

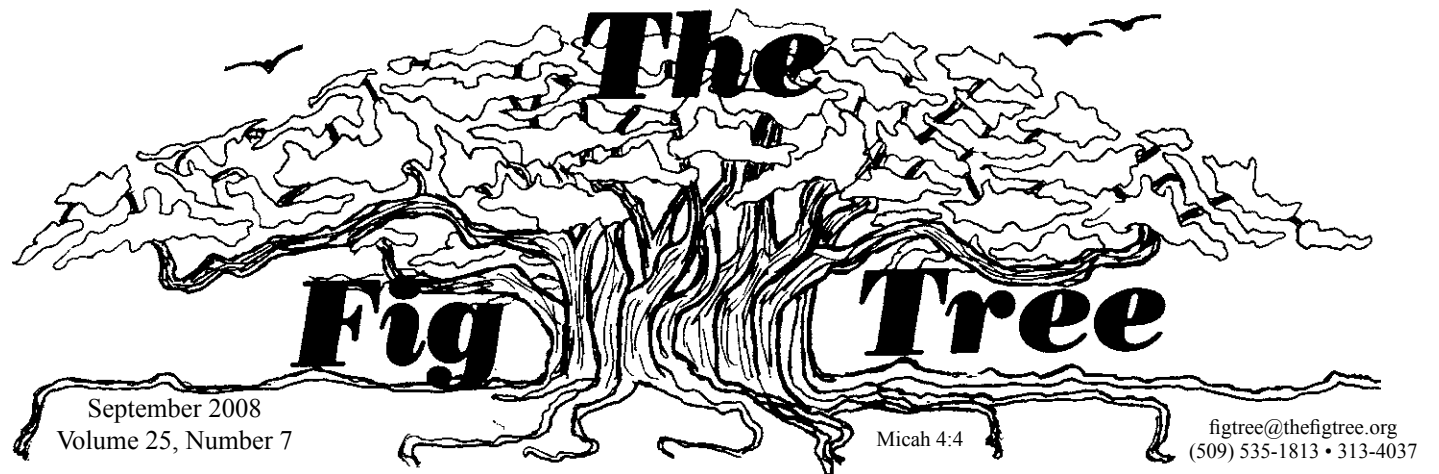
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Micah 4:4

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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest

online in color at www.thefigtree.org

Rancher implements sustainable practices

By Mary Stamp

The 1,000-acre Lazy-R Ranch of third-generation cattle rancher Maurice Robinette, who ranched conventionally for 15 years, qualifies as sustainable and nearly qualifies for organic certification.

He puts into practice with his herd of 100 cattle what he promotes in his other job, as part-time Eastern Washington organizer for the Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network (WSFFN), a 250-member nonprofit advocacy agency for sustainable agriculture and family farms.

In that role, he uses his understanding of rural sociology and the environment to help shape and advocate for legislative policies and funding to support sustainable and organic farming.

The network's members include farmers, environmental organizations, farmers' markets, faith-based groups, the natural foods industry, community organizations, anti-hunger and nutrition advocates, educators and individuals.

Sustainable farming is economically viable, environmentally healthy and socially equitable.

"Sustain" means to nourish, says the wsffn.org website: "A sustainable food system nourishes community, environmental and social



Maurice Robinette advocates sustainable food and farming policies.

wellbeing. Sustainability fosters ecological farming and land use that protects biodiversity, builds healthy soils and conserves natural resources."

Organic farming uses no chemical fertilizers or pesticides, growth regulators, feed additives, hormones, antibiotics or genetically modified organisms. It uses crop rotation, green manure, compost, biological pest control and mechanical cultivation.

"Organic agriculture is not necessarily sustainable, and sustainable agriculture is not necessarily organic," Maurice clarified.

Maurice explained that an organic farmer may spend more on energy using mechanical tillage and burning diesel, both of which are bad for the environment. Tilling creates runoff and erosion. Diesel pollutes the air.

"Whitman County spends about \$1 million a year to clear ditches of topsoil runoff," Maurice said. "That's not a sustainable practice."

"Some agriculture is both organic and sustainable," he said. "That's possible with holistic management that incorporates decisions on profitability, environmental monitoring and social compatibility with neighbors, with organic criteria."

Continued on page 4

Ecumenist engages in statewide effort to renew ecumenical spirit, association

Ecumenist Alice Woldt has been connecting with church leaders in Washington, laying the groundwork for a renewed statewide ecumenical spirit and organization.

She began in July as the transitional executive director for the Washington Association of Churches (WAC), following Darel Grothaus, who as interim executive director led the board and a Strategic Planning Working Group to develop a new board and plan.

"Building up the body of Christ through public expression of our unity based on gospel values of justice and peace, compassion and hope, reconciliation and equality is a calling to which I've devoted

most of my professional life," said Alice, who was public policy director for the WAC in 2006 and 2007, and recently was director of the Religious Coalition for the Common Good.

The plan she is implementing will expand the ecumenical organization's membership to the broader Christian community, community ministries, seminaries, advocacy organizations, church-related groups, ministerial associations and individual congregations.

The board will be more geographically diverse than in the past, so more meetings will be held by conference calls.

The strategic plan envisions the WAC being more engaged in com-

munities that are not necessarily theologically in sync, offering opportunities for dialogue, worship and prayer, Alice said.

One way to spread ecumenical involvement will be to encourage people in communities throughout the state to plan worship services for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity "to bring people together who do not normally come together," she said.

The WAC will also continue to be involved in public policy education and action as a way to lift up the Gospel values, but the agenda may be less extensive than in the past, focusing on priorities that cut across the Christian community—including Evangelical, African American and other ethnic churches—particularly related to stewardship of the earth and poverty.

"The WAC fills a useful role, building relationships, bringing people together, bridging differences, educating on public policy, inspiring people to do things in their communities that promote the common good," Alice said.

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Bioneers Conference urges living in sync

More than 10,000 people will gather in person and by satellite in 18 communities around the nation, including Spokane, to explore innovative sustainable ways to live in sync with the web of life.

For the second year, local organizers will provide a satellite link to the annual Bioneers Conference in San Rafael, Calif., and local workshops Friday through Sunday, Oct. 17 to 19, at Spokane Falls Community College.

The word, "Bioneers," comes from biological pioneers and refers to the Collective Heritage Institute, a New-Mexico-based nonprofit that sponsors the event to connect people from different disciplines to explore solutions to environmental and socio-cultural problems.

Founder Kenny Ausubel coined the term in 1990 to describe social and scientific innovators who promote the idea of people living by nature's "operating instructions." The principles include kinship, cooperation, diversity, symbiosis, continuous creation, and creating an equitable, humane and democratic society.

Patty Gates, organizer of local workshops, said the Spokane gathering taps the region's diversity.

Five years ago, she and several others from the New Priorities Foundation, where she is now executive director, attended the San Rafael conference. After learning about the Beaming Bioneers Satellite Conference, Spokane attendees decided they would save the energy of travel and reach more people.

Patty, an educator with School District 81 for 21 years, has worked 10 years with New Priorities funding environmental

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Religion News Briefs

Around the World

Press Release from the National Council of Churches USA

NCC and WCC have 60 years of shared history and spiritual ties

New York - The 60 years since the founding Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in August 1948, have marked incalculable changes, said the Rev. Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of Churches recently.

U.S. churches played an important role in founding the WCC and continue to share its history, he said. The WCC was officially voted into existence on August 23, 1948, with delegates declaring, "We intend to stay together."

He said the 20th century saw many ecumenical developments, including the founding of the Federal Council of Churches in America in 1908. That council became the U.S. National Council of Churches (NCC) in 1950.

The ecumenical movement formed when imperial monarchs ruled much of Europe and Asia, and the peoples of the southern hemisphere were dominated by foreign colonial powers, he said. It saw the rise and fall of Communism, and its leaders played a decisive role in the civil rights movement.

The WCC and NCC formed an important partnership during 20th century liberation struggles, Michael said.

The WCC's second general secretary was a U.S. Presbyterian, the Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, an activist in American civil rights. He was instrumental in creating WCC's Program to Combat Racism (PCR) after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968. The Rev. M. William Howard, an American Baptist and later president of the NCC, chaired the PCR.

In 1998, South Africa President Nelson Mandela came to the 8th Assembly of the WCC in Harare, Zimbabwe, to declare the worldwide ecumenical movement had been instrumental in removing the scourge of apartheid from southern Africa.

Before the WCC was officially formed, American churches helped keep the spirit of the WCC alive, Michael said.

"The founders of the World Council of Churches thought the WCC would be launched 10 years earlier than it was," said Michael, an ecumenical scholar and former member of the WCC's Faith and Order staff. "In September 1939 the churches of Europe ran for cover when their countries went to war against one another. It took years for the dust to settle."

In World War II, most records of the "World Council of Churches in Formation" were held in the United States for safe-keeping, by what later became the U.S. Conference for the WCC.

"U.S. churches have the distinction of being a component that predates its parent body," he said. "From the beginning, the U.S. churches made it clear they believed we were all together as members of Christ's universal Church."

