40TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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40th Anniversary Edition

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

Editor elicits understanding, relationships

Four stories on Fig Tree staff

Freelance ecumenical journalist Mary Stamp, editor and publisher, who co-founded The Fig Tree with Holy Names Sister Bernadine Casey in the spring of 1984 started work on it in the fall of 1983 after attending the World Council of Churches (WCC) Sixth Assembly in Vancouver B.C.

One assembly document on "Communicating Credibly" sparked thinking about the editorial approach, including being clear and concise to hold the attention of readers saturated by media.

Mary reviewed The Fig Tree history and described how it grew into a peace/solutions journalism editorial approach.

A 1967 graduate of the University of Oregon School of Journalism, she became a freelance feature writer for national denominational publications and dailies in Astoria, Ore., and Fresno, Calif., before writing and selling ads for seven years for the weekly Standard Register in Tekoa.

A pastor friend on the Spokane Christian Coalition board knew she had started a publication



There's room for more issues in the archives behind Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp.

called InterChurch in Fresno and suggested the coalition work with her. They recruited people to serve on a steering committee. One was Holy Names Sister Bernardine Casey, who co-founded The Fig Tree with Mary and was associate editor.

"We still have the Holy Names sisters actively involved with editing, writing, planning, mailings, displays and distribution," said Mary. "Sr. Catherine Ferguson brings her global and national leadership experience to the board, writing, editing and helping raise funds, including an annual grant from the sisters.

"Originally, we saw a need because religion was becoming invisible in media, except to play up contention and divisions," Mary said, likening its sidelining religious voices to ignoring the voices of women unless they fit the stereotypes of the mostly male-dominated media.

Mary brought a background in ecumenical religion—working to build understanding among the diverse faith communities—and in feature writing.

She used those skills to write features about religion, focusing

Continued on page 4

Community Observance of Holocaust features essays of the 2023 winners

Lorelai Taylor, who wrote the first-prize 2023 Yom Hashoah essay for high school students, will read her essay on "The Danger of Indifference" at the Community Observance of the Holocaust at 7 p.m., Monday, May 6, at Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave.

In her essay, she wrote about reviewing historical sources and finding that portions of the U.S. government were indifferent to the events in Europe leading up to and during the Holocaust.

"Indifference, the killer of humanity, is what brings humiliation upon us today. Select individuals and departments in the U.S. government knowingly prevented the immigration of Jewish refugees during World War II and prevented information about the persecution of Jews from reaching the people," she wrote. "In an attempt to keep protests and uprisings in the U.S. at bay, the government contributed to the deaths of thousands of Jews by not taking action during

World War II."

Lorelai, who grew up in East Valley schools and is a junior at East Valley High School, wrote the essay as part of the Advanced Placement European history class she was taking. Her teacher, Lori Jacobson, told students about the contest during the Holocaust unit.

"I found it interesting, especially the prompt of looking into what was happening in the U.S. during the Holocaust, because we had not studied that," she

Lorelai said she experienced an "aha" moment when reading the essay prompt about the indifference the U.S. showed in the Holocaust.

"I was not aware of the indifference before and it was shocking that people were indifferent," she said. "I had not taken into consideration the beliefs and trends in those times that may have led people to be indifferent.

"I don't justify it, but I understand how being antisemitic was reflected in the actions," she said.

Continued on page 11

Fig Tree celebrates 40th year with Gala, speaker

Following the Spring Benefit Events, The Fig Tree has shifted to organizing to celebrate its 40th Anniversary with a Gala that will feature keynote speaker Karen Georgia Thompson—story page 7. The Gala includes a dinner with three international dishes prepared by Feast World Kitchen, recognition of people who have made The Fig Tree possible, comments and reflections from regional faith leaders and an interfaith celebration.

The Gala will be from 5 to 8 p.m., Sunday, April 28, at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave.

Tickets for the event are \$50 and sponsors may donate a suggested \$250. There will be scholarships for those who request.

"We know many have just gathered for our Spring Benefit fundraising events in person and online during March," said Mary Stamp, editor, "but this is a once-in-40-years celebration of The Fig Tree's influence locally and globally."

As part of its extended 40th celebration through the rest of 2024, The Fig Tree will scan issues from 1984 to 2006 to add to the pdf files it has of issues since then. Those copies will be available through The Fig Tree's online archive and Washington Digital Newspapers.

In addition, The Fig Tree will compile two books—one on its history and one with articles and editorials Mary has written.

"We seek sponsors to help make those projects possible," she said. "In addition, we have a major gift towards starting a long-term investment fund."

Spring is also the time for updating the Resource Directory and securing its support with ads and community partners.

Mary reported that benefit events have so far raised \$35,400 towards its goal of \$42,000 for benefit/spring donations. Benefit videos are online at the figtree.org—select videos in the menu.

To rsvp, call 535-4112 or email event@thefigtree.org.

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Religion News Briefs

Around the World

World Council of Churches News, PO Box 2100 CH - 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland Tel: +41-22 791 6111 Fax: +41-22 788 7244 www.oikoumene.org

Thursdays in Black brings people together

Sally Azar, a Thursdays in Black ambassador, is pastor at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, serving Arabic and English-speaking congregations in Jerusalem. "Thursdays in Black universally brings people together," she said recently. "It is a day we remember all the women and all the violence that's happening all over the world.

"To talk about violence in my context in Palestine is taboo," she said, noting the church's gender justice office opened spaces for women to share their experiences. "We're a minority as Christians and even smaller as Lutherans. People worry that if something comes out, everyone knows about it, so they may hesitate to share their experiences of violence, yet we need spaces so women have someone to go to when they experience it."

For Sally, knowing there's a world out there that stands with women and knowing that other women experience the violence, even in churches, makes it less of a burden. "It's about all women being in solidarity with each other on Thursdays, thinking about each other, praying for each other and knowing it's difficult for many women, yet we are fighting this together," she said, hoping more churches implement Thursdays in Black.

Zacchaeus Tax advances gender justice

A March 19 discussion, "Zacchaeus Tax: Transforming the Global Economic System and Advancing Gender Justice," explored intersections between tax justice and gender jus-tice—and why this is a matter of faith. The event was held parallel with the 68th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York on the theme "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and empowering women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective."

The panel discussed how proposals for global and national wealth and taxes—and reparations called for in the ecumenical Zacchaeus Tax (ZacTax) campaign—can build a more just, sustainable planet that includes women and girls.

World Council of Churches (WCC) president from North America, Angelique Walker-Smith, of Pan-African and Orthodox Faith Engagement, Bread for the World and U.S. National Council of Churches said churches should care about the global tax system because taxation could make a more equitable life for all.

"Shockingly, 252 of the richest men possess more wealth than 1 billion women and girls in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean combined," she said. "Taxing the richest ensures that the wealth created by workers and subsidized by unpaid women's work is redistributed, rebuilding trust in democratic systems that respect and protect women's rights."

The Commission on the Status of Women draft calls for progressive tax policies that tax those with the highest ability to pay and prevent regressive taxes that disproportionately impact all people with low or no incomes, especially women and girls."

Easter Initiative reminds what is needed for peace

The WCC Easter Initiative in March called for rolling away the stone of violence, war and occupation, pain and suffering, and reminding the world what is needed to bring peace and transform swords into plowshares. The initiative is an annual activity of the WCC Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine, connecting stories of Easter with current realities in Palestine and Israel; spotlighting challenges of lives marked by violence, war and occupation; and nurturing hope that highlights groups and individuals striving for a just peace.

WCC general secretary Jerry Pillay, who recently visited the Holy Land, said "As Christians and as one global human family, we must work hard to discern, remember and remind one another what is needed to bring about peace."

Resources are available at oikoumene.org/what-we-do/eappi/

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REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Holocaust observance will be on May 6

The Yom Hashoah planning committee has set the Spokane Community Observance of the Holocaust for 7 p.m., Monday, May 6, at Temple Beth Shalom.

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

The Art Contest will be completed before then, so select artwork will be displayed and the winners will be honored May 6.

Following the guidance of teachers on the committee, the deadline for the writing contest is after the observance because

they teach the unit on the Holocaust later.

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

The first-place high school essay winner was Lorelai Taylor of East Valley High School, and the first-place middle school winner was Bella Buckner, who is now at Gonzaga Prep.

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

One of those heroes was Carla, who was 16 when Nazis invaded the Netherlands. She worked with the Dutch Underground and

saved more than 40 people.

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

Contestants are to create art or write essays based on reading about Carla and other young heroes of the Holocaust.

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

Expo 50th Anniversary is May 4 to July 4

Opening Ceremonies for the EXPO '74 50th Anniversary are on Saturday, May 4, at Riverfront Park.

The city of Spokane seeks to recreate the spirit of Expo '74 during the Expo 50th Celebration through various events that will take place between May 4 and July 4.

In 1974, Spokane was the smallest city in history to host the World's Fair. The environ-

mentally focused event transformed the heart of the city and was a catalyst for sustainable growth in the region.

Businesses, organizations, and community members have come together to organize events in five categories mirroring the original key pillars: Expo Legacy, Environmental Stewardship, Tribal Culture, Recreation and Sport, and Arts and Culture.

The full events calendar is at

spokaneexpo50.com.

Adjacent to EXPO's Community Stage in Riverfront Park will be the EXPO Vendor Village, featuring local and international cuisine, unique handcrafted items, historic displays and interactive activities. There will be vendors on May 18 and 25, June 1, 15 and 22.

For information, call 625-6600, email rfpinfo@spokanecity.org or visit riverfrontspokane.org.

Habitat fundraising lunch set for May 16

The Hope Builders Luncheon, Habitat-Spokane's largest annual fundraiser, will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Thursday, May 16, at the Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.

Proceeds sustain affordable homeownership opportunities in partnership with modestincome individuals and families in need of a safe, decent and affordable place to call home, said Michelle Girardot, chief executive officer.

Since 1987, Habitat for Humanity-Spokane has been a leader in providing affordable homeownership programming and new construction in Spo-

kane County.

For vulnerable families, this is an accessible path of financial flexibility that ultimately brings the stability to make forward-facing decisions, increase generational wealth and build equity for the future, she said.

For information, call 534-3553 or visit habitat-spokane.org.

Program begins building home for a vet

The national nonprofit, Homes for Our Troops (HFOT) held a kickoff event to begin building a specially adapted home for Army Colonel Daniel Dudek, who was injured in Iraq. The event was March 23 at Shiloh Hills Fellowship, 207 E. Lincoln Rd.

In early 2007, he deployed as the brigade fire support officer for the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry

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Division. On July 19, 2007, his Stryker was struck by an explosively formed penetrator, wounding him in the lower back and hips and killing the soldier next to him.

Danny credits regaining some mobility from his spinal cord injury to having surgery within an hour.

The home being built for him will feature more than 40 adapta-

tions, such as widened doorways for wheelchair access, a roll-in shower and kitchen amenities like pull-down shelving and lowered countertops.

HFOT, which has built 375 homes since it began in 2004, relies on contributions from donors and corporate partners.

For information, call 508-967-9057, email lduffy@hfotusa.org or visit hfotusa.org.

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Fair Housing Alliance offers presentation

National Fair Housing Alliance and its partners, Abt Associates, Fair Housing Center of Washington and Northwest Fair Housing Alliance are offering a virtual public presentation on the Washington Homeownership Covenant Act Study, 10 to 11:15 a.m., Tuesday, April 2.

The presentation will provide an overview and findings from the study. Those who register by April 1 will receive a link by email to join the event.

For information, email nfhaevents@nationalfairhousing.

Church history professor lectures at Whitworth

Han-Luen Kanzer Komline, professor of church history and theology at Western Theological Seminary, will lecture at 7 p.m., Thursday, April 18, at the Weyerhaeuser Center for Christian Faith and Learning at Whitworth University.

