

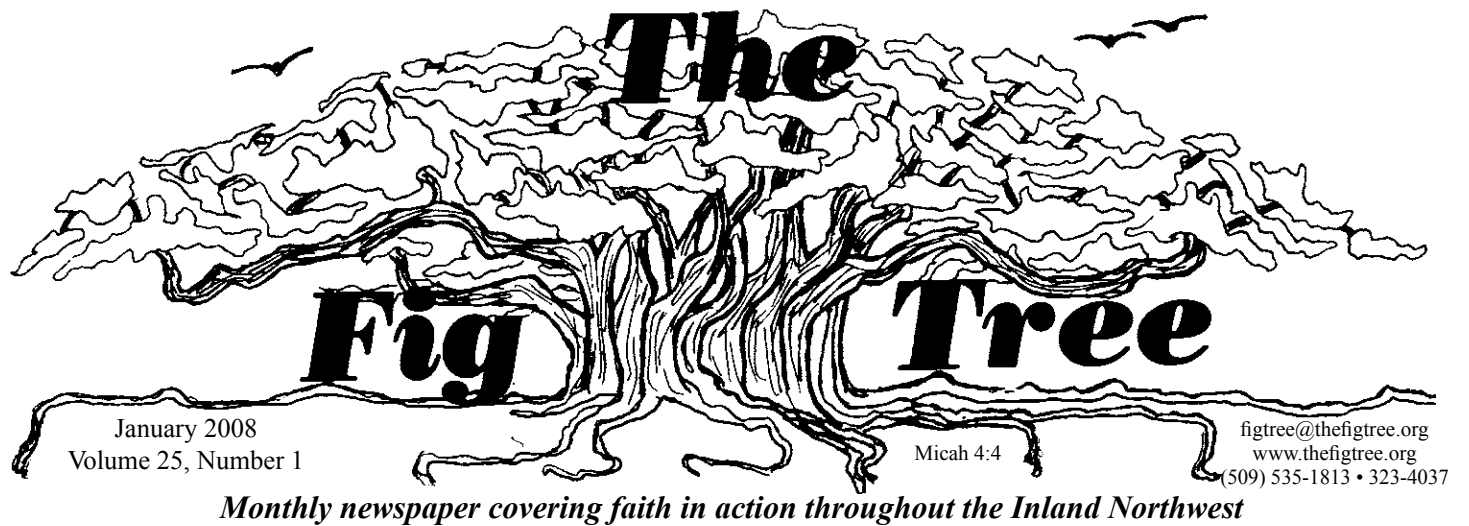
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Pain of discrimination stirs empathy

By Mary Stamp

When Shahrokh Nikfar came to the United States at the age of 16, images he saw in Hollywood movies meant he expected to see cowboys with guns and trucks.

Because he went to Texas to attend high school, his expectation was confirmed, but he found it was not true everywhere.

Since then he has experienced how media shape prejudices directed at others and him.

His parents wanted him to study abroad to expand his understanding. He went earlier than expected, because the revolution started in Iran and they thought he would be safer in the United States.

"At first, I was popular at school. Girls thought I was cute. I had many friends. When the hostage crisis started, media demonized Iranians," he said. "Those who had loved me soon hated me."

One day he missed the bus and walked to school. Students passing him in a car spat on him, swearing at him for being Iranian. He walked half an hour with a caravan of cars yelling at and spitting on him.

After high school, he came to Spokane, where his sister was a doctor at the Veterans Hospital, earned a bachelor's degree Gonzaga University, and then earned



Shahrokh Nikfar informs KYRS audience of "The Persian Hour" about his homeland.

another bachelor's and two master's degrees in business.

He worked in corporate management for a medical software company, the World Trade Center in Tacoma, a corporation in Southern California and a consulting firm.

"I was not happy working for corporations. I was bothered by the corporate culture," Shahrokh said. "The corporate world does not care about human beings. It's about profit and productivity. I was at odds with it."

Six years ago, he decided to volunteer. Elected to the Spokane Human Rights Commission, he learned of fair housing law, civil rights and nonprofits.

Then he discovered the Northwest Fair Housing Alliance, where he now works. The alliance seeks to end housing discrimination based on religion, nationality, gender, disability, race, color, familial status, sexual orientation and marital status.

"I had experienced discrimination when I tried to rent an apartment on the South Hill when I was a college student. I went to a new complex with a banner announcing specials for one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. It said, 'Come on in,' so I went in.

Continued on page 4

Through Permanent Supportive Housing

VOA provides rent, support services to house disabled and homeless people

Because of support services Volunteers of America (VOA) provides in its Permanent Supportive Housing Program, Dale Briese finds landlords responsive to renting one-bedroom apartments to chronically homeless and disabled people through the program he manages.

Since January 2007 they added 31 units to the six they had. Most are in five apartment complexes.

"We are a housing-first model. That means we move people into housing before we help them find work," said Dale, who has been with VOA six months, noting that housing-first has been VOA's model for a long time.

VOA leases apartments from private owners, rather than buying housing, with Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds.

At first landlords were leery, concerned about potential damages, but VOA contracts with them guarantee that VOA is responsible for any damage done by tenants. Case workers visit once a week and do a monthly inspection of apartments.

As case managers, he and Mary Tracey, who has been with the program four months, deal with issues that lead a person to be homeless—chemical dependence, mental health problems, disability, transportation or unemploy-

ment. Of their clients from 18 to 73 years old, 51 percent are men and 49 percent women.

"The people need encouragement and resources," Dale said. "There is much paperwork to fill out for employment, mental health and government assistance. Often it's overwhelming and the people give up.

"We nurture them through the system," said Dale, who had done social work for 20 years, first in bereavement with the Spokane AIDS Network and in health education with corrections facilities through the Regional Health District and Community Mental Health.

Growing up in Post Falls, church had an impact on his desire to give back to the community and promote community health. In 1983, he completed a degree in social work at North Idaho College.

He finds that some may resist moving from living in tents or on the streets, because living within

Continued on page 6

For Martin Luther King, Jr., commemoration

Rabbi and bishop speak on 'Stand up! Speak out!'

Rabbi Jack Isaacson of Temple Beth Shalom, Bishop William Skylstad of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane, and the Rev. Ezra Kinlow of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ will be among the speakers addressing the theme, "Silence Is Deafening: Stand Up and Speak Out," at the 2008 Martin Luther King Day Commemoration.

The 2008 featured speaker is Constance Rice, wife of Seattle's first African-American mayor Norman Rice. She has been an influential woman in Seattle, continuing to be a leader in bringing families together for nutritious meals, in promoting global peace and in challenging media bias.

The service of commemoration will be held at 4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 20, at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana. Youth and community choirs will provide music.

The annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Rally and March begins at 10 a.m., Monday, Jan. 21, at the INB Performing Arts Center (Opera House) and proceeds to Riverpark Square for more celebration and a community resource fair.

Members from Salem Lutheran Church in West Central Spokane, Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Browns Addition and Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ downtown will walk from their church buildings and join in the march and rally at the Opera House.

"We are inviting other congregations—Quakers, United Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Catholics, Disciples—people in all churches—to join us to make this a grand event," said the Rev. Happy Watkins, who is co-chair of the planning committee with Ivan Bush, equity officer with Educational Service District #101.

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Iraq church has 'new martyrs'

Geneva (ENI). Christians are fleeing Iraq and Christianity risks disappearing from the country, says a senior Baghdad archbishop, reiterating appeals made recently to Western churches to intercede with their governments about the plight of the Iraqis.

"We have the courage of faith, the outpouring of love, but because of the war, we see death and destruction, the manifestation of evil. Our people are lacking hope, and so they are leaving," said Archbishop Avak Asadourian of the Armenian Church of Iraq in an interview with Ecumenical News International on Dec. 10 at the headquarters of the World Council of Churches.

He said the four years since the U.S.-led invasion had been "the most difficult by far" of his 28-year ministry in Iraq.

"Each day, young people face death and destruction, threat of being kidnapped or facing the agony of having a loved one kidnapped," the prelate told worshippers.

Despite the hardships, Asadourian, who leads the Council of the Heads of the Churches in Baghdad, said the faith of the Christians in Iraq, who are estimated less than 3 per cent of the country's 27.5 million people, has not wavered, although many reports have said their numbers have dwindled.

"We have new martyrs in the church in Iraq," said Asadourian. "So in Iraq the faith of your brothers and sisters in Christ is strong enough to face martyrdom. We ask for peace, not only for Christians, but for the entire Iraqi people, be they Muslim, Christian or adherents of other religions."

Russian cleric meets with Pope Benedict XVI

Rome (ENI). A senior leader of the Russian Orthodox Church has met with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican, a visit seen adding credence to reports of a thaw in relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Roman Catholic Church. Pope Benedict met in December with Metropolitan Kirill, the head of the external relations department of the Moscow Patriarchate, to discuss the need for dialogue to coordinate their positions on the most important problems that humanity faces today.