At the WCC's first assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, church leaders from Germany, Italy and Japan sat together with church leaders from former enemies England, France, Canada and the U.S.

"It couldn't have been easy," he said, "but they put animosities aside in the name of Christ and church unity."

German Lutheran Pastor Martin Niemöller, a founder of the anti-Nazi Confessing Church in Germany who had been imprisoned in a concentration camp as a "personal guest" of Adolf Hitler, eased tensions at the assembly by persuading German delegates to confess their sins of silence or complicity. U.S. church leaders reached across the aisle to former enemies.

"From that time on, the U.S. churches—most of them member communions of the NCC—followed the same historical paths as our international counterparts," Michael said. "Many of our Orthodox members relate to churches with headquarters in other nations. The NCC's president, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, is diocesan legate and ecumenical officer of the Armenian Church in America and a member of the WCC Central Committee.

"Structurally, the NCC USA and the WCC are not related," Michael said. "Spiritually, we are inseparable in our history and our goals for the future. God has blessed us with 60 productive years in the WCC, and we celebrate with gratitude and hope for the future."

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Bishops, WAC leader discuss ecumenism

Local bishops and an ecumenical leader will participate in a panel on "25 Years of Ecumenism in the Inland Northwest"—including the impact of The Fig Tree over that period—at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 6, at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave.

The event launches the 25th anniversary of The Fig Tree.

Negotiations about starting the newspaper to cover religion news began in the fall of 1983, and the first edition was published in May 1984 under what was then the Spokane Christian Coalition.

Bishop Walton Mize of Christ Holy Sanctified Church, Bishop William Skylstad of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane, Bishop Jim

Waggoner of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane; Bishop Martin Wells of the Eastern Washington Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Alice Woldt, transitional executive director of the Washington Association of Churches, will be the panelists.

For information, call 535-1813.

Church hosts BeFriender Ministry training

Community Congregational United Church of Christ in Pullman is hosting training in the BeFriender Ministry, a national ecumenical program promoting a listening ministry for lay pastoral care. It will be held Monday, Sept. 29 to Thursday, Oct. 2, at the church, 525 NE Campus Ave.

Chip Laird, associate pastor, said that the program helps people connect and share stories so they sense God's presence in their

lives. It does not replace pastoral care by clergy or staff, but enables more people to receive pastoral care, building a sense of caring community, he said

BeFriender Ministry operates on a train-the-trainer model, in which one or two people from a church or group of churches attend a BeFriender Foundations Workshop and learn to facilitate a program in their congregation.

The program trains lay mem-

bers to provide pastoral care to promote spiritual growth, leadership skills and interpersonal relationships through the healing power of sharing one's story, he explained.

BeFrienders involves nonjudgmental compassionate listening, accepting people as they are, respecting diverse spiritual journeys and embodying the caring presence of God, he said.

For information, call 332-2411.

Domestic violence events educate youth

Given that a third of teens experience dating violence, Faith Partners Working Against Family Violence and the YWCA/Alternatives to Domestic Violence are offering workshops for pastors and youth to address the issue in their churches and youth groups.

The workshops are being held before and after the annual Domestic Violence Awareness Month March, which begins at 4 p.m., Monday, Oct. 6, at the YWCA, 829 W. Broadway, and leaves at 5 p.m., marching to a downtown church to raise awareness.

A workshop from 1 to 4 p.m., Monday, Oct. 6, is for youth pas-

tors, clergy and those working with teens to help them distinguish healthy relationships and signs of dating violence, and develop strategies to teach youth.

At 6 p.m., there will be a workshop to help youth discern the health of dating relationships and ways to leave unhealthy relationships and abusive situations.

The Rev. Lizann Bassham, who has been in youth ministry for more than 20 years, is the featured speaker. She has taught at Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif., on youth ministry, adolescent spirituality,

and spirituality and sexuality. She has also written youth ministry curricula for mainline Protestant, Evangelical and Catholic groups, and a teen dating violence prevention curriculum for The Faith Trust Institute in Seattle.

Organizers urge faith communities to preach and teach on family violence, and to enter a contest by submitting educational messages on domestic violence they put on their billboards.

The Faith Trust Institute has resources at faithtrustinstitute.org.

For information, call 326-1190 or 863-7005, or email sandit@hotmail.com.

Salvation Army sees an upsurge in need

While income from March to June 2008 is comparable to that period in 2007, the Salvation Army in Spokane had three times the number of people coming to its food bank in July 2008 as in July 2007, reported Christy Markham, development associate.

It's partly because it has been receiving clients from St. Vincent de Paul since it closed, partly because of the economic downturn and partly because it is allowing families in need to come every month, rather than only every

three months, she explained.

In surveying clients, she said they found that some had never used a food bank before.

The shelter opened in October 2007 and was filled within three days with 18 families and has remained full since with a waiting list of 20 families.

Sally's House Emergency Foster Care, which can take in children for up to 90 days while they await permanent placement, also has a waiting list, so when one child leaves in the morning, another is

there by the afternoon. Although it has beds for 18 children, it recently housed 42 children during one month. Referred by Child Protective Services, children stay an average of 25 days. Sometimes their mother and father correct issues that led to the children entering the foster system.

For information, call 325-6810.

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St. Margaret's Shelter earns recognition for poverty-cutting ventures

St. Margaret's Shelter, an emergency and transitional shelter for homeless women and their children and mothers with high-risk newborns in Spokane, is one of four Catholic Charities program receiving a Catholic Charities USA 2008 Family Strengthening Award and \$25,000 from the Annie E. Casey Foundation on Sept. 27 in New Orleans.

The awards recognize Catholic Charities programs that take a holistic approach to support healthy family relationships, improve their financial situation and enhance the community as part of the national campaign to Reduce Poverty in America to

half by 2020.

"St. Margaret's Shelter is one of the most innovative programs in the Catholic Charities network working to strengthen families and reduce poverty in America," said the Rev. Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA. "By connecting low-income parents to the supports and opportunities they need to be economically stable, this program helps families build better lives and a stronger community."

Families at St. Margaret's are headed by women, said Rob McCann, executive director of Catholic Charities Spokane.

"Some come from incarceration

or treatment facilities. Some are fleeing domestic violence. Some were living in their cars. Some mothers and children are struggling with mental health, addiction or physical health issues," he said.

In addition to sheltering families, St. Margaret's helps families overcome barriers to self-sufficiency through case management, tutoring, parenting classes, life skills and job training. Once families leave the shelter, support services continue.

• An economic literacy program offers weekly classes on money management, savvy renting and employment skills.

• Its Portfolio Project offers classes in renters' rights and responsibilities, empowering them when they sign leases and become tenants.

• Its community garden gives families access to local, organic produce and helps the mothers develop entrepreneurial skills and earn an income as they sell produce.

• It plans to partner with a local agency that will open a small deli in Catholic Charities' new family services center to provide training in culinary and restaurant skills

• In its School Pays Program, school-aged children can participate in a program that "pays"

them to attend school regularly, complete their homework and maintain good grades.

• Local university students provide individual attention to help children with homework or reading, offering incentives for improvement.

The other programs recognized are Our Daily Bread Employment Center in Baltimore, Homebase in Brooklyn-Queens and Kinship Care Resource Network of Rochester, N.Y.

St. Margaret's Shelter will soon host a visit for Catholic Charities staff from across the country to learn about its program.

For information, call 358-4253.

Church has long ties to concert beneficiaries

The two-hour "Manna" concert with local musicians helping raise funds to feed hungry people served by Second Harvest of the Inland Northwest and Meals on Wheels is part of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ's long term support of their work.

The fifth annual concert featuring the Spokane Area Children's Chorus, Turning Tide, Blue Door Comedy Theatre Improv, Giant A** Drum Corps and Six Foot Swing, will be held at 3 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 5, at Westminster, 411 S. Washington.

Rod Wieber of Second Harvest appreciates the concert's role in raising funds at a time when neighborhood food banks are having 10 to 30 percent more clients turn to them for help.

"Rising food and fuel costs tighten clients' budgets," he said. "We have been hearing that from clients who find it challenging to just put gas in their tank to go to work."

Over the summer, Rod said, community gardens have enabled low-income people to grow their own produce, and Plant a Row for the Hungry has provided fresh food to hungry people.

"Money raised from the Manna concert helps Second Harvest move donated food to where it's needed most," he said.

The Rev. Andrea (Andy) CastroLang, pastor of Westminster, said "manna" is about the theology of abundance. The concert continues the church's care for hungry people outside its doors.

Westminster created one of the city's first food banks and staffed it with volunteers. When that food bank outgrew its space, it became part of the program that became Second Harvest.

"Our concern is based on the belief that food is a basic human right, and that Jesus called us to feed the hungry and help end hunger through work for justice and human rights," Andy added.

Westminster also was one of the founding congregations for Meals on Wheels in Spokane.

The program delivers food to vulnerable elderly and disabled people. Westminster provides volunteers and cars to deliver meals.

The church has included funds for the two agencies in its budget and encouraged members' special donations to them.

Westminster also has a small-scale outreach to neighbors downtown who sleep under the freeway and live in nearby apartments. The church's caretaker began giving out cans of soup, and members prepare a simple meal on fifth Saturdays.