Her book, Augustine on the Will: A Theological Account, received the Lautenschlaeger Award for Theological Promise in 2020. Her scholarship focuses on innovative resources of Christian theology, drawing on early church writings for modern times.

For information, email dhenreckson@whitworth.edu.

Gospel Explosion Finale is April 19

Mama Beans Gospel Explosion Finale will be held at 7 p.m., Friday, April 19, in the Seeley Mudd Chapel at Whitworth University.

"It has been an honor and a privilege to serve Whitworth in ministry," said Stephy Nobles Beans, associate chaplain for diversity, equity and inclusion ministries, who is retiring

"Starting the Gospel Explosion over 20-plus years ago has been a blessing. It has been amazing to have many from our community come and praise the Lord in song, praise, worship, dance and just having a good ol' time praising God," she said.

She asks that individuals and churches interested in attending message or phone her.

For information, call 879-8070.

Land Conservancy leads two April hikes

The Inland Northwest Land Conservancy is leading two hikes in April.

Mark Merhab, a hike docent since retiring from the tech industry in 2020, will lead a hike and discussion with an Eastern Washington University (EWU) environmental philosophy student, starting at 9 a.m., Saturday, April 20, at Palisades Park.

Hike docent Alana Livingston, will lead a hike at Waikiki Springs Nature Preserve starting at 10 a.m., Sunday, April 21. She will also be joined by an EWU student who will facilitate discussion. Alana brings expertise in edible and medicinal plants.

For information and registration, call 328-2939 or email info@inlandnwland.org.

Wild & Scenic Film Festival will be April 25

The 10th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival at 7 p.m., Thursday, April 25, at the Garland Theater offers an evening of inspiring films that celebrate the planet's beauty and the people working to protect it.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m.

"It's an opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and be inspired to make a difference," said Katie Thompson of Spokane Riverkeeper, which is hosting the event and invites people to help underwrite it.

For information, email katie@spokaneriverkeeper.org.

Organists travel for Bachathon concerts

Bachathon, a marathon of four free 60-minute concerts with the American Guild of Organists (AGO) at four venues in Spokane and Coeur d'Alene starts 1 p.m. Sunday, April 7, at Whitworth Church, 312 W. Hawthorne, in North Spokane

The next concerts are at 2 p.m. at Messiah Lutheran, 4202 N. Belt in Central Spokane; 3 p.m. at St. Augustine Catholic Church, 428 W. 19th Ave. in South Spokane, and 4:30 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church, 812 N. 5th, Coeur d'Alene.

Performers each play 15 minutes of organ music by Johann Sebastian Bach, then travel to the next venue to begin again.

The organist team are:

• James Tevenan, music director/organist at St. Augustine from 1995 until he retired:

- Janet Ahrend, who teaches organ at Gonzaga, Whitworth and Eastern Washington universities, and has been organist at local Methodist, Congregational, Catholic and Episcopal churches;
- · Matthew Johnson, who earned a bachelor's in music and organ from McGill University in Montreal and is now working on a master's at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and
- Joseph Schubert, who retired after 36 years teaching choral music in public schools and simultaneously a church organist/ music director. He is now interim organist at St. Augustine.

The pipe organs in each church are suited for Bach's music.

'Spokane is fortunate to have such exciting organs in the community," said Joseph.

AGOs in many communities are presenting Bachathons to celebrate Bach's 339th birthday on March 31.

"To make the opportunity to hear Bach's organ music convenient, we are offering programs in four locations," said Edward Hurd, Spokane chapter dean.

The second, third and fourth concerts will start while organists are on the road from the previous venues.

The Spokane AGO began in 1946 and has 38 members who offer concerts throughout the year and an Organ Academy with low-cost lessons.

For information, call 402-319-1716 or email ehurd 1742@ gmail.com or visit spokaneago. org/bachathon-2024.

GU sets speakers on 'Environmental Justice'

Reflecting on the 50th anniversary of Expo '74, the first World Fair with an environmental theme, Gonzaga University's Climate Institute is collaborating with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Washington, the Washington State Attorney General and Gonzaga Law School Center for Law, Ethics and Commerce to host an event from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday, April 12, at Gonzaga Law School's Barbieri Court Room.

"Expo '74: 50 years of Environmental Justice in the Inland Northwest" will look at environmental justice work done over the last 50 years and explore the work that remains to be done in the coming decades.

Speakers are Brian Henning, director of GU's Climate Center; Jacob Rooksby, GU Law School dean; Vanessa Waldref, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Washington; Brooke Beeler, eastern region director for the Washington Department of Ecology; Marlene Feist, public works director, City of Spokane; Margo Hill, associate professor in urban and regional planning at Eastern Washington University; Jerry White, executive director emeritus, Spokane Riverkeeper; Cliff Villa, deputy assistant administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Casey Sixkiller, Region 10 administrator, EPA; Twa-le Abrahamson, executive director, Indigenous Rights and Reparation Foundation; Bill Sherman, assistant attorney general, Washington State, and Colleen Melody, civil rights division chief, Washington State Attorney General's Office.

The event is free and a livestream link will be provided for those to register.

For information, email ashby@gonzaga.edu.

Reuse center moves

Five years after opening as a creative reuse center, Art Salvage outgrew its space. In October 2023, the program leased new space. It re-opened on March 15 at 610 E. North Foothills Dr.

Now Art Salvage has twice the space it had, allowing for more donations to be diverted from the waste stream and made available for makers.

They also have classroom space to offer classes in creative reuse, maker meetups and open studio sessions.

For information, call 798-9039 or email katie@artsalvagespokane.com.

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For more information, contact: Shonna Bartlett at bartletts@gonzaga.edu

The Fig Tree models peace journalism and solutions journalism

Continued from page 1 on people of faith and values who were making a difference and able to share why they are committed to justice, peace, love, creation care and more.

"I have a passion to hear people's stories beyond the surface to understand who they are, which often means exploring their cultural heritage," she said, noting that people originally from Austria, Zimbabwe, Brazil and Korea have different language backgrounds that are part of who they are.

"In training writers, I encourage them to listen beyond the surface in order to sense underlying faith and cultural perspectives to gain a better understanding of nuances of what the person is saying," Mary said.

"It's important to ask questions to help them articulate who they are, why they're doing what they're doing and how that relates to their faith and values," she said.

In 1999, John Olson, executive director of the coalition when The Fig Tree started, retired. New leaders wanted The Fig Tree to be a newsletter promoting what was then the Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries.

"That would have undermined support, because we were established for wider coverage and to be independent," said Mary.

In 2000, The Fig Tree separated and in 2001 became an independent nonprofit with a mission to communicate among the community of faith and to build understanding among diverse people and connect people to share resources.

"That mission opened us to

being more than a newspaper. In 2006, we added the directory, which the Interfaith Council no longer had enough staff to do. We also took on planning the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference," said Mary. "I had helped coordinate both as associate director of the council."

The Fig Tree mission includes educational events and other media-its website, social media, networking and plans for a podcast.

"Much of what we do we learned by doing it as we moved from typing copy set in galleys that we pasted on layout pages, to using computer design and photo software to prepare camera-ready pages for the printer. We learned to design a website by doing it with website design software. We continue to consult with people like Kai Teoh, who is volunteering to help us make the website more user friendly.

"Over the years, we began to talk of our journalistic approach as peace journalism, which means covering various perspectives, not just two opposing viewpoints. Because we share stories of people who make a difference, we also refer to our approach as solutions journalism," said Mary, who found both terms used by journalism schools and by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC).

We wonder why society is so divided. Most mass media define news as what divides—conflict, violence, sensationalism, sex and the unusual.

"Divisions are exacerbated when just two sides are covered to the point people grow numb," said Mary, pointing out that

"peace journalism understands that our differences are not wide gaps or just two options, but multiple nuanced differences, with many areas of common ground.

'We help people articulate those nuances and realize there are solutions, and people are capable of solving problems," she said. "All sorts of people do all sorts of actions out of their values, faith and spiritual commitment. People want to make the world a better place. Stories help people tell why they are doing what they are doing."

Looking over 40 years of Fig Tree newspapers, Mary said the issues contain thousands of stories. At first, issues were eight tabloid-size pages. Now they are just 12 or 16 pages—no more—so many read the whole issue because it's enough, not too much.

By training students and others as editors and writers, The Fig Tree has an impact on their writing for other media.

"I've seen changes. Local media now feature stories on difference makers. They see how stories empower people," said Mary, a member of the Northwest Alliance for Media Literacy.

As The Fig Tree interviews people, it also hopes to help them articulate their story with integrity and confidence for other publications.

"Part of doing an interview is understanding that each encounter with another human

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being is an encounter with the source of all being," Mary said.

"Often we argue over or are influenced by statistics and polls that are not objective but can be skewed by how they are interpreted. Also I read news apps on my cell phone, I see that much is labeled as opinion or an interpretation of the news."

"We struggle in society knowing what is true. Trust does not come from the best facts but from the power of a story lived experience—not geared to convince," said Mary, who has seen empowerment come from stories.

"As a feature writer. I believe stories motivate and show threads of common ground," she said. "I love doing this. I find meaning. I find my being in the relationships I have with people."

The Fig Tree has been influenced by Mary's experience with the World Council of Churches, which involved living, working and studying with 60 people from 40 countries in a 1969 to 1970 study program, and attending assemblies at Canberra in 1991, at Harare in 1998, at Porto Alegre in 2006, at Busan in 2013 and online at Karlsruhe in 2022.

"From my living in a global, intercultural, interracial, interfaith community, The Fig Tree is multifaith, multicultural, multiracial and multi-gender," said Mary. "We are also committed to raising the voice of women to build a healthy, just community of women and men."

As part of its anniversary, The Fig Tree will scan issues from the first 20 years to include with pdf files of the last 20 years that are already on the website. They will also in the online archives of Washington Digital Newspapers.

The Fig Tree also plans two books. One will share The Fig Tree history through articles over the years. The other will compile selected articles and editorials

For information, call 535-1813 or email mary@thefigtree.org.





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The Whitworth Office of Church Engagement will present the Compelling Preaching Retreat for active and aspiring preachers June 24 to 27 in Leavenworth.

It will be a time of spiritual renewal to develop preaching skills through workshops, spiritual direction, quiet work/reflection time and worship.

Workshops will be led by Whitworth's preaching experts, including Mindy Smith and Mary Hulst.

This event is hosted as part of the OCE's Compelling Preaching Initiative.

For information, visit whitworth.edu/preaching.





Ecumenical background guides staff to connect the local and global

Mariike Fakasiieiki came to her role as development and editorial associate with The Fig Tree after years training in interfaith and ecumenical consulting with nonprofits and working to hone those skills internationally with the World Council of Churches

When she was 11, she went with her mother Mary Stamp, then living in Tekoa, to the WCC sixth Assembly in 1983 in Vancouver, B.C. She also joined Mary at the seventh assembly in 1991 at Canberra, Australia, while studying at the University of Oregon, and in 1998 to the eighth assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, marking the 50th anniversary of the first assembly in 1948 in Amsterdam, which her grandparents had attended.

In 1996, Marijke studied with the graduate program of the WCC at Bossey in Switzerland with 40 people from 30 countries before going to seminary at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, where she graduated

Marijke later raised money for The WCC Women's Theological Fund and worked as a justice and peace intern with the national United Church of Christ in Washington D.C.

She returned to work in the Bay Area with interfaith councils, organizing educational events and raising funds while her husband, Ikani, who is from Tonga, completed a doctoral degree in theology from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley.

"When I came back to Spokane and worked with nonprofits, it was in the back of my mind that I wanted to help continue the legacy my mother started in 1984," said Marijke. "I worked with some agencies that The Fig Tree newspaper and Resource Directory cover.'

