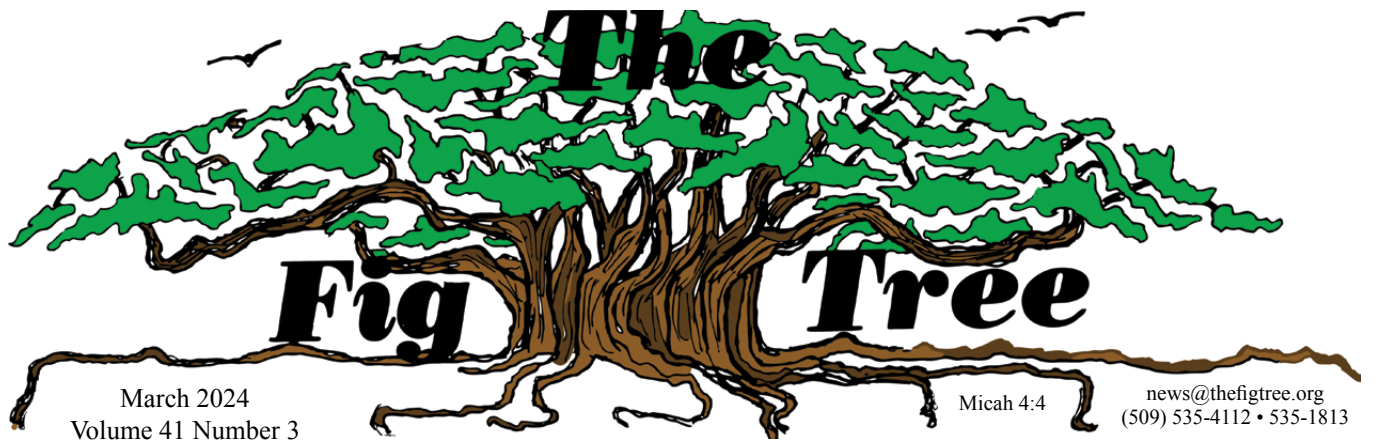


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- Ready 2 Serve partners with schools - p. 13
- Chaplain drawn by circuitous route - p. 16

CALENDAR ON PAGE 15
FEATURES 75+ EVENTS



Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest online at www.thefigtree.org • check The Fig Tree Facebook page daily for news and links

Supporters uplift empowering stories

By Mary Stamp

Mary Mackay's story is one of hundreds of volunteers and staff whose lives have intersected with The Fig Tree, making it what it is today, sharing thousands of stories over its 40 years.

She was involved with the 1984 advisory group that began meeting in the fall of 1983 to establish The Fig Tree newspaper. They made decisions about its mission, format, operations and funding.

Mary is one of 19 people involved with The Fig Tree many of those years who shared comments that will be in the promotional video telling The Fig Tree story for the Benefit Lunch on Friday, March 8, at Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University and the Breakfast-Time Zoom gathering on Wednesday, March 13.

After helping organize The Fig Tree in its early years, Mary began studies for a degree in education with a minor in math at Eastern Washington University—having earned bachelor's and master's degrees in biology in 1959 and 1963. She taught anatomy and physiology as an adjunct faculty member at Spokane Falls Community College for three years, and then worked with her hus-



Nineteen supporters and staff of The Fig Tree share comments in the Benefit video.

band, Alan, an ophthalmologist, until they both retired in 2002.

Soon after that, she returned to help as a volunteer with editing and mailings. At the 20th anniversary of The Fig Tree, Mary came to the Benefit Breakfast and signed up to serve on the board, which she did for six years. She was the board secretary for four years.

Now she is on the development/benefit planning committee, and helps with editing and mailings.

"I initially became involved because of my friendship with Mary Stamp. I was drawn by the goals of ecumenism and stories about people and organizations working toward the betterment of the community," Mary Mackay said.

At age 10, she asked her parents for a printing press. Her father, who had worked in a print shop and knew the techniques, taught her to set type by hand—the old-fashioned way. Then she and a friend printed some newsletters, which they distributed in her neighborhood in Middlebury, Vt.

Family friends in Middlebury bought the local newspaper, the Addison Independent, a weekly, giving Mary another early contact

Continued on page 4

'Young Heroes of the Holocaust' is the theme for 2024 art, essays

The Yom Hashoah planning committee has set the Spokane Community Observance of the Holocaust for Monday, May 6, at Temple Beth Shalom and is announcing the writing and art contests.

The theme for the writing and art contests this year is "Young Heroes of the Holocaust," using Spokane's Holocaust survivor and educator Carla Peperzak as the role model.

The Art Contest will be completed before the observance, so

select artwork will be displayed and the winners will be honored at the observance on May 6.

Following the guidance of the teachers on the planning committee, the deadline for the writing contest is after the observance because the timing for teaching about the Holocaust in the schools is later.

The 2024 keynote speakers will be the winners of the 2023 high school and middle school writing contests on the theme, "The Dangers of Indifference."

The first-place high school essay winner was Lorelai Taylor of East Valley High School, and the first-place middle school winner was Bella Buckner of St. George's School.

The 2024 prompt for the art and writing contests points out that "the Holocaust was a manifestation of the worst of humanity, but the best of humanity was also evident. There were people who dared to try to help Jews."

One of those heroes was Carla, who was 16 when Nazis invaded her homeland, the Netherlands. She worked with the Dutch underground and helped save more than 40 people.

Now she is 100 years old and lives in Spokane, where she is a Holocaust educator and a Spokane middle school bears her name.

The middle school and high school contestants are to create art or write essays based on reading about Carla and other young heroes of the Holocaust.

For information, email nevragain-spokane@comcast.net.

The Fig Tree sets 40th events

"Sharing Stories: Empowering People" is the theme for 40th anniversary events for The Fig Tree in March and April.

The annual Benefit Lunch features four brief talks and a video on The Fig Tree story. The buffet begins at 11 a.m., and the program is noon to 1 p.m., Friday, March 8, in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga. It will be livestreamed at gonzaga.edu/livestream.

The Breakfast-Time Benefit on Wednesday, March 13 is on Zoom. Gathering begins at 7:30 a.m., with chat groups for those wishing to converse. The program is from 8 to 9 a.m.

For both, Hamilton Studio is preparing a video on The Fig Tree's history, long-time supporters and news sources.

Maria Gaines of La Prensa Bilingue, Catherine Ferguson SNJM of our editing team, Bob Bartlett, a long-time friend of The Fig Tree, and Maurice Smith of Rising River Media will share brief comments on the value of The Fig Tree.

"In reviewing the bound volumes of our 40 years, I have been reminded of the hundreds of people involved in framing our approach to journalism that inspires hope and empowers people," said founding editor Mary Stamp. "We have shared stories of thousands of people."

The Fig Tree seeks support for its ongoing work, and for an online archive of all past issues and to publish two books, one on its history and the other with selected articles and editorials.

From 5 to 8 p.m., Sunday, April 28, The Fig Tree will host a Gala 40th Anniversary Celebration at the Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave.

Karen Georgia Thompson, the first African American woman president and general minister of the national United Church of Christ and a member of the World Council of Churches Central and Executive Committees, is the featured speaker. She's a Fig Tree reader. There will be a dinner, a faith leaders panel and an interfaith celebration. Tickets are \$50.

For information, call 535-4112 or email event@thefigtree.org.

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Around the World

World Council of Churches News, PO Box 2100
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WCC Lenten series is on water

“Seven Weeks for Water,” a World Council of Churches (WCC) Lenten series, was written by Bishop Emeritus Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. It is a reflection on “Water for Peace in the Middle East Region” based on Isaiah 55:1, “Everyone who thirsts, come to the water.” He notes that Isaiah invites his followers to drink not only from both earthly and spiritual waters.

“Almost a billion people on the planet are without access to clean, safe water,” he said. “Although technological advances in the desalination process have done miracles, especially in Palestine and Israel, where we have tap water processed from the Mediterranean, we still have a long way to go, which makes how we steward water all the more urgent.”

WCC reflects on UN Pact for the Future

The World Council of Churches (WCC) submitted comments in February to the draft of the “Pact for the Future,” a starting point for intergovernmental deliberations at the United Nations (UN) “Summit for the Future: Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow.” Co-facilitated by Germany and Namibia, it will be held Sept. 22 to 23. The aim is to adopt an action-oriented “Pact for the Future.”

On “Sustainable Development and Financing for Development,” the WCC stressed the importance of accelerating global responses to climate change and economic justice. “These issues are fundamental to human dignity and security, and undergirded by human rights obligations,” said the WCC text.

The WCC highlighted “the role of poverty, economic injustice and rampant income inequality as drivers of instability, conflict, displacement, climate change, environmental degradation and many other crises facing the world, and in undermining efforts for sustainable development.”

It called for more attention to hunger, food security and water access, as well as to the ongoing HIV and AIDS pandemic and the mental health crisis facing children and young people.

On “International Peace and Security,” the WCC urged more attention to the role of civil society and religious actors. In addition, it affirmed concern about the increased risk of nuclear conflict, the need for the prohibition of nuclear weapons and the importance of progress towards a ban on killer robots.

In general, it is concerned that, in the current global context with “dialogue and diplomacy being side-lined, investment in foundations of true human security is tragically inadequate.”

The WCC agreed with concerns related to risks entailed in the application of artificial intelligence under the section Science, Technology and Innovation and Digital Cooperation.

“Other areas of technological development that warrant attention include advanced biotechnology, bioengineering and nanotechnology, as well as social media and other electronic communication technologies,” the WCC commented.

On “Youth and Future Generations,” the WCC acknowledged the responsibility of the international community to young people and future generations, saying that “young persons will live with the consequences of our actions and our inaction.” It welcomes a Declaration of Future Generations to the Pact.”

Finally, related to “Transforming Global Governance,” the WCC affirmed the need for reform of the UN Security Council, but noted that its “post-WWII power dynamics, vested interests of its permanent members and the current geopolitical situation make meaningful reform impracticable.” The WCC supports initiatives to make the Security Council more accountable to the General Assembly, the UN’s most representative and inclusive body.

The “Pact for the Future” is available at oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-comments-to-the-zero-draft-of-the-pact-for-the-future.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Advent Lutheran gives Fig Tree a grant

Advent Lutheran Church in Spokane Valley recently granted The Fig Tree \$450 in its annual response to funding requests from its endowment fund.

“Because we received double the number of applications this year, the amount we allotted to each has decreased,” wrote Francie Shoquist, the endowment chair.

Advent’s endowment funds ministries within the Evangelical

Lutheran Church in America’s Northwest Intermountain Synod.

It is designed to provide a perpetual source of income to benefit outreach into the local community and NWIM Synod, missions of the ELCA in the U.S. and globally, and capital projects for churches.

The endowment is maintained by ongoing gifts of cash, memorials, bequests, life insurance, securities and more.

“We appreciate when local congregations recognize our contribution to, partnership with and strengthening of their ministries to their neighbors,” said Mary Stamp, The Fig Tree editor.

“Our goal is to raise the visibility of faith communities as positive assets in their local communities,” she said

For information, call 928-7733 or call 535-4112, or email news@thefigtree.org.

Muslims host fundraiser, education event

Muslims for Community Action and Support (MCAS) will hold their first-ever fundraiser, Knafeh for a Cause, at 6 p.m., Friday, March 1, at Hamilton Studio, 1427 W. Dean, to support their mission to build a network of diverse, inclusive relationships that enable outreach, civic engagement, education and sup-

port and resources for the refugee and immigrant community.

MCAS will offer an evening of education to learn the history of the Palestinian people, engage in community conversation and eat some Knafeh with cardamon chai, a dessert and tea combination from the region.

The goal is to raise \$25,000 to

help vulnerable people build a new life in Spokane, using their skills and experience to enrich the community with culture, art, language, food and education.

Local activist and indigenous artist Jacob Johns has donated a painting to be auctioned.

For information, email mcas-forspokane@gmail.com.

Heritage University trains counselors

In January, the first cohort of the YMCA of Greater Seattle and Heritage University master’s degree program in mental health counseling began their four-year program, which is part of a new initiative to improve the quality of behavioral health care in King County.

The university in Toppenish has partnered with the YMCA to offer the program for employees

working in King County Medicaid mental health or substance use disorder agencies.