GodTube offers believers social networking

Oxford, Ohio (ENI). After the success of social networking Internet sites such as YouTube and Facebook, religious leaders and hopeful entrepreneurs have launched what some experts consider to be the next generation of online communication for believers. Internet sites such as GodTube, JewTube and Mecca.com have been launched with goals ranging from profit to prophecy, and from worldwide networking and marketing to live webcasting of religious services.

"YouTube opened our eyes to the model, and then Godtube filled a particular niche," said Rick Colby, assistant professor of religion at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

Its major business partners include the 10,000-member Crystal Cathedral in Orange County, Calif., the late Rev. Jerry Falwell's Liberty University in Virginia and Christian publisher Thomas Nelson Inc. of Nashville.

Uganda churches discourage handshakes

Nairobi (ENI). Religious leaders in Uganda back government efforts to fight Ebola by discouraging followers from shaking hands or embracing during greeting. Some Christians express fears the lethal disease may affect Christmas celebrations.

South Africans asked to welcome refugees

Pretoria (ENI). Southern Africa's Catholic bishops have called on South Africans to show compassion and welcome those fleeing worsening hardship in Zimbabwe.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Coalition helps lead advocacy workshop

The statewide Religious Coalition for the Common Good (RCCG) and the Coalition for Progressive Pastors plan a Legislative Advocacy Event from 4 to 8:30 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 13, at Spokane Friends, 1612 W. Dalke.

Alice Woldt of the RCCG and Paul Benz of the Lutheran Public Policy Office will address RCCG priority issues: environmental

stewardship, tax fairness, public safety and restorative justice, compassionate immigration reform, efforts to reduce poverty, and affordable and accessible housing and health care.

After a 5:30 p.m. dinner with Interfaith Hospitality families staying at the church, participants will do local networking and discuss local issues.

The timing was set, said the Rev. Nick Block of the Spokane Friends Church, to accommodate inclusion of people from various faith traditions.

There will be a computer lab available so participants can send email messages to representatives and senators as the new state legislative session begins.

For information, call 844-5666.

Sexual assault training set for Jan. 10 -11

Gonzaga University and Eastern Washington University are presenting a Sexual Assault Training and Investigations (SATI) Conference Thursday and Friday, Jan. 10 and 11 at the Cataldo Hall Globe Room at Gonzaga University.

The event will feature presenta-

tions by Sgt. Joanne Archambault, SATI training director; Jennifer Pearson Stapleton, director of the Spokane County Domestic Violence Consortium until 2006, and Cindy North Jones, a Spokane County Sheriff's Department deputy on the Spokane Regional Domestic Violence Team.

Sessions are from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., both days.

Sexual Assault and Training Investigations, Inc., provides victim-centered, multidisciplinary training and consultation related to crimes of sexual assault.

For information, visit www.gonzaga.edu/ce.

Speaker describes Witness for Peace in Iraq

The Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane is sponsoring a program by Kathy Kelly, the coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence in Chicago, at 7 p.m., Friday, Jan. 25, in Spokane.

Kathy, who helped start Voices in the Wilderness to end sanctions against Iraq in 1996, participated

in 24 of 70 delegations, delivering medicine and toys to Iraq from 1996 to 2003.

In October 2002, she joined the Iraq Peace Team, which has been in Baghdad through the bombing and invasion. She went in April 2003 and has returned three times, most recently in May 2006.

Kathy, three times a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, has done prison time for planting corn at a nuclear missile silo site and "crossing the line" at Fort Benning to resist the Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation.

For information, call 838-7870.

AHANA partners with Community-Minded Enterprises

AHANA has entered into partnership with Community-Minded Enterprises, and now shares office space in the remodeled Saranac Hotel at 25 W. Main.

Ben Cabildo, director of the African-American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American business support network, said their missions coincide.

AHANA's mission is to improve the economic status and quality of life of people who are marginalized and under-represented through business and employment opportunities, Ben said.

Community-Minded Enterprises focuses on building sustainable communities through economic development, diversity, equity and health and wellness.


Each year, AHANA has added to business start-ups and contributed to promoting diversity in the region. In 2007, they organized Unity in the Community, a multicultural celebration that began in the Liberty Park neighborhood, and held it at Riverfront Park.

Ben said AHANA goals in 2008 are to infuse capital into regional business development, widen

its micro-lending program to include childcare center development and offer media training for youth with Community-Minded Television.

For information, call 838-1881 or email bcabildo@ahana.org.

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Bishop Skylstad reflects as he ends term as president of U.S. bishops

A call to faithful citizenship, a consolidation plan, care for earth, immigration and clergy sexual abuse have been among the issues on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' agenda in the three years Bishop William Skylstad of the Diocese of Spokane served as its president.

The conference reflects on the challenges to and challenges of the Catholic Church today as it seeks to improve life for Catholics, society and the world.

In their Nov. 12 to 15 annual meeting in Baltimore, the bishops approved a statement, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States."

That proposal calls for U.S. leaders to work in a bipartisan way to bring a responsible transition in Iraq that ends the war at the earliest time and minimizes the loss of American and Iraqi lives.

It urges Catholics to be involved in public life and use their faith values to shape their political choices, looking at specific issues in light of Catholic social teachings, principals and the common good, Bishop Skylstad said.

The conference's new president is its former vice president, Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, who like Bishop Skylstad previously was bishop in the Yakima Diocese.

Bishop Skylstad also said the conference approved restructuring and streamlining its operations to save \$1.5 million by reducing the number of standing committees from 32 to 16, consolidating to increase efficiency.

"It's the first restructuring in my 30 years as a bishop," he said.

The changes and financial cuts are necessary because of increased prices and financial pressure from the sex abuse cases, he said, not from a drop in membership.

The Catholic Church continues growing, with more than 65 million U.S. members. The bishop said many new members have come with migration and growth in Georgia, Florida, California, Arizona, Denver and Seattle.

"Being president has been a rich experience," said Bishop Skylstad, who will spend one more year on the administrative committee.

Interviewed his first day back from the meeting, he said that day he had no calls from the national office in Washington, D.C., in contrast to two or more calls a day previously. He pointed to a stack of papers—nearly four months of correspondence—he will no longer need to do.

The bishop said that since the emergence of the sex scandal, the



Bishop William Skylstad

U.S. bishops adopted the Charter to Protect Youth and Children. Early in his term, the Vatican affirmed the charter.

"It caused a massive change in the church, requiring screening and training all priests, employees and volunteers on harassment and sexual abuse. Two auditors go every week to different dioceses to evaluate if they are living up to the new expectations of the charter," he said. "I don't know of any other organization that has such a thorough auditing process.

"Priests are now aware of boundary issues. All church workers are trained to respond immediately to anything out of line. Priests need to respect boundaries with children and adults. It will make for healthier relations and a safer work place," he said.

Screening, once only a medical exam, is more demanding and includes psychological tests.

"Priests are trained to understand appropriate relationships and celibacy, so they will be integrated. If someone cannot work responsibly and respectfully with women, he should not be a priest," Bishop Skylstad said.

He sees more people now entering the priesthood, especially in the West, South and East.

From the 1940s to 1960s, there was an upswing, and there were more priests than needed, he said. With a shortage of priests now, Bishop Skylstad feels they are in their rightful place, rather than in ministries laity can do.

Once priests taught in schools, were parish janitors and directors of Catholic Charities. Now lay workers fill most of those roles. Priests focus on pastoral care, Mass, funerals, visiting the sick and overseeing the parish. Of the 310 people in the Washington, D.C., office, 90 percent are laity.

Father Steve Dublinski, Father Mark Paulter and Bishop Skylstad are the only priests in the Chancery office, now on the third floor of 1023 W. Riverside. The diocese recently vacated second-floor offices for the new owners.

In the coming year, Catholic Charities offices in the chancery and in other locations around Spokane will move into the Fifth and Browne Medical Building. It is being remodeled to accommodate the offices under one roof.

Bishop Skylstad finds the diocese of 100,000 parishioners a "vibrant faith community," with a strong presence in health care, higher education and outreach.

In areas of rapid growth, such as the Tri Cities, he sees need for a new church facility to handle the crowds.

Through Catholic Charities, there are 700 housing units for low-income people, including 25 units for farm workers in Othello and a new farm worker housing facility with 45 units in Pasco.

"We have a commitment to provide housing for farm workers and the needy," he said.

The diocese also faces immigration issues.

"It's frustrating that our country has become paralyzed with 12 to 15 million undocumented workers on whom our economy depends," he said, urging justice for them.

"We need both respect for borders and respect for needs of

people," he said.

Immigration is one of 20 issues the Faithful Citizenship statement addresses. Such documents are part of the bishops' constant effort to "catechize" or form consciences, said Bishop Skylstad, who sees progress in influencing Catholics. For example, once 75 percent of people supported capital punishment. Among Catholics, support has dropped to 50 percent or less.

On immigration he sees need to educate people and address myths about immigrants preying on the local economy. In contrast, he said that "immigrants contribute more than they take."