When the development associate position opened part-time,



Marijke Fakasiieiki serves as The Fig Tree's development and editorial associate.

she applied. Not only did her skill sets match the needs, but also she had the ecumenical and interfaith understandings needed.

In academic settings for more than 20 years, she had helped international students edit and write papers, theses and dissertations.

"Journalism is a different style, so I have been learning AP style," she said. "For ecumenical journalism, the main thing is to learn how to listen with eyes and ears to help people communicate their stories to the world in an authentic, respectful manner."

She spends time listening to people and then helps translate their stories in The Fig Tree to communicate with a broader audience

"We look for people who are not covered in the general media, people who are living out their faith and values," Marijke said. "There are people in the community stepping out of their comfort zones every day to make a difference—people of faith and people with humanistic values.

"My framework is local but I understand that our community is a microcosm of the world's different cultures, religions and races," she said. "We hear so much about hate groups that we forget about the transformative power of love in the community."

Marijke told of interviewing Doresty Daniel from the Marshallese community that was impacted by nuclear testing in the South Pacific, learning that many Marshallese have come here to find a safe place to live and work. Their presence has an impact on

"As we hear their stories, we realize we have something in common. We can understand that our stories are their stories, and their stories are our stories," she explained. "It's not just storytelling for the sake of the story. It's for the sake of empowering and transforming lives."

Marijke also interviewed Luc Jasmin Jr, a Haitian immigrant who is pastor of Maranatha Ministries, a multicultural church, gaining insights into the struggles in Haiti.

Doresty and Luc exemplify

Marijke's awareness about the intersection of the global and the local

"The global framework of understanding local issues helps us know we're not alone. We are doing works of caring, justice and faith in solidarity with others throughout the world," she said. "We're not isolated."

Because of her connections, The Fig Tree is bringing a global faith leader as keynote speaker for its 40th Anniversary Gala on April 28 at St. John's Cathedral. Karen Georgia Thompson is a member of the WCC's Central and Executive committees.

She is a national and global church leader who reads The Fig Tree stories about people here.

Beyond their global scope, Marijke's tasks require attention to details, problem solving and quick thinking—maintaining databases, networking, selling ads, building relationships and keeping track of people as they move to different organizations.

"As people move, it's an opportunity to build relationships with other organizations," Marijke said. "That's why my role is called 'development' as I seek to build a solid base of support with individual and organizational sponsors, advertisers, community partners and grants."

With its 40th anniversary, Marijke is also helping The Fig Tree explore establishing a longterm investment fund to help expand staff and create new media.

Marijke nurtures relationships not only over the phone but also by meeting people in coffee shops, attending events, offering information at displays, and going to congregations and nonprofits to preach and to share The Fig Tree story.

"While we focus on faith, we are not just interviewing people in faith communities. We also interview people in businesses," she said. "We highlight people in different racial and cultural communities, women and LG-BTQIA+."

Marijke frames ecumenical and interfaith work in the words of former WCC General Secretary Phillip Potter, who described ecumenical leaders as those working toward bringing unity among the diverse peoples of the world. He said ecumenically leaders need to have a sense of humor, an open mind and a willingness to take risks.

"Those traits keep me going when dealing with the harsh realities of the world. To have a sense of humor is also to understand other people's humanity and to move forward in solidarity with them," she said.

"An open mind means we are open to learning things from other people. When we ask questions, we're asking out of respect and deep interest, longing to learn about a person at the soul level," she continued.

"Taking risks means we know that forces in the world seek to divide people, and even threaten journalists for telling stories. There is a risk to being a journalist, but it's important for people around the world to know what is happening to millions of people who are oppressed, displaced or living on the edge, so others will care and act.

"It's important to share stories to build hope that empowers people to make a difference," Marijke concluded.

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





'Prodigal son' and pope's astronomer speak

discuss "Divine Mercy: Spiritual Warfare, Divine Mercy and Healing" from 6 p.m. Friday, April 5, to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 7, at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben

Ken shares his experience as a prodigal son, leaving then returning to the church with questions—a journey of conversions, struggle, study and questioning from agnosticism to non-denominational Christianity, and back to the Catholic

Fr. Ken Geraci CPM will Church, where he joined the Fathers of Mercy in 2006 and was ordained in 2012.

> The retreat includes a Eucharistic Healing Service.

> April 26 to 28, IHRC offers an astronomy retreat, "Faith, Science and Beauty in the Stars," with Br. Guy Consolmagno, SJ, "The Pope's Astronomer" and director of the Vatican Observatory.

The observatory was established by the Holy See for astro- 1224 or visit ihrc.net.

nomical research and outreach to advance scientific understanding of the universe.

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Directory editor is committed to providing resources beyond paper

Along with being the editor and ecumenical/interfaith liaison, Malcolm Haworth said his work preparing The Fig Tree's annual Resource Directory has grown to be part of a family venture.

It's more than the Stamp-Haworth-Fakasiieiki family. It's part of the family of the Sisters of the Holy Names through the legacy of co-founder Sr. Bernadine Casey.

It is also family in the sense of the staff, editing team, volunteers and the community of individual and corporate sponsors, faith communities, advertisers, nonprofit agencies and community partners who are committed to supporting the monthly newspaper, annual directory, website access, social media, educational events, interfaith dialogue, networking connections and new media.

"The future is family in that broad context," he said.

As ecumenical/interfaith liaison, Malcolm helps organize the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, interfaith dialogue opportunities and a networking initiative to bring immediate connections among people in the faith and nonprofit communities.

"I have also been involved in some direct action within the community related to knowing the resources," he said. "So I connected people with CO-VID resources. I helped connect people to set up church warming shelters recently. I also provided information on resources for the Spokane County Emergency Management response to the fall fire recovery for the Medical Lake and Elk communities."

Malcolm drove to impacted areas to collect information on resources and distributed nearly 900 directories to more than 350 families impacted by home loss or displaced by smoke damage or partial loss. He said a staff person at one city noted victims were able to act quickly to resolve issues because they had access to the resources.

"During the Thanksgiving and Christmas/Winter Holidays, I compiled lists of community dinners, food resources and gift programs to include with the November and December Fig Tree calendars," Malcolm said.

"Having information, I like to help streamline it to provide for people involved in direct services, emergent needs and



Malcolm Haworth has edited the directory for eight years.

emergency services," he said.

"With The Fig Tree directory, we offer connections within the faith community and wider social services," Malcolm added.

The Fig Tree is in the process of working with teams in the community to discern emerging media needs in consultation with board members.

"We are present within the community as part of our research to update directory listings and help serve by providing the information people need to improve their lives," he said.

Malcolm said his impetus for commitment to the mission to provide communication and connection came during his growing years as the son of editor, Mary Stamp, who started The Fig Tree when he was five years old.

He went to events with diverse people, sometimes listened in on interviews with people who make a difference and worked with the Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries, the name in the 1990s of the Spokane Christian Coalition, which helped form The Fig Tree. He also worked with the Interfaith Council for a short time when it was in an interim phase.

Through AmeriCorps, Mal-

colm began working with The Fig Tree in 2006 to prepare to publish the Resource Directory in June 2007, after the Interfaith Council was unable to continue it.

Now new media ventures are based "on our mission of promoting communication among people in faith and nonprofit communities. They will network to connect people to build relationships for common action for the common good," he said.

Along with having research skills developed over the years from studying history for a bachelor's degree in 2001 at Washington State University and a master's degree in 2005 at Eastern Washington University, he often volunteered with mailings and events.

During college, he was student leader with the ecumenical campus ministries board and participated with Lutheran, United Methodist, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim campus ministries in peace, justice, environment, diversity and leadership development efforts.

In addition, in 1993 and 1996, he traveled in Europe, attending the 50th anniversary of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey and

studied a year in Vienna, Austria, in 1999 to 2000.

Currently he is working on a doctoral degree in leadership studies at Gonzaga University.

"As a volunteer, I was kind of waiting in the wings, going to agencies and congregations over the years and building an institutional knowledge of what existed within the community and region," Malcolm said.

"Now I apply that knowledge in my work. While we provide information in the printed and online Resource Directory, I know that information and am able to respond to requests that come directly to us," he said pointing out how fluid the research process is and that it's needed periodically through the year.

The directory is online as searchable pdf files arranged by type of services and the people served

"We include nearly 12,000 agencies and faith communities. Online we cover Central Washington and include congregations in Eastern Oregon, Southern Idaho, Montana and

Wyoming to include full regions, synods and dioceses in the area," he said

"Our Google Asset Map had about 6,000 visits in 2023," Malcolm added.

Through regular research, mail, emails, phone connections and personal contacts, Malcolm updates information on congregations and agencies.

"I have a thirst for knowledge that's in service to the community to help make a difference in people's lives," he said.

"I'm proud to carry on my mother's vision of communication to make a difference in the community," he said. "I don't think that I necessarily intended to do this work originally, but it has become a calling over the years.

"Family can be a starting point for anyone's engagement in service to the human family and the values expressed by the peace and solutions oriented journalism," Malcolm said.

For information, call 216-6090 or email resourcedirectory@thefigtree.org.







National, global leader is keynote speaker for Fig Tree's 40th Gala

The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, the first woman of African descent elected as general minister and president/ CEO of the United Church of Christ (UCC), and a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Executive and Central Committees, is the featured speaker for The Fig Tree's 40th Anniversary Gala from 5 to 8 p.m., Sunday, April 28, at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave. in Spokane.

She will address the anniversary theme, "Sharing Stories: Empowering People.'

Karen Georgia was elected to a four-year term by the UCC General Synod in July 2023 and installed in October 2023.

She previously served the national UCC for 14 years, two as minister for racial justice, eight as minister for ecumenical and interfaith relations and four as the associate general minister for Wider Church Ministries and coexecutive for Global Ministries.

Her passion for justice and equity led her into global work with the UCC to reduce marginalization experienced by people of African descent and other communities globally.

Before joining the national staff, Karen Georgia was pastor of a 15-member new church in the Florida UCC Conference and then on the Florida Conference staff as minister for disaster response and recovery. She had previously worked 10 years in leadership positions with nonprofits.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, she immigrated to New York as a teenager and earned a bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College, followed by a master's in public administration from North Carolina Central University in Durham, N.C., and a master of divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York. She also studied public policy at Duke University.

Karen Georgia earned a doctorate in ministry at Seattle University and was later awarded an honorary doctorate from Heidelberg University in Ohio.

Being a Black woman, an African descendant, Jamaican immigrant, poet and public theologian are her identities.

The United Church of Christ, a church in the united and uniting church family, was created in 1957, merging the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and the Congregational Christian Church. Those churches had



The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson

roots in German Lutheranism, German and Swiss Reformed and Anabaptist traditions and from Congregationalists who were Puritans and Separatists in England and New England.

The 2023 General Synod recognized a fifth stream of the UCC roots in the Afro-Christian Convention.

The UCC is a diverse communion, including congregations of many racial and ethnic origins: African American, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian American, Pacific Islander and more.

From its diversity and commitment to being a united and uniting church, the UCC engages the ecclesial and liturgical perspectives its members bring. It is committed to becoming more intentionally multi-racial and multicultural, open and affirming to the gifts of gay and lesbian persons for membership and ordained ministry, accessible to all people, and dedicated to pursuing ecumenical relationships, and peace and justice in the church and the world, according to ucc.org.

Writing for The Fig Tree, Gen Heywood, pastor of Veradale UCC, interviewed Karen Georgia during the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in September 2022.

Karen Georgia told Gen she envisioned "global ministry moving us beyond the walls we create. Our mission is both local

and global because those levels are connected.