The program will provide advanced education for up to 60 staff who are from diverse racial and ethnic groups, of diverse abilities and part of the LGBTQ-IAA+ community.

Without accruing student loan debt, staff will receive education, paid time and unpaid internships.

The graduates will be contracted to maintain employment for four years at their community-based behavioral health organizations, with the goal of improving employee retention rates of behavioral health staff and offering culturally relevant and affirmative behavioral health care to the community.

For information, email dgoodman@seattleymca.org.

Pilgrimage for Peace urges war to end

From Feb. 14 to 21, faith leaders, activists, and artists joined a pilgrimage from Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pa., to the White House to urge President Biden to call for an end to the war in Palestine.

Faith for Black Lives, National Council of Churches USA, Rabbis for Ceasefire, Hindus for Human Rights, the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations

(CAIR-Philadelphia), Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, Black Church Center for Justice and Equality, Kairos Center, Freedom Church of the Poor, Until Freedom and others marched to address the ongoing tragedy in Gaza.

“As we continue to mourn the loss of innocent Israeli lives on October 7, we firmly believe that responding to violence with more violence is not the solution,” the groups said.

They urged President Biden and Congress to halt weapons funding to Israel and increase humanitarian aid to Palestine.

“It is our collective responsibility to advocate for a peaceful resolution and uphold the principles of justice and compassion,” they said. “We will either sow seeds of nonviolence today or reap nonexistence tomorrow.”

For information, visit pilgrimageforpeace.org.

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PJALS facilitates ‘Why Race Matters’

Liz Moore, executive director of Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane and Mikaela Brown, racial justice educator and leader, are co-facilitating “Why Race Matters: History, Systems, and Strategies,” from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, March 2. “Every measure of socio-economic well-being shows disparity along the fault line of race,” said Liz. “We can’t build a just and nonviolent world without addressing racism on the individual, institutional and systemic levels.”

“Why Race Matters” provides interactive exercises and shares local data, while addressing how racial inequities are built into institutions. It introduces a racial equity lens and offers a foundation for further racial justice work, helping participants examine their understandings of race, advantage and justice.

For information, email lmoore@pjals.org.

International Women’s Day is March 8

International Rescue Committee Spokane is hosting an International Women’s Day event, in partnership with Providence and Community Health Plan of Washington, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Friday, March 8, at the Spokane Central Library Branch, 906 W. Main Ave. in Nx*yx*yetk* Hall on the Third Floor.

The annual event uses this international holiday as an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the resilience, courage, talents and accomplishments of refugee and immigrant women in Spokane with community booths, activities for women and children, a donation and giveaway room, and refreshments. Mayor Lisa Brown and refugee and immigrant women will speak from 12 to 12:30 p.m.

For information, contact 258-5774 or kimberly.curry@rescue.org

LCSNW seeks foster parents for refugees

Lutheran Community Services Northwest will hold an in-person Refugee Foster Care Information Session at 5 p.m., Wednesday, March 20, at its office at 210 W. Sprague in Spokane.

“This is an opportunity for families interested in supporting refugee youth to learn about being foster parents with the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program, which serves teenage youth seeking refuge in the U.S. but do not have family to provide care,” said Kelsey Doerr, foster parent recruiter. “Foster families offer a safe, supportive home for youth to thrive.”

For information, call 747-8224 or email theirhope@lcsnw.org.

United Methodists plan March 24 cantata

United Methodist churches in the region will usher in Holy Week by presenting the cantata “Song of the Shadows” by Joseph Martin at 4 p.m., Sunday, March 24, at Spokane Valley United Methodist Church (UMC), 115 N. Raymond Rd.

Directed by Mary Jane Shervais of Cheney UMC, the Inland District Choir concert is free. The choir rehearses at Spokane Valley UMC at 10 a.m., Saturdays, March 9 and 23, and there are rehearsal tracks for those at a distance available by emailing mjshervais@gmail.com.

District UMC congregations are joining Lenten series based on Thomas Steagald’s book “Shadows, Darkness and Dawn.”

For information, email alissaamestoy@gmail.com.

River Warriors plan Expo 50th events

River Warriors Margo Lee Hill and Jeff Ferguson are working on plans for the Tribal Culture Pillar at the upcoming EXPO 50th anniversary celebration from May 4 to July 4.

They are coordinating plans for events including a powwow, musical festival, film festival, historical tours, Salish TED Talk, spoken word, a Native fashion show and dugout canoe races.

They are seeking volunteers to help with these events. For information, email jfergusonphotos@yahoo.com.

Equity Electronics fixes used computers to give

Equity Electronics is a small program created to distribute computers to those without one. It seeks donations of used computers that are securely wiped so none of the previous owners’ data can be recovered, said Linny Dee, who owns the business.

“We replace parts, and install a new operating system and software,” she said. “We match recipients with a restored computer that meets their needs.”

Linny works with organizations to identify local people who would benefit from a restored computer.

For information, visit ko-fi.com/equityelectronics.

Our Lady of the Lake event funds grotto

Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church in Suncrest is enhancing its sacred space with a grotto and small amphitheater centered around a statue of the blessed mother on its property.

To kick-off three months of fundraising until June 30, they are holding an event at 7 p.m., Saturday, March 2, at the church social hall with a presentation about the project and donation options, such as purchasing paver bricks to engrave as memorials to honor loved ones.

Our Lady of the Lake began in the early 1970s with services in private homes, then at a community center and now with a new church since 2016.

Their priest for 25 years, Fr. Tim Clancy, a Jesuit who teaches at Gonzaga University, envisioned creating a labyrinth to “make a space where people could engage in the ancient tradition of contemplative prayer.”



Suncrest church creates grotto as a sacred space.

The effort seeks to enhance that space with a grotto and small amphitheater, with the hope this will be a place for “people of all faith traditions to come to pray, contemplate and find peace.”

As one of the parishioners shared, “I feel like this is such a beautiful natural setting and imagine this to be a place of refuge where, ‘however softly we

speak, God is near enough to hear us,’ as St. Teresa of Avila said.”

They say the project is a testament to the physical labor and financial support of parishioners and local Suncrest community members.

For information, email Lynn McHugh, jlb.mchugh@gmail.com or Mary Foutz, msfoutz@msn.com.

Film festival explores nuclear issues

The International Uranium Film Festival (IUFF) will stop in Spokane for showings from 5:30 to 10 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday, April 3 and 4 at the Magic Lantern Theater, 25 E. Main.

Cheryl McDaniel of Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility helped bring the films that recount the history of uranium, atomic bombs, nuclear power, and issues of destruction, health and survival.

Marcia Gomes de Oliveira and Norbert Suchanek, who co-founded IUFF in 2010 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, will visit Spokane.

The Inland Northwest has been impacted by plutonium pro-

duction at Hanford, the world’s largest nuclear clean up site, said Cheryl. Its where most nuclear weapons at the Trident Nuclear Submarine site at Bangor were built.

The festival is dedicated to Klee Benally, IUFF web designer and a film producer, who died after completing designs on Dec. 30, 2023. The first film on April 3 is “Making Waves: The Rebirth of The Golden Rule,” the story of the Veterans For Peace Sailboat that inspired Green Peace.

After “Nuclear Savage, The Islands of Secret Project 4.1,” a panel will lead a discussion. The

next film is “Downwind,” narrated by Martin Sheen.

April 4 films include “Atomic Cover-up,” black and white footage after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and color footage a U.S. soldier took that the U.S. government classified the films for more than two decades, believing the sight of suffering would turn the world against the bombs. The 2023 film “Richland” by Irene Lusztig, who will lead discussion with Twa-le Abramson, Marcia and Norbert. Next is “Radioactive: The Women of Three Mile Island,” with Jane Fonda.

For information, visit magi-clantern.com.

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2024 Benefit Events



Lunch - Friday, March 8

Arrive: 11 a.m. • Program 12 to 1 p.m.
Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University
in person and streaming

Zoom - Wednesday, March 13

Gather 7:30 a.m. - Slides 7:50 - Program 8 to 9 a.m.

‘Sharing Stories: Empowering People’

Speakers and video share highlights of 40 years since founding
There is no charge to attend the event. Guests are asked to donate to The Fig Tree.

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Sunday, April 28

5 - 8 p.m. - Cathedral of St. John - 127 E. 12th Ave.

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General Minister & President national United Church of Christ
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Continued from page 1
with the field of journalism.

“In editing each issue, I find the quality of writing and The Fig Tree’s ability to find new stories remarkable,” she said.

“Sometimes I find that I am quoting articles I’ve edited before we have gone to press,” Mary commented.

“I’m amazed at where people’s faith takes them and at their dedication,” Mary said.

For many years, the editing team gathered around Mary Stamp’s dining room table, where they built friendships as they discussed the articles, editing points, the issues raised and life.

Since COVID they have been editing on Google Drive, where they can enter their edits on the same copy.

Recently, the volunteers on the editing team have included Deb Bisenius, Erin Endres, Marijke Fakasiieiki, Catherine Ferguson, Malcolm Haworth, Gary Jewell, Lori Leigh, Mary Mackay, Emma Maple, Dru Powers, Jill Redl, Nancy Roth,

Wade Schwartz and Pava Young.

Participating on the Steering Committee that organized, founded and guided The Fig Tree were co-founder and editor, Mary Stamp of the United Church of Christ (UCC); co-founder and associate editor Sr. Bernadine Casey, SNJM, of St. Patrick’s Catholic; Kim Fields of the Disciples of Christ; Fred Fritz of the American Lutheran Church; Jo Hendricks of Manito Presbyterian; Mary Mackay, Westminster UCC; Carl Milton of Manito United Methodist; John Olson of the Lutheran Church in America and Spokane Christian Coalition; Bart Preecs, Whitworth Presbyterian and now Westminster UCC, Jim Sims of New Hope Baptist, Jack Sondericker of Park Heights Baptist, and Peter Stretch of St. David’s Episcopal.

Those sharing in the benefit video about their involvement with The Fig Tree along with Mary Mackay are the following:

- Bart Preecs was on the organizing committee until he moved to Richland. His parents helped

with deliveries, and since he returned to Spokane in 2020, he has been helping with deliveries.

- United Methodist retired pastor Flora Bowers was involved through the Spokane Christian Coalition and often contributed reflections in the Sounding Board column.

- Mitch and Kathy Finley, who have written books on family, counseling and faith, told of being interviewed in their living room for the first issue.

- Marilynne Mueller, a longtime peacemaker, and other members of Shalom United Church of Christ shared for the first issue the story of doing a production of “Alice in Blunderland” to challenge nuclear war.

- DR Michel of Upper Columbia United Tribes expressed appreciation for The Fig Tree’s ongoing coverage of Indigenous issues and salmon recovery.

- Denise Attwood of Ganesh Himal Trading Co. found that Fig Tree coverage helped strengthen fair trade in the region.

- Her son, Cameron Conner, is now writing a monthly column about the influence of commu-

nity organizing globally.

- Catholic Bishop Emeritus William Skylstad values the coverage of ecumenical issues and the Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on the Columbia River Watershed.

- Naghmana Sherazi of The Lands Council appreciates The Fig Tree’s coverage of the environment, the Muslim community, immigrants and refugees and anything related to the community.

- Gloria Baynes, a new board member, uplifted the multifaith, multicultural and multiracial coverage.

- Former board members Happy Watkins and James Watkins

of New Hope Baptist Church shared many story ideas to further that coverage.

- Emma Maple, editorial intern, expects what she learned in writing for The Fig Tree according to its editorial approach will help her as a religion reporter.

Staff members Mary Stamp, editor; Malcolm Haworth, directory editor and ecumenical/interfaith liaison; Marijke Fakasiieiki, development and editorial associate, and Kaye Hult, described their roles and enthusiasm about The Fig Tree and Resource Directory.

For information, call 535-4112 or visit thefigtree.org.



The Arc opens in North Spokane

The Arc of Spokane is celebrating the grand opening of its new thrift store in north Spokane at 11008 N. Newport Hwy from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Friday, March 1.

Festivities include a gift card scavenger hunt, an adaptive school supplies drive for local students, and sips and sweets while shopping.

