

STORIES INSIDE

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Jewish Reform congregations merge - p. 11

Photography gives women a voice - p. 16



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

online in color at www.thefigtree.org

Art works convey values and faith

By Virginia de Leon

Known worldwide for her bronze sculptures, life-size statues and monumental cathedral doors, Spokane artist Dorothy Fowler uses art to pay tribute to both the human form and the human spirit.

Her work, which graces galleries and public places throughout the globe as well as the entrances to cathedrals in Spokane, Great Falls, Mont., and Israel, reflects her reverence for life and humanity, as well as her profound faith.

"I am a Christian artist," she said. "I sign all my work with a cross before my name to give God credit," she said. "The Lord has blessed me throughout my life."

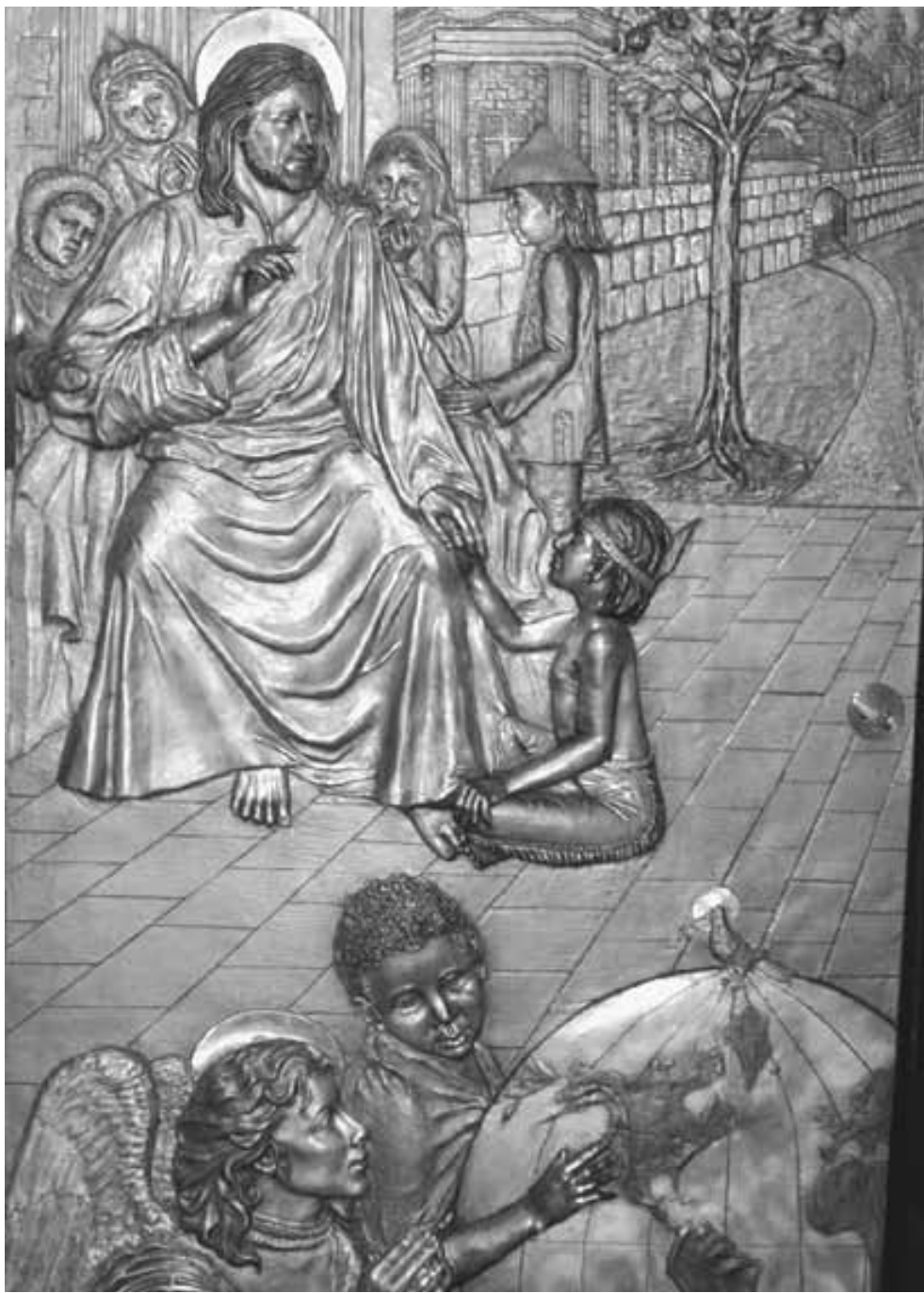
Dorothy was 55 years old when the public was first introduced to her work. During an art show at Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC), Dorothy exhibited the first piece she ever cast—a small sculpture of a mother holding a baby.