"Issues at home—homelessness, racism, discrimination, women's and children's issueshave global components. They are not unique to us," she said. "Our ability to name things in concert with what is happening overseas empowers us to do a better job of connecting the dots. Recognizing that what is happening here is happening in the wider world moves us to become global advocates.

"If we are going to talk about a just world for all, we need to mean a just world for all," said Karen Georgia, who believes faith communities as global advocates can make people aware that poverty and racism are human rights violations.

Karen Georgia, who has two sons-Everette and Patrickand three grandchildren—Giovan, Elijah and Sara—said the most difficult part of her work is not the long days and hard work but being a Black woman and having her skin color and gender trigger questions about her expertise.

What keeps her committed to her ministry is the certainty that God is bigger, she told Gen.

"The faith component allows me to get up every morning and step back into the places of trauma," Karen Georgia said.

"Living is traumatic. No one cares how educated I am or that I am a wonderful person, they just see the color of my skin and it triggers the thought that this person doesn't know anything.

'The church has work to do—the work of confessing and owning where we have gotten things wrong," she said.

A writer and poet, she has her works in books, journals and online. Her poetry book. Drums in Our Veins (2020), focuses on the injustices facing people of African descent, and the fight for racial justice around the globe.

According to a ucc.org report on Karen Georgia when she was nominated to be general minister and president in March, her leadership has created opportunities for dialogue in the church and safe space for engaging varied expressions of religious multiplicity. On that theme, her doctoral dissertation looked at ways African Caribbean people continue to practice Africanderived religious and spiritual expressions along with Christianity and other religions.

Highlighting the importance of spiritual diversity in the UCC, Karen Georgia said, "I see the UCC as a place that will continue to welcome those who come. As a community, we are theologically diverse. We hold the tensions of beliefs, theologies, race and gender identification. Can we make room for adding depth to our understanding of who we are as a spiritual people?

"I envision the UCC widening the welcome to the table and church," she told ucc.org.

Karen Georgia said the UCC ethos of welcoming creates space for people to explore their spirituality on the fringe of what many consider mainstream or mainline Christianity.

For information, call 216-736-2156, email copelane@ucc.org or visit ucc.org.







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Artist grateful for Jonah Project's help in hard time

Adam Bodhi, a local artist, will be having a Meet and Greet in collaboration with the Jonah Project from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 11, at the Shadle Library.

Adam seeks to share his story and art as a way for people to connect and raise funds for The Jonah Project, an organization working to end human trafficking.

"I'm interested in promoting The Jonah Project because they helped me at a crucial moment in my life and helped me change my life," said Adam.

Adam believes his experience as someone on the autism spectrum and as trans allows him to approach his art business and podcast in a different way.

"Since I've been co-hosting 'Relax Let Go Be,' a podcast that connects me with spirituality, I'm getting out of my shell more, breaking out of the box and sticking up for the little guy. My goal is to grow my company, a small art business, to help the community through activism."

During a period when he was homeless, Adam was trafficked by someone he met online who lured him with promises of an apartment.

He found his door out of homelessness was costly.

The Jonah Project assisted him so he could leave that situation and get back on his feet.

Starting in 2018, Adam had

multiple art shows with Spokane libraries, the Queer Art Walk and Celebrate Inclusion for The Arc of Spokane.

Adam's medium is acrylic abstract, some on canvas and some on metal, where he uses and releases his negative energy in his paintings.

"On the podcast, I talk about how my Christianity and faith have allowed me to get through my life experiences, good or bad. I want to spread the message that God can help people solve their problems and move out of difficult situations and find God," Adam said

"Part of my passion is to help people," Adam said. "The best way to do that is to sponsor nonprofits that assist people. Those are things I'm working towards.

"The main message is that I've been through a lot in my life, and I've worked hard to overcome many things," he said.

Now Adam wants to motivate people who struggle with things like abuse and human trafficking. Other people in the community and with similar stories can inspire others to live differently and even help people.

Adam, who advertises in The Fig Tree, recently worked with The Fig Tree to design a graphic being used for the 40th Anniversary Gala event on Sunday, April 28.

For information, visit diamondartworkscollective@



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Methodist pastor mentors German pastoral intern for two months

Alissa Amestoy, ordained elder and pastor of Spokane Valley United Methodist Church (UMC), mentored German pastoral intern Klara Diesler in February and March.

Over her 19-year career as pastor and campus minister, Alissa has mentored three pastoral interns and 30 campus ministry peer ministers.

Klara is the first pastoral intern at Spokane Valley UMC.

"My model for a reflective internship," Alissa said, "is I do, you watch. We talk about it. Then we do. We talk about it. Then you do it, and we talk about it. Once a week we shared what we observed both about my ministry and her ministry."

Alissa likes working with young people to help them refine their call to ministry.

Klara enjoyed meeting new people, learning about the culture and being open to differences and similarities in American and German cultures and congregations.

She also appreciated that people in the church were open to doing new things and liked to hear her ideas.

Alissa helped Klara better understand that when a pastor enters a gathering, many grant the pastor more power and authority, so it's important for the pastor to draw them out and empower them to lead.

To facilitate that, Spokane Valley United Methodist Bible study classes are lay-led.

"Sometimes I need authority to give another perspective and information, but I also like people to think for themselves and see their own call in a biblical passage," said Klara.

While Alissa's family moved to Spokane in 1993 and she graduated from North Central High School, her family lived several years in an American community near Bonn, Germany, where her father served with the Navy at the American embassy. In the Defense Department International School she attended, 60 percent of her classmates were children of diplomats.

Alissa has also lived in California, Florida, Virginia and Sicily. Her bachelor's degree is in anthropology from Washington State University.

The summer of 2001 between college and seminary, she was a global justice volunteer with United Methodist General Board Global Ministries at an orphanage in a Russian village northeast of St. Petersburg.

Alissa has served Spokane Valley UMC since July 2022, after eight years as pastor of Cheney



The Rev. Alissa Amestoy

UMC. She was campus minister from 2008 to 2014 for the Wesley Foundation at Washington State University in Pullman, and from 2005 to 2008 at the Wesley Foundation serving the University of California at Los Angeles, after completing a master of divinity degree in 2005 at Claremont School of Theology.

"I like partnering in ministry. I had an associate in Cheney and served in an associate-like role in Pullman and UCLA when I was a campus minister," she said.

Klara, 22, who is fluent in English, lived in several German communities because her mother was a Methodist pastor and moved during Klara's school years. After school, Klara's plan to volunteer a year in Malawi with a church mission agency was thwarted by COVID. So she volunteered at a fair-trade shop in Mainz and wrote articles on fair trade and boycotting vegetables grown in Spain by slave labor.

After six months, she traveled to Sweden and then lived in a mountain hut near Steiermark, Austria, cooking and baking for hikers

She entered the Methodist theological seminary, Theologische Hochschule Reutlingen, where theology studies generally last three to five years.

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Klara Diesler

"I needed time to find out if I felt called to ministry," Klara said. "At first, I did not want to be a pastor, because my mother had only talked about the hard parts of being a pastor. However, after attending an inspiring church retreat, I decided I wanted to begin my journey to become a pastor."

Klara learned about Spokane Valley UMC from the Rev. Damian Carruthers, who attended the seminary in Reutlingen and currently serves Cheney UMC.

Alissa and Klara met on Zoom in early December and discussed their goals and what Spokane Valley UMC could offer.

"I mentor in ministry based on it being an equal partnership rather than a senior pastor-intern relationship of hierarchy," Alissa explained.

Because Alissa lives near Cheney, church members Paul, Renee and Ali Norris, who live near the church, hosted Klara. Paul works at Fairchild. Ali is executive director at Mission Outreach Center. Renee works in Rapid Rehousing with Catholic Charities. They lived in Germany for part of Paul's military career, and Ali studied German in college.

"Church leaders were excited about the opportunity," said Alissa.

Thirteen people from the church went to the airport to welcome her when she arrived Feb 2.

Klara observed worship two Sundays and then helped lead the Ash Wednesday service and preached Feb. 25 when Alissa was away. She also preached on her last Sunday, March 17.

"My internship required that I shadow a minister to see what a pastor's work is like and then choose a topic to write on. I chose work-life balance," said Klara, who finds Alissa's professional boundaries between ministry and a "robust social and family life outside church" a good model.

Alissa said Spokane Valley UMC is "a healthy, thriving congregation with strong lay leadership."

"As pastor I partner with laity in a complementary way, sharing the work of the church," she said.

After the first week, Klara went to every committee meeting, helped plan worship and co-led a memorial service. Klara attended small groups and Bible classes, and visited social service agencies the church works with.

"The congregation fell in love with her and wants her to return,"

said Alissa, who found the internship an opportunity to let the congregation see the benefits of a multi-pastor configuration.

Klara found the congregation supportive and appreciative. They prayed for her before her first sermon and affirmed her with hugs and compliments afterwards.

Klara was curious to know about ministry with diverse people, especially about campus ministry with queer college students, so she spent a day in Pullman visiting the Wesley Foundation at Simpson UMC, the ministry Alissa served previously.

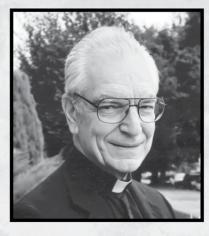
"My studies focus on diversity, queer theology and discrimination," said Klara. "I'm interested in how those issues are different and the same here and in Germany."

She has observed the split in the United Methodist Church between "affirming congregations" that support LGBTQIA+ people and leaders, and those who have separated from the United Methodist Church in the U.S.

"The Methodist Church in Germany fought to stay as one church because we believe a united Church represents the universal message," she said.

For information, call 924-7262 or email alissaamestoy@gmail.com.





Remembering Fr. Armand Nigro, S.J. A Day of Healing

Thursday, April 18 8:00am - 3:30pm

Guest Speaker: Fr. Michael Maher, S.J.

FREE please RSVP

You are invited to join us at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center to celebrate and honor Father Armand Nigro, S.J. on April 18.

Father Armand Nigro, S.J. has been a gift to many of us throughout the years. Please join us for a day to share stories, memories and pictures, and view a DVD recalling his life. Following this program, we will have a community prayer service with music and prayers, requesting our dear Father Armand Nigro, S.J. to bless our lives.

8:00 am Mass
9:10 am Presentations on Fr. Nigro
12:00 pm Lunch
1:00 pm Community Prayer Service
2:30 pm Closing





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Volunteer coordinator started with The Fig Tree as a volunteer

Kaye Hult, administrative and volunteer coordinator, began volunteering at The Fig Tree in early 2011. She did many of the tasks she now assigns volunteers to do.

"Volunteers do all sorts of things. They help with editing, writing, putting out mailings, delivering papers, making phone calls, planning events and doing other office work," she said.

Sometimes Kaye has to scramble to find someone to fill a slot. but "the people who work with us love what we're doing and continually tell me that they value being part of The Fig Tree."

As volunteer coordinator, she understands the tasks she assigns.

Kaye is part of an interfaith volunteer team that helps plan the annual Eastern Washington Legislative Conference to inform people what the Washington State Legislature is doing.

"We bring together people from Catholic Charities, Faith Action Network, Earth Ministry/Interfaith Power and Light, the NAACP and more to plan the event and offer a variety of perspectives on issues," she said. "Through the lens of faiths, we raise discussion on issues, offer information and a chance to think about the concerns so members of faith communities can talk intelligently to the legislators about what they believe is in the best interest of the state.

"Recently, I was buying a cup of coffee and talking with a woman in a store. She was railing about how everything she heard that morning on the news



Kaye Hult recruits volunteers for The Fig Tree.

was negative, and she couldn't stand it," Kaye said.

"One talking point for The Fig Tree is that it is a place that shares good news, the good things that are happening. We share stories of people who are out there trying to build up the community and the world," she said.