Previously, Bishop Skylstad helped other Northwest bishops write the Columbia River Pastoral Letter on sustainable rural life and environment. It is still among the resources on environmental education used in catechism.

"Care for creation is one of the seven pillars of Catholic social teaching. We need to educate each generation on environmental sustainability," he said.

The bishop turns 74 in March. Bishops traditionally resign by their 75th birthdays, but remain bishops. He plans to stay in Spokane, exploring future options for ministry, such as leading retreats.

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In 'The Persian Hour' on KYRS

Shahrokh Nikfar celebrates Persian culture through people, stories, food

Continued from page 1

"The manager handed an application to a Caucasian woman. I said I was interested in renting an apartment. The woman manager said nothing was available. I said, 'You have clearly just opened. The banner says to come in. There are no cars in the parking lot.'" She told him to "get out."

Shahrokh knew he had experienced discrimination because of his accent and national origin.

"I knew I could bury it or be angry," he said. "I buried it."

With the Fair Housing Alliance, he felt he could make a difference for others. He started to volunteer and advocate for others who experience discrimination.

"I want to turn pain into hope, knowing no one needs to accept discrimination," he said.

The alliance offered him a part-time job on a six-month project. When he finished it in three months, they created a position for him.

Shahrokh is happy to work with people who share his concerns and accept him. He feels at home.

With the Fair Housing Alliance, he educates property managers and landlords on the law. Sometimes an audience is hostile when he discusses discrimination.

At one session, a woman landlord said, "I don't want to rent to people from the Middle East. They are all terrorists."

Shahrokh was shocked. The memory of his experience of discrimination in searching for an apartment came to the surface. He shared the story.

"Just because I am from the Middle East does not mean I'm a terrorist," he asserted. "There are 1.5 million Iranians in the United States, and none has done an act of terror. My sister has been here as a doctor for 25 years. One brother is an architect and another is a college professor. We give to the community. To hear that you would not rent to me hurts me."

Five minutes later, she came to Shahrokh with tears in her eyes and hugged him, saying: "I didn't realize what I was doing. What I just did was what was done to my Irish parents when they came. No one wanted to rent to them. I'm so sorry."

"I knew I made a difference," Shahrokh said. "I had opened her up, so she would no longer be afraid and would share her awakening with others."

Shahrokh's faith background influences his values and his life.

He was born Muslim, because 95 percent of Iranians are Shia Muslim. Islam in Iran differs from Arab countries.

"Nationalism and our Persian

culture are first, not religion. Our culture goes back 7,000 years. Often Islam and Persian culture, based on Zoroastrianism, are at odds," he said.

"Islam was forced on Iran. Those who did not convert were massacred," he said. "Over 1,400 years, however, Iran has changed its practice of Islam."

Shahrokh went to a mosque only once. When he was 10, he heard about a mosque event with "yummy cream puffs and pastries."

"Islam in Iran is more a spiritual than a religious experience," he said. "Few pray five times a day. Prayer is more about meditation than submission. It's about connecting ourselves with God. In Ramadan, my family ate less and shared food with the poor."

"Zoroastrianism is the basis of most religions, introducing ideas of good and evil, heaven and hell. Most religions borrow from each other," Shahrokh said.

In Iran, Islam and Persian culture come into balance, he said.

"Any religion has fundamentalists who want the destruction of the earth before the Messiah comes," he said. "Most people of faith, however are not like that."

Shahrokh did not practice Islam, because as a child he asked questions about everything that did not make sense. At eight, he asked the religion teacher what Heaven looked like. The teacher said it was like a table full of food that never ended with seven beautiful women serving the food.

"I asked if a woman died and went to heaven if there would be the same feast with good looking men," Shahrokh said.

The teacher told him to leave.

Shahrokh believes terrorism arises from the desperation of

people who have suffered so much pain that they have lost hope.

"To prevent terrorism, we need to stop our terrorism," said Shahrokh, a U.S. citizen who also sees himself as a citizen of the world.

In his desire to educate Americans about the beauty of Persian culture, Shahrokh began volunteering with KYRS Thin-Air Radio, 92.3 FM, which is also in the Community Building with the Fair Housing Alliance.

"Media can have much influence. In World War II, Nazis used the same strategies with media that government and corporations use with media today," he said.

Shahrokh said media can inspire positive action or brainwash people to commit atrocities, as Nazis did to demonize Jews before committing atrocities against them in the Holocaust.

Since Sept. 11, he said, media has demonized people from the Middle East, including Iranians, even though those involved were Saudi Arabians. The picture was so contrary to what he knew about Iranians and his culture.

Upset by what media conveyed about people from the Middle East, especially Iranians, he decided to do something.

Former United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan once said: "If you know their story, you won't hate them," Shahrokh quoted.

"So I decided I would tell stories of Iranians to counteract the false images and to humanize Iranians," he said.

Shahrokh started The Persian Hour radio show on KYRS from noon to 1 p.m., Saturdays.

He shares stories of growing up in Iran, plays Persian music, interviews people and offers Persian recipes.

"The best way to develop relationships is by breaking bread," he said, noting that several people have tried the recipes.

"It's heartwarming to have an effect on people's thinking," he said. "I feel compelled to do the show to counteract negativity."

When he works out in a gym, dozens of TV shows on different stations are about hate and fear.

"I can't give up. I will continue on this one tiny radio station to do this one tiny show," said Shahrokh, who hopes to reach people filled with hate and fear, so they might begin to ask questions.

"If I can make someone wonder and ask questions, then I help that person," he said.

He also hopes Iranians who are afraid will follow him in identifying themselves as Iranians.

"Iranian Persian culture and history are beautiful, filled with compassion, love and poetry, but not flawless. I am willing to say how proud I am to be an Iranian. If I can do it, other Iranians can, too," he said. "I want to encourage other Iranians to be agents of change, too."

Shahrokh said there are about 350 Iranians in Spokane, so his audience is 99 percent Americans.

Historically, people living in ongoing fear may eventually commit atrocities and justify them, as Nazis did against Jews, as Jews do against Palestinians and as Arabs do against Jews, he pointed out.

"We need to stop the cycle," he said, "and do what is right."

Because corporations own most

media, he knows media and governments benefit corporations.

"That has nothing to do with humanity. It's about profits and productivity," he said. "How can we expect media as tools of corporations to tell us the truth?"

Shahrokh believes everyone needs to take responsibility.

"I can blame government and corporations and media, but if I say it's not my fault, there is nothing I can do until they change.

"That's wrong, because we can make change by our personal choices, even simple choices such as starting an organic community garden," he said.

As KYRS gains in audience, he believes other media will begin to offer shows about human issues so they won't lose their audiences.

"For them, it's about money," he said, "Once small media are successful, other media follow."

Shahrokh quoted Mahatma Gandhi's challenge for people to "be the change they want to see."

"It starts with us making a choice. I saw others caring and was inspired. Now I pass it on. I may affect 10 other people to change and pass it on.

"When we stop the pain and fear in us or learn to deal with our pain in a positive way, we become positive. Positive energy attracts people with positive energy, and soon we are surrounded with people full of positive energy," he said. "Then every day is an adventure."

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Chabad Center supplements Jewish life with kosher co-op, gatherings

By Virginia De Leon

Angst and fear had taken over Armalona Hagel of Spokane as she sat in the hospital awaiting heart surgery. At the request of a cousin in California, a man she had never met before visited her.

His gentle demeanor put her at ease. His smile and kind words gave her assurance. Along with Armalona's family, the bearded young man in the dark suit and yarmulke prayed at her bedside.

"When he prayed, he took my fear away," said Armalona of the first time she met Rabbi Yisroel Hahn.

The rabbi comforted her not only during her hospital stay, she said, but also when she went home. He and his wife, Sarah, brought food for her family.

Other Jews in the area whose lives have been touched by the rabbi share similar stories.

Since they first moved to Spokane earlier this year, the Hahns have made it their mission to reach out to as many Jews as they can find and to serve them "with an unconditional love."

The Hahns' South Hill home is the new Chabad Center of Spokane—a place that seeks to serve spiritual, emotional and physical needs of Jews in the region.

Spokane's Chabad Center is the first of its kind in Eastern Washington. In addition to offering weekly Shabbat gatherings and classes on Torah, Judaism and Hebrew, the center is a kosher co-op and social service agency for Jews.

The Chabad Center of Spokane is a branch of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, one of the largest branches of Hasidic Judaism. The movement was founded 250 years ago by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi and now has more than 3,300 institutions in more than 70 countries worldwide.

Chabad is known for its outreach among Jews. Although organizers are Orthodox Jews like Yisroel, Chabad centers or houses are essentially places for Jews to gather, pray and deepen their understanding of their faith.

According to its mission statement, Chabad encourages "positive action" among Jews and



Rabbi Yisroel Hahn, left, shows how to extract oil from olives.

Photo by Virginia De Leon

facilitates the efforts of Jewish organizations, synagogues and groups to increase Jewish knowledge and observance.