“Through some artwork made by our clients, carefully curated displays, a positive shopping experience, and easy access from the highway, the Newport Highway store demonstrates our commitment to supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families,” said Pamela Norr, chief executive officer of The Arc of Spokane.

“We welcome support of this new thrift store and the Argonne thrift store in Spokane Valley through donations and shopping,” she said.

Proceeds from thrift stores go towards services The Arc provides for people with IDD and their families.

Currently, The Arc operates about 30 programs and services to ensure people with IDD and their families have support for employment, healthcare, community engagement and in schools.

“Moving north gives us the opportunity to expand our outreach and mission,” said Rose Williamson, director of thrift operations. “It gives easier access for the northern counties, allowing us to establish community connections and a presence to realize our goals. We strive to

provide a quality thrift experience where people can feel great about supporting our mission.”

A key part of the grand opening is an adaptive school supplies drive for local students with IDD. These kits contain tools such as chair bands and chewable necklaces to help students with IDD focus to succeed in school.

Adaptive school supplies help students with IDD be and feel successful at school by improving access to the classroom and curriculum, said Rose.

At the checkout, customers can donate \$1 toward a kit, \$7 for half a kit, \$14 for a kit or \$20 for a wheelchair backpack.

This fundraiser will continue through March in celebration of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

“Adaptive school supplies help students with disabilities succeed in the classroom in ways that work for them,” said Jennifer Oliveri, advocacy and family support director. “Even if a student doesn’t have a disability, he or she may still benefit from a fidget, a weighted pencil or reading strip. When we normalize adaptive supplies, we open the conversation for all kids to share what they need.”

The Newport Highway store is open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday to Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday.

Donation drop-off hours are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday.

For information, call 328-8100 or email mmulligan@arc-spokane.org.



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Race Amity Chat
1 p.m., Friday, March 22, 2024
A sacred space to offer prayers, converse,
make plans for action and reflect on action
Spokane Public Library - Liberty Park Branch
402 S. Pittsburg St., Spokane 99202
Call Deb (509) 863-4461 for Zoom info
Everyone is welcome. Contact Deb to request accommodation.

Spokane pastor becomes auxiliary bishop in COGIC jurisdiction

By Mary Stamp

Spokane has a new bishop. It's Auxiliary Bishop Ezra Kinlow.

In November, the General Assembly of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) in Memphis, Tenn., approved the nomination of Ezra Kinlow, who has been district superintendent for Eastern Washington and the pastor of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, as auxiliary bishop.

In January at Atlanta, Ga., the COGIC consecrated him as auxiliary bishop in the Washington State Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of the COGIC. He was among eight auxiliary bishops consecrated.

"I will be assisting the Washington State Presiding Bishop," said Bishop Kinlow, 86, conscious that his new position is a reward for his loyalty and commitment for working a number of roles within the Washington State Jurisdiction and for 42 years as pastor of the Holy Temple COGIC.

As district superintendent for 10 years, he visited churches in the district. Now he will help the presiding bishop visit churches in seven states—Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Alaska—to nurture the pastors and congregations.

For 20 years, he was youth leader for the Washington Jurisdiction.

In 2004, his church outgrew its building at 312 E. 3rd Ave. and moved into the former Christian Science building at 806 W. Indiana, where it is continuing to grow.

COVID has had an impact on the congregation. It lost some members to the illness, and some did not come back when services started being held in person again. The church continues to offer Sunday worship in person and online and a Bible study on a phone conference line. About 150 to 200 now attend regularly in person and online combined.

Many members of his congregation are aging, and many have had cancer.

"Some are passing away, but God is still healing some," he said.

Bishop Kinlow has also been active in the community.

"For many years, I worked with other pastors in the Spokane Ministers' Fellowship, conversing with the police department to urge them to hire Black police officers," he said.

Their hope was to decrease the rate at which Black men were stopped and incarcerated.

Once the city agreed to hire Black police officers, the pastors visited colleges around the state to recruit candidates. They hired seven, but over 30 years since then, most have retired and were not replaced, Bishop Kinlow said.

When Sheri Barnard was mayor, she invited the Spokane Ministers' Fellowship to join with others in the community



Auxiliary Bishop Ezra Kinlow has served Holy Temple Church of God in Christ for 42 years.

to help choose a police chief, he added.

He also was involved with organizing Churches Against Racism in connection with the Spokane Christian Coalition. The goal was to bring together faith leaders to work on common concerns, but it did not gain the traction hoped for, he said.

In 1996, he also helped organize a gathering of 5,000 church people to sign an agreement to work together and share pulpits.

"We learned about our different churches but didn't experience the progress in race relationships we sought," Bishop Kinlow said.

Also in the 1990s, the Greater Spokane Association of Evangelicals worked to form a Mission Spokane organization with leadership shared by him and Tom Starr. It lasted several years after Tom's death in 2001.

As a pastor, he continually joined efforts to increase Black leadership and visibility in schools, in the police department and in the job market.

"We wanted the schools to hire more Black counselors, teachers and principals and had some success," he added.

Holy Temple COGIC has

worked to present the Gospel of Christ and has been faithful to this mission, Bishop Kinlow said.

Because of the church's seating capacity, it has been used since 2004 as the place for gathering for the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day worship service, which the Spokane Ministers' Fellowship organizes each year as a fundraiser for the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center.

Bishop Kinlow did prison ministry for about 20 years in Airway Heights. Currently the elders and missionaries at Holy Temple continue this ministry.

"Some felons turned their lives around after they accepted Christ," he said. "We helped some reduce their sentences and achieve early release because of our relationship with them."

"Some became active in the church and productive members of society," he added.

Working with Ezra is Elder Wayne Washington, who was trained in-house and appointed as

assistant pastor three years ago. Two others, Elder Tommy Whitman and Elder Marvin White, also work in ministry with him.

Many members who came to Spokane with the Air Force and different colleges stayed.

Bishop Kinlow, who grew up in Arkansas, moved to Tacoma with his family. There he met Eleise, his wife of 60 years. Not only has she supported his ministry, but she has also organized women's retreats that have drawn women from across the United States and sparked some of them to start their own ministries.

"I'm grateful for what God has done in my life, for a southern boy from Dumas, Ark., to be picked as bishop, one of the highest offices in the church," he said. "I have been in the Church of God in Christ all my life, but initially did not see ministry in

my future."

During some of his early years of ministry in Spokane, he worked as an engineer with IBM. He retired in 1985 after 17 years and focused on ministry full time.

Three of the Kinlow's six children are active in church. One son in Seattle plays keyboard at a church. One daughter is married to a minister and lives in Atlanta. A second daughter, Yolanda, is choir director at Holy Temple. Their other sons include one who paints houses, one who lives in Seattle and one who died in a car accident.

"We have 13 grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. We are a close family, often traveling back and forth between Tacoma and here," he said.

For information, call 624-0522 or visit facebook.com/HolyTempleSpokane.



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Churches open their doors as warming shelters and need volunteers

Sharyl Brown of Jewels Helping Hands serves as day supervisor at the recently opened Cedar warming shelter in the former New Apostolic Church, and also helps at three other church warming shelters—Liberty Park and St. Paul’s United Methodist, Knox Presbyterian and Morning Star Baptist.

Along with logging in the clients, she receives donations of clothing and blankets at the Cedar location for distribution to other locations.

Sharyl pointed out that not all the guests are homeless people seeking shelter from the streets.

One man called during the cold snap when his furnace went out, and he needed to be somewhere warm to stay. Later he realized his pipes were frozen and needed to be repaired.

Volunteers connected him to CHAS and Pioneer Human Services, which helped him contact his insurance agency. They also



Cedar warming shelter offers beds and boxes for belongings.



Sharyl Brown

drove him home to take pictures of the damage, said Sharyl.

For four people who came to the warming shelter, the Cedar center was the step they needed for them to decide to enter in-patient treatment for mental health care. Cedar center volunteers now call and check in on them to be sure they are still in treatment

and receiving the help they need.

“For many, it’s just a matter of being somewhere safe, having people believe in them and providing them with the support they need, rather than leaving them outside with no support,” she said.

“It’s more effective to assist 20 people than it is to help more,”

said Sharyl, who started a peer program at Camp Hope, where she built resources and relationships.

Each of the church warming shelters need volunteers, donations and meal trains, with volunteers making, bringing and serving food.

As a substance use disorder professional, Sharyl went to

college to be an addiction counselor, but after volunteering with Julie Garcia and Jewels Helping Hands for several years, she developed a passion working with people who are experiencing homelessness.

“I left my career to be here, because God spoke clearly to me that this was where God wanted me to be,” Sharyl said.

“When I started at Camp Hope, Julie told me that all the people were my clients. It was my job to find help for them. Every day I pulled up to camp and I said, ‘God, I’m not capable. I’m not.’

“No human is capable,” Sharyl continued, “but look at what God has done. I’m just grateful the churches opened their doors to be warming shelters, to give people the love, compassion and the safe space that we all deserve.”

For information, visit jewelshelpinghands.org.

2024 Homeless Connect breaks records for attendance, services

Spokane’s Jan. 25 Homeless Connect broke attendance records, said Maurice Smith of Rising River Media.

As organizers anticipated, the event surpassed the 2023 record attendance. Food staff served 2,000 people, which included 300 vendors, staff and volunteers, compared with 1,200 people served in 2022—a 42 percent increase, he estimated.

In 2019, there were just 541 people at the Homeless Connect, which Maurice said indicates the growth in homelessness in

greater Spokane.

Participating agencies and service providers spread the word to homeless friends to make the 2024 Homeless Connect the largest in its 12-year history.

It was a record day for haircuts, with more than 250 provided by more than 60 cosmetology students from Spokane Community College.

In the annual Three-Court Warrant Fest, court staff recalled 103 warrants—16 by Superior Court, 20 by District Court and 67 by Municipal Court—more

than double the number of warrants recalled last year.

Spokane County Superior Court Judge Szambelan said there was more engagement by people in felony warrant-status than past years.

“Reconnecting folks with the court system without an arrest on a warrant benefits everyone. We appreciated the opportunity to work with our criminal justice partners to facilitate case resolution,” he said.

• Department of Licensing staff, in collaboration with the

Spokane Regional Health District, saw 130 people seeking identification (ID) cards and issued 109 IDs to attendees to replace lost or stolen cards.

• There were a record number of 116 vendors and service providers offering various services.

• Breast Intentions saw about 14 clients an hour with four fitters, serving 116 folks who signed up.

• Health care providers gave more than 30 flu vaccines.

• The clothing and food banks were “cleaned out.”

• Pet Services saw about 120 animals and gave thousands of dollars in spay and neuter vouchers.

Reports are that the Spokane Police Department was “bored,” which is a good thing at a Homeless Connect, Maurice said, also grateful for the local elected officials who came and spent time learning more about homelessness, those experiencing it and service providers who make a difference.

Information on the Spokane Valley Connect is available at SpokaneConnect.org.

For information, call 475-8797.

Gonzaga’s online master’s in nursing includes veterans

In the new U.S. News and World Report 2024 Best Online Programs rankings, the Gonzaga University (GU) online master’s program for veterans rose from 22nd to 19th, and the online master’s in nursing program rose from 68th to 54th. Rankings are based on a survey of more than 1,800 U.S.-institutions.

Julie Wolter, dean of GU’s School of Health Sciences, said the online master’s in nursing “reflects our accredited distance programming, which we have continued to refine for decades. Our students are often accomplished nurses who have established themselves as leaders in

their organizations and return to school to advance their careers.”

GU’s ranking in the online master’s for veterans reflects the its commitment to students who have served in the military.

GU has done nursing distance education for decades in line with the school’s Jesuit mission to support underserved populations. Rural communities in the West have severe shortages in health professionals such as nursing. Gonzaga creates new ways to serve those communities.

“Our experience allows us to provide distance education that includes innovative, immersive clinical experiences and simu-

lations,” Julie said, noting that GU values experiential learning and community connections. “In-person immersion students are integrated into the online curriculum while other students

work and serve where they live, and we place students in their home communities.”

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2024 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference

Youth give overview of concerns, media, actions and hope

Four young adults shared their hopes for their lives and the world in the opening plenary of the 2024 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference (EWLC) on Jan. 27 at Spokane Valley United Methodist Church.