"There are such people all over the place, but we don't hear those stories," said Kaye. "The Fig Tree is wonderful about getting those stories out.

"I feel I am part of an incredibly important mission to tell stories of others, to let the world know there is hope in this place and this time. People are doing phenomenal things right in our own backyard.

"That matters. It sets me thinking about what I'm doing, what I could be doing, what actions I take and how I am doing my part to build up the world," said Kaye, who also helps write stories about people in North Idaho, where she lives.

Recently she wrote about a barber who donates his time to people who have been homeless by giving them a new look so they can interview for a job.

"It builds up their life. It's a tiny thing, but incredibly important," she said. "I talk with other people who are doing larger things like influencing the way Kootenai County operates.

"The team I work with amazes me with their dedication, energy and creativity. It's an amazing place for me to be," said Kaye, noting that The Fig Tree mission fits her sense of what the church is.

Kaye learned about The Fig

Tree through First Christian (Disciples of Christ) Church in Coeur d'Alene, where she began attending soon after moving to North Idaho in 2010, because her husband Al's son and two grandchildren live in Coeur d'Alene. A short while later, she attended Veradale United Church of Christ (UCC).

She began volunteering at The Fig Tree to help build an archival database of articles. Now living in Post Falls, she has been developing relationships and outlets for The Fig Tree in North Idaho.

After Kaye earned a bachelor's degree in social work at the University of Wisconsin in 1970, she attended the Catherine Gibbs Secretarial School in New York, worked six months with Merrill Lynch and two years as a copy editor with the UCC's A.D. magazine and United Church Herald.

She helped build a trimaran sailboat in Connecticut, sailed it and married in 1975. Moving to Boston, she did typesetting, attended Boston University School of Theology from 1980 to 1983 and was ordained a UCC pastor

Kaye served two small churches near Toledo, Ohio, until 1988, when she went to Cape Cod for her husband to teach school. She became part-time minister of education at North Falmouth UCC in 1988 and was minister to single adults at First Congregational Church in Falmouth, as well as secretary in a law office until 1996. During that time, she divorced in 1992 and married Al Torres in 1994.

Kaye then served as pastor of the United Church of Bellows Falls, Vt., from 1996 until she retired in 2010.

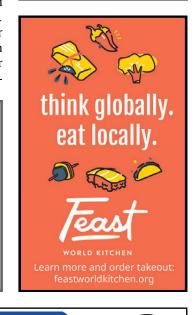
Before Kaye moved to Coeur d'Alene, Southeastern Vermont Community Action honored her for her religious and community work, including helping start an emergency warming shelter for homeless people.

Kaye now serves reports on North Idaho for The Fig Tree and attends Shalom UCC/Mennonite Church in Spokane.

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



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Indigenous Roots names director

Indigenous Roots and Reparation Foundation (IRRF), located in Wenatchee, recently named Twa-le Abrahamson its new executive director.

Twa-le is an enrolled Spokane tribal member and descendant of the Colville, Coeur d'Alene and Navajo Nations. The mother of two daughters, she earned a degree in environmental studies with a minor in restoration ecology at the University of Washington.

She has been a social, health and environmental justice organizer for more than 20 years.

Twa-le and her late mother, Deb Abrahamson, founded SHAWL (Sovereignty, Health, Air, Water, Land) Society, a grassroots organization on the Spokane Reservation to empower and educate people to join mine and nuclear waste sites on a balanced, sustainable level. the Spokane Reservation.

years in natural resource man-

agement for the Spokane Tribe, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognized the tribe for its education and outreach.

With Jeff Ferguson, Rachel Crow-Spreading Wings and Yvonne Abrahamson, Twa-le produced "InnerTribal Beat," a Native American news and music radio on environmental news in the Northwest.

Twa-le recently worked for the Washington State Human Rights Commission as a civil rights investigator and serves on the Washington State Office of Equity Community Advisory Board and the Indigenous Environmental Network Board of Directors.

The IRRF is an Indigenous-led nonprofit that supports the rights of the Earth, recognizing the intrinsic value of all species, ecosystems to ensure clear water and in the oversight of toxic uranium air, and return human activity to

For information, email info@ When she worked several indigenous rrf.org or visit indigenousrrf.org.

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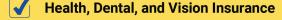
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Essay contest opens teen's eyes to U.S. indifference in World War II

Bella Buckner, a freshman at Gonzaga Prep, was in the eighth grade at Saint George's School last spring, when she wrote an essay on "Indifference and Action" for the 2023 Yom Hashoah essay contest.

As first prize winner for middle school, she will read her essay at the 2024 Observance of the Holocaust at 7 p.m., Monday, May 6.

Bella opened the essay with recognition that Americans during World War II "were indifferent to the events of the Holocaust because they were primarily looking out for their own selfinterests, influential voices discouraged Jewish immigration and moral outrage was disconnected from practical action."

To move from indifference to effect positive social change, she calls for communities to educate themselves on the benefits immigrants bring, to offer resources that help people see different perspectives and to share personal stories.

While Bella enjoys cross country, track, basketball, figure skating, biology and violin in her school life, her perspective is shaped by experiences of living abroad with her family.

In her preschool and kindergarten years, she lived in Scotland, where her father, Forrest Buckner, chaplain at Whitworth University, was studying for a doctoral degree in theology at the University of St. Andrews after earning a master's in theology at Fuller Seminary in California.

Bella not only read books on the Holocaust to learn about America's role, but also lived in Israel twice—when her father was on sabbatical from February to April 2022, and when he took Whitworth students in January

"For the essay, I appreciated learning about America's impact and found it sad how America was indifferent toward the Jews during World War II," said Bella, who attends both St. Luke Lutheran and Whitworth Chapel.

"Learning about it in detail was helpful," she said, like learning that the St. Louis, a ship filled with Jewish people fleeing the Holocaust, was turned away, and influential people did not want Jews to come to America.

"For me, it seems crazy that we have so much land and so many opportunities, but the system was set up so we did not help them. It is sad and hard to hear the horrors that happened, especially from reading Elie Wiesel's writings, which helped me see the experiences and perspectives of Jewish people.'

Bella also learned that not all Americans ignored and shut Jews out. Some people worked to help the Jews.

"Sometimes it's hard for people to do what's right, instead of just looking out for themselves," she said, aware that Americans were detached from the war until Pearl Harbor. "It would



Bella Buckner

have been easy for people who were busy with their own lives to ignore it—and many people did—but there were also people who knew what was happening and were concerned."

Many felt "we were not doing anything wrong. We were not hurting them. It's not so bad," said Bella, "but I think that actually affected the character of those people. Not helping hurt not just the Jewish people, but also the people who didn't help. When we don't do something, it's almost as bad as doing something bad, because we just let bad things continue to happen."

Bella knew there was limited information then about what was happening to the Jewish people, so most Americans didn't fully know the horrors that were happening, but there were rumors and information people could like they were treated.

"Being aware of what happened in the Holocaust can help remind us what happens when we don't do anything and shows us that we need to work to have better awareness," she said. "Even little things, like helping refugees or donating money, make an impact and help us to be better people."

"The Oct. 7 attack by Hamas on Israel was unacceptable," she asserted.

From living in Israel, Bella is aware of conditions under which Palestinians and Israelis have been living. From interacting with Jewish families in 2022 in Jerusalem and from staying part of the time in 2023 with Palestinian families on the West Bank, Bella learned that Palestinians need passes to enter Israel and their limited access to water could be shut off randomly.

She also found an amazing sense of community in Palestine.

"They are like a giant family," she said. "Most are loving people and do not like Hamas or want violence. We have Christian friends in Palestine who are helping each other."

She also learned from Palestinians of their fear of Israelis and from Israelis of their fear of Palestinians as terrorists.

"The Jewish people have been hurt so many times, and fear they will be hurt again," said Bella, concerned that some Israelis, out of fear, may treat Palestinians

to recognize how small acts of

hate, antisemitism and racism

"I appreciated that Jewish

members shared their experi-

ences of what it was like to be

Jewish and what it is like to be

Jewish now," she said. "My eyes

have been opened to the amount

of antisemitism today. I am mor-

ally opposed to antisemitism and

sad it is still a big issue and has

Lorelai feels more aware of

Outside of school, she and

what is going on around her for

an impact."

minority groups.

can grow and affect people.

Even though there is no ocean separating Israelis and Palestinians, as there was separating Europe and the U.S. in World War II, Bella found Israelis and Palestinians unaware of each other's experiences.

"There are also groups of Palestinians and Israelis working for peace and reconciliation between Palestinian and Israeli people, aware that both have been hurt and it's hard for evervone." Bella said.

Because the situation is complicated and she sees hate on both sides, she knows peace will be hard, but she cares what happens because she knows and cares about people who are Palestinians and Israelis.

In her essay, Bella offered three ways communities can make positive social change and move beyond indifference.

First is to educate people on the benefits of welcoming refugees who often strengthen the economy and enrich American culture.

Second is to have diverse information sources and know media biases.

Third is to share personal stories, as did one college student who lived in Israel and Palestine for three weeks, told about the plight of two college-aged girls, and raised funds toward their education.

"Personal stories lead people to connect words to action," Bella said.

with veterans through the Red

Cross. High school activities and

sports have reduced her time for

that, but she has appreciated the

played bingo and made holiday

visits with veterans at the Post

Falls VA Home and the VA

Home in Spokane. We listen to

stories of their lives and child-

hood. Some have told us about

how they were injured," said

Lorelai, whose goal is to work

more on world events," she said.

"I strive to educate myself

"We have brought cupcakes,

Lorelai believes it's important her family have volunteered

contacts.

in medicine.

High school student gains insights into experiences of people targeted

Continued from page 1

Lorelai, who is in the National Honor Society, Modern Music Masters Honor Society, Knowledge Bowl competitions, History Bowl and Future Business Leaders of America, believes it's important to look at different sides of what happened to find the truth and the historic facts.

"The U.S. State Department hid things and blindsided people about what was happening," she said, aware that it came from prejudice and was wrong.

"I tried to understand and be aware, because even though we can't change what happened, we can learn from their mistakes," she observed.

"I learned we need to acknowledge that indifference is still shown as people look away from problems," she said. "It's a natural impulse to want to take the easy way. That's why we need to actively combat indifference in the world and in our daily lives."

Lorelai sees indifference in

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Lorelai Taylor

her school related to prejudice against the LGBTQIA+ community and people of color.

"We need to acknowledge them as people needing to be treated equally, not judged," she continued. "To fight indifference, we need to recognize the need to treat people equally even though we may not agree with them."

Lorelai said it's important to be able to recognize prejudice when it happens.

"After I wrote the essay, I became more aware of indifference," said Lorelai.

Having never attended a Yom Hashoah service or been to the synagogue in Spokane, she said writing the essay opened her eyes and made her aware of the Jewish community here.

From listening to people on the student leadership board with the Holocaust Center for Humanity, she realizes a goal of the essay contest is to educate area students about the dynamics of prejudice and the progression of hate.





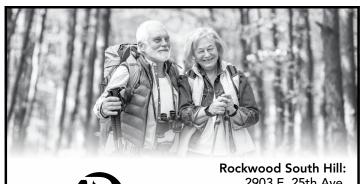


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The 26th Get Lit! festival draws writers from the region and world

The 2024 Get Lit! Festival hosts writers from around the region and world with free, ticketed and virtual options. conflict and beyond combat zones; Shannon Huffman Polson, a poet, nonfiction writer and veteran, and MaxieJane

The 26th anniversary Get Lit! Festival hubs in Spokane, Cheney and Coeur d'Alene are at the Central Library and Montvale Event Center, with venues at Spark Central, Emma Rue's and Hogwash Whiskey Den, said Kate Peterson, festival organizer.