Through Chabad headquarters in New York and Chabad centers around the world, Hahn and other Chabad rabbis are able to contact Jews in their regions through relatives and word of mouth. They establish ties with existing Jewish synagogues and congregations to help invigorate Jewish traditions and faith, he said.

In December, about 65 Jews from Spokane and North Idaho gathered at the center for a children's Hanukkah celebration. Many who came were affiliated with at least one of Spokane's three Jewish congregations: Temple Beth Shalom, a Conservative congregation, and two smaller Reform groups, Ner Tamid and Beth Haverim.

During the celebration, children gathered as the rabbi used an olive press to extract oil from 10 pounds of olives. As he and other adults applied pressure on the press' wooden blocks to squeeze out the oil, Rabbi Yisroel talked to the children about Hanukkah—the eight-day festival of light.

Later, the children decorated doughnuts, colored dreidls and joined their parents in a feast that included latkes—fried potato pancakes that are considered traditional Hanukkah food.

After the meal, the merriment in the large room paused as the rabbi lit two candles on the menorah.

The group recited a prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

"When we light the Hanukkah candles, we should listen to what the candles tell us," said Yisroel. "We light the menorah only when it's dark, and we do it at the window because our job is to illuminate—to light the world."

Yisroel, 27, was born in Rehovot, Israel, just south of Tel Aviv. He was six years old when his family moved to New York. He grew up in a devout home.

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Instead of becoming the rabbi of an established synagogue, Yisroel chose to go the Chabad route to be a spiritual leader willing to move far away to foster a Jewish community.

His mission isn't to find converts to Judaism, Yisroel stressed, nor is it to start a new congregation. His goal is simply to help any Jew in need.

The couple, who have two young children, visited Spokane several times in the past year after receiving instructions from Chabad headquarters and Rabbi Sholom Ber Levitin, director of the Seattle-based Chabad-Lubavitch of the Pacific Northwest.

According to Rabbi Sholom, the Inland Northwest is home to a

large number of Jews who are not affiliated with a congregation.

His hope is that Yisroel will "reignite" the spirituality of these Jews and to help others deepen their faith.

Since the opening of the Chabad Center, several dozen people have taken part in Yisroel's classes and a regular group comes every week for Shabbat service. Once a month, the rabbi also travels to the Pullman-Moscow area to give classes on Judaism.

Last month's Hanukkah gathering, however, was the largest group the Hahns had seen at the center since summer, according to Sarah.

For information, call 443-0770 or visit www.jewishspokane.com.

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Community Colleges of Spokane provides equal opportunity in education & employment

Housing-first approach helps homeless adjust to living inside four walls

Continued from page 1

four walls may seem too much like incarceration or institutionalization.

Some hesitate to go to a faith-based shelter that expects them to attend worship before they receive a meal or shelter. For some, that's too much.

"Our goal is to help each find the best resources for them," he said, "to provide the tools they need to live successfully within walls."

For example, recently, Dale picked up a man at a local tent city and put him in an apartment. He helped the man settle in for a few days to settle in so he would acclimate from living in the tent city to living within four walls.

Mary had previously worked with the Spokane Neighborhood Action Program and the House of Charity in crisis response. She values working with this program that helps people avoid crises.

"We take time to teach them how to live in a residential setting, letting them know they don't need to hide from a guard, helping them navigate in their freedom and guiding them to take responsibility for their new home as their sanctuary, their place to rest and recuperate from the world," Dale said.

He knows faith can be helpful in healing people who are alone, but he also knows people's beliefs differ.



Dale Briese and Mary Tracey

Following VOA's style, he is gradual in his approach of helping people find their own faith or spiritual walk, navigating to discuss faith only as appropriate, because ultimately, "a spiritual path helps keep people healthy," he said.

He hopes the program's annual report statistics will set a model that encourages the community to build a stock of

supportive housing for homeless people and infrastructure to help them re-enter the community and be healthier.

VOA can provide the permanent supportive housing as long as there are funds from the federal and city budgets to subsidize support services and the one-person apartments for single disabled people. It's a partnership.

In the first year, some have already transitioned onto disability or employment.

"Eight of 10 that were in the program when I started have found employment or training," said Dale, who was part of the Otis Hotel Home Finders Team.

As part of his work with VOA, he served six hours a week for six weeks on the team, in collaboration with Catholic Charities and the Spokane Neighborhood Action Program, to help find homes for people who lived at the Otis Hotel before it evicted low-income tenants in mid November.

VOA also houses 25 women in Hope House, provides transitional housing for pregnant and parenting teens and their babies in six bedrooms at Alexandria's House, serves and shelters homeless teens downtown through Crosswalk, provides transitional living for five men 18 to 21 at Flaherty House and offers Independent Living services for teens leaving foster care.

VOA-Spokane just received one of seven grants from the Veterans Administration to VOA chapters to provide five transitional apartments for veterans and assistance with seeking medical and mental health care.

For information, call 328-4685 or email dbriese@voaspokane.org.

After years of prosperity, church seeks healing, hope in hard times

Lucille Moore hurts for her church, so she prays for it.

That and sharing her belief in Jesus so those who visit her will live in love, hope, mercy and forgiveness is about all she feels she can do at 97, wheel-chair bound after hip and knee surgeries.

"I've seen many ups and I've seen many downs," she said, quoting a song she often sang at church. "The ups outweigh the downs. I thank God for the downs to help me look up."

Now Morningstar Baptist Church, which she has attended for 50-some years is down.

In 2006, led by a new pastor, they followed their dream of relocating. They purchased a newer building at 3909 W. Rowan and put their building at 1829 E. Malton up for sale.

The new building is handicap accessible, so older and disabled members like her could attend again. They began to grow.

They paid savings of \$235,000 down on \$629,000, trusting the old building would sell. It has not yet sold. They sold five houses near the church to help with payments. They expected that growth and starting a daycare would cover the monthly mortgage.

The arrest of their new pastor,



Gerald Moore and Odis Denmon, Jr.

the Rev. Herman Lewis, for alleged incidents on April 30 and his sudden departure to address health concerns, shattered the church, said Gerald Moore, a deacon.

Members, who had their dreams stirred, reacted in different ways to their disappointment.

Attendance has dropped from 100 to about 25, said Deacon Odis Denmon, Jr., in a recent interview with Gerald. The child care did not develop. They can no longer pay their mortgage.

In December, the deacons sent a letter to community friends to ask for help, because they helped others when they were in need.

They hope someone they helped with a scholarship, travel to a funeral, burial costs, or to pay a rent or utility bill is now doing well and will help them in their tough time. They want to continue in their new location and grow.

Gerald and Odis said that the Rev. Freeman Simmons had served the church 32 years until

he retired in 1999. Then the congregation had several short-term and interim ministers.

Now three associate pastors, Aaron Davis, Abraham Cavanaugh and the Rev. Charles Welch serve the church, leading Sunday worship.

In its heyday up to the early 1990s, the church had 600 members with 250 attending. Now it has about 40 members, said Gerald, Lucille's 60-year-old son.

The Moores and the Denmons have both been in Spokane and the church since 1954. Gerald and Odis are both retired after each worked 35 years with a national supermarket distribution center in Spokane.

Morningstar Baptist has had a strong sense of mission.

In the late 1980s, it opened Caring and Sharing, a clothing bank

in the parsonage. Members also collected, sorted, cleaned, packed and shipped boxes of clothes nationally and globally.

Serving with her contemporaries, Lucille, who taught Sunday school, was president of the Mission Society for many years.

She served on the Union Gospel Mission board and with Church Women United, recruited for CROP Walks and organized trick-or-treating for UNICEF.

Hurt to see the church struggling today after years of prosperity, Lucille prays God will bless and heal the church—its members and its leaders.

She also continues to pray for the world and her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, trusting that "God knows what we need."

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Celebrating 50 Years

Pastor's colleagues rally to lead adventures in worship

Realizing she was not ready to return to the pulpit after a six-months extended leave for health care and a new treatment program had an opening she had to accept within 48 hours, the Rev. Tammy Bell called her colleagues and invited them to provide "Adventures in Worship" for six weeks.

The Rev. Myles Alexander, who had served as sustaining pastor at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Colville since March 18, was leaving Sept. 30.

Without a regular secretary, how would there be a bulletin? Who would plan worship, music and preach? Who would provide pastoral care?

Faced with those questions, Tammy had an idea. She asked six colleagues each to plan one service, print a bulletin and preach, and for some to bring some lay leaders, too. Neighboring pastors provided pastoral care.

She saw it as an opportunity for members to experience the ways worship is similar and different in UCC churches.

It seemed impossible, but as new member Rose Burns said, "Tammy makes us feel the impossible is easy to do."

Tammy, who began her ministry in her hometown in December 2004, helped make it easy by arranging for "Adventures in Worship" and organizing lay leaders to tend to a myriad of tasks. Long-time attendee Donna Williamson began a "Called to Care" ministry to homebound members.

Now that she's back, the church is planning to visit the congregations that came, and members will continue to do the visitation.