Anastasia Wendlinder of Gonzaga University's Religious Studies Department and member of the EWLC planning committee, guided their discussion.

The panelists were Rachel Muhr, a junior at Gonzaga majoring in English and secondary education; Ellis Benson, a Lewis and Clark High school student and youth organizer with the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane; Jasper Willson, a senior at Washington State University in environmental studies, and Taylor Licon, a sophomore at Gonzaga who volunteers with people in the intellectually and developmentally disabled (IDD) community.

Rachel is Catholic. Jasper is Jewish. Ellis and Taylor are agnostic.

Anastasia opened with several questions: "What does the world look like to you? What issues are of concern to you and why?"

Despite challenges, Taylor feels hope for the world, especially for the IDD community, which is often pushed aside.

Jasper focuses on the environment, which she considers "the scariest issue." She does that because "it's hard to hope if we are not working on it."

Ellis is hopeful despite an increase in isolation, a decline in community, an escalation in global conflict and concerns about climate change.

"When we lose community, we lose so much. Community teaches us to have empathy for each other," she said, aware that people searching for community online can be good or can lead to online echo chambers—where people hear only opinions like their own—and radicalization. "We need to interact with people with different values on a daily basis, or we can lose empathy."

Rachel's Roman Catholic faith guides her to form relationships, and know who she is, who God is and how the world works.

As a future educator, Rachel said relationships are important. She is concerned that youth suffer disillusionment, disenfranchisement and discrimination. We must build up our communities and converse on issues to take care of our common home."

Ellis is aware that her gen-



Ellis Benson and Rachel Muhr discuss faith perspectives.



Taylor Licon and Jasper Willson committed to keep working.

eration can easily isolate themselves. "If we go online, we may think we are not isolated and have community, but we need real community. Isolation breeds fear and more isolation. Community should be based on trust and companionship."

With K-12 students, Rachel sees the impact of isolation and COVID on mental health because students did not interact in school, sports or faith communities. She knows kids who post every day and get caught up in bullying, isolation and discrimination. "I see 12-year-olds do horrible things to other people online."

Ellis said high school kids scrolling their phones in the halls and in class may be a sign of boredom, which could also lead them to talk with those nearby.

Jasper suggested that if people talk to each other, they find they have common concerns and then can work to improve the environment.

During COVID, Taylor found the IDD community felt isolated in group homes or their parents' homes. Now they go bowling or

do karaoke for social interaction, and see others like themselves.

"The IDD community is active on social media. Many like media. Unlike many, they use social media to uplift and support each other," she said.

Taylor uses social media "to share my voice and the voices of those in the IDD community. I use it to interact with those who don't have positive interaction in the world."

As a journalist and documentarian, Jasper said her relationship with social media is complex. It's one of the ways to get information out.

"In my career and in my organizing, I need social media to share information," she said. "It's hard to balance using it for organizing and for relaxing because algorithms feed me more of what I do in organizing."

Ellis stepped back from social media this year, but PJALS uses Instagram to organize, so she has to check it, limiting herself to 15 minutes a day.

Rachel didn't go on social media until high school, when she began using it to connect

with people.

Anastasia then asked participants the impact of their faith and values on their lives and concerns.

Rachel said she was non-denominational Christian until she was eight and baptized Catholic.

"My family had a strong emphasis on faith and having a right relationship with God. I believe I need to show my relationship with God in a way that benefits others. Faith is not about agreeing with people or God. Faith moves us to make up and have better relationships," she said.

For Ellis, faith is "having trust in something larger than yourself. I don't have a religious faith, but I have a faith in humanity and in my work. I think humans are inherently good, not inherently bad. Conditions make us do bad or greedy things. I have faith in my neighbors and fellow activists. That drives me to do my work."

Faith is an interesting concept for Jasper as a Jew living in a Christian culture.

"Judaism is not a choice. It's who I am and will be. I don't worry about being right with God. I have faith humans will do the right thing," she said.

Taylor, who is agnostic, did not grow up with religion, but as a child carried a giant Buddha with her everywhere.

"I associate faith with hope. Faith is believing in something so hard it drives one's soul. The IDD community has a variety of religions. I'm open to learning and I'm hopeful," she said.

Anastasia then asked: "What

is the role of religion? Are you looking for a spiritual practice that corresponds with your social justice?"

Ellis said her focus is on activism and justice.

Taylor values human decency, kindness and being welcoming, not putting people in a box.

In her final question, Anastasia asked: "What do you want the world to look like?"

As someone who hikes and enjoys being in nature, Taylor hopes people will work to preserve and improve the environment. She also hopes for stronger community, both online or in person.

Jasper wants people to keep working on behalf of the environment.

"Some say the world will be destroyed so what is the point of trying," she said. "I believe there is so much that can be done. Every little bit matters. If we have community connections, it's never too late to do something. You never know what will come from what you do," she said.

Seeking to end mass incarceration, imperialistic oppression and environmental destruction, Ellis' hope is that people will connect with neighbors and build community.

Rachel's hope is for more love.

"Love means we put heart and soul into what we do. When we have love and direction for that love, I have hope for the future. Love doesn't stop. It has to keep going and going," she said.

The workshop video is at <https://youtu.be/RLrOFvvG-dAE>.

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Environmental leaders present a taste of hope and progress they see

John Wallingford of the Cathedral of St. John, Naghmana Sherazi of The Lands Council, Tom Soeldner of the Sierra Club and Sarah Robinson of Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light (WAIPL) spoke on “Renewing Hope for the Future” at the 2024 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference environmental plenary.

Each shared progress they see.

John Wallingford has organized Hope for Creation conferences for two years at St. John’s to raise awareness on environmental issues before the 50th anniversary of Spokane’s Expo ’74, the first World Fair focused on the environment. After Expo, Spokane became a leader in environmental care.

John sees hope in scientific accomplishments, interventions, and increased awareness.

“With science, we can use ethylene to improve plant growth, so we can grow more,” he said. “We can capture carbon dioxide with microorganisms and improve carbon capture with chemistry. We have materials to improve solar batteries and can remove jet fuel exhaust and combustion.”

He said scientists are discussing how trees recover after wildfires and farm machinery now recognizes weeds using facial recognition so farmers can spray just the weeds.

The U.S. government plans to protect old growth forests, and the Bureau of Land Management is using Indigenous knowledge to manage western lands.

Laminated timber skyscrapers in Sweden that use renewable resources are a carbon sink.

John listed local accomplishments: protecting the Saltese Flats and Waikiki Springs, and having one of the nation’s best wastewater treatment plants.

“Many new organizations have sprung up on environmental issues. There are now 30,000 environmental NGOs in the U.S.,” he said.

The Lands Council is 40 years old. Climate Justice is new. Earth Ministry is part of the national Interfaith Power and Light.

“Each speaker today has expertise on work in environmental care from different perspectives,” he said.

Naghmana Sherazi, who is climate justice program director with The Lands Council and a member of Muslims for Community Action and Support, is driven by her concern that today’s children may die from climate change causing heat



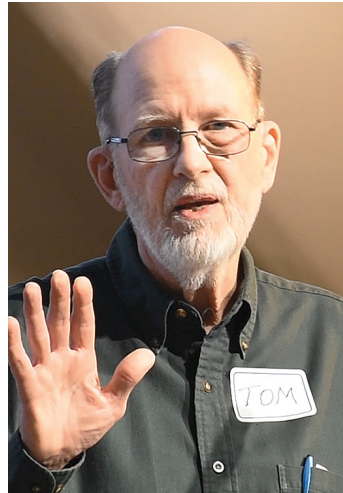
John Wallingford uplifts accomplishments, awareness.



Naghmana Sherazi counters those without hope.



Sharon Robinson urges action against pipeline.



Tom Soeldner offers five suggestions for action.

waves and wildfire smoke.

She is heartbroken that her son does not want to bring children onto this planet.

She recently asked 300 people gathered at a Priority Spokane meeting how many want to make the world better for their children and grandchildren. Most raised their hands.

In a global survey, however, more than three-fourths of youth expect the planet to die.

To counter those without hope, Naghmana shared a video of Hannah Ritchie, a young woman who tells of changes she sees that give her hope: the prices of electric vehicles are dropping so more can buy them; eco-friendly structures sequester carbon and breathe out oxygen, and there are efforts to remove carbon from the atmosphere.

“**We can start locally** and talk about what we can do,” said Naghmana, urging people to influence policies, invite people to express their visions, and stand up for bills in the legislature. “We need to be sure our voices are heard.”

Aware of the impact of heat in low-income areas with little shade, The Lands Council plans to plant trees in its spring Spokane campaign.

control and power generation, the U.S. and Canada are considering ecosystem functions in dam operations to promote salmon passage, wildlife safety and protection of lands.

The U.S. has not included tribes at the table, as Canada has, but is doing some consulting with them. Negotiations continue.

In 2023, tribes were granted \$1 billion to restore salmon in the Columbia and Snake River Basins. Tribes have comprehensive plans for salmon habitat, water quality and replacing services of dams, he said.

Salmon re-introduced above Grand Coulee and Chief Joe dams spawned and went past the dams to the ocean and came back.

He urges citizens to support the work of conservation organizations and Indigenous sovereign nations.

“Scientists tell us the planet has survived five great extinctions and we have entered the sixth, the first to be wholly caused by humanity’s appetites and lifestyles,” Tom said.

“Hope is a state of mind, not a state of the world,” he said.

“It is based on commitment, not optimism. Hope calls us to live into that hope and do what we can to sustain the beauty, fullness and variety of earth’s life,” Tom clarified.

He offers five suggestions:

1) Think holistically about sustaining all life, not just human lives, because humans depend on all living things.

2) Select a focus and put energy there.

3) Act locally and connect with local groups.

4) Connect with and support Indigenous knowledge and leadership. Indigenous people have millennia of experience and use the best science.

5) Be satisfied with enough. Conservation is the way forward. Consume less.

Sarah Robinson, who is the advocacy director of Earth Ministry/WAIPL, urged challenging the proposal of TC Energy to push more gas from British Columbia through old GTN pipelines that go through North Idaho, Eastern Washington and Oregon to Northern California.

“It locks us into fossil fuel use rather than renewable energy,” she said.

“**Thousands of residents** have written letters. Attorneys general, senators, governors and faith leaders in the region have expressed their opposition to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s recent approval. There will be more opportunities to express opposition,” said Sarah, calling for asking the Biden Administration to review FERC’s approval.

“We can write letters to bring our stories, express solidarity with indigenous communities and raise concern about health impacts,” she said.

“We are responsible to keep on acting, aware there is much we can do to make the world more livable,” Sarah said.

For details, see the workshop video at <https://youtu.be/YYNn6KLeA-0>.

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Indigenous communities make their voices heard on climate and salmon

Jeff Ferguson, Spokane tribal member, freelance photographer and videographer who does documentaries on cultural preservation and issues facing Indian Country, and DR Michel, executive director of Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT), led a workshop on “Indigenous Issues” for the recent Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.



Jeff Ferguson and DR Michel offered Indigenous insights.

Climate change and salmon recovery were two areas of focus. **With Indigenous people** from around the world, Jeff attended COP 27 and COP28—the last two United Nations Conference on Parties—to stop climate change.

“Indigenous leaders were there to share their wisdom on caring for the land and as people overwhelmed by climate change,” said Jeff, who went to COP28 in Dubai in early December with environmental activist Jacob Johns.

Gathering with government leaders were NGOs and Big Oil.

“**No one, regardless** of wealth, will survive climate change,” Jeff said. “We bring Indigenous knowledge as solutions for climate change. My ancestors have lived here for 10,000 years.”

“Colonists came, saw the land was pristine and thought it was untouched. It was because Indigenous people see land as part of us. We live in reciprocity, respecting the land, unlike capitalists who take from the land,” he said.

Lewis and Clark said the salmon runs were so thick they could walk across the Columbia River on the backs of salmon.

“We are salmon people. We fished 100 days a year and

caught massive 30- to 110-pound salmon. Salmon chiefs regulated the number of salmon we could take so we did not overfish. We let some go by to spawn.”

When colonists came 150 years ago, they brought the industrial age and changes that polluted the rivers.