Get Lit! opens with a panel at 11 a.m., Thursday, April 11, at the PUB in Cheney with writers Lauren Kay Johnson, a former military public affairs officer and Afghanistan veteran; Abby Murray, editor of Collateral, a journal on the impact of violent

conflict and beyond combat zones; Shannon Huffman Polson, a poet, nonfiction writer and veteran, and MaxieJane Frazier, a veteran. They will discuss the humanity of war, the impact of war on women and experiences of veterans and their families.

At 7 p.m., Friday, April 12, at Saranac Art Projects, 25 W. Main, there will be a presentation on art inspired by writers with Mary Farrell, Lena Lopez Schindler, Mariah Boyle and Josh Hobson.

At 8 p.m. at the Magic Lantern, Rebekah Wilkins-Pepiton will moderate a discussion on "Artistic Process and Inspiration."

Fiction writer Alma Garcia and poet Luther Hughes will teach craft classes.

A book fair will take place all day Saturday at Montvale Event

"We offer opportunities for attendees to speak and share their work with two open-mics, multiple workshops, a silent reading party, writing time with Spark Central and virtual conversations on books and writing," said Kate.

Carmen Maria Machado, author of the memoir *In the Dream House*, will read at 7 p.m., Saturday, April 13, at the Bing, followed by conversation with Spokane author Sharma Shields. They will discuss women at the

forefront of re-imagining fiction. Sunday events are virtual.

At 2:30 p.m., authors Jeffrey Dale Lofton and Greg Marshall will share about homophobia and ableism.

At 3:30 p.m., writers Sarah Ghazal Ali and Cori Winrock will discuss being a woman, motherhood, erasure, silencing and telling stories in the midst of violence and grief.

At 6 p.m., authors Sofia Ali-Khan and Jennifer Lunden will reflect on sociopolitical, personal, scientific and historical intersections related to industrial capitalism and social justice.

For information, visit Get Lit-festival 2024. sched.com.





Westminster Presbyterian closes one chapter to be open to the next

Recognizing that there's a birth and death to everything, Sandy Brockway uplifts the vital role Westminster Presbyterian Church has had in West Central Spokane as it prepares to close after 119 years of ministry.

After more than 33 years as pastor, Sandy, 74, will retire.

The final service at Westminster Presbyterian is at 2 p.m., Sunday, April 28.

The church has served the community with a food bank, medical care, job training, afterschool programs, young adult mentoring, neighborhood outreach, volunteer services and summer programs, along with worship, Bible study and congregational life.

"Sandy has had a long, amazing ministry," said Sheryl Kinder-Pyle, who, as executive presbyter of the Presbytery of the Inland Northwest, has been consulting with the church on closing.

"The presbytery wants a presence in West Central Spokane and wants to be sure members find a new church home," Sheryl said. "We don't plan to sell the building now and are discerning how we will continue ministry in the neighborhood."

Growing up attending Mission Avenue Presbyterian Church in Spokane, Sandy found faith central in her life. Her carpenter father often did odd jobs at the church.

After graduating in education in 1970 from Eastern Washington State College, she supported herself through school by working three years at Cheney Nursing Home. She then did substitute teaching and supplemented that income working at Sampson-Ayers Music Co., North Central Care Center and the former Custom Glass and Auto.

In 1973, Sandy became church secretary, youth minister and a parish worker at Mission Avenue Presbyterian.

When the Larger Urban Parish of Presbyterian churches started in 1987 with Bethany, Emmanuel, Mission Avenue and Westminster churches, Sandy became its youth director.

"The Larger Urban Parish put small churches together in a

Sandy saw an opportunity and joined studies with three Nimiipuu lay pastors from Lapwai to become a commissioned lay pastor (CLP).

After finishing the program in 1990, Sandy became part-time pastor of Westminster Presbyterian, at 2705 W. Boone.

Several ministries were al-

The Presbytery Office was at Westminster before Christ Clinic and Christ Kitchen.

The church housed Christ



For 33 years, Sandy Brockway has been pastor of church.

Clinic to provide low-income neighbors with health care. It was run for many years by volunteer doctors who tended to both medical and spiritual needs.

It also housed Christ Kitchen at Westminster to help women seeking to gain job skills so they could escape lives marked by addiction, poverty and abuse. Women came to package dry foods and study the Bible. Now Christ Kitchen also does catering.

Both Christ Clinic and Christ Kitchen eventually moved to 2410 N. Monroe. Christ Clinic has since closed.

"Westminster opened the first food pantry in Spokane," Sandy said. "Others were modeled on it." The Spokane Food Bank, which started in 1971, supplied Westminster and nine other food bank sites with mostly canned goods and some dried beans and fruit.

The Spokane Food Bank became Second Harvest, which is part of Feeding America and supplies food in Eastern Washington and North Idaho.

Second Harvest continued to supply food and to supplement the Westminster Presbyterian Food Bank director's salary until 2023, Sandy said.

"For many years, the food bank gave government-issued surplus food such as flour and cheese," she added. "People lined up around the block to get food."

It also operated with donations from Second Harvest and from Knox, Northwood, Manito and Shadle Park.

"Those churches provided funding and volunteers, as well as food," she said.

Westminster also participated in founding and supporting Our Place Community Outreach Center at 1509 W. College Ave.. sending funds and volunteers. She served on the West Central Ministries group of congregations that founded Our Place in 1988 and supported it for many years.

Our Place provides basic needs and services for West Central neighbors. It has a large food pantry and a loading dock to receive food.

"We transferred our clothing bank to Our Place," Sandy said.

The church, which was also a drop-in center for people needing help, joined six Presbyterian churches in 2002 to build a Habitat for Humanity house nearby and helped start COPS West, a neighborhood police station.

Westminster Presbyterian also had Boy Scout Troop #1.

Each year since 1992, five to six Whitworth University graduates lived nearby at 2612

"OUR TEAM OF

W. Gardner in Westminster would give care to each other. House. They helped with Logos, a Wednesday Bible study for children ages five to 12. They also helped with the after-school program for 40 children from Holmes Elementary School who came for activities and homework help. It was a safe drop-in center for children.

The graduates paid \$50 a month for rent to live in Westminster House. Along with other half-time jobs, they served the church and neighborhood. Several went on into various types of ministry careers.

During the summers, youth groups came from churches in Tampa, Fla., Beaverton, Ore., and other communities around the nation to lead vacation Bible school programs.

Westminster Presbyterian has also offered its building for a weight-loss group, a singing group and a Native American neighborhood group led by retired Presbyterian pastor Tom Sutherland. A 2005 Fig Tree article reported that the church also offered cooking classes through Washington State University and Native American worship services.

Sandy said her ministry of presence in the neighborhood has been one of "providing love for the unloved."

The congregation drew both people who needed care and who

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The West Central area, which once was a middle-class neighborhood, became what was known as "felony flats," with many low-income, marginalized families and people caught in drug addiction and gangs living in deteriorating homes, Sandy said. Now Kendall Yards townhomes border it on the south.

At its peak, Westminster had 199 members. Now it has 26 members, with 15 to 26 attending Sundays, including some from the neighborhood. When Sandy came, there were 85.

Along with Sunday worship, there is a Thursday morning Bible study.

"We went from being a mission church with an active ministry to a church that is struggling," Sandy said.

"I have used my gifts to maintain the ministry through ups and downs, but now the presbytery will close the church and consider options to continue its presence through new use of the building and property," said Sandy, who will help church members find places to worship.

Sandy expects many may attend Emmanuel Presbyterian, because Westminster and Emmanuel worshiped together six times a year for many years.

For information, call 328-





Editorial Reflections

Vigilance, perseverence, solidarity needed in face of racism, hate

Vigilance, perseverance and solidarity are and will always be needed. We can never assume because of some progress that hate, bigotry, racism, violence or intolerance are fully overcome, although overcoming was the dream, hope and theme song of the 1960s and since.

We always must be ready to take the risk of speaking out and being targeted by consistently raising our voices and putting our livelihoods and lives on the line. We must continue to educate and resist hate like the few who shouted racial slurs, waved a confederate flag and revved their big truck engines to intimidate the University of Utah women's basketball team going to dinner in Coeur d'Alene.

Their voices and intolerance made the headlines even though other voices from the community stood in solidarity with the team that is racially diverse as are most college campuses.

The community is ashamed that image of of them went out again. Residents, businesses and government don't want Coeur d'Alene known for intolerance that drives away tourists and does not represent the sentiment of most people in the community.

The hate reinforces the assumption of groups who choose not to meet in Eastern Washington or North Idaho because such racism exists. What solidarity might help overcome the stigma that furthers the image we're in a haven for bigots? What actions, coverage and presence will strengthen area residents who promote diversity and decry intolerance and hate?

In the 1960s, people of faith and conscience went to the South in solidarity

with the civil rights advocates who invited their help. Southern Poverty Law Center attorneys helped drive out the Aryan Nations here in the 1990s.

What solidarity is needed here today?

As human rights leader Tony Stewart said in a press conference, those who hate feel license to act on their hate because of the current tone of national politics in which bigotry is seen as a ticket to power.

It's not freedom of speech when ultraconservatives seek to ban books, ban Black history, ban indigenous history, ban affirmative action, ban diversity-equityinclusion, ban LGBTQIA+ voices, ban immigration and silence others.

Those espousing bigotry and hate use racial slurs and threats to silence voices for human rights and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). They threaten, demean and undermine the confidence, safety, rights and livelihoods of people.

Being white does not equate to being white supremacist or white nationalist but calls for responsibility. In a predominantly white area, most of those speaking out against the hate are white. That does not mean they are safe when they speak or that they won't be targeted by the few.

The incident represents why the Gonzaga Center for the Study of Hate, the Human Rights Education Institute (HREI), the Kootenai County Task Force for Human Relations, the Bonner County Human Rights Task Force, Human Rights Spokane, NAACP Spokane—along with the antiracism, antisemitism and anti-islamophobia efforts of faith communities, schools, businesses, human services, non-

profits and governments—must not allow themselves to be distracted by progress or when voices of hate tone down.

It's why the Equal Rights Act, Civil Rights Act, Voters Rights Act, affirmative action and diversity-equity-inclusion efforts were, are and always will be crucial.

We see how backlash to electing a Black president still reverberates in the rhetoric of some political candidates who are trying to silence the efforts needed so our nation and our world can live together in peace and unafraid. We want to be able to celebrate our rich multiethnic, multiracial, multicultural, multifaith diversity so we learn from each other and with each other.

That's why schools, universities, businesses, nonprofits, governments and faiths do need diversity training and multiethnic studies.

That's why NAACP Spokane was ready to lead a "Town Hall about Racist Language" in a newsletter sent to parents at Wilson Elementary inviting students to a Jazz Night that would "take a trip back to the times of slavery in America" to discover how jazz grew. It invited students to dress as slaves or hobos.

The NAACP Spokane responded saying this type of entertainment is deplorable, unacceptable and demeaning to African Americans, especially to youth. The town hall addressed what students and teachers of color experience in Spokane public schools when such incidents happen.

The Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane continues to offer BOLD (Building Organizing Leadership Development) to build awareness of race and class, breaking the silence in the region to reject racism and fearmongering.

The Human Rights Education Institute was also present in Coeur d'Alene to immediately speak up about the racial incident the NCAA visiting college basketball team experienced.

In a statement, they said it stirred "a high volume of challenging and uplifting conversations with community members," affirming that "the actions of a few individuals do not exemplify our region."

They call for rising above the racist rhetoric to say there is no tolerance in Coeur d'Alene or the region for "discrimination or hateful acts that seek to intimidate or cause harm and insecurity within our communities, especially among newcomers and visitors. All are welcome here."