Although she majored in art at San Jose State University as a young woman, Dorothy didn't spend much time in the studio until the early 1980s, after rearing six children.

"Caring for my family was just as important as my career," she said.

Although she took pottery classes at the YWCA and SFCC, she didn't have time to spend on her artwork while taking care of the children and household. Her husband, Jack, was a dentist and one of the founders of Schweitzer Ski Resort. His many responsibilities often meant long hours at work as well as many days away from home. "I needed to be with the children during those years," she said.

Dorothy's passion for art and



One of the bronze bas relief doors Dorothy Fowler sculpted for the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes in Spokane depicts Jesus with children of the world.

her gift for creating figures out of clay, helped her realize that it was simply a matter of time before she would have a chance to pursue her calling.

In 1981, when her children were grown and had moved out of the house, Dorothy returned to school at SFCC and enrolled in as many art classes as she could. She also studied under Ken Spiering, a local artist known for his paintings, sculptures and other works, including the giant Radio Flyer Wagon at Spokane's Riverfront Park.

Ken encouraged Dorothy to include her work in an art show. The experience led her to continue studying at various art academies and to devote her time to sculpture.

"I had a lot to learn," said Dorothy, who spent her childhood in Pacific Grove, Calif. "I also set a high goal. I set my mind to become a nationally known female artist. I wanted to show my daughter and granddaughters that they could do anything at any age if they work hard and set their mind to it."

Dorothy continues to spend about eight hours a day in her Spokane-area studio.

When she's not sculpting, she's often at Valley Bronze of Oregon, the foundry at Joseph, Ore., that casts her creations, or at one of her six galleries in the Northwest and in Scottsdale, Ariz. Now retired, her husband runs the business end of Dorothy's artwork.

"I just have to pinch myself sometimes," said Dorothy, who has 12 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. "I can't believe what's happened to me. I give

Continued on page 4

Sensitive truth-telling helps heal groups

By Mary Stamp

By fostering open, sensitive, loving truth telling, the Center for Organizational Reform (COR) helps congregations, nonprofits and secular organizations avoid relationships that perpetuate dysfunction, abuse, trauma and confusion, and when these conditions occur, to move to healthy relation-

ships that enable them to fulfill their missions.

COR started at Gonzaga University in 1995 to provide organizational support to people who lead and serve others, particularly in nonprofits. In 2005, after anger, division and decreased donations because of disclosure of sexual abuse, Catholic Charities Spokane

called on COR to help.

COR set up workshops with Catholic Charities staff and volunteers to find ways to come out of the crisis stronger.

Nancy Isaacson, COR's executive director, said such dynamics as clergy misconduct, abuse of power and manipulation by laity can create "sanctuary trauma."

That means people are traumatized when they experience distress in places they go for comfort, help, compassion and justice. For example, a woman reporting being raped experiences "sanctuary trauma" if police imply she may be responsible or people needing medical care experience it when their insurance refuses a claim.

"In churches, people feel com-

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Several agencies observe 60 years of human rights

The United Nations Human Rights Day community celebration will begin with a video of children reading the 60-year-old Universal Declaration of Human Rights in six languages—with ear sets provided for those who wish translation and an experience of the simultaneous translation.