The Spokane Tribe has worked two decades to set high water quality standards, Jeff said.

“**Our problem is being** able to get to the table to share our knowledge,” Jeff said, placing his hand on a table. “Even though the Yakama and Colville are the largest land-based tribes, they aren’t included in negotiations. We need our voices to be heard to share what our ancestors taught us.”

Jeff gives many presentations on the environment and climate crisis.

“Will I see my great-grandchildren?” asks Jeff, who is nearly 39. “It’s getting worse with floods, fires and drought.”

He said Indigenous people find it hard to get a seat at the

table. Last year in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, many who came were denied hotel reservations they made in advance and were left with expensive options.

“**We have answers** and need to be at the table of global climate summits,” Jeff said, adding that such economic pressures make it hard for Indigenous people to come and be heard.

One voice presented was a woman named Vandana Shiva, who is an Indian scholar, environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate, ecofeminist and anti-globalization author based in Delhi. She said India could feed twice as many people on half the land with organic farming, growing food with 70 percent higher nutritional value, while reducing carbon emissions and pollution.

For information, visit jfergusonphotos.net.

DR, a member of the Colville Confederated Tribes, affirmed that UCUT efforts are not just for tribal people but also have an impact on all who live in the

Columbia Basin.

He wants to improve the environment for the sake of his great granddaughter and other future generations.

“We do not have a lot of time. We are aware we are on the edge,” he said.

He is grateful the region has received \$200 million over 20 years from the national infrastructure bill for restoring salmon passage at Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams.

“There could and should be more salmon. We need to bring the salmon home. There are costs and benefits to doing that. Producing power, irrigation and flood control have costs and benefits. Having salmon also has benefits,” said DR, who seeks to create a paradigm shift with awareness of economic values.

“The Columbia River Basin has immense capital value. The value of ecosystem functions is \$190 billion annually, compared to \$3.3 billion for hydro power,” he said.

“**We have usually talked** of the value of power and irrigation, but the value of the ecosystem functions and services exceeds all the other values. Bringing salmon back is just part of the overall ecosystem functions,” DR explained.

Following recent ceremonial releases, salmon have returned to spawn in the Sanpoil River. Some that were released above Kettle Falls returned to B.C.

“The salmon did not forget where they came from. We have released salmon and they

returned to the dams and beyond, swimming upriver on the mainstem of the Columbia River, and to the Spokane River and Hangman Creek. It’s amazing with all we have done to the fish over the years, they are still there,” he said.

“**Salmon give their lives** for us if we take care of them,” DR said. “My family will see salmon restored if we correct the historic wrong.”

While U.S. tribes were kept outside negotiations for renewing the Columbia River Treaty, Canadian tribes are at the table and able to call for inclusion of ecosystem functions. U.S. tribes conversed with official delegates, who say they negotiate for tribes’ best interest, he commented.

Ecosystem functions include clean water and land. People cannot walk on the beaches along Lake Roosevelt because of pollution from Tech Cominco. Because of contamination, people need to eat fewer fish.

DR pointed out that in allowing fish passage, cleaning the river and restoring tribal traditions will restore fishing, tourism, hunting, hiking, recreation and other activities for all along the rivers.

UCUT has created a video that captures the story of their efforts. It is available on their website.

“**There is a lot of work** to do. We have to talk with politicians at the city, county, state and national levels,” said DR.

For information, visit ucut.org.

For the workshop video, visit <https://youtu.be/uP7OWDTP0yc>.

NAACP, city leaders discuss hate crime laws

At the Jan. 27 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, NAACP Spokane President Lisa Gardner, who is director of communications and community engagement for the Spokane City Council, teamed up with Zack Zappone, Spokane City Council member for District Three, to discuss hate crimes and legislation to address them.

Zack reviewed legal requirements for a hate crime.

A perpetrator must maliciously and intentionally commit acts because of their perception that the victim belongs to a protected class based on race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, or mental, physical, or sensory disability.

The perpetrator must assault the victim or another person, cause physical damage or destroy the victim’s property, or threaten a person or group and place people in reasonable fear of harm.

“Words alone do not constitute a hate crime if the person lacks the ability to carry out the threat,” Zack said, adding that state law does not allow prosecution of a hate crime as a felony when done to public property. Senate bill 5917 addresses this gap.

Two other bills are before the 2024 legislature. Senate Bill 5427, co-sponsored by Senator Andy Billig from Spokane, addresses the state’s lack of data on hate crimes. It calls on the attorney general to set up a bias in-

cidents hotline to receive reports. It would help the state develop a knowledge base on the frequency and nature of hate crimes.

The hotline would help track and prosecute hate crimes more effectively. Opponents argue it may be abused by people unable to distinguish between freedom of speech and a hate crime.

Lisa said the bill came to the legislature in 2023 but died in committee, because it provided compensation for victims.

“Currently the NAACP shoulders much of what the hotline could track,” she said.

They were called when a racial slur was painted on a school bus driven by a biracial driver. They were called to remove racial slurs spray-painted at Mission Park.

The second bill, Senate Bill

5914 and House Bill 1911, deals with activities of the Office of Public Defense (OPD), which addresses some hate crimes.

By statute the OPD cannot represent clients. It can only contract with attorneys, local governments and law firms to represent indigent clients and initial consultations for youth stopped or arrested by police.

It would allow the OPD to do more direct activities, manage OPD attorneys to provide limited coverage for initial telephone or video consultations when contracted counsel is unavailable.

It may coordinate with law schools to facilitate placement of clerks, externs and interns with OPD contracted counsel. Its employees may also provide some pro bono legal services.

Reflections on 'Renewing Our Hope for the Future'

Faith leaders heartened that faith resources stir action and hope



Gen Heywood - FLLC



Jeremy Press Taylor - Jewish



Karen Stromgren - Muslim



Pat Millen OSF - Catholic



Liv Larson Andrews - Lutheran

In a plenary discussion at the recent Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, five faith leaders offered an overview of avenues for renewing hope for the future.

Gen Heywood of Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscious (FLLC) said there is hope just being in community and being in communication.

"Renewing hope is about attitude," she said.

Gen introduced the image of "putting on the lifejacket of hope with people helping each other put on the lifejacket and zipping it up, so we do not give in to despair," she said.

"When we are desperate, we may hurt ourselves and others," she said. "The next few years will be difficult. We need to be lovers of compassion and justice."

Gen, who is also pastor at Verradale United Church of Christ (UCC), is grateful that Faith Action Network, Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light, and Washington State Catholic Conference inform people about how their lives may be affected by issues coming before the legislature.

"We help each other keep snuggled in lifejackets of hope, knowing others are doing work, especially work different from ours," she said. "We make a difference. They make a difference."

Gen also said that reducing social media and media in general can help build hope, freeing time for people to turn to one another.

"We do not need to do it all. We can support someone else who has a brilliant idea and acts," she said. "We can turn to people who know what to do. We can also help by changing, if the way we are doing things is not the best way."

"We can give and receive help and hope," she said. "The next three years may be bumpy, but

we can embrace hope."

Jeremy Press Taylor of Congregation Emanu-El and Temple Beth Shalom, finds hope in the solidarity of everyone working together on shared struggles.

He calls for connecting to develop understanding and find similarities by coming together to build a strong group and build a world we want to live in with marginalized groups," he said. "Then we can push the needle on big issues."

He was heartened by the young people talking of their visions for the future. As a youth, he felt it was up to him and other youth to create the world they wanted."

"It's important to support and empower young people to be involved," he said.

The youth talked of feeling isolated and disconnected by COVID and social media, which interrupt the power of being in community in person, he said.

"Stories of our similarities and differences keep me going," Jeremy said. "I am thankful for this opportunity of solidarity and networking."

Karen Stromgren of Muslims for Community Action and Service (MCAS) was raised Catholic. Her husband introduced her to Islam, and she became Muslim.

"I know what was at the heart of my early faith values, but my parents were not there for me. I found a sisterhood in the Muslim community that helps me be an example for my children to make them hopeful," she said. "I bring positivity to the table."

"God put us on earth to help one another and support each other," Karen said, adding that she feels a connection with the interfaith group at the conference.

Sr. Pat Millen OSF, said that as a Franciscan woman religious she is "a justice promoter."

"I follow Francis and Clare

of Assisi. Francis was a peacemaker concerned about the environment. He also embraced lepers. In his peace prayer, we say, 'Where there is hatred, let me bring love,'" she said.

"How do we embrace and support lepers? Who are they today? The homeless among us are the lepers in our community. How do I touch and support them?" Sr. Pat asked.

"Francis gave us the Canticle of Creation. Pope Francis has given us Laudato Si, saying we each have a role in caring for our common home, for creation," she continued.

On peacemaking, she asked, "What does a peacemaker need to do today related to Ukraine and Gaza? How can we be peacemakers and support peacemakers?"

"We need to be in an ongoing conversation. We need to be ready to change our views," Sr. Pat said. "We need a Franciscan renaissance of embracing lepers and caring for our common home."

Liv Larson Andrews, former pastor of Salem Lutheran Church in Spokane, recently became director for evangelical mission with the Northwest Intermountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She works with the synod that covers the Columbia River watershed in Central and Eastern Washington, North Idaho, Wyo-

ming and Oregon.

As she visits Lutheran churches, she finds hope. People may begin in despair about the violence and hate around them, but through honest conversations, they can move to healing by looking at the roots of their faith and their calling.

Liv told of the Lutheran pastor in Bonners County who was on a panel, "Unite Against Hate." As part of the community, she said he sees sacred connections.

"Such efforts are rays of inspiration if we have the eyes to see them," Liv said.

She recommends reading the book *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals*, dedicated to those who survived the middle passage and did not drown despite unbearable circumstances.

"When despair rises, we need

to go toward the water, like the Spokane River," she suggested.

For details, see the video at <https://youtu.be/mBW-TEA5QHJA>.

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Outreach advocate leads boards and committees, connecting people

By Kaye Hult

Through her work, community outreach and church involvement, Donna Brundage has her fingers in many pies, leading various boards, serving on different committees and connecting people.

Her work as community outreach advocate at the St. Vincent de Paul (SVPD) HELP Center in Coeur d'Alene consists of 30 percent seeking grants for the programs provided by the HELP Center and 70 percent networking with their social services throughout North Idaho, particularly in Kootenai County.

"I've always had a predisposition to help those less fortunate," said Donna, reflecting on what it takes to do the work she's doing and the many barriers between people in these times.

"To break through barriers we're facing now, people need to start one conversation at a time with people whom they don't know," she said. "We need to start at the grass—no, the grass seed level.

"I don't talk about things that divide us from the people with whom I work," she reflected. "We're just interested in working together, not anything related to our politics or beliefs.

"We ask, 'How are we going to solve this problem? How are we going to fund this?' That allows us to find the ways in which we can work together," she said.

Donna described how she connects groups and events in her ties with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), where she sits on the NAMI Coeur d'Alene board and is the new president of NAMI Idaho, and with her ties to many other community groups.

NAMI events and programs are a means to educate people about issues related to mental health, so she mentioned several upcoming events she is helping organize.

- As a fundraiser, NAMI will show "Orchestrating Change" at 6 p.m., Thursday, April 18, at the Human Rights Education Institute. It is a documentary about the world's only orchestra for people living with mental illness.

- Coeur d'Alene's 2024 Mental Awareness walk will take place on Saturday, May 4.

- NAMI programs include the Connections Support Groups for people with mental health issues and the Specialized Support Groups for Mental Health Court.

- On first and third Tuesdays, the Disability Action Center in Post Falls hosts support groups for friends and families of those with mental health issues.



Donna Brundage feels called to serve and give back.

- NAMI Nights Out on the last Friday of each month gather people for a social activity, such as a barbecue, a rafting trip or a class on painting.

"They provide a safe space to be with others, where no one will judge others, because they all have their own issues," Donna said.

- NAMI and other organizations will collaborate to present the third annual Housing Resource Fair in September.

Other groups Donna is involved with as a leader or committee member are the North Idaho Alliance of Care (NIAC), Project Home Share of Kootenai County and the Region 1 Behavioral Health Board.

She was chair for the recent Region 1 Idaho Housing and Finance Association's Point-In-Time Homeless Census.