HREI also called for working with local leaders to promote vigilance and education and to bring people together to be part of the change that makes the world just for everyone.

They affirmed their commitment to reflect on such tragedies, fight for equality for all, investigate their own privilege, always speak in love, unity and empathy, offer HREI space for inclusive, safe conversations, work to reduce poverty, train local law enforcement on racial equity, increase understanding to reduce prejudice, equip educators in antiracism and oppose any form of racism.

No place will be safe or welcoming if we cave into the backlash, bigotry and threats that always follow any progress toward becoming the beloved community.

Mary Stamp - editor



Benefit speakers sum up their reasons for supporting The Fig Tree

In my 18-year involvement with

homeless services and shelters, I started doing documentaries on homelessness in greater Spokane and wrote a book about Camp Hope that included voices of people I might not agree with. We need to find common ground, so we work together to address community issues. That



Maurice Smith

represents what I call building shalom. Mary says shalom is a goal of The Fig Tree. That's not just peace. It's the wholeness, restoration and well-being for everyone in our community.

Shalom for the homeless is a constant theme of my documentary work.

To show a better optic about people experiencing homelessness, we needed to tell a different story, to set a better tone than "us against them." It's about us working together to build the shalom of everyone in our community, including the homeless. A chapter of my book, A Place to Exist: The True and Untold Story of Camp Hope, is on building shalom. What does that have to do with The Fig Tree? In Matt. 25, Jesus said, Blessed are the peacemakers—or shalom makers.

The Fig Tree helps us find common ground and build shalom. That's why I support it and feel encouraged when they include a story about me. If that contributes to us as a community finding common ground and building shalom, then I'm all in.

The Fig Tree also publishes the Resource Directory. It's absolute gold. Every homeless service provider in our city has a copy on their desk or within reach. It provides hundreds of copies to the Spokane Homeless Coalition and Spokane Homeless Connect. It's an essential resource.

We consume the directory on a regular basis looking for resources, so I encourage us to support The Fig Tree, common ground and shalom building as we move into the future.

About 35 years ago, my husband Troy and I came through Fairchild. There was

no Spanish newspaper, so I talked with Hispanics here and started La Prensa Bilingue.

When I was out in the community, I often saw Mary taking photos. I learned she published a newspaper. That was inspiring because I was also doing a newspaper. She encouraged me. She



Maria Gaines

gave me hope saying, "You can do it."

Now she has 40 years of doing the newspaper. I have 28 years now. I can look forward to more. She's a good example.

When we came, Spokane was only 2 or 3 percent minorities. When I walk around even now, I hardly see any people of color. One of the things I love about The Fig Tree is all the information about diversity, equity and inclusion, and what we need for the community to flourish. It's important to know we have a multicultural community, so we are able to understand each other. I used to go to places where I was the only minority in the room but there was always Mary.

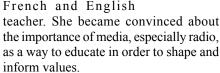
The Fig Tree is a guiding light, so I definitely think we need to support this newspaper financially and by sharing stories. It is the best thing that we have for this community.

Being Buddhist, I also love that we can talk about any religion in this paper. I love the paper and the resource directory. It has helped me a lot.

I'm a sister of the Holy Names of

Jesus and Mary. The Fig Tree is important to the Inland Northwest community as an ecumenical, interfaith, diverse newspaper and other media.

Forty years ago, my community had a dedicated member, Sister Bernadine Casey, who had been a high school French and English



Catherine

Ferguson

When she moved from Seattle to Spokane, she met Mary Stamp, who was starting a newspaper. So Bernadine shifted her energies from radio and to The Fig Tree and began to help write for and edit the paper. She was meticulous and never missed anything in editing. Through the years, many sisters have served as writers, editors, board members and volunteers. With the annual financial support of my religious community, we attest to the importance of The Fig Tree.

A prayer I say frequently says, "In the search, a flicker of hope arises, enough to keep me searching for you, God, who are slowly revealed in the tiny sparks of daily encounters."

The Fig Tree provides our community with journalism. Its articles are a tiny spark of hope—or bigger one—but that tiny spark of hope in our daily encounters inspires us.

The faithful people and activities in The Fig Tree feature stories give us examples that motivate us to work for justice, equity, harmony and the common good. Join with the Sisters of the Holy Names in continuing The Fig Tree legacy with your support.

We need to commit to "the why"—why we do things is more important than

Great leaders inspire others and are inspired by others.

what we do.

They give others a sense of purpose, importance and belonging. They acknowledge others' good works. They give others a voice and they share their stories.



Bob Bartlett

Great leaders and

organizations start with asking, "Why?" Which is our purpose, cause or belief? Why does The Fig Tree, a nonprofit grassroots newspaper exist? Why should anyone support it?

I believe The Fig Tree starts with why. In everything they say and do the why is clear. We are here today to celebrate the 40th year of The Fig Tree.

I believe the overwhelming majority of us in this room are here because we know and believe in the why of Mary Stamp. At some point along our way, Mary has inspired us to serve on the board, to provide her office and distribution space, and to tell our stories in The Fig Tree.

The why of Mary began with her parents and upbringing, and her early exposure to people of the world, including two from a mission school and hospital in Zimbabwe. She recalled being inspired by their stories. Her interest in listening to the stories of ordinary people, and how their faith and values intersect with what they do inspires her journalism.

Every encounter with another human being, she said, is an encounter with the sacred, with the all-being. Mary continues to be inspired by stories of ordinary people.

Let us celebrate the life of The Fig Tree and support the why of it with our dollars.

Calendar of Events

Send submissions to development@thefigtree.org. The telephone area code is (509) unless otherwise listed.

- Apr 2 WA Covenant Homeownership Act, Northwest Fair Housing Alliance, virtual, 10 a.m., wshfc.org/covenant
- Apr 2, 4 2024 Fair Housing Plan, City of Spokane Forum, NE Community Center, 4001 N. Cook, Tues 6 p.m. or on Zoom, Thurs noon, execdir@nwfairhouse.org
- Apr 3-25 Sing, Say, Dance & Play, Holy Names Music Center, 3910 W. Custer, 326-9516, dates/times at hnmc.org
- Shaping Asian American Wellbeing, Hemmingson, Gonzaga, 6 to 7:30 p.m., bit.ly/acls-forge
- Apr 3-4 International Uranium Film Festival, Magic Lantern Theatre, 25 W. Main, 5:30 to 9 p.m., 209-2383
- Apr 3, 10, 17, 24 Spokane Community Against Racism, Saranac, 19 W. Main, noon, scarspokane.org Open Meditation, Spokane Buddhist Temple, 927 S. Perry, 5:30 to 7 p.m., 206-979-5570
- Apr 3, 17 Spokane Folklore Society Contra Dance, Woman's Club, 1428 W. Ninth, 7:15 p.m., 838-2160
- What's Happening for Expo '74 50th Anniversary, Shadle Library, 2111 W. Wellesley, 4 p.m., 444-5390
- Strengthening Families Coalition, Human Rights Education Institute, 414 W. Fort Grounds Dr., Coeur d'Alene (CdA), 4:30 to 6 p.m., hrei.org

 Apr 4, 23 • Medicare Counseling, Rock Pointe Tower, 316 W.
- Boone, Ste 260, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., altcew.org > events Apr 4, 11, 18, 25 • ESL Café: A Cup of Conversation, Literacy
- Project of North Idaho, CdA Library, 10 a.m., cdalibrary.org Apr 4, May 2 • Lawyer in the Library, CdA Library, Idaho Volunteer Lawyers, 4 to 6 p.m., register, cdalibrary.org/
- library-events/lawyer • Spring Resource Carnival, SNAP, The Hive, 2904 E.
- Sprague, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., 319-3036, snapwa.org/tax Apr 5-7 Divine Mercy Weekend: Spiritual Warfare, Divine Mercy and Healing, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr, Fr. Ken Geraci, ihrc.net
- Standing Like a Tree: Self-Discovery Retreat for Women, Harmony Woods Retreat Center, 11507 S. Keeney, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., ruthafletcher.com
 - Free Tax Prep, Latinos en Spokane, 10 a.m., latinosenspokane.org
- Apr 6, 13, 20 27 Voices Together Children's Choir, Holy Names Music Center, 1 to 3 p.m., music@hnmc.org
- Apr 6-7 National Women's Expo, Spokane County Fair & Expo Center, womensexpo2@gmail.com
- Bachathon, American Guild of Organists, see p. 3, Apr 7 402-319-1716
- Apr 7, 14, 21, 28 Spokane Community Against Racism Coffee, Saranac, 19 W. Main, 9 a.m., scarspokane.org
- How to Use the Fig Tree's Resource Directory, Shadle Library, 2111 W. Wellesley, 5:30 p.m., 535-4112
- To Apr 8 Family Promise Match Madness Fundraiser, 747-5487, familypromiseofspokane.org
- Apr 8, 10, 15, 17, 22, 24, 29, May 1 Prevent Falls with A Matter of Balance, philip helean@dshs.wa.gov
- Family Law Clinic, MIA Spokane, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., 869-0876
 - Peace and Justice Action Committee, Zoom, 5:30 p.m. ucarter@pjals.org
 - Freedom of the Press in Indian Country, Kenworthy, 508 S. Main, Moscow, 6:30 to 9 p.m., (209) 669-4080
 - Spokane Symphony: Chamber Soiree, Rockwood Retirement, 221 E. Rockwood, 7 p.m., 838-3200
- Apr 10 Executive Director Coffee Hour, Nonprofit Association
- of Washington, online, 10 a.m., nonprofitwa.org Working Families Tax Credit Assistance, Colfax
 - Library, 102 S. Main, 1 to 6 p.m., cydney@whitcolib.org • History Hour Lecture: Wilderness Cathedral: Idaho's Oldest Building-Cataldo Misson, CdA Library, 5:30 p.m.; 1213 W. Railroad, 7:30 p.m., (208) 465-3591
- Apr 11 Reuse Workshop, Mobius Discovery Center, 331 N. Post, 10 a.m., 321-7137
 - Free Immigration Clinic, Latinos en Spokane, 1502 N. Monroe, 5 to 7 p.m., latinosenspokane.org
 - CDAIDE Care Affair. The Coeur d'Alene Resort. 5 to 8:30 p.m. auctria.events/CDAIDECareAffair
 - · General Meeting, Spokane NAACP, Location TBA, 6 p.m., spkncpbr@gmail.com 25 • Showing Up for Racial Justice, Peace and Justice
- Action League of Spokane (PJALS), Zoom, 5:30 p.m., slichty@pjals.org
- Apr 11-14 GetLit! Festival, see p. 12, getlitfestival.schedule Apr 12 • Expo '74: 50 Years of Environmental Justice,
 - Gonzaga School of Law, 721 N. Cincinnati, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., 747-3304 · Fair Housing Overview Training, Northwest Fair Housing Alliance, Better Health Together, The Hive, 11
 - a.m. to 1 p.m., 325-2665 • Pamyua, Inuit Music, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts,
 - 211 E. Desmet, 313-2787, mwpac@gonzaga.edu • Chocolate and Champagne Gala, Lutheran
- Community Services Northwest, Historic Davenport Hotel, 6 to 8:30 p.m., amarinoni@lcsnw.org Apr 13 • Tools for Running an Effective Nonprofit, Nonprofit
- Association of WA, 900 W. 4th, Newport, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., nonprofitwa.org
 - Holistic Festival, CenterPlace, 2426 N. Discovery, Spokane Valley, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 468-9001
 - Community Baby Shower, Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, 500 S. Stone, 12 to 2 p.m., for new and expecting parents, and parents of children 3 or under, tinyurl.com/4ht7b287
 - Medical Lake Geo-Walk & Water Sampling, with Chad Pritchard, EWU geologist, Waterfront Park, 1386 S. Lefevre, Medical Lake, 1 to 3:30 p.m., 869-0205
 - April Showers Auction, The Land's Council, Barrister