For information, call 624-1366.

Festival fetes Hispanic heritage

The second annual Hispanic Heritage Festival will be held from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 13, at the Bowl and Pitcher recreation area at Riverside State Park in west Spokane, 4427 N. Aubrey White Parkway.

Hosted by the Spokane Hispanic Business Professional Association and the Washington Parks and Recreation Commission, the festival is part of National Hispanic Heritage Month.

It opens with a parade of national flags and features music all day, children's activities, food, information and craft booths.

Sponsors of the Hispanic Heritage Festival also include the Folk

and Traditional Arts in the Parks of the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, and Northwest Heritage Resources.

The celebration is part of a series of events celebrating Washington's diverse cultures.

The Folk and Traditional Arts in the Parks Program is a partnership between the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and the Washington State Arts Commission, with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington State Arts Commission, and the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

For information, call 244-9737.

'Peace One Day' film documents visions of world government, religious leaders

"Peace: One Day at a Time" is the theme for the 2008 International Day of Peace celebration at 7 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 18, at Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

The event will include music and the film, "Peace One Day," which documents interviews with world leaders, such as Kofi An-

nan, Shimon Peres, the League of Arab Nations and the Dalai Lama.

Organizers include the United Nations Association of Spokane, in conjunction with the World Affairs Council and the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane.

For information, call 747-9338.

Extension offers tour of community gardens

From 1 to 5 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 6, 11 community gardens in Spokane and Spokane Valley will be open for visitors to learn how the gardens contribute to building community while growing food.

Each garden will have a representative available to tell about the garden.

Gardens are run by congregations, organizations, a group of neighbors or apartment complexes. For example, Emmanuel Lutheran Church uses unused lawn beside the church for a neighborhood garden. Riverfront Farms uses growing boxes and

neighborhood plots to train at-risk youth for green jobs and growing their own food. Grounds of the Transitional Living Center at Hemlock and W. Fairview provide a neighborhood garden.

Carpools will meet at 1 p.m. at the Spokane Farmers Market at 20 W. 2nd.

Pat Munts, small farms and acreage coordinator for the Washington State University Spokane County Extension, said gardens provide more benefit than food. They increase fitness, help people meet neighbors, inspire people to converse, heighten beauty and

increase property values.

A map of the gardens is at www.spokanegardens.com or by calling 509-477-2173.



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If doesn't keep up with demand

Just one percent of farm products are grown organically and sustainably

Continued from page 1

So running his ranch is more complicated than managing a herd.

Maurice has been working for three years for his organic certification, farming four years without use of petro-chemical herbicides or pesticides, and limiting use of drugs with the cattle.

Becoming organic certified requires paperwork and use of organically certified hay and feed. There's a 10 to 25 percent premium for organic.

"To become certified, I have to keep good records of animals, and give them organically certified feed. If I treat a sick animal with antibiotics, I take that animal out of the organic herd and wholesale it to someone not concerned about eating organic," he said.

Maurice is doing more direct marketing as a sustainable practice. He has regular customers who buy half a beef a year.

"It works well socially over the long term for a consumer to know the producer and the producer to know the consumer," he said.

He sometimes talks with customers in supermarkets to build relationships and learn what they want. Seeing 99-cent hamburger recently, he said it's likely from Brazil, not local.

"Selling locally gives the farmer a better price and assures the customer that the product is fresher," he pointed out.

He said that for every \$1 people spend on local products about \$3 to \$4 more will be spent locally, strengthening the local economy.

Growing up on the ranch between Medical Lake and Cheney, Maurice had no intention to farm it. He completed a degree in sociology at Eastern Washington University in 1974 and graduate

work in rural sociology at the University of Idaho in 1976.

After several years of working for an energy development company in Montana, he returned to the ranch when he was 30.

While ranching conventionally, he was not satisfied with the environmental impact.

In 1995 and 1996, he studied holistic management at Washington State University (WSU).

"I looked for different ways to make decisions to address the impact of agriculture on the environment," he said. "Holistic management is about making decisions based on values and on ecosystem practices. Now when I make a decision, I consider how it fits my goal for quality of life and how it affects the ecosystem.

"Quality of life is about having my family happy and healthy. That includes financial security, education, employment and good food," he said. "Quality of life also includes making sure the world can provide future resources. I want the world to be an optimally effective ecosystem of people and communities."

That's where his interest in rural sociology comes in.

Maurice sees two trends in rural society: an increase of population in areas of urban-rural interface and a decrease in population in the purely rural areas.

"I live in the interface. Until 1968, there was one house between my ranch and Cheney and one house between my ranch and Medical Lake, where I attended high school. Now there are 100 homes in both directions, a phenomenal change in land use and community over 40 years."

Sprague, Lamont, Benge, Winona, Lacrosse, Tekoa, Oakesdale and many other small towns have

become smaller.

"There's migration away from small towns," he said.

In the 1950s, he remembers people coming to Cheney on Saturdays. The streets were full of people shopping at about 25 downtown stores. Now there's a strip mall and downtown Cheney has little life, he said.

As his interest in sustainable agriculture grew over the years, he began to testify at public hearings, go to state meetings and promote agricultural policies. Now WSFFN pays him to do that.

Maurice said 60 years of agricultural policies have affected farmers' decisions and practices, and have helped cause the decline in family farms and the increase in soil erosion, water pollution and harmful chemicals.

The Conservation Reserve Program has the Department of Agriculture pay farmers to take land out of production, so they buy less equipment or diesel. Gradually, that money disappears from the community. Previously, there were more equipment dealers in the region.

"With each dealer go five or six employees, reducing farmers' choices for purchase and repair of equipment."

Maurice believes communities and economies can be rekindled.

For a year, he has been involved in the Agricultural Pilot Project, which funds experimental agriculture as an alternative to letting land lie fallow. One alternative is to use land to graze livestock.

"If it's successful, there are possibilities to regenerate small-town economies. It would increase need for labor—skilled herdsmen—and would use controlled grazing as a tool to enhance ecosystem sustainability.

"Much of Eastern Washington 200 years ago was grassland for large animals. Many old-timers in the Palouse talk of grass being up to their horses' bellies. We can duplicate that sustainable system," Maurice said.

"The key to sustainable grazing is for large, closely-packed herds to move quickly from one area to another, allowing long periods of rest for the plants to recuperate. That would keep the topsoil in place," he said.

He also promotes diversity, such as Oakesdale's previous plum industry.

Maurice said organic and sustainable agriculture still amounts to less than one percent of farm products, but it has not kept up with demand, so it has much growth potential.

While fewer children of farmers are going into agriculture, he said that other young people are entering organic farming.

Another effort he promotes is BIOAg, Biologically Intensive

and Organic Agriculture at the Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources at WSU. It now has a \$600,000 line item in its budget.

BIOAg focuses on six research priorities: livestock, nutrient management, alternative crops/bioenergy and bioproducts, food quality, economics and demonstration farms.

WSU, he said, has the first major in organic agriculture, started in 2006. In 2008, they started an organic certificate. Historically, WSU focused on a chemical-based, single-crop approach, so this shift means that WSU is the WSFFN's primary outlet for research and education.

The network and WSU co-sponsor organic seminars and workshops, and promote the BIOAg Program.

Maurice works with two other WSFFN staff, whose office is in Mt. Vernon.

For information, call 299-6690 or email robinette@wsffn.org.

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Congregations organize 11 days of peace events

During the 11 days from Sept. 11 to Sept. 21, the United Nations' International Day of Peace, there will be several local, interfaith opportunities to raise consciousness that peace is possible.

"One Peace, Many Paths: 11 Celebrations of Peace" seeks to inspire people to make changes in their own lives, knowing that peace "begins with me," said Clare Austin, pastor of Unity Church, 2900 S. Bernard.

The church's peace team developed the program with ideas from national and international organizations to dream of what people in Spokane can do to "be the peace" they want to see.

One program features representatives from 11 local faith groups,

including Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Baha'i and Hindu, speaking on radio, TV or in print about ways to promote peace.

Planners urge faith and peace organizations to plan their own peace events—prayer vigils, discussions or films—for their own communities or the public.

"We hope people will try something new to reach out and meet with people of differing beliefs and customs, because that is one way we can help bring peace to the world," she said.

There will be an interfaith service at 6 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 21, at Unity Church, featuring drummers, a marimba band, the Unity Choir directed by Shawn Wright and the Spokane Community Gospel Choir directed by Sharon Cowan.

The Very Rev. Bill Ellis of the Cathedral of St. John will speak. Children and youth from several faith communities will participate. There will be chanting and prayers from many traditions.

For information, call 838-6518.

Teddy Roosevelt: A One-Man Show

Dr. John "Chuck" Chalberg, a professor of American History at Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minn., delights audiences throughout the United States with his historical impersonations of American and British characters including this performance as President Theodore Roosevelt.

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The Challenges of Faithful Citizenship

Thursday, Sept. 11 - 7:30 p.m.