Donna also is the president of the CDAIDE board and is just moving to the position of past president of the 208 Recovery board.

Along with those involvements, Donna attends meetings regarding the local ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) population, the Suicide Prevention Area Network (SPAN) and SPAN-WALK.

At her church, First Presbyterian in Coeur d'Alene, Donna has helped set up a series of events called Coffee House Conversations to discuss issues. Participants share their stories, and a discussion leader offers education on the topic and information on volunteer opportunities. Then they enjoy coffee and snacks.

On Thursday, March 23, they

will discuss recovery. A presenter from 208 Recovery will offer community resources.

Upcoming conversations will be on environmental concerns, suicide prevention and parenting in a digital age, she said.

Donna participates in other church committees, is a member of the Session and serves on the Missions Committee.

Donna grew up just north of Scranton, Penn., where she attended Marywood University, graduating in 1980 with a bachelor's degree in communications and English.

"I wasn't interested in working in either of those fields, but I've learned never to say never," she commented, noting that her current role relies heavily on communications skills and using Zoom.

After college, Donna saw an ad for working with juvenile delinquents in an alternative treatment program called Vision Quest, where the treatment was living and working in wilderness camps.

The teens prepared for and then participated in wagon trains traveling from Pennsylvania to Florida, and to other parts of the country. She stayed with Vision Quest for 17 years.

In 1997, Donna moved to Sandpoint, where she worked five years for CEDU, which offered alternative education for teens. Its Ascent program

included a ropes course and a wilderness program.

After holding a variety of other jobs, including owning a restaurant, she had trouble finding work when the economy declined in 2009.

That year, she began working on an online associate degree in graphic design from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, which she completed in 2013.

She began working with the SVPD HELP Center in 2016.

At first, she helped run Trinity Group Homes, a SVPD program of semi-independent homes in Coeur d'Alene, Hayden and Post Falls.

"The homes provide safe and affordable housing for adults with severe and persistent mental health challenges," said Donna.

Working with Trinity, she became familiar with the many social service programs in North Idaho, such as the ALICE group.

She also began learning to write grants.

Over time, her work has evolved into her community outreach position, in which she uses much of what she learned in college courses so long ago, she said with a grin.

In 2020, she moved to Coeur d'Alene.

When asked why she does what she does, Donna replied, "It's my calling."

In part, she cites having gone to a Catholic university, where they repeated over and over, "You serve. You give back."

In part, she believes that caring is innate in her.

"While I was in high school, we had an exchange student from Austria," she recalled. "He was bullied. I flipped out in front of my senior class in that person's defense."

Donna likes Idaho, but wishes it was more diverse, more welcoming.

For information, call 208-664-3095 or email donna@stvincent-depaulcda.org.



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Workshop leaders advocate both rent stabilization, affordable housing

In a workshop on housing, Terri Anderson of the Tenants Union of Washington, Duaa-Rahemaah Hunter of the Washington Low-Income Housing Alliance (WILHA) and Ben Stuckart of the Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium (SLIHC) discussed proposals for rent stabilization and affordable housing.

“We have a tenants hotline, and offer workshops and clinics for tenant empowerment. We talk every day with renters and know their concerns,” said Terri, noting that tenants need to keep up with changes to laws.

“We organize tenants, especially in HUD Section 8 buildings, to form tenants’ associa-

tions to know their protections. Organizing often gets tenants results,” she said.

Ben said SLIHC’s point of view is that rent stabilization and tenants’ rights are important, and “we also have to build low-income housing for people.”

There were rent stabilization bills in the House and Senate. The Senate bill that first said landlords could not raise rent over 5 percent in a year came out of committee with a 15 percent limit. A 10-year exemption for new builds was raised to 15 years. Ben asked why pass a law, if it is gutted.

“A rent stabilization bill that allows a 15 percent increase gutted Spokane’s supply,” said

Ben, adding that increases since 2017 led to a 50 percent increase in three years. “When rents increase, homelessness increases. People can’t afford a home.”

“If we pass a rent stabilization bill that allows 15 percent increases a year, that’s 45 percent in three years, an outrageous amount,” he asserted.

Terri said about 50 percent of Spokane’s population are renters, and there is a racial imbalance between renters and homeowners. In Washington, 68 percent of Black households rent, and 45 percent of white households rent. In Spokane, 81 percent of Black households rent and 31 percent of white households rent.

Beyond a 40 percent increase in rents from 2014 to 2019, rents skyrocketed during COVID, leaving Spokane with the highest rent increases in the nation, Terri said, explaining, “We have a shortage of affordable housing.”

Duaa-Rahemaah added that what some consider affordable is not affordable for someone on a fixed income.

Terri said the standard Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sets for affordability is 30 percent of one’s monthly income.

“That’s the standard we would like to see but that’s not what most tenants pay. In one senior building, the average tenant pays

about 70 percent of their monthly income in rent.

“We also do not have a state law that says a landlord can only raise rent if they provide livable housing. Many tenants live in sub-standard housing with no improvements or repairs, but still face rent increases,” Terri said.

Ben said more BIPOC renters live in areas zoned multi-family, such as East and West Central.

“They are red-lined neighborhoods,” Duaa-Rahemaah said.

Ben said Spokane now allows four-plexes in single-family zones, but 77 percent of Spokane is still zoned for single families.

For more, visit slihc.org, wilha.org or tenantsunion.org.

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Ministry provides schools access to at-risk students and their families

In both his work with the Spokane Public Schools (SPS) and with Ready 2 Serve (R2S) ministries, Oscar Harris builds bridges to equip, nurture and inspire people as they pursue their goals and dreams.

He holds to clear lines between his work as chief officer of family and community engagement with the school and his ministry, which has partnered with several SPS programs.

For example, R2S has hosted resource fairs that draw diverse populations and at-risk students with whom the schools seek to connect.

With both SPS and R2S, he has provided youth with mentors to intervene and encourage students to stay in school.

Oscar knows the importance of mentors. His uncle, who served at Fairchild Air Force Base, was his mentor, bringing him for a semester of high school to Spokane from his hometown of 300 in Moro, Ark., in the segregated Bible Belt of the Mississippi Delta.

After graduating from high school, Oscar moved to Spokane in 1995 when he was 18. In 1996, he married his wife Christina.

“I found life in Spokane a good culture shock,” he said. “It was healing to see the races mixing, in contrast to the separation in Arkansas. I loved it and settled here, attending local churches, engaging in the community and providing resources for people who didn’t know about all the social services we have available.”

Oscar worked with Honeywell, Central Remix and Agilent, and traveled for several years with a music group.

In 2006, he earned a bachelor’s degree in history at Eastern Washington University (EWU). His minors were in social work and music. He earned a master’s degree in social work in 2008 at EWU and a school principal certificate in 2016 at Gonzaga University. Online, he completed a doctoral degree in education in transformational leadership from Concordia in Portland and a school superintendent certificate in 2020 from City University of Seattle.

While at EWU, Oscar started working with schools in parent education and substitute teaching. He began working full time with Spokane Public Schools in 2009.

His department with SPS is responsible for restorative interventions to keep students of color in school. That includes Native education, Every Student Succeeds, a foster care liaison program and EPIC (Encouraging Positive Intentional Connections) mentoring.

“I see schools as a microcosm of what is happening in the community—hearing staff needs and serving as a communication



Oscar Harris builds bridges between Spokane schools and community resources.

conduit to connect families to resources,” said Oscar. “We build bridges by partnering with the community for prevention and intervention.”

R2S, which Oscar started 20 years ago, also builds bridges.

“We began a downtown program serving breakfast and offering a light inspirational service for homeless people at the Mid-City Concerns Meals on Wheels building,” said Oscar. **“We realized the people** who came faced greater needs than food, so we pivoted to address other aspects of their needs,” he said.

Since then, R2S has moved to its own building at 8104 E. Sprague Ave., where it offers social services, networking, counseling and leadership training, as well as worship and Bible study.

“Our vision is to provide the missing link in social services. As a multicultural multi-ethnic ministry, we focus on reconciliation, restoration and redistribution of resources,” he said.

R2S has provided peer counseling through Access to Recovery’s teen substance abuse program.

“As one of God’s bodies of caring believers, we supplement services,” he said, noting that R2S connects with Pastor Shon Davis’ gang ministry, The Lord’s Ranch, other churches and leaders of color.

Oscar connects SPS to communities of color and families of students who have disengaged from schools. He helps re-engage them to complete high school and go on to col-

lege through the SPS Building Bridges program.

Under a 2015 grant with the school district and police department, R2S recruited and trained community members, including pastors, as mentors to work one-on-one with students and staff at two schools. Three mentors met during lunch with five to six youth each for a year.

Oscar made it clear to pastors there would be no proselytizing.

For him, Jesus’ ministry was about providing resources to meet needs, not proselytizing.

“We emphasized protocols of how to mentor in schools,” he said. “Mentoring puts a positive adult in the lives of teens to open them to see opportunities.

“We had success in retaining students,” Oscar reported.

The program gained national recognition for tackling gang challenges and improving school safety. It continues as EPIC mentoring.

“There are still challenges, but not at the same level as before,” said Oscar, who is also helping the National Gang Institute develop a resource guide schools can download.

As part of its informal partnering with high schools and Community Colleges of Spokane, R2S also coaches high school and community college students in filing FAFSA and WAFSA financial aid applications so more students can afford to attend college.

R2S offers informational events for high school seniors and their families to increase college enrollment.

Oscar is also an adjunct faculty member at EWU and Whitworth, where he teaches leadership classes.

His wife, Christina, who helped him start Ready 2 Serve, serves as administrator and teaches groups.

She earned a bachelor’s degree

in human services and women’s studies in 2011 at Gonzaga University and an online master’s degree in business in 2013 from Concordia in Chicago.

They have eight children—five biological children and three daughters who consider them parents—and two grandchildren.

Growing up in the farm community on the outskirts of a town of 1,000 and going to high school in a town of 15,000, he experienced segregation.

“My family has been in Arkansas since my grandmother and grandfather Charlie Palmer purchased 20 acres and gave each of their 12 kids property to build homes. I was raised in a community mostly around relatives,” he said, “but we experienced a lot of racism and bigotry.”

In Spokane, in contrast, Oscar has rarely felt unwelcome or threatened because of his race.

“Here I meet individuals different from me, but the majority do not judge or threaten me. Most treat me with dignity and respect,” he said.

“I preach a loving God and a faith that does not have divisions,” he said. “We need to be brothers and sisters in our hearts.”

For information, call 230-0269 or email r2s@r2sministries.com.



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Forty years is a time to reflect, renew and recommit to coverage

40 days of Lent is a time for reflection. Israelites wandered 40 years.

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In 1985, a year after starting The Fig Tree, I was a United Church of Christ delegate to visit East and West Germany 40 years after World War II. It was a time for remembering, repenting, reflecting, reconciling, renewing, restoring and rebuilding.

As The Fig Tree embarks on its next decade, we have been remembering, reflecting, renewing and reimagining our life in the future with visions for new media.

As 19 folks involved with The Fig Tree over our 40 years shared their intersection with our mission and stories, memories and energy emerged, including reminders of how our stories empower people.

With media coverage in the 1990s, Spokane, Northeast Washington and North Idaho gained a reputation for racism and antisemitism. We needed to know about the Aryan Nations, but most media missed the many people who challenged white supremacists on an ongoing basis to help end their reign of terror in the region.

White supremacists still exist, but the area developed one of the strongest human

rights communities in the nation. The Fig Tree persists in covering that story.

Out of participating in the 40th-year delegation to Germany and coming face-to-face with horrors of the Holocaust and communist propaganda and suppression, we have uplifted Spokane's Holocaust educators message of "never again," and promoted media literacy efforts to help people recognize propaganda.

For decades, the region lived in the shadow of Hanford that took uranium from hillsides of the Spokane Reservation, poisoning its people in a continuation of genocide, while making bombs to drop in Japan and then test in the Pacific.

Now Spokane is home to many displaced Marshall Islanders and many tribal people who have struggled to clean up radiation on their lands and to find treatment for their cancers. The Fig Tree continues to cover that story.