The program starts at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 10, at the Hagan Centre at Spokane Community College, 1810 N. Greene St., with introductory music by the Havermale Drummers and a welcome by Spokane Mayor Mary Verner.

The keynote speaker, George Critchlow of the Gonzaga Law School and the Institute for Action Against Hate, will speak on "60 Years Later: A Celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

There will also be brief comments by representatives of co-sponsoring organizations: Golie Jansen, president of the Spokane chapter of the United Nations Association (UNA),

Continued on page 3

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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES NEWS:

Council calls for expanding the G20

As many of those “responsible for the current financial melt-down” met “behind closed doors in Washington, D.C.” to discuss the future of the global economy, the World Council of Churches (WCC) challenged the legitimacy of the so-called “G20” group of developed and emerging nations. The WCC calls for broader participation—including all developing countries and representatives of civil society including religious communities—and a paradigm shift in the global financial architecture.

The global financial meltdown debunks the myth that “deregulated financial markets are ‘efficient.’ The prevailing system is based on injustice,” said WCC general secretary the Rev. Samuel Kobia. “Its consequences threaten the UN Millennium Development Goals, development aid and mitigation of climate change.”

ECUMENICAL NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Congo families who take refugees are at risk

Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo (ENI). Thousands of families who have opened their modest homes to fleeing strangers in the crisis-hit eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo are facing the danger of having their meagre resources stretched to the limits. Meeting with a pastor near Goma, an assessment team from ACT (Action by Churches Together) International learned of the needs of the largely “invisible” displaced families and the increasingly vulnerable communities who are hosting them.

Churches failed to oppose persecution of Jews

Frankfurt, Germany (ENI). Churches in Germany have remembered the 70th anniversary of the systematic attack by the Nazis in 1938 on Jewish Germans, saying that many Christians failed in their duty to speak out. “In the November 1938 pogroms, defenseless people were humiliated, harassed and killed, houses of worship were desecrated and destroyed,” Germany’s Protestant and Roman Catholic leaders said in a joint statement to mark the anniversary. The pogroms were also the prelude to the Holocaust, a period of unimaginable destruction and annihilation, whose consequences Europe, the world and especially the Jewish community still have to bear,” the church leaders stated.

Catholic-Muslim forum affirms right to practice religion

Luigi Sandri Rome (ENI). The first meeting at the Vatican of a Roman Catholic-Muslim Forum affirms the right of individuals and communities to practice their religion in private and in public, while rejecting terrorism in the name of religion. “Genuine love of neighbor implies respect of the person and her or his choices in matters of conscience and religion,” the 48 Catholic and Muslim scholars and leaders said in their Nov. 6 declaration. Catholics and Muslims, they stated, “are called to be instruments of love and harmony among believers, and for humanity as a whole, renouncing any oppression, aggressive violence and terrorism, especially that committed in the name of religion, and upholding the principle of justice for all.”

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES USA

Church leaders call for health care priority

The leaders of the National Council of Churches urge President-Elect Barack Obama to make health care coverage “a first priority.” Pointing out that more than 47 million Americans lack health care coverage, NCC President Archbishop Vicken Aykazian and General Secretary the Rev. Michael Kinnamon said with the economic downturn, “millions more are finding increases in medical co-payments and participation requirements unmanageable or are losing health benefits with the loss of employment.”

“Our own long history of health care advocacy and the experiences of tens of thousands of our congregations in providing health education and direct service programs tell us that a piecemeal system cannot meet the needs of our neighbors,” the leaders wrote.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Donors restore meals through end of year

Mid-City Concerns, which faced cutbacks in state and federal funding that would have meant cutting its meal programs by half, received a grant from Providence Health Care, and raised funds from individual donors to help them continue their level of services with Meals on Wheels and senior nutrition sites through the end of the year.

For 2009, state funds for 5,000 meals will be cut, said Mollie Dalpae, director of Mid-City Concerns.