Globe Room - Cataldo Hall - Gonzaga University

She was lead staff for the revised 2007 version of "Forming Conscience for Faithful Citizenship," a teaching document used each General Election year by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that achieved notable consensus of the entire body of American Bishops. She will speak to challenges of reaching across ideologies to focus on the whole of the Church's teachings—to which no party conforms completely—as Catholics seek to meet their responsibility to take part in civic life.

The event is open to the public.

For more information, call (509) 358-4273

Choir director advocates equity, unity and justice in music and life

By Virginia de Leon

Gospel music embodies Sharon Cowan's life and faith.

Through song, the director of the Spokane Community Gospel Mass Choir expresses her love for God. Gospel music also helps her share the message of God's love with others.

"I depend on the Lord for everything," said Sharon, "Gospel music is sacred to me. I breathe it. I live it."

From the time she sang her first hymn in church as a little girl, she has used her musical gift to reach out and bring people together.

As a choir director and also as the equity and community outreach services director for the Community Colleges of Spokane (CCS), Sharon has made it her life mission to "promote unity and social justice in our community and to bring an awareness of how to build an inclusive environment for all people."

While her work at CCS makes a difference in the lives of students, faculty, staff and the community, most people in Spokane recognize her for the lasting impact she has made on those who have sung with her and have heard the richness and power of her voice.

After moving to Spokane in 1989, Sharon joined Calvary Baptist Church and served for many years as the music director.

Because of her experience conducting choirs and working as a liaison among various groups, she was asked to direct the choir for the city-wide Martin Luther King, Jr., celebration.

About 10 years ago, Sharon also brought together singers and musicians from throughout Washington state to establish the Spokane Community Gospel Mass Choir, which continues to perform at events such as Whitworth University's annual Gospel Explosion, African American graduation ceremonies and Unity in the Community.

In 2007, Spokane Falls Community College's dean of instruction asked her to teach a class on Gospel music. This led to the creation of the Spokane Falls Gospel Choir, a class that drew 75 students from various faiths, cultural and ethnic backgrounds last fall and spring. It will be offered again next spring.

Students have ranged in age from 18 to almost 80 years old.

There were no auditions. Sharon's only requirement was that they had to sing.

"If you have a willing heart, you can sing," she said. "Gospel music is expressive. It's energetic. It's sacred. I can teach anybody to sing and carry a tune."



Sharon Cowan

For its debut concert, the choir sang spirituals from the Deep South's era of slavery to Gospel music sung in churches today.

This repertoire of music gave people hope despite hardships and prejudice they endured as slaves, Sharon explained.

Some of the songs also were used to secretly communicate escape plans so she has had members of the class portray people at work in the fields. Dressed in clothing representative of the Civil War period, some students sang solos.

During class rehearsals, Sharon established a bond with her students teaching them not only about music but also about the history of the civil rights movement and people's experiences of prejudice.

People shared their perspectives. They discussed their lives and relationships. They fostered friendships.

"When we sing the songs of faith, hope and trust, these are songs of healing," she said. "We feel God's power. It brings our community together."

Sharon's love of God and her passion for music began during her childhood in Cockrum, Miss.

As a little girl, she would accompany her grandmother into the fields and help her with chores around the house.

Willie Leola Phillips, who lived to be 95, constantly filled their modest, tin-roof house with the

mesmerizing sound of her voice, Sharon recalled.

Her grandmother sang hymns and spirituals while churning cream into butter, canning peaches and plums, baking corn bread for every meal and toiling in the cotton fields.

"She persevered. She sang away all her worries and troubles," said Sharon, the granddaughter of sharecroppers. "I didn't know the grief she experienced because I never saw anyone as happy as my grandmother. I didn't even know we were poor."

"I thank God for her. She imparted life into me through her singing. She was a beautiful woman."

Her favorite memories of her grandmother include the ones from church. Willie Leola "would lift her hands and heart to God as she belted songs of love and joy while singing in the church choir," Sharon recalled. "Back then, we didn't have a lot of music equipment, but we knew how to tap our feet and leap for joy."

She followed in her grandmother's footsteps.

By 12, Sharon was singing and directing the choir at Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn. Before she was 20, she was conducting The Bible Days Revival City Choir.

After spending about seven years in Anchorage, where she served as the director of the city-wide Martin Luther King Jr. cel-

ebration and the music director of New Hope Baptist Church, Sharon moved to Spokane in 1989.

A graduate of Spokane Falls Community College and Whitworth University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in organizational management, Sharon sees herself as a builder of cross-cultural relationships.

One of her goals, she said, is "to educate, enlighten and empower people to speak up" whenever they encounter prejudice, racism and cultural insensitivity.

Her work in equity and diversity has been recognized numerous times throughout the community. Earlier this year, Sharon was nominated for outstanding staff/administrator and faculty member at the Women's Leadership Conference of the Inland Northwest. She also was nominated in

the adult category for the Chase Youth Award as an Asset Builder. Last year, she was honored by her colleagues with the Deccio Excellence in Equity Award.

As equity council chair for Community Colleges of Spokane, Sharon collaborates with academic and student services units across the multi-campus system.

She also facilitates CCS's legislative steering committee and serves as a liaison to business, education, civic and religious organizations in the community.

"I am called to encourage, inspire and bring life to the dry places of other people's lives," said Sharon, a mother, grandmother and member of Victory Faith Fellowship in Spokane Valley. "I am a servant. When people need something, I am there for them."

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As retailer-educator shops, she learns about lives of crafts people

By Mary Stamp

Kim Harmson recently set aside her reticence about shopping to go on a wholesale shopping spree for fair-trade, earth-friendly, locally made merchandise to stock her new shop, which will open mid September at 35 W. Main.

"I've been shopping for gifts for friends," she said as one way she motivated herself.

Running a retail store was far from what the educator ever expected to do, but when she learned that the Global Folk Art fair-trade shop at that location was closing in May, her commitment to fair trade led her to decide to open a for-profit store.

She is calling the shop "Kizuri," which means "good" in Swahili, because she said the "shopping at Kizuri is good for the planet and good for the people."

For Kim, fair trade is social justice at its best. So her goal is not to ask people to increase their consumption but to become more responsible consumers.

"If people would shop fair trade first, it would make a major impact on the world," she said, "because part of fair-trade shopping is to learn the stories of those who produce the products."

Knowing the stories and her desire to share the stories inspires her commitment to fair trade, because it involves education that connects consumers, wholesalers, retailers and producers.

When her children were young, she was an early childhood educator, and then spent 10 years as an education consultant. She also worked part time in customer service at Ganesh Himal, a fair-trade wholesaler in Spokane.

Kim grew up in Chicago and did college studies in Michigan, Chicago and the Northwest.

She came West with her husband, Jeff, when she was 23.

"We left Chicago with our bikes on the back of our car, intending to live in Seattle where I would continue in school," she said. "We stopped in Spokane for lunch and decided to camp for three days to explore the area."



Kim Harmson at the gate of the shop as it's being remodeled.

They continued to Seattle and biked down the Coast to San Diego and east to Albuquerque. Unencumbered and unemployed, they considered where they wanted to live and finally settled in Spokane in 1980.

Kim proposed the idea of a for-profit shop to Jim Sheehan, who offers space in the Community Building to nonprofits. She said Kizuri would operate with community involvement, would educate people and would give 7.5 percent of profits back to the community each year.

Global Folk Art's nonprofit status will be transferred to the Northwest Fair Trade Resources Network, she said.

Needing funds to start the store, she asked members of the community for low-interest, eight-year loans. Nine investors are providing a financial base for the venture.

"At first, I felt a sense of ownership. Now I feel I'm the orchestrator, and Kizuri belongs to everyone," said Kim, who attended

a Lutheran church in childhood and has attended various churches over the years. She now nurtures her spirituality through meditation, friends, time in nature and her commitment to social justice and equality.

To shape her children, Kim volunteered with them at Global Folk Art when they were in grade school. Now young adults, they are excited about her decision to open Kizuri.

"Our mission is to run a successful business to accomplish our vision of having a community-inspired store that practices the values of fair trade, and social justice, economic and environmental sustainability, fostering good relationships with producers, vendors, customers and the community."

Part of building those relationships is to tell the stories of producers and the difference fair trade makes in their lives.

"People everywhere want the same things—to have healthy, happy families, and to have the

world be at peace," Kim said.

She will tell the stories verbally, and also have photos and descriptions by the products.

For example, Kim purchased bead necklaces and batik bags from young women who were once beggars on the street. By taking small loans, they can now carry on their traditional cultural work and provide a living for themselves and their children.

During the summer, Kim met two women from Nepal who belong to the Association of Craft Producers she knew about through Ganesh Himal. They started with 90 workers and now have more than 1,200.

These producers, primarily impoverished women, have come from difficult life situations. The Association for Craft Producers trains them to value themselves and their work. Now they have respect in their families and communities, and they earn enough that they can pay for their children, both boys and girls, to go to good schools. Some have earned graduate degrees.

"It's not charity. It's about people working hard and competing in the economy," she said.

Relationships also include wholesalers conversing with producers to help them decide what products to make, items that will both represent their cultures and appeal to consumers.