A couple with Spokane roots trekking in Nepal were asked to sell some knit jackets. They started a fair-trade wholesale business that multiplied with a fair trade store, many vendors with ties around the world, annual fair trade

festivals and efforts to improve the lives of women handcrafters. The Fig Tree in telling stories of the local people and their global partners has empowered the region's fair-trade community.

The Spokane area has had powerful civil rights leaders—working to teach children, start newspapers, repeat "I Have a Dream," rename a street, raise disparities, challenge police, organize MLK Day rallies and marches, gather for worship, build a nonprofit center, start a gathering place, mentor at-risk youth and more. Those stories in Fig Tree pages have given visibility to those lived experiences.

For years we have followed the stories of the area's Indigenous people, the salmon people, who know the land and rivers. We have shared their voices and vision of having rivers be valued for more than power and irrigation—for their interactive ecosystem functions that affect the lives of everyone. We continue to share the stories of needing a voice to restore salmon, canoe traditions and river health.

We shine a light on everyday concerns, injustices, struggles and people in order to make them visible, heard and

real. We share about issues to act on and people to be in solidarity with.

We consistently cover the voices of women of all ages and backgrounds, because many media leave out women's visions and equalizing nature as mothers, grandmothers, daughters, aunts. Too many women continue to suffer in the shadow of stereotypical, sexy, abuse inviting images of women that undermine their credibility. We have many women reporters, editors and interviewees.

We respect and cover the voices of elder, middle-aged and young people to broaden our vision. Founders Sr. Bernadine Casey SNJM and Jo Hendricks wrote editorials into their 90s. We are committed to nurture young writers, too.

We call our editorial approach peace and solutions journalism, covering the nuances not extreme divisions, the everyday not the unusual, anyone not just celebrities. We connect the global and local—multi-faith, multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-generational, multi-gender, multi-perspective people to give new eyes to cherish the wonders God has created.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Community organizing spreads among universities in United Kingdom

Stories of communities organizing
Column by Cameron Conner

The modern practice of community organizing was born 85 years ago in the stockyards of the Chicago meatpacking plants, a neighborhood made infamous in Upton Sinclair's book *The Jungle*:

"The buildings...were old, dilapidated and unclean. The streets were generally narrow, the shops along them dirty and gloomy looking. The district was mildewed, and the atmosphere oppressive."

In 1939, a young sociologist named Saul Alinsky worked with Chicago residents to build a new type of "people's organization." They called it the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council (BYNC). In a community with Polish, Lithuanian, Slovak, Bohemian, German, Irish and Mexican residents, this organization became the first to unite people as a single powerful constituency.

Where unions and political parties failed for years, Alinsky's model succeeded because it worked through the few neighborhood institutions people already held in common. In an area that was 90 percent Catholic, the most important of these was the parish.

The strategy worked. More than 100 of the neighborhood associations—many church-based—pledged support in the organization's founding assembly. Confronted for the first time by the united people of Back of the Yards Neighborhood Councils, meatpacking companies quickly gave in. Within days of the organization's founding, neighborhood residents won their first union contract and local banks quickly caved to pressure, demanding residents be able to access funds for mort-

gages and building upgrades.

Based on the success of his model in Chicago, Alinsky went on to build similar "people's organizations" across the country. Organizations like BYNC became the first chapters of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF)—the oldest and largest community organizing network in the U.S. today.

More than eight decades later, faith-based institutions—churches, synagogues and mosques—are still the glue that holds many communities together. They remain at the heart of the community organizing tradition, but a new generation of community institutions are coming onto the scene, and organizers at Citizens UK are taking note.

Just as the Catholic Church was at the center of the BYNC in the 1940s, today universities represent a crucial new institution for community power.

King's College London has been at the forefront of work with Citizens UK for the last decade. Responding to the issues affecting families in the neighborhoods around their campus, college leaders began working with organizers to bring together working-class parents from the boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark.

Rather than develop programs they predicted would be useful to struggling families, King's College staff called on community organizers at Citizens UK to help them ask parents what they needed. Despite representing a diverse population, parents overwhelmingly agreed that they wanted to break down two of the main barriers that still kept their children from attending university: the cost and quality of private tutoring—a necessity for at-

tending good universities—and the huge application fees for British citizenship.

Soon, this parents' group pulled in other members of the community connected to King's College and built a campaign that both reduced the citizenship application fee for children and created an interest-free loan program so parents could avoid taking out risky debt to finance applications.

Because tutoring existed in the university for community members, parents formed their own organization, "Parent Power," to train more families in how to access resources. In 2019, this organization received national recognition by winning the Guardian's Social and Community Impact Award.

Meanwhile, north of London in Birmingham, student, faculty and administration leaders of Citizens UK at Newman University held their own campaign to identify pressures facing families in the community. As a smaller, public university that fills a role like community colleges in the U.S., Newman was the same kind of "linking institution" that the church had been in Chicago.

In a community-wide listening campaign, organizers heard story after story about the lack of mental health care for older teens. The Newman team learned 16- and 17-year-olds fell into a service gap for local health care providers.

Mobilizing with other Citizens UK member institutions across the city, leaders worked with health care practitioners to close the gap. The result was an astonishing array of new mental health services that impacted about 4,000 young people in Birmingham.

These are two stories among many. In Wales, Cardiff University has worked with Citizens UK to win pay rises for thousands of low-paid workers. In 2019, students at University College London organized with high school students, teachers and parents to ensure that kids could no longer be denied free school meals because of parents' immigration status—a game changer for tens of thousands of children across the UK.

Cases like these demonstrate that not only does the community benefit when universities are woven into our civic alliances, but also—just as the Catholic Church had a vested self interest in improving the living and working conditions of its parishioners—universities need not engage out of sheer altruism. They benefit.

Too often, universities are turned to by community organizations as an altruistic and aloof benefactor rather than a partner with an equal need to live in a flourishing community. After all, it's hard to attract new students to a university in a struggling community.

In an increasingly competitive market, King's College London, Newman University and Citizen UK's other higher education members have seen their work in the community attract new investment, applicants and acclaim.

Cameron Conner's columns for *The Fig Tree* are selected from blogs he is writing during his Watkins Fellowship stays in Spain, the UK, South Africa and Mongolia. To follow his stories of communities organizing around the world visit cameronnorbuconner.com/blog.


 Reflections

Sounding Board

Commentaries

Bishop compares Ash Wednesday love to Valentine's Day love

Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day were the same day this year. It is an interesting juxtaposition. One congregation invited members to write "valentine's cards to God."

We have turned Valentine's Day into a day that celebrates romantic love but forgets all the other types of love that exist, and especially forgets that all love stems first from God's love.

God's love is always merciful, full of compassion and loving kindness. It is only if we believe that forgiveness and repentance have nothing to do with love that we

will believe we cannot celebrate both Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day. Anyone who has ever been in a true relationship will remind all of us that repentance and forgiveness are an integral part of love!

For years I always tried to schedule my yearly physical, eye check-up, and a teeth cleaning during Lent. It was one way I showed "self-examination and repentance" as well as offering love to myself.

To take the time to take care of our own health, physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, is a way of offering ourselves love.

Our beloved Presiding Bishop Michael Curry reminds us to "love God, love your neighbor, and while you are at it, love yourself."

To love yourself in this way is not narcissistic, but in fact right and proper. We are told by Jesus to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Lent is often a time when we are invited to fast. Fasting is a good discipline, and it takes various forms, such as forgoing all food or particular types of food.

We can also fast from anything that gets in the way of love. We can fast from

anything that gets in the way of our loving God, loving our neighbor or loving ourselves. So for some people that might be food or drink. It might be social media, gossip, judging others, holding a grudge or the negative thoughts that run through our heads about our own self-worth.

What do you need to fast from in order to grow in love?

May this time of Lent be a time we can grow in love, love of God, love of neighbor and love for ourselves.

Bishop Gretchen Rehberg
Episcopal Diocese of Spokane

Calendar of Events

To submit material, email development@thefigtree.org
Area code is 509 unless otherwise listed.