After treatment in Georgia and Florida, Tammy said she is "medication free, pain free and nearly symptom free for the first time in years."

The church's time was also renewing, receiving special "treatment" by UCC sister churches modeling how churches can "take care of one another and give each other hope," she said.

Her colleagues' coming and bringing one member to their entire congregation inspired the Colville church both in worship and after-worship discussions.

The Rev. Matthew Melchor-Gordon at Chewelah United Church of Christ (UCC) and



The Rev. Tara Leininger, right, welcomes the Rev. Tammy Bell back.

Photo by Bernard Kovalchik

the Rev. Tara Leininger at First Congregational UCC in Metaline Falls, were on call for emergencies. The Rev. Andy CastroLang at Westminster Congregational UCC in Spokane was on call for medical emergencies in Spokane. Each also preached.

Soon after Matt agreed to go, he realized his congregation could go, too. The churches are 22 miles apart. They filled the sanctuary at First Congregational in Colville on World Communion Sunday.

"We just put a sign on our door that said, 'Jesus has left the building,' and told where we were worshipping," Matt said.

Jesus, a large cloth doll they use occasionally for children's stories, sits on a pew by the altar facing the congregation. They left Jesus in Colville so the church would know Jesus was with them.

"Many people knew each other from camps and retreats," Matt said. "One family in our church has family in Colville."

"We will take Jesus back in the spring when the roads are clear," said Tammy, who plans to have teams of three or four members go to say thanks to the congregations that shared their pastors and had to arrange for pulpit supply.

Tara not only led worship for Tammy one Sunday, bringing six members of her church in Metaline Falls, but also welcomed Tammy back the Sunday she returned by helping lead worship.

"My people are self reliant. I

arranged a sermon, worship leader and Scriptures. Lay people often help because it's hard to find pulpit supply here. A member read the sermon I gave in Colville," said Tara, whose husband, Donovan Johnson, led worship at Ione, where she also preaches for an 8:30 a.m. service each week.

Others who came were the Rev. Dan Berg of Open Door Congregational UCC in Deer Park, the Rev. Hollis Bredeweg, acting conference minister, and the Rev. Paul Forman, retired from Northshore UCC in Woodinville.

Hollis played his banjo and autoharp. For the sermon, he handed out three-by-five cards for people to write their questions.

Janet Kovalnik, moderator of the Colville church, found discussions with the pastors and lay people after worship over coffee and cookies helpful.

"We asked what fund raisers they do, what they think the church would do if it was bold and brave, how to stay connected in the future, what they like about the United Church of Christ, what they would do with \$100,000 and what their vision is for the next five years," she said.

"Adventures in Worship created stronger bonds among our churches. It said that the churches care for us, stand by us and will minister to us," said Janet. "The time of hardship became a blessing, learning we are not alone."

In six months of treatment, Tam-

my saw 30 specialists, had more than 100 medical appointments, 11 procedures and many treatments for esophageal problems that hindered her ability to speak.

Members helped drive her to appointments. She stayed at her home in town, so she saw people at the store and continued to write the pastoral column for the newsletter to stay connected.

Six weeks at the alternative Health Institutes relieved symptoms by natural treatments including a change in diet, supplements and home therapy, she said.

"I am grateful for the congregation's courage, grace and patience," she said. "They could have made a different choice, but chose to live the compassion they profess, helping create a hopeful future for us all."

In addition to the local church's witnessing what it means to take care of one another, the wider church witnessed to caring for a sister church.

Rose, whom Tammy baptized just before she left, experienced the "positive loving family of the wider church being there for us, just as we know our families are there for us. I feel we have a great big church family around us."

Rose, who was born in Colville, started attending after Tammy led a memorial service for her cousin. She grew up with Tammy's parents, and her children went to school with Tammy.

Tammy summed up the experience for her and the congregation: "This has been a time of

understanding what is important and what is not, a time to look at our priorities and passions, to use our best gifts and give up the rest so we can make a difference in people's lives, in the church and in the community.

"I often thought in recent months, 'If I have only one more day to live, how do I want to live it?' or 'If this is the last thing I do or say, is it what I want to do or say?' Those are now my breath prayers every day," she said.

Returning the first Sunday in Advent, Tammy asked worshippers to write "waiting prayers" on strips of paper—"Links of Love"—each gave to another person. Then they linked them in a paper chain for the Christmas tree.

The next Sunday, they wrote prayers for peace on stars to add to the tree as part of the 100,000 prayers for peace the national United Church of Christ invites congregations to offer.

"We passed out 100-Grand candy bars for members to share with friends. Evangelism can be scary, but giving out candy bars is easy. I suggested they give the candy to someone and say it's part of an effort to seek 100,000 prayers for peace," Tammy said.

In a closing circle, she reminded them how precious life is: "The challenge is that we not become complacent and that we hold one another accountable to the lessons of love we have been privileged to learn together," she said.

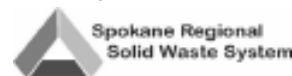
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Kenyan family in Spokane Valley involves parish in AIDS project

By Virginia De Leon

After witnessing how AIDS ravaged lives of many friends and family in Kenya, the Kigano family decided to start a circle of caring involving their faith community—St. John Vianney Catholic Church in Spokane Valley.

Lucy Kigano, her daughter, Mary Oyugi, of Spokane Valley, Rachel and Chelsea Kigano from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Mary Ann Mwangi from Campbell, Calif., and family from England traveled to their native country last April to bury Lucy's father, who had died of a stroke at the age of 80.

It was their first visit since they immigrated to the United States a decade ago. During their 10-day stay, they not only grieved the loss of their father and grandfather but also mourned many childhood friends and neighbors who have died from or suffer with AIDS.

The disease has also wreaked havoc on the immune systems of their uncle, a cousin and other relatives—shrinking their once strong bodies into unrecognizable forms of skeleton and skin.

In their hometown, Likii, a community of about 10,000 about 150 miles north of Nairobi, nearly a quarter of the population is infected with HIV.

As the Kiganos watched their mother and grandmother, Rachel Kigano, 76, care for people living with the disease, they decided to start a "circle of caring," a program to empower those suffering with AIDS by teaching them new skills and providing them a chance to give back to others.

Their plan evolved into Likii Tender Hearts, a nonprofit that teaches people with AIDS and those who have lost a loved one to the disease the arts of dressmaking, knitting and crocheting.

After learning the skills, participants donate their handiwork—clothing, tablecloths and other textiles—to AIDS homes, orphanages and other organizations.

"In return, the trainees acquire a spirit of giving and skills they use to build a new life," Lucy said. "It's a way to give back and become self-reliant again."

The people who are learning to sew and knit have been coming to Rachel's home for years.

As a respected elder in Likii, Rachel has counseled AIDS patients for three years, said her children in Spokane Valley.

Recently, Likii's chief offered her the use of the library in the town's center to teach classes on AIDS, which has taken more than 25 million lives worldwide since



Jane, Alex and Lucy Kigano, Jane's grandson Christian and Lucy's daughter Mary Oyugi

Photo by Virginia De Leon

1981. Rachel and others use the space to help those suffering with HIV and AIDS through counseling and teaching them how to manage their health.

A Presbyterian, Rachel's faith has long spurred her to help others, said Jane Kigano, a daughter who also lives in Spokane Valley.

Even though she was busy with her family, the mother of nine children "never turns people away" when they seek her help or advice, and she usually feeds her visitors, Jane recalled.

Her mother's kitchen continues to serve steaming pots of mukimo, a combination of mashed peas, corn and potatoes; githeri, a mix of beans and corn, and other traditional Kenyan dishes.

In addition to her volunteer work educating about AIDS, Rachel has made a living as a seamstress for more than 60 years.

To help their mother in her mission with AIDS patients, U.S. members of the Kigano family are raising money by selling banana leaf mosaics.

These are traditional African art with images of elephants, zebras, other animals and tribal people made from dried banana leaves and fibers, and then mounted on black muslin.

The family used their own money to purchase these pieces at the Masai Market in Nairobi.

Jane and Lucy's younger brother in Florida, Benson Kigano, organized a silent auction of these mosaics at his church earlier this year and raised more than \$1,000.

In Kenya, that amount is enough to purchase five rolls of materials and three sewing machines, Lucy said.

Fund-raising efforts are also under way in Spokane, which

is home to eight members of the Kigano family: Lucy, Mary and Jane, Jane's daughter Catherine and five-year-old grandson, Christian; their brother, Alex Kigano; a nephew's son, eight-year-old Stephen, and their aunt, Violet Kigano.

Lucy and Mary, 18, were the first to move here from California in 2005. They wanted to live somewhere more affordable, said Lucy, who is a planner for a manufacturing company. The Kiganos thought Spokane Valley would be a good place to rear their families, said Jane, who is a nursing assistant.

Jane, Lucy and their families later invited parishioners at St. John Vianney to become involved. In fact, members of the church were so touched by their efforts to help AIDS patients that the church made Likii Tender Hearts part of its mission this year.