Kim is also inspired by Palestinian and Israeli women collaborating to create candles she will sell. The Palestinian women

begin the process and then send the candles across the border for Israeli women to finish.

"It's an example of peace," she said.

"Whether a shop is for profit or nonprofit, the producers have the same benefits, operating in open, transparent relationships and financial agreements of mutual benefit," she said.

In the Spokane area, there are five fair-trade wholesalers supplying handicrafts and clothing from Nepal, Mexico, Chile, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

Kim is buying from them and some local artists and crafts people.

She will offer a selection of clothing made from sustainable materials, such as organic cotton, hemp and bamboo, expressing her concern about conditions under which clothing is produced.

As she makes her pre-opening purchases, Kim said she is thinking about both functionality and beauty of items, keeping in mind that some shoppers want to buy consumable goods, such as fair-trade organic chocolate and coffee.

The merchandise will also include jewelry, indigenous art, practical housewares, handcrafted pottery, soaps, lotions and children's toys.

"I will listen to consumers," she said. "I want it to be a community inspired store."

For information, call 747-7377 or email kimharmson@hotmail.com.

Friend to Friend sets Fun Run/Walk, recruits volunteers

Friend to Friend is recruiting runners and walkers for its 5-K Fun Run/Walk, starting at 10 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 20, at the Avista parking lot, 1411 E. Mission Ave.

The event raises funds for this organization that provides comfort and companionship to persons in long-term care facilities needing a friend, said Jan Kendrick, volunteer coordinator.

Friend to Friend has 26 visiting

friends, and 18 new friends are being placed in long-term care and assisted-living facilities.

David Smith, activities director at Royal Park, said the volunteers provide residents "a ray of sunlight on a cloudy day."

D.V. Hillard, recreational therapy director at Regency at Northpoint, finds the volunteers professional and courteous—reading to, playing cards with or going for walks with residents.

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Celebrating 50 Years

Stephen Ministry expands role of laity in pastoral care that can build community

By Virginia de Leon

Through Stephen Ministry in several area churches, lay people become caregivers, trained to help clergy meet a congregation's pastoral care needs.

Barbara White and volunteers at Audubon Park United Methodist Church at 3908 N. Driscoll offer support and fellowship so no one suffers alone.

"We walk with people through crisis and through difficult times in their lives," said Barbara, explaining the role of Stephen ministers and leaders, who are trained and supervised by this trans-denominational ministry.

Their motto is "Christ caring for people through people."

In the early 1990s, Barbara learned of the ministry in a presentation by members at St. John United Methodist Church, which she attended in Anchorage where she lived for almost 20 years.

"I'm a people person, and I felt God was calling me to help others," she said.

Since moving to Suncrest in 1995 and joining Audubon a year later, Barbara has promoted Stephen Ministry, which was started in 1975 by the Rev. Kenneth Haugk, a pastor and clinical psychologist in St. Louis.

Realizing he couldn't care for his congregation's needs alone, he created materials and trained nine members to help those experiencing life crises. He commissioned them as "Stephen ministers," named for St. Stephen, one of the first deacons in the early Christian church. The apostles commissioned him to care for widows, the poor and others in need.

Other congregations wanted to create a similar program, so he founded the Stephen Ministry with its training program.

Its website says Stephen Ministry is a nonprofit, religious, educational organization that trains lay people to offer "distinctively Christian care" to people in their congregations and communities.

It is a commitment for both individuals and congregations. It draws people who have empathy and compassion for others.

Stephen ministers make a two-year commitment, which includes 50 hours of training, supervision twice a week and visiting someone at least an hour a week.

They visit people who are suffering from the loss of a loved one, divorce, unemployment, terminal illness, a move or a life change that has resulted in grief and crisis. People who have had



Barbara White

difficulty adjusting to a birth or dealing with every day pressures of work, parenting and stress also turn to Stephen ministers.

The church commits to fund training and travel for the lay ministers. Members also support the ministry through prayer.

"With this commitment, all are involved even though not all are trained or called to this ministry," Barbara said. "Members also agree to accept help of a trained Christian friend."

Nearly 10,000 congregations in 150 denominations worldwide are engaged in Stephen Ministry, said the website. In Washington, about 300 congregations and organizations have trained Stephen ministers.

Among them in Spokane are Whitworth and First Presbyterian; Covenant United Methodist; Redeemer, Beautiful Savior and Holy Cross Lutheran, and South Hill Bible churches.

Idaho's 40 churches include First Presbyterian in Moscow, and First Presbyterian and Calvary Lutheran in Coeur d'Alene.

A Stephen Ministry workshop will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 1, at Holy Cross Lutheran, 7307 N. Nevada.

Like Barbara at Audubon UMC, more than 50,000 pastors, church staff and lay people are Stephen leaders, responsible to oversee the ministry in their congregations. Barbara helps administer the program at Audubon and helps others start it in their churches.

In training, lay people discuss keeping confidentiality, listening effectively and ministering to people in specific situations.

They also learn to recognize when a person needs to be referred to a professional therapist.

The ministers help only those who agree to receive their care, said Barbara. Churches inform members of the program through the bulletin boards, information cards in pews, newsletters and word of mouth.

Some meet with a Stephen minister only once. Others meet weekly or monthly. Sometimes the relationship lasts for years.

Through her life, Barbara has felt a call to help others. This desire to care for those in need began while attending a community church with her family in Colorado.

Later, after being baptized in a Presbyterian Church and attending Episcopal and Methodist churches, she became more aware of her calling.

At Sterling College in Kansas, she earned a bachelor's degree in social work. While rearing her two children, she was a school volunteer and a classroom aide.

After coming to Audubon UMC, she asked about starting a Stephen Ministry. There was little interest, but she persisted. Ten years later, after gaining members' support, she demonstrated the need for the program. Pastors can help members, she said, but often have too many responsibilities to keep up with pastoral-care needs.

So in 2006, the Audubon board sent Barbara, Karyl Brantner and the church's pastor then, the Rev. Leslie Ann Knight, to Ontario, Calif., to become Stephen leaders, so they could train others.

"As a leader, my goal is to help ministers do their best," she said. "We are caregivers but God is the cure giver. God is our stronghold. God is in control, not me."

With each person receiving care, Barbara listens, asks questions and clarifies to make sure she understands. Often they read Scripture and pray together. She also continues to pray for the person through the week.

"We focus on the process, not the results. God takes care of the results," said Barbara adding that her involvement deepened her confidence and her faith.

"I've learned if God wants me to step out in faith, God will light the path for me," she said.

For information, call 467-1850 or visit www.stephenministries.org.

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Ski injuries create empathy, motivating teacher to educate seniors to prevent falls

Aware of the effects of falls from ski patrol work at Mount Spokane and empathetic about how a back injury can impede life, Tom Ulvin is spending a year promoting falls prevention among senior citizens.

A retired teacher, he has worked on the Spokane County Injury Fall Prevention Program since January with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) at the YMCA in downtown Spokane through AmeriCorps VISTA.

In 2006 in Washington, he reported, there were 12,500 hospitalizations of seniors 65 years and older because of falls, and 30 percent of them were still receiving nursing care a year later.

He is assisting with a pilot program to write and distribute information on falls prevention for a new county program, which is a collaborative effort of 60 individuals and agencies, such as the Spokane Regional Health District, EMTs, the Spokane Fire Department, Striders, senior centers, Sit and Be Fit, KHQ and KSPS-TV.

The partners are also providing training for speakers and preparing videos as part of the educational effort.

Tom summarized suggestions to help seniors prevent falls:

- Start exercise programs to improve coordination, balance and core strength;
- Choose good footwear;
- Avoid dangerous interactions of medicines;
- Have annual vision checks;
- Make the home safer by clearing clutter, using hand rails, not reaching high, using night lights and installing grab bars in tubs.



Tom Ulvin

The Spokane Neighborhood Action Program does safety inspections of homes of low-income seniors, Tom added.

For a year-and-a-half after he retired in 2006 after 31 years of teaching grades four to six and coaching middle-school sports, he vacationed, enjoying doing hobbies, archery, hunting, sailing, skiing, mountain biking and hiking.

Then he sought an avenue to use his teaching and community organizing background.

"I'm public-service oriented," said Tom, who grew up in Northwood Presbyterian Church, and studied Buddhism and Native American spirituality in college.

He studied at Washington State University, the University of Washington and Eastern Washington University, completing a degree in K-12 education and communication studies in 1974.

He taught at Regal and Browne elementary schools. On a year leave of absence, he taught at an American school in Norway.

On ski patrol at Mt. Spokane, he saw broken backs and necks, dislocated shoulders, lacerations, and head, hand, wrist and leg injuries.

He feels a commitment to public service as he speaks to small and large groups gathered for AARP, health care and other conferences.

His goal is to develop the program so that the health district will be able to carry it on after his AmeriCorps term ends.

Having empathy from experiencing a back injury that needed physical therapy and epidural injections, he said: "If I can prevent one senior from going down, it's worth it."

For information, call 344-7787 or email tulvin@ymcaspokane.org.

Bioneers connect people to the earth

Continued from page 1 activities. She described some local workshops.