- Winery, 5 to 9 p.m., aparrish@landscouncil.org
- Spokane Symphony Pops 5: Bugs Bunny at the Symphony, The Fox Theater, 1001 W. Sprague, 7:30
- Sing the World Awake, Moira Smiley and choir, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts, 211 E. Desmet, 7:30 to 9 p.m., 313-2787
- Apr 13, 14 Palouse Patchers Quilt Show, Latah County Fairgrounds, 1021 Harold, Moscow, Sat., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sun, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., palousepatchers.org
- Apr 14 Sharing the Dharma Day, Sravasti Abbey, 692 Country Ln, Newport, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., 447-5549
- Apr 16 Communities in Schools/Bite2Go Stuffing, Second Harvest, 1234 E. Front, 3 to 5 p.m., spokane.ciswa.org
 - PJALS Member Meeting, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., Imoore@
- Apr 17 Awareness Town Hall for Aging Adults, Corbin Center, 827 W. Cleveland, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., bit.ly/3OKiWIL • Free Legal Clinic, Latinos en Spokane, 5 p.m.,
- latinosenspokane.org Apr 18 • Remembering Fr. Armand Nigro, SJ, A Day of Healing, Fr. Michael Maher SJ, 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.,
 - RSVP, 448-1224, ihrc.net • Mental Health First Aid, Providence Community Wellness, 1313 N. Atlantic, Ste 4900, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.,
 - register at 473-6007 • Thursday Night Live, Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. First, 5 to 8 p.m., 456-3931
 - Han-Luen Kantzer Komline Speaker, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m., see p. 3
- Apr 19 Diversity & Social Justice in Education, Hemmingson, Gonzaga, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., bynum@
- Apr 20 Sandy Williams Justice Center Free Drop-In Legal Clinic and First Anniversary, Carl Maxey Center, Justice Mary Yu, 9 a.m.to 2 p.m., shayla@carlmaxeycenter.org
 - Walk for Autism Acceptance 2024, Kootenai County Fairgrounds, CdA, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., • Earth Day River Cleanup, Spokane Riverkeeper, High
 - Bridge, Latah Creek, 10 a.m., 464-7614
 - Earth Day Celebration, "The Planet vs. Plastics," CdA Library, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., jsmithson@cdalibrary.org
 - Earth Day with the Symphony: Children's Program, CdA Library, 11 a.m., jsmithson@cdalibrary.org
 - Scripture Circle with Tara Owens from Anam Cara, Harmony Woods Retreat Center, 3 to 6 p.m., harmonywoods.org.
 - Spokane Symphony Masterworks 8: Power to the People, The Fox, 1001 W. Sprague, 7:30 p.m., 624-
 - Learning from the South: The Black Experience and Reform in Republican China, University of Idaho Student Union, 875 S. Line, Moscow, (208) 885-7110
- Apr 21 Earth Day Clean Up Hike, Church of Gaia, 2 to 4 p.m., hello@churchgaia.org
 - Earth Day Centennial Trail Clean-Up, 2176 N. Barker, Spokane Valley, 2 to 3:30 p.m., 903-0440, shawna@ greenlightning.llc
- Apr 23 "Without Them, I Am Lost," film and conversation, Institute for Climate, Water and the Environment, Hemmingson, Gonzaga, 6 to 7:30 p.m., climateinstitute@gonzaga.edu
- Apr 25 SFCC Job Fair, 3410 Whistalks Way, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., 533-3521, sfcc.careers@sfcc.spokane.edu
 - Building Bridges to Equity: Maternal Health in Communities of Color, YWCA, The Hive, 5 to 7 p.m., virtual ywcaspokane.org/equity4all
 - · Wild and Scenic Film Festival, Spokane Riverkeeper, The Garland Theater, 924 W. Garland, 5:30 p.m., katie@spokaneriverkeeper.org
- Apr 26 A Woman's Worth Annual Gala, Hemmingson, Gonzaga, 6 p.m., ghallman@aww.community
 - Evening with Jess Walter and Spokane Symphony, The Fox, 1001 W. Sprague, 7:30 p.m., 624-1200
- Apr 26-27 "Faith, Science and Beauty in the Stars," Astronomy Retreat, see p. 2, ihrc.net, 448-1224 Apr 26-28 • Getting Honest about Attachment, Sravasti
- Abbey, 692 Country Ln, Newport, 3 p.m, 447-5549 Apr 27 • El Mercadito, Latinos En Spokane, West
- Central Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.n latinosenspokane.org All That Jazz, North East Youth Center Dinner &
 - Auction Fundraiser, Doubletree, 322 N. Spokane Falls, 5:30 p.m., 482-0708, sheilag@spokaneeyc.org • Bach to the Future: Musical Journey from Classical
- Roots to Rock Revolution, Holy Names Music Center, 7 Apr 27, 28 • Whitworth Polynesian Club Dinner and Luau.
- Hixon Union Building 5 p.m., and Field House 7 p.m., Apr 28 • "Sharing Stories: Empowering People," The Fig. Tree 40th Anniversary Gala, St. John's Cathedral, 5 to 8 p.m., for tickets call 535-4112, or email event@
- Apr 29 Gonzaga Symphony Orchestra Concert, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts, Gonzaga, 7:30 to 9 p.m., mwpac@gonzaga.edu

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- NAMI Walks Spokane, Riverfront Park, 1 mile, 7:30 to 10 a.m. namiwalks.org/index.cfm
- The Power of Connection, SNAP Fundraiser, Central Library, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., snapwa.org May 2 • The Fig Tree Benefit/Development Committee, Zoom,
 - 12 to 1 p.m., development@thefigtree.org The Fig Tree Board, Zoom 1 to 3 p.m., mary@
- thefigtree.org May 4 • Spring Fling Bazaar, Millwood Presbyterian, 3223 N. Marguerite, sfetcho2000@yahoo.com

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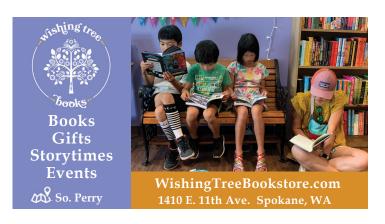
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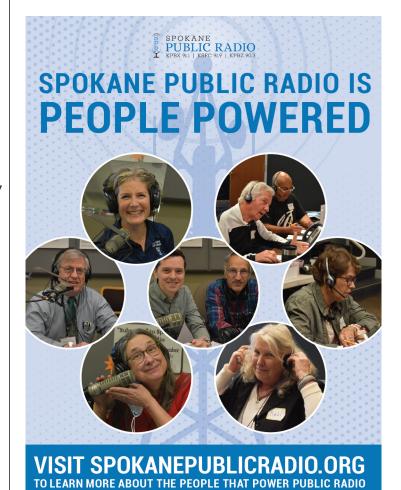
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Stories on organizing in Preston, UK, raise questions of approach

Stories of communities organizing

Column by Cameron Conner

For the last 14 years, while many of England's policies slashed tax rates, gutted social systems and eroded corporate regulation, progressive local governments tacked to the center, except for one.

Nearly 10 years ago, the city of Preston embarked on a program of ultra-localism that sought to redirect wealth back into the local economy and place control into the hands of people.

These policies kept hundreds of millions of pounds in the local economy, strengthened small businesses and improved the standard of living. PricewaterhouseCoopers named Preston the UK's "most improved city" in 2018.

Today the "Preston Model" has been used as a template by city officials from Cleveland to Sydney. It sparked an international movement for a peoplecentered approach to economic development, but sailing against the tide of national policy hasn't been easy for Preston, and they have faced challenges.

Since I applied for the Watson Fellowship, visiting Preston was at the top of my list. I spent four weeks there as my last stop in the UK.

Preston was a place to see where policy and organizing

My question was, in a community-focused economy, what is the role of community organizing in developing people who want to be and are capable of being at the table?

I offer two stories from Preston. One showcases the potential for a community-focused economic development approach. The other is a cautionary tale about what happens when such an approach puts creating programs ahead of developing people.

Story 1: A new way of economic development began with the banking crash. In the early 2000s, the Preston City Council planned to build a massive shopping mall, the Tithebarn, replacing the city center of empty shops. Tithebarn was also to be the lifeline for the city with

capture it on video!



Cameron Conner

England's highest suicide rate.

When the 2008 recession reached Preston, cranes stopped, and businesses pulled out. By 2011, the plan was dead.

The crisis created an opportunity. A new council member, Matthew Brown of the liberal Labor Party, had an unusual idea.

He proposed paying people in Preston a fair living wage and putting the government's support behind local businesses to grow and reinvest in local people, not in outside businesses.

In 2012, Preston became the first living wage employer in Northern England. The council helped families sign up for community credit unions that invested savings locally. It began organizing other major area economic actors—a hospital, regional university, public housing association and the municipally owned Harris Museum.

These "anchor institutions" are tied to the community and unlikely to leave.

The team began working with them to increase local purchasing. As more institutions joined the alliance, local procurement in the county increased from 39 percent of funds spent in 2012 to 79.2 percent in 2017. An additional £200m stayed in the county.

The county's pension fund moved from the stock market to local investments, like building student accommodations.

In 2015, the county wanted healthier meals for school children and asked local businesses to make bite-size contracts with local suppliers and farmers, providing a £2m boost.

In the first months of CO-VID, 80 employees were to be laid off from a local manufacturing plant. The council asked the employer to repurpose the plant to make masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) that was purchased by the anchor institutions, especially the hospital. The company made money, people kept their jobs and the spread of the virus was slowed.

The economy in story 1 worked for the people. On the other hand, story 2 asks, "Where are the people?"

Matthew eventually realized the average resident of Preston had no clue about the Preston Model or the philosophy of community wealth building. He realized this was a problem for an economic idea that said it puts people first. The council succeeded in organizing anchor institutions to keep money local but struggled to engage local people and form co-ops.

While some new cooperatives started, there was resistance to

Chris Davis, a community leader, launched co-ops out of the community center he cofounded. He and working-class neighbors had a co-op that improved the energy efficiency of local buildings and created new employment and skills for local people.

Local builders learned about retrofitting. They had a grant to retrofit in their own community center as a model. They trained folks in highly skilled, highwage jobs.

Chris used the "if you build it, they will come" fallacy.

It involves well-meaning experts coming up with a program to address a community need

only to find when everything is in place that nobody wants it. They created a program before they built a constituency.

A better axiom is: "if they come, you should build it." Start where people are. If there is energy, move forward together. One co-op development consultant turned the corner by asking, "What are the challenges in your community? Maybe a cooperative is a tool that you can use to fix it."

The Preston Model is not *the* answer.

Comparing Preston and Barcelona, which I reported on in an earlier column, both have the same goals: use corporate investment to strengthen the common good, enable people to have a larger say in politics and the economy and invest in what people actually need.

How they go about it differs.

In Barcelona, organizers asked neighbors, "What issues does your family face?" In Sants, it was childcare and fresh groceries. Organizers then asked, "Do you want to do something about it?" When people emerged, they presented the co-op as one tool.

Now, there are more than 35 community-run co-ops in Sants.

In Preston, people learned the limits of their top-down approach. There is a growing interest in the slow, relational work of community organizing.

A community-focused economy is not possible without the political education and agency community organizing provides. Yet the Preston Model offers organizers a vision for new policies with potential dividends in local contexts.

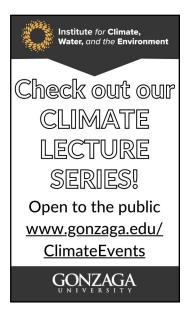
The existence of that model speaks to one city's courage to do things differently.

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

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