In October, the Kigano family sold banana leaf mosaics at the church's craft fair. In December, they hosted a silent auction and Kenyan dinner, raising \$2,500.

"Just as Jesus fed 5,000 people from five loaves and two fish, your purchases, however small, will have impact on a large number of people," Lucy told members of St. John Vianney during a presentation with Mary, a senior at University High School.

Proceeds from the event will pay for fabric, thread and other materials to make clothing and

textiles. It will also be used to buy and repair sewing machines.

The family hopes to find an artist in Kenya to teach banana-leaf mosaic art to those with AIDS. Eventually, Likii Tender Hearts will purchase mosaics from those students and sell their original pieces in the United States.

Despite the prevalence of AIDS and HIV, people with the disease continue to be shunned and suffer discrimination, said Alex, who moved to Spokane Valley from

Nairobi last year. Some remain in denial, not wanting to hear about AIDS, he said.

Although Kenya has experienced a decline in HIV in recent years with increased AIDS education in schools, only those in urban areas hear the message.

People in small, rural communities such as Likii, where many are poor and uneducated, lack those resources, said Jane.

Some don't realize that practices such as wife inheritance—a custom among several of the more than 40 tribes in Kenya—also contribute to the spread of the disease, Alex said.

Because those afflicted with HIV or AIDS often live in shame and silence, Rachel seeks to give them confidence to speak openly about their experiences.

Jane said that when they "come out of this cocoon," they spread awareness.

By learning to sew, knit and make clothing for others, people who once lived in loneliness are now part of something bigger than themselves, said Lucy. Despite their suffering, they realize they have worth and can give to their communities.

By acquiring a spirit of giving, she said, they discover hope.

For information, call 927-5574.

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Professor introduces Gonzaga students to dialogue with other faiths

While some interpretations of religion may entrench believers, John Sheveland said a mainline approach seeks strategies to break barriers to help people see each other as part of the same body.

John guides juniors in a class on inter-religious dialogue at Gonzaga University to understand today's religious-based violence in light of Christian and Buddhist thought.

He focuses on the two faiths as examples of how religions address problems and offer solutions.

From doctoral studies in theological anthropology at Boston College focused on comparing classical Christian and Hindu authors, John has background in inter-religious dialogue related to many faiths.

In a workshop with The Ministry Institute on Saturday, Jan. 26, at the Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, he will address "How Do We Dialogue with Other Faiths?"

"In Catholic thought we use relational anthropology, noting that religion is not just individual but that individuals live profoundly in relationship. It's a communitarian construct," John said. "Human beings are social animals who are meant to be in relationship with God and with neighbors."

"In the Catholic church we often use the word, 'solidarity,' related to justice," John explained. "Solidarity asks for deeply empathetic identification with others, especially victims of injustice."

Solidarity is based on understanding that the whole community is degraded if one person is degraded.

"Empathy is more than sympathy. It means we identify with the other. It means your experience as a victim is my experience. There is also ownership of one's complicity in injustice, which gives tools for acting to remove the injustice," he said.

After childhood in Los Angeles, he moved with his family to Portland for junior high through college years, majoring in history at the University of Portland. A freshman class in world religions changed his direction, so after graduation he went on to studies for a master's degree, which he completed in 1999 at Yale Divinity School in Hartford, Conn.

He worked three semesters at Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles before he came as assistant professor in religious studies at Gonzaga University in September 2006.

Of the 60 junior students he has taught in three semesters, one was Buddhist.

"We focus on one faith, Bud-



John Sheveland teaches students how religions address issues.

dism, in order to go into it in more depth than would happen in an overview of several religions," John explained.

Discussions wrestle with how to respond to religious extremism that leads to violence or hatred.

"Islam, for example, means 'peace.' It is not an inherently violent faith. Muslim extremists distort Islam," he said. "We also look at Jewish extremism that

leads to violence and at Christians who might think their religion calls them to bomb abortion clinics. For those on the religious fringes, hate and violence are part of their identity. They have a distinct ideology. Every world religion has such faulty expressions."

Even among Buddhists, he added, were Japanese Zen Buddhist samurai warriors who tied

their ideology to their religion.

He observes that for fundamentalists in any religion, their religion is a security blanket.

"What extremists believe and do is not a product of their religion, but of their psychological makeup," he said.

When they tie their religion to an ideology, others may be drawn in or be complicit in their actions, as many Catholic and Protestants were in "superimposing the cross over the swastika" literally and figuratively in Nazi Germany.

"Ideologies co-opt religion. So people became convinced that Jews were the reason Germany lost World War I or for the economy tanking," John said.

Both Christianity and Buddhism have correctives that can counter such complicity.

The Christian understanding of the body of Christ and the Buddhist understanding of true love and compassion can help believers discipline their understanding of people outside as well as inside their faith communities.

"The notion of the body of Christ is prophetic at this moment in our society when some count and others don't, when some are marginalized and some are doing well. Jesus was concerned about the poor, those disenfranchised by the power structures and hierarchies," he said.

Understanding that the body of Christ includes everyone, he said, can change how people view each other.

Similarly, the Buddhist concept of loving compassion can help people transcend bias and prejudice, learning to love beyond the boundaries humans erect.

John, who attends St. Aloysius and St. Peter's parishes in Spokane, also teaches an upper division class on Buddhism. Next semester, he will teach a graduate class on theological anthropology of Christianity on "understanding the human person as a creature of God, forgiven in Christ, belonging to Christ and seen as Christ."

For information, call 323-6784 or email sheveland@gonzaga.edu.

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Media and personal encounters can counter media-bred stereotypes

Peace, like many well-intended, much-needed resolutions at the start of a year, often lands on the table of good intentions set aside for another year.

So many set peace aside in the belief that it's a good idea but impossible because human nature is violent. Is that really so? Is it our assumption because that's what our media, entertainment, corporation and government storytellers often tell us—each with vested interests in profiting off war, hate, fear and insecurity.

Is war really *easier* than peace?

Can our communication in media and interpersonally be redirected to guide us into creating a culture of peace? Can we replace the expectation that war and violence are ways to “accomplish” things, even though experience says they accomplish the opposite of what they promise: peace?

Especially as electronic communication takes more time from verbal communication, we must be cognizant of when we let entertainment fill spaces in our lives

once filled by interpersonal relationships, dialogue, discussions, debates and contacts. How much do shows spur us to think?

Media offer can also offer ways to counter stereotypes some create: For example, CBS recently aired a show, “In God’s Name,” with French filmmakers Jules and Gedeon Naudet interviewing the world’s religious leaders—exploring respect for diversity and positive attributes of faiths. In addition, the movie, “The Great Debaters,” reminds viewers of 1930s racism and a challenge for nonviolent action through the words of James Farmer, Jr., founder of the Congress of Racial Equality.

Other ways to counter the notion that anything foreign or different is a threat can start by hosting a high school or college exchange student, or going on a short-term international mission experience. Meeting people as people is the primary way to counter suspicions media, entertainment or other storytellers instill.

To learn for myself about the Soviet

Union—the 1960s evil empire—I visited Kiev, Moscow and Leningrad as part of a college semester abroad. It stirred to differentiate between people and their government. I asked: How could we aim weapons at people for what the government that oppresses them does? How could we target the innocent to retaliate against military or political threats our media covered in lieu of people stories? Personal connections stir thinking.

To counter the notion that immigrants—so commonly preceded today by the word “illegal,” implying all immigrants are illegal—are people to suspect and hate, we might join church efforts to resettle refugees, to meet people as people.

To counter the notion that everyone must speak English when first stepping on U.S. shores or turf, we can learn another language. Not only is it a good tool for any travel and keeping the brain active, but also it gives us insights into the ways people think and feel, because of the differing word

order and different sounds of words.

To counter fear of the United Nations or a global climate agreement as impeding our national sovereignty, we might attend speakers offered by the United Nations Association, Gonzaga University and Whitworth University. They are among the many who seek to educate the community about global affairs, common issues and struggles of people around the world.

The dream of peace is as old as the reality of war. Peace is much more than the end of a war or the time between two wars. Peace is both personal and societal, requiring cooperation of nations’ political, economic, social, spiritual and media structures.

Survival of all life on earth depends on our embedding the reality that peace is about implementing creative responses to human conflicts, not limiting ourselves to violence that silences, oppresses and destroys life. The Fig Tree stories are examples that peace is possible.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Housing Task Force offers avenues for involvement of faith community

The report of Spokane’s Affordable Housing Task Force offers some avenues for congregations and faith-based organizations to participate in solutions and to develop partnerships to address the current housing crisis.

The faith community can encourage the overall community to continue to work together to make urban neighborhoods a tapestry of diversity with people from different incomes, races and perspectives.

The task force convened by former Mayor Dennis Hession met in 2007, concerned that new economic growth and market-rate housing is both making downtown Spokane a vibrant neighborhood and resulting in a loss of housing for vulnerable members of the community.

The summary, which was prepared by representatives from nonprofits, faith-based groups, businesses, government and the community, expressed concern that there be balance in dealing with the new

economic reality and the community’s desire that the poorest among us be treated in a dignified and human manner.