One features Center for Justice's Spokane River attorney, Rick Eichstaedt, leading a field trip on river management to the wastewater treatment plant, dams, an urban spring and a proposed whitewater park site.

Crissy Trask, who will lead a workshop, "Energy and Water Wise Living: Practical Solutions," has a website on everyday green living—greenmatters.com—and has compiled "A Handbook for Earth-Friendly Living."

Spokane workshops will be offered in four sessions Friday and Saturday afternoons.

Friday sessions include workshops on envisioning Spokane, green-collar jobs, farms and healthy food, becoming a zero-

waste society, green living, nature's tools, changing communities, women in leadership, and public and private partnerships.

Saturday sessions are on indigenous spirituality and the environment, helping veterans heal, returning the Lower Snake River to salmon, wildlife and people, art as a solution, eco-nomics, alternative transportation, local farms, women leaders, reclaiming media and building community.

Patty said Bioneers fits her values, which were nurtured growing up Catholic and now as a Unitarian. She recalls lying for hours on the floor of a forest in the Skagit Valley as a child, mesmerized by

the moss, creek, trees and sky.

"We need to maintain our connection with the earth," she said.

"I'm encouraged that the faith community is embracing earth stewardship to care for God's creation by looking at how we live, consume and treat each other."

She said more clergy are preaching on ecology and on "bringing the left and right together around a concept they can agree on: If we don't have the earth, we don't have anything."

"Bioneers provides ways to increase involvement in our community, connecting with kindred spirits and renewing our sense of what is possible," Patty said.

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| | |
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| A Time to Be Born Shonna Bartlett, MPM | Dec. 6 |

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Whitworth students learn by doing, experiencing history of spirituality

By immersing Whitworth students in a month-long, quasi-monastic community at Tall Timber Ranch, a Presbyterian camp located in the Cascades, Gerald (Jerry) Sittser has introduced several January-term classes to the history of past to current models of Christian spirituality.

In his 15 years of research, he has refined the class. InterVarsity Press recently published that information in his book, *Waters from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries*.

Jerry said students gain appreciation of their spiritual heritage and explore their own spirituality. Some worked with him to form Knox House, an intentional community at 1117 W. Mansfield near Knox Presbyterian Church.

Drawn through youth ministry to study theology, Jerry completed doctoral studies in the history of Christianity at the University of Chicago, a master's of divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary and a bachelor's degree from Hope College.

Since coming to Spokane in 1989, he has taught the history of Christianity and American religion at Whitworth University, is chair of the master's in theology program and serves as director of the Whitworth certification for ministry program.

The book and class follow a chronology of models of spirituality from the early to the modern church.

Each chapter focuses on a model: early martyr's adamant faithfulness, medieval monasteries' rhythm and rules weaving prayer, study and life together in a seamless whole; desert fathers' and mothers' emphasis on self-examination and purification as the path to discipleship; the Puritan's introduction of practical thinking and the redemptive narrative; Orthodox icons of saints as windows to the larger world of spiritual reality; Reformed spirituality's focus on the Word of God; pioneer missionary spirituality, risking everything to bring the Gospel to unreached people; evangelical spirituality emphasizing conversion, and the ecumenical movement calling for unity.

Jerry explores practices of sacrifice, simplicity and community as means to shape and enrich contemporary faith.

"We drink from a deep well of spiritual practices," he said.

The classes that have gone to Tall Timbers have lived in community, worshiping four times a day, doing chores, reading texts, meeting as a class and in small groups, and collecting notes.

The rules of life include fasting



Robyn Hubbuck, right, a participant in a Tall Timber retreat in January 2008, visits with Jerry Sittser on campus.

from media—no TV, iPods, radios, phones or videos—and private devotions four times a day.

In addition to study, community life has included playing in the snow—snowshoeing and cross-country skiing—to experience the spirituality of play, Jerry said: "In that setting, we experience that God understands Sabbath rest as involving healthy play."

Students find it a challenge to live by the Benedictine Divine Rule of Life, principles governing how they lived as a family and viewed their schedule, "weaving together work and prayer, so work would drive us to prayer, and prayer would drive us back to our work," Jerry said. "We lived prayer in the world."

While he recognizes that it's hard to do that in modern society, he says it creates spiritual health.

Students do prayers at the first, third, sixth, ninth and evening hours—at 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m. and evening vespers, plus prayer before going to bed.

"It establishes the notion of regular, rhythmic prayer, woven together with the day's work," he said.

Students also spend time in isolation to reflect on applying spiritual practices to their lives. Some appreciate liturgy, others appreciate quiet time.

"Most practice spirituality in a hit-and-miss way," he said, "but I sense that beginning in the 1990s a growing appreciation for the various traditions of spirituality in Christian life and practice has emerged."

As students are exposed to different forms of spirituality, Jerry said they develop appreciation for and connection with 2000 years of Christian church history and practice, and for ecumenism today.

"Appreciating the larger heritage of the faith community, hymnody, writing and liturgical practices helps us feel less lonely," he said. "It helps us appreciate what unites us through our creeds, our

understanding of the triune God and of Christ as divine and human, the sacraments and grace."

Each student, he hopes, learns that faith is not rooted in what "I feel" but about God and what God has done in Christ.

"The bread and wine in communion remind us that God is there for us," said Jerry, a member of Whitworth Presbyterian Church.

Young men who had been at Tall Timber became interested in living in intentional urban community, so Jerry helped them launch Knox House in 2005 as a modern monastic experience.

When the first four drafted their rule of life, Jerry helped. He also helped them find and buy a house. It opened in fall 2006.

Their spiritual practice includes an hour-long morning prayer at 6:30 a.m. each day.

Jerry goes Wednesday mornings for prayer and occasionally on Sunday evening for their community meal.

Participants in Knox House are committed to serve the community. One has been youth director at Knox Presbyterian. Others work with children after school. They offer hospitality, including housing two Sudanese refugees and someone who was formerly at Union Gospel Mission.

Their community life and disciplines include tending a large garden, recycling, living from a common fund, participating in churches and volunteer work.

Jerry said they build community from their spiritual and service focus.

"At Whitworth, we realize today that the church is not primarily modern and western. It is much larger than what we experience here and now. So some students teach in inner city schools or do mission work in Africa and Asia, as well as here," said Jerry.

"My spiritual practices enrich my life and enlarge my understanding of Christian faith, giving me a sense of connection to

the larger church globally and historically," he said. "Faith is about what we know and practice, a rhythm of life in prayer and work."

Jerry said he has deepened his sense of the sacraments, salva-

tion, God's Word and the value of belonging to a community of faith through these immersion experiences and through his teaching.

For information, call 777-4381 or email gsittser@whitworth.edu.

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As history bends, will mainline media adopt 'peace journalism'?

In the recent media coverage of the Olympics and political party conventions—writing this between conventions—we see how media can give us a seat in the stadium, a view to history being made.

While we had many direct-view moments and were allowed to hear many full speeches, the sports and political pundits still intervened on many channels as if we don't have the ability to judge for ourselves.

History goes on around us each day. Too much of it is filtered through pundits' commentaries, as if "objectivity" is provided by two—usually differing—opinions. Too often, we have just isolated quotes and sound bites out of context.

During these events—this is written between conventions—history came in more than words, more than the win-lose, scandals or celebrities of sports or politics as typically framed by "conflict journalism." It came in a challenge to journalists to see beyond their typical coverage.

Have they heard about "peace journalism," a term now discussed at professional conferences and journalism schools. It's what The Fig Tree has been doing as we cover the myriad of perspectives and ideas between polarities most media emphasize.

The Olympics, for example, is more than medal winners. It's about all the young and older athletes dedicated to hard work and training, their stories of overcoming hardships and setbacks, to be in the international gathering with other hard-working athletes, worthy competitors whom medal winners passed by only fractions of seconds.

Granted, some athletes are concerned only about their victory and what it means to them.

Beyond the celebrity aspect of media focus, was the reality that the games draw people around the world with a common love of a sport, people with something to share that surpasses nation. Olympics gather people in international harmony.

The first convention moved millions of us

to tears by the historic reality of an African American being nominated as a candidate for President 45 years after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, "I Have a Dream Speech."

It doesn't end racism for some. It will creep into the campaign, but Barack Obama's nomination is history beyond his race, because his words may help shift the tone of the country from the politics of fear, hate and violence to a politics of hope, respect and reconciliation.

Did that shift help influence John McCain to choose as his running mate a woman—the second time in history?

The question for media is will they catch on or remain caught up believing only sensationalism, conflict and violence will sell? Pundits still seemed eager to tell us and the candidates what they need to do to win the contest—in the old terms. Will they allow the shift in history or cling to business as usual?

Peace journalism about a focus on creative solutions people are already doing—

either as alternatives to conventional wisdom or part of the mainstream society and economy.

Are media prepared to move from wedge issues—abortion, gun control and same-sex marriage? Will media help people examine issues in depth and explore approaches on which more may agree, such as working for fewer unwanted pregnancies, keeping automatic rifles out of the hands of criminals, and allowing gays and lesbians basic civil rights such as visiting their partners in hospitals? Those are stands on which more people of faith may be able to agree.