- Mar 1 • Muslim Community for Action and Support** benefit, Hamilton Studio, 1427 W. Dean, 5 to 8 p.m.
- Mar 1-2 • Engaged Encounter Weekend Retreat**, Couples workshop, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr, 7 p.m. to 12 p.m., ihrc.net
- Mar 1, 2, 3 • Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat**, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, Fri, 7 to 9 p.m., Sat., 3 to 5 p.m., 7 to 9 p.m., Sun., 3 to 5 p.m., 487-6540
- Mar 1-30 • A Women's Art Show** in Celebration of National Women's History Month with Northwest Artists, New Moon Art Gallery, 1326 E. Sprague, Mar 1, 4 to 8 p.m., Wed to Sat, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., 413-9101
- Mar 2 • "Why Race Matters,"** Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS), 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., imoore@pjals.org
- Cabin Fever Virtual Gardening Symposium:** Gardening Now & for the Future, online, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., 477-2160
- The Healthy Girl Workshop**, Liberty Park Library, 402 S. Pittsburgh, 10:30 to 1 p.m., (602) 505-7275
- Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church Grotto** Fundraising, Suncrest, 7 p.m., jlb.mchugh@gmail.com
- Symposium on the Past, Present, and Future** of Chicano/a Studies: Inland NW Summit, honoring Deena Gonzalez, Hemmingson, Gonzaga, 1 to 5:30 p.m., 313-6942
- 2024 William L. Davis SJ Lecture:** "The Women in My Life," Deena Gonzalez, Hemmingson, Gonzaga, 7 to 8:30 p.m., ostendorf@gonzaga.edu
- The Triplets of Belleville**, PG13, Live Orchestra, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, 211 E. Desmet, 7:30 p.m., 313-2787, mwpac@gonzaga.edu
- Mar 3 • Connecting to the Spokane River**, Gonzaga Environmental Studies, students create mosaic art project for the Saranac Commons, The Hive, 2904 E. Sprague, 12 to 2 p.m., 415-871-7585
- Mar 3, 4 • Spokane Symphony Masterworks 7**, A Message to the Stars, The Fox Theater, 1001 W. Sprague, Sun, 7:30 p.m., Mon, 3 p.m.
- Mar 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 • Spokane Community Against Racism** Coffee, Saranac Commons, 19 W. Main, 9 a.m., scarspokane.org
- Mar 4 • Guatemala, Road of Two Davids**, Denny's, Division St. Hill, 11:30 lunch, 12 noon show
- Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month Kick Off Party**, The Arc of Spokane, 320 E 2nd, 4 to 6 p.m., info@arc-spokane.org
- "A Community Building Approach** to Understanding and Addressing Climate Change Impacts," Daniel Vimont, Hemmingson, 702 E. Desmet, 6 p.m., 313-6942
- Mar 5 • Weyerhaeuser Center for Christian Faith & Learning** Speaker, Christian Wiman, poet, religion and literature professor at Yale Divinity School, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m., 777-4703, tcoder@whitworth.edu
- Mar 6 • "Nina Totenburg: The Power of Friendships,"** *Dinners With Ruth: A Memoir on the Power of Friendships*, online 1 p.m., library.org/scld/40585
- The Concordia Choir** in Spokane, Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th, 7 to 8:30 p.m., 838-4277
- Mar 6, 20 • Spokane Folklore Society Contra Dance**, Woman's Club, 1428 W. 9th, 7:15 to 9:30 p.m., 838-2160, myspokanefolklore@gmail.com, spokanefolklore.org
- Mar 6, 7 • Homebuyer Education Seminar**, Moran Prairie Library, 6004 S. Regal, 6 to 8:30 p.m., 456-7627 x 4418
- Mar 6, 13, 20, 27 • Spokane Community Against Racism** Meeting, Saranac Commons, 19 W. Main, noon, scarspokane.org
- Mar 7 • Resource Fair and Legal Clinic**, Nuestras Raices Centro Comunitario and Manzanita House, 1214 E. Sprague, 1 to 4 p.m., 557-0566, office@hbpaofspokane.org
- How Latino Immigrant Families Manage** Surveillance, South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry, 6:30 p.m., 444-5331
- Mar 8 • March for Meals**, benefit for Greater Spokane County Meals on Wheels, Spokane Valley Mall, 14700 E. Indiana, 8 to 10 a.m., 924-6976
- International Women's Day Event**, International Rescue Committee, Central Library Branch, 906 W. Main, 3rd Floor, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 258-5774
- "Sharing Stories, Empowering People,"** The Fig Tree 40th Anniversary Spring Benefit, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., RSVP, 535-4112, development@thefigtree.org
- Greg and Jere Canote, Folk Music Concert**, Hamilton Studio, 1427 W. Dean, 7 to 9 p.m., 838-2160, myspokanefolklore@gmail.com, spokanefolklore.org
- Mar 8-10 • Worldwide Marriage Encounter**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, ihrc.net
- Mar 9 • Sweets Before Supper**, benefit for Girl Scouts of Eastern Washington and North Idaho, Davenport Grand Hotel, 333 W. Spokane Falls, 6 to 9 p.m., 800-918-9344
- Square and Contra Dance with the Canote Twins**, East Spokane Grange, 1621 N. Park, 7 to 10 p.m., 838-2160, spokanefolklore.org
- Spokane Mom Prom**, benefit for Women Helping Women Fund, Montvale Event Center, 1017 W. First, 7 to 11 p.m., 413-2915
- Spokane Jazz Orchestra** with the Jeff Hamilton Trio, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., 227-7638
- Mar 9, 10 • Spokane Symphony Masterworks 7**, Along the Silk Road, The Fox Theater, 1001 W. Sprague, with Sandeep Das and James Ross, Sat, 7:30 p.m., Sun., 3 p.m., 624-1200
- Mar 10 • Death Café**, Spokane Public Library, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., deathcafe.com/deathcafe/17431
- Purple Ribbon Banquet**, speaker Jacob Powers, supporting Women's Healing Empowerment Network, Center Place Regional Event Center, 2426 N. Discovery Pl., 5 p.m., whennetwork.com
- Mar 11 • St. Paddy's Day Delights Cooking Class**, The Kitchen, Second Harvest, 1234 E. Front, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., 252-6256
- Mar 11, 25 • Scribbler's Society Writing Club**, Coeur d'Alene Public Library, 702 E. Front, 11th, 2 p.m., 25th, 5 p.m., (208) 769-2315 x 455
- Mar 12 • Peace and Justice Action Committee**, Zoom, 5:30 p.m., ucarter@pjals.org
- Mar 13 • "Sharing Stories, Empowering People,"** The Fig Tree 40th Anniversary Spring Breakfast-Time Benefit, Zoom, 7:45 to 9 a.m., RSVP, 535-4112, development@thefigtree.org
- Medicare Getting Started**, online, 6 p.m., 893-8350
- Ubuntu: How an Ancient African Concept** Can Help Human Flourishing, South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry, 6 p.m., 444-5331
- Mar 14 • Reuse Workshop**, Mobius Discovery Center, 331 N. Post, 10 a.m., 321-7137
- Learn How to Use The Fig Tree Resource Directory**, Liberty Park Library, 402 S. Pittsburgh, 5:30 p.m., spokanelibrary.org
- Mar 14, 28 • Showing Up for Racial Justice**, PJALS, Zoom, 5:30 p.m., slichty@pjals.org
- Mar 15 • YWCA Spokane Women of Achievement Awards**, with Margaret Mitchell, YWCA USA CEO, Spokane Convention Center, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., ywcaspokane.org
- Mar 16 • Improv and Poetry, Blue Door Theatre**, 319 S. Cedar, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., 747-7045
- Saturday with the Symphony:** A Children's Program (3+yr), Coeur d'Alene Public Library, musical performance, interactive activity, book reading, Coeur d'Alene Public Library, 702 E. Front, 11 a.m. (208) 769-2315 x 455
- Inland Northwest SongFest**, The Bing Crosby Theater, Dry Fly Distilling and The Steam Plant, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 12 to 10 p.m., 227-7638
- Spokane Symphony Pops 4**, Music of the Night, The Fox Theater, 1001 W. Sprague, 7:30 p.m., 624-1200
- American Ballet Theatre**, First Interstate Center for the Arts, 224 W. Spokane Falls, 7:30 p.m., 279-7000
- CDA Symphony:** Celebrating Young Artists, Schuler Center, 880 W. Garden, 7:30 p.m., (208) 769-7780
- Mar 17 • Music of Lent** with the Schola Cantorum, Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes, 1115 W. Riverside, 2:30 to 3:45 p.m., 358-4290
- Make Your Own Dentalium Shell Necklace**, storytelling, Coeur d'Alene Casino, 3791 S. Nukwalqw, Worley, 6 p.m., (208) 769-2464
- Mar 18, 19 • Innovia Foundation Community Summit**, Spokane Convention Center, innovia.org
- Mar 19 • Bloom Together: A Celebration of Spring**, Spark Central, 1214 W. Summit Pkwy, 4 to 7 p.m., 279-0299
- Mon/Wed to Mar 20 • A Matter of Balance:** Preventing Falls, Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington, Moran Prairie Library, 6004 S. Regal, 1 to 3 p.m., 893-8340
- Mar 20 • Refugee Foster Care Information**, Lutheran Community Services, 210 W. Sprague, 5 p.m., 747-8224
- A Taste of Ireland**, tumultuous history with world-class performers, tap battles and storytelling, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
- Mar 21 • Free Rental Rights Clinic for Women**, Women's Hearth, Transitions, 920 W. Second, 9:30 to 11:30 RSVP, 720-4858
- Mar 22, 23 • 31st Anniversary Powwow**, Coeur d'Alene Casino, 37914 S. Nukwalqw, Worley, Fri-7 p.m., Sat-11 a.m. to 11 p.m., (208) 769-2464
- Mar 23 • Holi Celebration**, Southside Senior and Community Center, 3151 E 27th, 7:30 to 8:45 a.m., devika.gates@gmail.com, spokaneunitedwestand.org
- Book Arts: Fukur-Toji** with Suminagashi Covers, Spokane Print & Publishing Center, 1921 N. Ash, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., spokaneprint.org
- Spokane Volunteer Fair**, Women's Club Spokane, 1428 W. 9th, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., thewomensclubsofspokane.org
- Coffee House Conversations about Recovery**, 208 Recovery, First Presbyterian Church of Coeur d'Alene, 521 E. Lakeside, 2 p.m., (208) 667-8446
- Mar 24 • Young Artists Music Festival**, Washington-Idaho Symphony, U of I Administration, 851 Campus Dr., Moscow, 3 p.m., 888-884-3246
- Spokane String Quartet**, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 3 to 5 p.m., 227-7638
- "Song of the Shadows" Cantata**, Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, 115 N. Raymond, 4 p.m., alissaamstoy@gmail.com
- Taize Evening Hour of Prayer**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6:30 p.m., ihrc.net
- Mar 28-30 • Men's and Women's Holy Week Retreat**, Fr. Roger Keeler, IHRC, 4 p.m. to 1 p.m., ihrc.net
- Mar 29 • Terrain Gallery Fundraiser**, 628 N. Monroe, 6 to 9 p.m., terrainspokane.com
- Mar 30 • Homebuyer Education Seminar, SNAP**, Moran Prairie Library, 6004 S. Regal, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 456-7827
- El Mercado, Latinos En Spokane**, West Central Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Mar 31 • Easter**
- Apr 4 • Fig Tree Meetings**, noon-Development, 1 to 3 p.m.-Board, Zoom, mary@thefigtree.org
- Apr 28 • "Sharing Stories, Empowering People,"** Fig Tree 40th Anniversary Gala, St. John's Cathedral, 5 to 8 p.m., tickets \$50, 535-4112, development@thefigtree.org
- Thurs • Taizé Prayer**, Zoom, 4:15 p.m., bartletts@gonzaga.edu

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Road to being chaplain seemed crooked, but was a straight path

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

Looking back over his career, Bill Strunk, a chaplain at the MultiCare Deaconess and Valley Hospitals, sees that “God has written straight with crooked lines.”

His paths in life have taken different turns that he couldn't have expected when he began his career.

In his current ministry, which requires him to meet grief daily, Bill is glad for what he can do to help hospital patients and staff learn how to cope with it.

“Here, I interact with grief in one way or another—in the death of a loved one, in the loss of autonomy or whatever brought someone to the hospital. Change is a constant, which means when any of us lose something, we are in a transition to what is to come,” said Bill. “I often talk about grief and help teach people skills to deal with it.”

In teaching these skills, he draws on the wisdom of the internationally recognized palliative care and hospice doctor, Ira Byock, who says that four simple phrases: “Please forgive me,” “I forgive you,” “Thank you” and “I love you” carry “enormous power to mend and nurture our relationships and inner lives.”

Bill finds that to be true. “When we use them, those words can go a long way in helping us cope with grief,” he observed.

Offering spiritual care in a hospital setting was not something Bill came to directly. He came to it by a crooked line.

His life has had many changes in direction—some of his own choosing and some not, some causing grief and some not.

Bill was born the oldest of three children in the southern Idaho town of Wendell, about 100 miles southeast of Boise. His mother was a nurse and his father worked in different kinds of construction that often took him out of the country during the years Bill was 13 until he was in his late 20s.

“Dad planned carefully so that he was always at home for the important times in our lives, like my sisters’ performances or my baseball games. He really was there for us,” Bill said.

When he went to the College of Idaho in Caldwell, Bill thought he would become a doctor. After nearly two years he discovered that his biology and chemistry classes didn't give him life, so he found what did and changed direction—another crooked line.

He began to look for opportunities for ministry.



Bill Strunk has found his niche as chaplain with MultiCare.

Serving in college ministry for seven years in Washington led Bill to Fuller Seminary's branch campus in Seattle, where he earned a master of divinity degree in 2014. During that same time, he also served in hospital administration at Seattle Children's Hospital and loved the work.

By then he had married and had been licensed in the Evangelical Covenant Church. In 2015, he and his wife, Claire, dreamed of planting a church in Bothell, north of Seattle.

“We had this dream to plant a church, but it didn't plant, and this was the death of our dream—another loss and another experience of grief in my life,” Bill said. “We had to take another look at our identity and look hard at what could come next. That was another crooked line.”

He had enjoyed his experience in hospital leadership in Seattle, so when a patient advocate position opened at Deaconess in Spokane, he applied and was hired.

His wife became a supply minister, serving when other pastors were away from their churches.

About six and a half years ago, Bill had another experience of God writing straight with crooked lines. His father passed away and he grieved.

Later during Clinical Pastoral

Education, he learned about William Worden's four tasks of mourning, and he learned to accept the reality of the loss, to experience the pain of grief, to adjust to an environment with the deceased person missing and, in the end, to find an enduring connection with the “deceased” while embarking on a new life.

His own grief and experience of loss eventually led him into hospital chaplaincy five years ago—another crooked line.

It also led him to promote the No One Dies Alone program in the hospital.

This program provides a reassuring presence for dying patients who would otherwise be alone. Trained volunteers become supportive, compassionate companions to a dying person, giving them a dignified death.

“This program benefits everyone. It helps staff who have many patients to be with and, although they might want to, simply cannot spend time just

being present,” he said. “It also helps family members who may have already spent many days with the dying person and simply cannot stay any longer. It provides a comforting presence to the person at this important time of transition.”

Despite the emphasis on grief that spiritual care in a hospital setting necessarily has, Bill has relationships which give him joy and has developed practices that help him maintain his inner peace.

Bill loves baseball and has been a lifelong fan of the San Diego Padres. He spends time coaching the baseball team of his 11-year-old son, Jude, and has developed a strategy of coaching young players: “Have fun. Try hard and be a good teammate both to your team and the other team.”

Soon his son will move into

another level of baseball, and Bill will have to decide where his coaching career will go—to assist on his son's team or perhaps to continue coaching younger players.

“My nine-year-old daughter, Greta, has other interests,” Bill explained. “She enjoys ballet and is on the swim team at the Y. I enjoy spending time with her, too.”

A meditative practice grounds him each day as he makes the transition from home to work and back. He listens to podcasts like the “Pray as You Go” site, sponsored by the Jesuits and Kate Bowler's podcasts, “Everything Happens: Hard Truths, Soft Hearts.”

With these resources to support him, Bill comes to each day with a joyful heart.

For information, email bill.strunk@multicare.org

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