In 2007, three downtown buildings housing the poor—the New Madison, the Commercial Building and the Otis—all sold in a six-month period to for-profit development as market-rate businesses, apartments and condos.

Those buildings housed more than 180 people with special needs and low incomes, including frail elderly, disabled, domestic-violence victims, felons, people with substance abuse problems and the urban poor.

The Affordable Housing Task Force formed a Homefinders Team to help residents find homes and help them move.

The task force summary calls for 1) establishing a Regional Housing Commission; 2) supporting initiatives of that commission; 3) continuing the Homefinders Team; 4) continuing funding

for emergency housing; 5) continuing partnership around the Turner Building; 6) developing a local relocation ordinance; 7) doing a baseline study to track housing; 8) working with Washington Housing Finance Commission; 9) urging the mayor to increase funding of the Washington State Housing Trust Fund to support low-income housing; 10) studying what other cities are doing; 11) advocating state and federal legislation that addresses affordable housing needs and obstacles, and 12) encouraging discussion on this topic for long-term policy options.

Marty Dickinson, director of the Downtown Spokane Partnership and task force chair, realizes effort is still needed “to preserve the overall health for all the people in our downtown community” and “gaps in service for the homeless will not be filled overnight, nor without strong community involvement and commitment.”

How can our community become one

with justice and housing for all, so we are not segregated into haves and have nots, and none are left out of our growing prosperity?

The gentrification process we are experiencing has been growing in urban areas around the United States, as young professionals and empty nesters buy urban lofts and condos and dilapidated historic buildings for avant-garde artist studios, gourmet eateries and their residences.

Faith community involvement is an integral part of solving housing problems. We need pastors and congregations to come together to be informed, join existing and new efforts and partnerships, and establish a moral high ground and viable resources for innovative housing options.

Guest editorial by Brian Royer, who has 17 years experience in community and low-income housing development, bringing faith and nonprofit groups together to provide housing. He is a member of Bethany Presbyterian and past Fig Tree Board member. - 534-1307 or pbroyer@sisna.com

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

At first glance, we might say “You shall not kill” is an easy commandment to keep. Martin Luther’s explanation, however, implicates us: “What does this mean? We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life’s needs.” He includes both what we should not do and what we should do.

It seems we catch kids doing what they should *not* do all the time. The media are quick to pick up on that, too.

At a recent youth gathering, someone asked, “Is the news an accurate portrayal of what is going on in the world?” After some silence, one said, “Yes?” After more silence and thought, one young man said, “I don’t think so. There are so many good things people do that never are reported.”

Have we been duped into looking through negative lenses at our young people or at our world? Certainly, there are bad things happening. There are those who bring harm to others, who, in Luther’s explanation are more into “killing” than making alive.

Look again! You are certain to catch young people, as well as many people around you bringing life, hope and light to this world! There *are* many good things that people do, people all around you.

**The Rev. Ann Frerks
Emmanuel Lutheran - Cheney**

We are such linear people. Our education system is set up on deductive thinking. Only recently have those in authority begun

to recognize “multiple intelligences”—that there are a number of ways to both learn and think about the world.

Linear thinking is like reading a book with an unbelievable story in it and then seeing how it can be applied to your life.

Symbolic thinking is reading a book and waking up inside the story and recognizing that it is your story, and that the story is going on in your life and that you are in it.

Symbolic thinking is thinking in all directions at once. It does not remove us from what we are thinking about. There is no “about.” God is not something we think about, but a presence we participate in. Mystic Meister Eckhart said, “We are inside of God and God is inside of us.”

**The Rev. Redhawk Rice-Sauer
Covenant Christian**

The Bible speaks of the fullness of time as a season of ripeness or readiness, reminding us that, despite all our technological innovations and so-called advances, there are still some things in our instant society which can’t be rushed.

The industrial age, for all its gifts and conveniences allows us to circumnavigate some natural rhythms of the order of the universe. We’ve gone from crockpot pace to a microwave culture, from slow to fast food, from rotary to speed dial. So much about the modern world seems to slingshot us forward more quickly and efficiently.

While I’m grateful for many modern inventions, part of me can’t help but wonder if our indiscriminate embrace of such things

doesn’t keep us from missing something happening in the slow lane of life. Because there is no hurry in heaven, much of our life in the Spirit is spent, by design, waiting. The soul, it seems, develops best in the simmering mode, taking its time.

**The Rev. Eric Peterson
Colbert Presbyterian**

I have been intrigued by obituaries—some I know and most I never met. Beyond dates of birth and death and names of survivors is the lavish praise heaped on by family and loved ones.

To read the details of their lives, one would think they were all truly angels in disguise. No one seems to have had a “dark side,” a temper, a bad habit or an unfortunate personality flaw.

If the truth were known about each of us, there would need to be two obituaries, one for public consumption and one for “truth in advertising.”

As Ambrose Bierce reminded us several decades ago, “A saint is just a dead sinner revised and edited.”

**The Rev. Wilbur Rees, emeritus
Shalom United Church of Christ
Richland**

We seem to understand the notion of a holy place. A temple, a church or a synagogue bespeaks space enshrined. Such places recall Moses at the burning bush taking off his shoes because the ground on which he stood was holy ground.

We might even appreciate that there are

levels of holy space. The ancient sanctus sanctorum or “holy of Holies” in both the tabernacle and temple of the Israelites was almost beyond holy in the regulations that protected its singularity.

We may have our own holy places, locations we like to visit because when we are there we feel especially close to God.

What if we transfer our understanding of holy places to the dimension of time? Suppose we think of certain moments of each day as devoted to God, as “holy.” Perhaps we ought to begin large rather than small with seasons like Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. The world may reduce this to an intense few hours of feasting and gift giving. It will be a holiday, not a holy day.

Perhaps we could discover ourselves in holy time if we attempted to make a connection between our holiday activities and the reason for the holiday.

If we could discover ourselves in holy time during the season, perhaps we would want to establish holy time every day of our lives. When the rush of the season is over, the rush of our lives makes it harder to find holy time than holy space.

**The Rev. Dan Berg
Open Door United Church of Christ
Deer Park**

I continue to be impressed with your integrity, sensitivity and devotion.

Jan Polek

Thank you for the good job you do.
Dorothy Haenle

2008 Inland Northwest CROP Walk dates planned

The Spokane CROP Hunger Walk Committee is holding a meeting for church representatives with Church World Service/CROP regional director Lynn Magnuson at 7 p.m., Monday, Feb. 4, at Mission Community Presbyterian, 2103 E. Mission.

Last year, about 50 Spokane-area congregations raised more than \$35,000 to support global development and relief programs, and local hunger outreach—with 25 percent going to Second Harvest, Mid City Concerns, Spokane Valley Meals on Wheels and Interfaith Hospitality.

The 2008 walk will be Spokane's 30th. Previous walks raised nearly \$577,000, with \$144,000 for local agencies.

For information on Spokane's

walk, call 891-1045.

Lynn reported on other Eastern Washington/Oregon CROP Hunger Walks:

- Sunnyside will hold its fifth CROP Hunger Walk on April 19.
- Milton-Freewater and the Upper Valley near Leavenworth will hold walks on May 18.
- Pullman and Moscow will celebrate their 25th Walk next fall.
- This fall, Walla Walla raised \$13,597 in their first walk since 1991.

Funds raised in the CROP Hunger Walks assist with global

hunger, disaster relief and development. For example, CWS is assisting with aid for 4.6 million Iraqi refugees and is urging the U.S. government to keep its commitment to resettle 12,000 Iraqis in the United States during 2008.

CWS is also helping with material requests for storm-related needs in the Midwest, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, and helping form long-term recovery groups after Pacific Northwest floods.

For information, call 888-297-2767.