It's about helping America move beyond being stuck on divisive issues to find common ground for solutions that move us to care about each other.

So will journalists catch the spirit and move with the new winds? Will journalists hear what colleagues are saying and be open to learn about peace journalism?

Mary Stamp
Editor

'Enough' is about a theology of abundance of God's love and care

Thinking about "enough" will lead down many mental side streets and alleys with labels such as "needs" and "wants."

All three terms are as slippery as mercury as they become interchangeable in much of our thinking.

Take, for instance, those strangely illogical demands that start, "I need you to..." as in "I need you to stand over there," or "I need you to finish your lunch, Timmy." Maybe Timmy should finish his lunch, for nutritional needs. Maybe lunch should be cleared away because Timmy is due at nursery school in 20 minutes and snacks are served there. Maybe Timmy truly doesn't need his lunch, as signalled by his using his sandwich as modelling clay. Why should Timmy see how his lack of chewing affects some unidentified need of his mother's?

The lack of a border between wants and needs can also be seen in the starter castles in newly developed housing areas. Archi-

itects and builders report that they are now building more houses with many specific-use rooms, rather than larger generic areas such as family rooms. These smaller areas include a computer room for each member of the family, a karaoke room for the eight-year-old girl and a bathroom for each one in the family plus a guest bath.

During a family dinner conversation about nothing in particular, a friend's teenage daughter burst out, "I don't know what you were thinking, buying a house with only two bathrooms!" They had lived in their house for more than 10 years, made periodic improvements, and thought it quite satisfactory. Seeing the newer homes of acquaintances, the younger daughter was finding it onerous to share a bathroom with her sister. Her sense of enough was seriously challenged, and tales about the days when her parent grew up and five or six people shared a bathroom proved nothing.

Times have changed. They didn't have enough bathrooms. They needed more.

Advertising is omnipresent, trying to convince us that we don't have enough of anything except shortcomings that their products can cure. There are actually people in advertising who work exclusively at placing their products within camera range in movies and television programs.

Will we ever see the day when the management of a megacorporation decides we have seen its name in enough places, buys the naming rights to a public arena, and gives it back its locally significant name?

An inability to define enough can also be seen in one of our national health problems: obesity. Fast food restaurants advertise the hugeness of their offerings, not the nutrition. In fact, they have resisted revealing nutrition information. Buffets are popular partly because you can refill your plate endlessly, presumably until closing time.

In the midst of too much, we gorge ourselves as if we will not have enough tomorrow, as if having to loosen our belts a notch or two were the only reliable measure of enough.

God has reassured us constantly of the abundance of God's love and care.

In one of the earliest such stories, God warned the Israelites against gathering too much manna. It would be provided six days a week with a double portion on the sixth day. Still, some hoarded, and some went out to gather on the seventh day. We've been at it ever since.

As the Rev. Joanne Coleman Campbell recently reminded her parishioners at Cheney United Methodist Church in a newsletter, much depends on whether you see God as a God of scarcity or of abundance. Seeing God as a God of abundance helps us realize the abundance of enough.

Nancy Minard - Editorial Team

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

In our 21st-century society a high premium is put on youth and beauty. People are always looking for new ways to stay young looking, to turn back the clock and to flatten the wrinkles.

Many social problems stem from valuing appearance above wisdom and youth above experience. They often translate into disrespect for parents and elders.

Traditional societies respect elders. When I volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in Uganda, there was a term of respect used for elders, "mozay." It was a term of honor and endearment used instead of someone's birth name. A mozay is someone who can be turned to when life's challenges come, someone who has "been around the block."

The mozay offers perspective based on experience, knows village stories and can add perspective and insight. He or she knows choices have to be weighed carefully because each choice has consequences and ripple effects that can last generations.

One mozay I encountered in my ministry in Montana was Helen. She took her time with whatever she was doing. Her hot bread was legendary. I valued her attentiveness, giving everyone who visited her full, undivided attention. Then she offered carefully chosen words that kept people's best interests in mind. Many confided in her. Every morning for more than 30 years she read from her Bible and daily devotional booklets. She pondered those words all day and let them sink in. She knew how to attend to people and to listen because she attended to God and to the still small voice within. She made room to listen.

I have met many mozays who bless me with their faith that has lasted the test of time. Somewhere in the stillness and the luminous darkness, the ancestors from centuries past find me and cradle me in their arms of faith.

Amos Smith - Zion Philadelphia
United Church of Christ - Ritzville

Food is expensive. Gas is expensive. The cost is pushing on me. My guess is we're contained so far, trying to make it all fit in the family budget, but food banks are running low, Lutheran Community Services is stretched, and those who lack flex are feeling the pinch. Farmers may have fair prices for crops, but expenses are way up.

It's natural to focus on our problems and make do. Looking to ourselves is a natural impulse, but all around are folks who aren't making it and can't make it. They have no flex and little hope.

How does the Gospel call in this situation? The Good News of God is that we are more than what we earn or what we do. The "left hand kingdom" of this world doesn't define us. Claimed in baptism, we have our ultimate legacy: Child of God. This is an impermeable seal, a solid declaration, an ultimate definition. We will make it and not just make it, but make it under the protection of God.

The others are what we're here for. They depend on us. The first form of our Great Commandment/Great Commission calling is loving our neighbor. God calls us to be a neighbor for those in need. This is the Good News that those without hope can hear.

So, let's tell the children the ice-cream money is going to feed hungry children. They'll receive the best of our Christian legacy and be eager to help. Each of us knows where our extra money is spent. The call of discipleship will show us the way.

God is with us, and there is joy in this. The call we have is a gift. The gift we have is a call.

The Rev. Martin Wells - Bishop
Eastern Wash Idaho Synod - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

A man who delivered the wallet I had dropped at the grocery store and would not accept a reward was one of many anonymous benefactors who have blessed my life from time to time: strangers who helped me change a tire, early risers who shoveled snow from my walks and visitors who stopped in the hospital to add cheer to a miserable day.

The key word is "anonymous." These are God's special emissaries who pause to help regardless of political party, religion or race. They expect no reward other than the satisfaction of giving a boost to a fellow human being.

Jesus spoke of those who gave food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, hospitality to the stranger, clothes to the naked and visits to those who were sick or in prison. They were God's anonymous angels and expected no reward.

In this age of "what's in it for me," it is refreshing to find those who find gratification in simply doing the right thing.

The Rev. Wilbur Rees - Shalom
United Church of Christ - Richland

I have noticed a similar story line being used to sell different products. The story goes like this: a family spends so little time together that they do not even know each other. In the commercial, Mom or Dad brings in some great product that draws the family back together—chicken or pizza. Sometimes family members are surprised they have a dining table.

I can accept that food might bring a family together for a while. Recent versions strain credibility. One family is brought together by a minivan, another by a big screen TV.

We should take these commercials seriously. There is a real need. The church should be concerned about families living disconnected lives. The church is a better answer to bonding families than chicken, pizza, minivans or TVs. Families can be bonded around Christian fellowship centered in new life in Jesus Christ.

Restaurant chains and car makers have bigger budgets to promote their false brand of family bonding. Christians can employ a cheaper, more powerful way to spread the word: relationships. Our loving relationships with unchurched family and friends are a powerful force for bringing new families together within the family of God. Simple sharing how church enriches family is a word many are just waiting to hear.

Family, as Martin Luther said, is the first church, where we first experience God and begin to grow in faith. To have a stronger bond in your family, treat them as a church, make family play or meals times of worship. Church starts with family.