Calendar of Events

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| <p>Jan 5</p> <p>Jan 10</p> <p>Jan 10-11</p> <p>Jan 12</p> <p>Jan 13</p> <p>Jan 17</p> <p>Jan 19</p> <p>Jan 20</p> <p>Jan 21</p> <p>Jan 24, 31</p> <p>Jan 25</p> <p>Jan 26</p> <p>Feb 4</p> <p>Feb 6</p> <p>Feb 7</p> <p>Wed-Sat</p> <p>Thurs</p> <p>Fridays</p> <p>1st Sats</p> <p>3rd Mons</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Neighborhood Grand Writing Workshop," Community Leadership Academy, Salem Lutheran, 1428 E. Broadway, 4:30 p.m. • Spokane Community College Service Learning Fair, The Lair, 1810 N. Greene, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. - call 533-8221 • Sexual Assault Training and Investigations Conference, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. - www.gonzaga.edu/ce • Multifaith AIDS CareTeams, Volunteer Orientation and Training, St. John Vianney Catholic Church, 503 N. Walnut, 8:30 a.m.-4:45 p.m. - 328-4273 • "Celebrating the Eucharist for the Life of the World," Workshop with Samuel Torvend, Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave., 9 a.m.-3 p.m. - 838-4377 • Spokane CROP Hunger Walk Planning Committee, Interfaith Hospitality Network, 2515 E. Sprague, 2 p.m. - 891-1045 • Legislative Advocacy Event, Coalition for Progressive Pastors and Religious Coalition for the Common Good, Spokane Friends, 1612 W. Dalke, 4-8 p.m. - 844-5666 • "Too Much, Too Fast: Too Little Money, Not Enough Time," Institute for Congregational Leadership Workshop, Clare Center, 4624 E. Jamieson Rd., 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. - 897-9223 • Dixieland Jazz & Devine Desserts Benefit, Colville High School Jazz Band, Veradale United Church of Christ, 611 N. Progress Rd., 7 p.m. - 926-7173 • "Silence Is Deafening: Stand up! Speak out!" Martin Luther King, Jr., Community Commemoration, Holy Trinity Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana - 4 p.m. • Union Gospel Mission Open House, 1224 E. Trent 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. • Martin Luther King, Jr., Rally, March and Resource Fair, begins at INB Performing Arts Center, 10 a.m. and march proceeds to Riverpark Square - 455-8722 • Starting Sustainable Community Gardens, Washington State University Spokane County Extension Education Center, 222 N. Havana, 5:30 p.m., 487-1603 • "Voices for Creative Nonviolence," Kathy Kelly, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane - 838-7870 • KYRS Film Night, "Pirate Radio USA," documentary on underground world of illegal radio in America, Community Building Lobby, 35 W. Main, 7 p.m. • "How Do We Dialogue with Other Faiths?" John Sheveland, The Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. - 323-6784 • Spokane CROP Hunger Walk Congregational Representatives Training, Mission Community Presbyterian Church, 2103 E. Mission - 891-1045 • Fig Tree distribution, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m. • Fig Tree Board, Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 1 p.m. • Habitat-Spokane work days - call 534-2552 • PJALS street vigils against the Iraq War, Riverside and Monroe 4:30 p.m. - 838-7870. • Colville Peace Vigil - 675-4554 • Ministers' Fellowship Union and Minister's Wives/Widows Fellowship, 806 W. Indiana - 624-0522 • NAACP - 467-9793 |
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Community gardens need leaders, resources

The Washington State University Spokane County Extension and the Spokane Regional Health District are offering two workshops on starting sustainable community gardens.

Based on Growing Communities workshops of the American Community Gardening Association, sessions recognize that community gardens need leaders and resources, as well as soil, seeds and water to grow.

A workshop on "Learning How to Lead: Building the Heart of the Garden" is on Thursday, Jan. 24. A workshop, "Learning to Ask for the Time, Talent and Money You Need," is Thursday, Jan. 31.

The workshops are 5:30 to 9 p.m. at the Extension Education Center, 222 N. Havana.

For information, call 487-1603.

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Women in Silver Valley church help feed 30 children in Uganda

A small group of elderly women in a small North Idaho church with little money now help feed more than 30 children each day in a school in Nambirizi, Uganda.

Through an exchange of emails with the school's coordinator, they learned the children have little food. For five cents a day, a child can have millet porridge.

At first, the women sent \$50 four times a year, then \$50 bi-monthly and now \$50 a month with the help of the diocese, other churches and individuals.

Through storytelling and connecting with people, the Rev Jane Nelson-Low has introduced women in Wallace and Kellogg, Idaho, to people around the world, opening their eyes to common concerns and experiences.

"For many small churches, outreach seems too big to handle, but there are ways to be involved, because money goes further in Uganda," she said. "It opened the world to people here. They are excited about the project and feel good about the church."

"My neighborhood is large," she said. "It includes Uganda, Palestine and South Africa."

Her neighborhood also includes women she met last February and March at the 2007 United Nations Conference on the Status of Women in New York City. She attended as part of the 80-member international Anglican delegation that participated in the non-governmental organization (NGO) events held simultaneously with the official meetings.

The congregation has been interested to learn what Jane learned about "The Girl Child," the 2007 theme—such issues as child marriages, girl soldiers, prostitution, trafficking and mutilation. She plans to go to the 2008 session on fair trade and microfinance.

"What makes things real is to tell stories of a particular woman, not discuss general issues," she said. "For example, an African woman told me how hard it is for a girl in her village to stay in school because girls and women spend much of their day going to get water. They don't have time for school or studies."

"I work their stories into sermons," she said. "In small communities where people have spent most of their lives, few are aware of what is going on in the rest of the world. Part of my job is to help make them aware."

"Women in the Silver Valley have stability from having friends since grade school. That stability can mean resistance to change, but it often fosters tolerance for the 'eccentricity' of people they have known for years," she said. "There is understanding and pa-



The Rev. Jane Nelson-Low

Photo by Episcopal Diocese of Spokane
tience, accepting people as part of the community."

In 2004, Jane started as supply pastor for Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Kellogg and Holy Trinity Episcopal in Wallace. Then she served part-time. At first, the combined congregation traveled alternate weeks to Emmanuel and then to Holy Trinity.

Since October, she has been full-time pastor of the Episcopal Church of the Silver Valley, which now worships in Wallace.

Work to merge the churches led to sale of Emmanuel on Oct. 14 to All Nations Christian Center in Spokane. The last service at Emmanuel was Oct. 26. Funds from the sale made it possible to call her to serve full time.

Having worship in the same place each week means the church can attract newcomers and more parishioners. Previously, some were unsure where services were.

The church is adding an 8:30 a.m. Sunday service, plus holding a 2:30 p.m. service Wednesdays at Mountain Valley Care and Rehabilitation Center in Kellogg.

Holy Trinity, founded in 1885, is in a Kirtland Cutter building built in 1910.

Most of the 40 members have lived in the Silver Valley a long time. Most are elderly. Younger members are in their mid-50s.

The congregation draws people from Cataldo to Mullen along I-90. Shoshone County has a population of 12,000, Wallace, 1,000, and Kellogg, 2,500.

For a long time, the Silver Valley was a mining area. Most mines shut down in the 1980s and the focus of the economy shifted to recreation. With the price of heavy metals up, mines are becoming active again and have hired staff. Silver Mountain, once drawing winter recreation only, is planning a water park, a golf course and bike trails on old rail lines. As a result, real estate prices are up and there is a shortage of workforce housing.

In an area often viewed as conservative, Jane brings a commitment to social justice as integral to the Gospel. She has introduced it slowly, in small ways.

She is the only woman pastor and the only mainline church pastor in an area where evangelical, pentecostal and independent churches predominate.

From 11 years with her former husband in Kenyon City in Eastern Oregon, rearing three sons in a home heated with wood, tending livestock and a big garden, she understands rural living.

She moved back to the Portland, Ore., area, where she had completed pre-med studies at Linfield College in 1970 before living in Kenyon City. She found a job at Good Samaritan Ministries, which "shares unconditional Samaritan love with the world through education and counseling."

Four years later, Jane decided to study at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley. She did field work with the Center for the Christian Study of Urban Ministry and for the Catholic Charities AIDS division. She also served an Anglo-Catholic Church with people affected by AIDS. Jane began to focus on justice and outreach.

After graduating in 1991, she spent seven years as associate at Christ's Church in Lake Oswego, Ore., doing adult education and outreach. She volunteered at an AIDS hospice.

In 1995, she went to Uganda to a school the church's outreach committee started. She also helped the

church sponsor a Bosnian refugee family and made two trips to the West Bank and Gaza.

She worked briefly with World Vision and served two years at a church in Scottsdale, Ariz., before coming to the Cathedral of St. John in Spokane in 2000.

Bringing those ties and concerns to the Silver Valley, her connections have helped personalize those commitments.

Since Good Samaritan Ministries matched the church with the Ugandan school, the congregation's commitment has grown.

In addition to the mission project, Jane has introduced a women's study group to issues raised at the UN's 1995 Conference on Women in Beijing.

"Recently they discussed women's health in other areas of the world, learning that many women lack access to health care. Then the women discussed local access, telling of friends unable to afford pap smears and mammograms, lacking consistent health care and going only when there is an acute problem. They told of church and community members who have no health insurance or Medicare," Jane said. "They discussed how hard it is for low-income people to be insured."

"We start by looking at an issue in a far-away place, interweave Scripture, look at the issue in general and realize it's in our own community," she said.

Then they pray about the concern and ask what they will do as a result of their new awareness.

On hunger, they talked about

far away places where women and girls are the last to eat, eating only if there is enough. Then they discussed local hunger.

Unequal access to education, violence against women, effects of conflict on women, economic disparities, and inequalities in decision-making are other topics.

At the UN gathering on the status of women, Jane learned that the U.S. government has ratified neither the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) nor the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Both passed the UN and most member nations ratified them, but not the United States, even though U.S. representatives helped draft them.

Jane submitted a resolution at the Diocesan Convention in October at Post Falls, calling for churches to discuss the UN conventions on women and children, and asking members to urge the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to approve them. The resolution passed.

For information, call 208-752-7031 or email jnlow@usamedia.tv.

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