The Rev. Duane Anderson

Calendar of Events

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>Sept 4 • Inland Northwest Senior Wellness Conference, Spokane Community College, 1810 N. Greene, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 326-1471</p> <p>Sept 5 • Church and Ministries Fair, Whitworth University HUB, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>Sept 5-6 • "Sharing Your Faith without Losing Your Friends," Central Lutheran, 512 S. Bernard, 7 p.m., Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday - 624-9233 or www.spokanegardens.com</p> <p>Sept 6 • Community Garden Tour, 1 to 5 p.m., 477-2173</p> <p>• United Nations Association-Spokane Potluck Picnic, 530 W. 24th Ave, 5 p.m.</p> <p>• Transitional Living Center 15th anniversary open house and tour, 3128 N. Hemlock, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., 328-6702</p> <p>Sept 6-7 • Praise-A-Palooza, 12 Christian bands play benefit for Mercy House (a halfway house to be built in Cusick for individuals and families in crisis and recovery) Pend Oreille County Fairgrounds Cusick, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Saturday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Sunday, 863-3778</p> <p>Sept 7 • Afternoon of Elegance Arts and Music Fest, Convent of the Holy Names, 2911 W. Fort Wright Dr., 2 p.m., 328-4310</p> <p>Sept 9 • "Old Bones and a New Vernacular: Whitworth Permanent Collection," Ernst Lied Center for the Visual Arts, Whitworth University, 777-3258</p> <p>Oct 19 • "The Challenges of Faithful Citizenship," Joan Rosenhauer, associate director of justice, peace and human development for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholicism and the New Millennium series, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Sept 13 • Hispanic Heritage Festival, Bowl and Pitcher Area at Riverside State Park, 4427 N. Aubrey White Pkwy, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., 244-9737</p> <p>• Main Street Fair, Community Building, 35 W. Main, noon to 8 p.m., 232-1950</p> <p>Sept 17 • "The Power of Forgiveness," Heart Films Series, presented by the Center for Organizational Reform and St. Joseph Family Center, 1016 N. Superior, 6:30 p.m., 483-6495</p> <p>Sept 18 • "Peace One Day at a Time," United Nations Association and World Affairs Council, Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., 747-9338</p> <p>Sept 20 • Spokane Multifaith AIDS Care Teams Volunteer Orientation and Training, Unity Church, 2900 S. Bernard, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., 358-4273 or scooper@ccspokane.org</p> <p>• Friend to Friend 5-K Fun Run/Walk, from the Avista parking lot to the Green Street Bridge and back, 10 a.m., 483-1600</p> <p>• Lake City Blues Benefit for At-Risk Youth at Project Safe Place, Coeur d'Alene Casino, Worley, Idaho, 7 p.m., 800-523-2464</p> <p>Sept 21 • Interfaith Service for United Nations International Day of Peace, Unity Church, 2900 S. Bernard, 6 p.m., 838-6518</p> <p>• Bruce Neswick Organ Recital, Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave., 4 p.m., 838-4277</p> <p>Sept 24 • Salmon Nation Dinner, Slow Food Spokane River and Save Our Wild Salmon, Hill's Restaurant, 401 W. Main, 6:30 p.m., 747-2030</p> <p>Sept 25-27 • Annual Greek Dinner and Festival, Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, 1703 N. Washington, lunch/pastry 11 a.m.; dinner and dancing 4:30 to 8 p.m.; Connie Prekeges 5-K Memorial Walk for Kids' Cancer, 10:30 a.m. at the church, 328-9310</p> <p>• "Eat with Your Eyes: Sustainable Food Film Festival," Benefit for Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network, and Slow Food, Magic Lantern Theater, 25 W. Main, 879-9337</p> | <p>Sept 26 • "Flying through the Bible with Wit and Whimsy," Daniel Erlander, Christ Lutheran, 13009 E. Broadway, 7 p.m., Friday, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, 928-7733</p> <p>Sept 26-28 • "God's Extravagant Love," Mary Jo Chaves, OSF/Celeste Clavel, OSF, St. Joseph Family Center, 1016 N. Superior, 6:30 p.m. Friday to 1 p.m., Sunday, 483-6495</p> <p>Sept 27 • "Embracing a Grace-Filled Rhythm of Life," Weyerhaeuser Center for Christian Faith and Learning Prayer Retreat, Bruce and Chris Murphy, Seeley Mudd Chapel, Whitworth University, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., 777-3275</p> <p>Sept 29-Dec 15 • "Cultivating Success Sustainable Small Farming and Ranching," Washington State University Spokane County Extension, 477-2173</p> <p>Sept 28 • "Second Chance Extravaganza," Faith and Environment Network fund raiser, Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave., auction at 3:30 p.m., dinner at 5 p.m., 294-3944</p> <p>• "A Time for Change," Fr. Armand Nigro, Ministry Institute, 10 a.m., 313-6012</p> <p>Sept 30 • Greater Spokane Association of Evangelicals Leadership Seminar, "Strategies for Life Coaching," led by Southside Christian Church Pastor Rob Fisher, Fourth Memorial, 2000 N. Standard, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 487-7429</p> <p>• "Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army," Jeremy Scahill, investigative journalist and former senior producer of the TV program, "Democracy Now," sponsored by Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, the Center for Justice, KYRS and Progressive Democrats, The Bing, 901 W. Sprague, 7 p.m., 838-7870</p> <p>Oct 1 • Fig Tree Distribution, St. Mark's Lutheran 24th & Grand, 9 a.m.</p> <p>Oct 2 • Fig Tree Board Meeting, Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 1 p.m.</p> <p>• Grand Opening of the Franciscan Place at St. Joseph Family Center, 1016 N. Superior, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., 483-6495</p> <p>Oct 4 • Mennonite Country Auction & Sale, Menno Mennonite Church, 659-0926</p> <p>Oct 5 • Manna Concert, Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, 411 S. Washington, 3 p.m., 624-1366.</p> <p>Oct 6 • Domestic Violence Month workshops and march, 326-1190</p> <p>• Film on Media Literacy, NW Alliance for Responsible Media, Community Building, 35 W. Main, 7 p.m., 313-5378</p> <p>Oct 19 • Bread for the World Sunday, worship resources at www.bread.org</p> <p>Tues-Sats • Habitat-Spokane work days - 534-2552</p> <p>Fridays • Colville Peace Vigil - 675-4554</p> <p>3rd Mons • NAACP - 467-9793</p> <p>1st Sat • Spokane Ministers' Fellowship & Ministers' Wives/Widows Fellowship, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana 624-0522</p> <p>2nd, 4th Weds • Pax Christi, St. Joseph's, 1503 W. Dean, noon - 844-4480</p> <p>Third Fri • Contemplative Prayer, Mary Jane Yassick, OSF, St. Joseph Family Center, 1016 N. Superior, 7:30 p.m., 483-6495</p> <p>Nov 6 • Fig Tree Dialogue on 25 Years of Ecumenism</p> |
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Leader urges Christians to stand together

Continued from page 1

"There is growing recognition that Christians need to stand together and be witnesses to what Jesus' life is about," she said. "In our culture, it's too easy to be divisive. Our culture lifts up differences and encourages people to identify with their differences rather than their commonalities.

"That thinking breeds competitiveness among churches," she noted.

Alice served 17 years on the executive staff of the Church Council of Greater Seattle, involved in administration, social justice and public policy. For two years, she was its interim executive director before leaving in 2004.

She grew up Lutheran in a South Dakota farming community and earned a bachelor's degree at South Dakota State University.

Alice, who has a master's in public administration from Seattle University, was a teacher and organizer in Illinois before moving to Seattle in 1975. She began working with the Seattle school district, studying the impact of school cultures on neighborhoods.

In the 1980s, she became active in Plymouth Congregational UCC. In 2004, she also started to attend Trinity United Methodist Church in the Ballard neighborhood of Seattle where she lives. She holds dual membership.

The WAC, Alice explained, is in place to help people address emerging needs in faith and life.

"There have been ups and downs in the ecumenical movement over the years. The movement has depended on mainline churches to survive, but in recent years mainline churches have felt less need to work ecumenically, drawing into their silos to protect their denominational structures.

"Mainline churches have also been aware that Christianity is one form of religion, and they can work with others in interfaith ventures," she said.

In addition, issues around human sexuality have divided mainline churches internally and from each other, Alice pointed out.

"Ecumenical organizations have been left in the breach," she said. "Some deal well with that breach. Some find it hard to remain in integrity.

"Because some perceive that mainline ecumenism promotes liberal issues, some assume it also endorses liberal views on issues of sexuality, but that is not true for many churches," she said.

"The WAC has had no position on abortion, death with dignity or same-sex marriage. Some churches wish we would have a position,



Alice Woldt visits Unity in the Community in Spokane

but those issues are divisive," Alice said.

In some communities, mainline and evangelical churches work together to serve the poorest of the poor and to advance other issues in which there is agreement.

"Most interfaith or ecumenical organizations focus on a community need such as housing or hunger, finding unity around issues or a community crisis," she said.

The WAC's plan includes helping communities do ministries of compassion that cut across theological differences.

Some issues where she has had feedback of common concern are: on support for veterans, their families and victims of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; on restoration and rehabilitation of ex-offenders; on environmental issues, and on buying local products.

Over the years, Alice reminded, churches were the core groups developing food banks, low-income housing and many other ministries that have spun off.

"We plan to make the WAC relevant to the faith communities of Eastern Washington, meeting needs for ecumenical dialogue, worship and public policy action and education," Alice said, noting that she will be in Spokane for an Oct. 18 Witness for Peace Luncheon, the Nov. 6 Fig Tree Dialogue and the Feb. 6 legislative event.

The WAC currently connects 10 Christian denominations and 11 ecumenical organizations for dialogue, reflection, worship and action on the needs of community and world.

For information, call (206)-625-9790 or visit www.thewac.org.

Organist gives recital at Cathedral

Bruce Neswick, organist and music director at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, will play a recital at 4 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 21, at Spokane's Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th.

In his youth, Bruce, who is noted for improvisation, was organist at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Kennewick. Since earning

degrees at Pacific Lutheran University, the Yale School of Music and the Institute of Sacred Music, he has performed throughout the United States and Europe, and has served as organist and music director at cathedrals in Atlanta, and Washington, DC.

For information, call 838-4277 or visit stjohns-cathedral.org.

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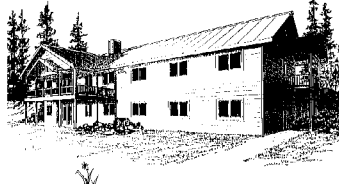
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