In October, discovery of a budgeting error and reductions in state funding resulted in \$30,000 less income from the federal Nutrition Services Incentive Program.

Mollie and staff are also researching ways to build sustainable support for Meals on Wheels, which serves 250 people a day, and the senior nutrition site they run at 1222 W. Second, which serves nearly 60 meals a day.

They have been contracting with a meal provider to deliver pre-made, pre-heated meals for

volunteers to deliver. Mollie said they can save funds by buying pre-made frozen meals and heating them onsite in their kitchen.

They are also applying for grants and planning ongoing fund-raising efforts, such as holding a Cinnagram fund raiser with Cinnabon on Feb. 13. Donors will donate \$20 to send a cinnamon bun, coffee, candy and other goodies as a Valentine’s Day gift to their staff, family or friends.

For information, call 233-0864 or email director@mowspokane.org.

Habitat Store opens a Spokane Valley store

The Habitat Store is expanding its inventory and opening a second store, the Habitat Valley Store, at 11410 E Sprague Ave. During its grand opening, Dec 2 to 6, everything will be discounted.

The stores serve people interested in purchasing used building materials—for environmental reasons as well as for cost-savings, said Jeff Howard, store director.

Since opening the first Habitat Store in Spokane in January 2000,

the recycled building materials venture has sold more than 4,000 tons of building materials and supplies, making an impact on the environment as well as the local affordable housing landscape.

Annual store revenues generate enough funds, \$297,000, to offset the cost of building three to four Habitat homes each year.

The Habitat Stores have nine staff and 45 regular volunteers.

The new 6,000 square-foot

Habitat Valley Store will feature new and used doors, windows, eclectic items, home furnishings, books and tools.

The inventory changes weekly, depending on donations.

The main store at Trent and Hamilton features 30,000 square feet of building materials and supplies. New and used material donations are only accepted at the main store at 850 E. Trent.

For information, call 489-3833.

German Christmas service is on Dec. 21

For more than 25 years, Spokane’s German-American Society and its Concordia Choir have presented a Christmas worship service of carols in German. The 2008 service is at 3 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 21, at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave.

When it started at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church under Father Otto Koltzenburg, the whole service was in German, said Eberhard Schmidt, choir president. As Father Otto moved to serve other churches, the Christmas service followed, including one time in Walla Walla. Several years ago, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church began hosting it.

Choir members are Catholic,

Lutheran and non-denominational, said Eberhard, whose family came as refugees to California from their home south of Berlin, Germany, in 1957 when he was 20. He finished his bachelor’s degree in geology at Stanford and earned a master’s and a PhD at the University of Arizona in Tuscon, where he met his wife, Suzie.

They moved to Spokane in 1971, and became involved in the German-American Society at the Deutsches Haus on Third near Division in 1977. He has been in the choir for many years.

Eberhard said the choir has had a new director, Robin Campbell, since September.

In addition to the Christmas

service, the choir gives a fall Pioneers Day concert, honoring area German-speaking immigrants, and a Spring Concert with German folk music at the Deutsches Haus.

The 45-member Concordia Choir of German-speaking and non-German-speaking members meets weekly at 7 p.m. Tuesdays. It began in 1911. A German men’s choir began in 1893 when the railroad came to Spokane, he said.

The German-American Society now has fewer first-generation members. More than half are Americans, second- and third-generation Germans and people who enjoy German culture, he said.

For information, call 928-2595.

Yakima churches house homeless men

Englewood Christian Church, First Baptist Church, Stone Church and Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Yakima will house local homeless men during extreme weather this winter, said the Rev. David Helseth, pastor.

The program is an outreach of Central Washington Comprehensive Mental Health and Vineyard Christian Fellowship’s Sunrise Outreach Center.

For information, call 966-6550.

WAC renews state ecumenism

The Washington Association of Churches is planning a meeting and social hour for representatives of denominations, congregations, ecumenical organizations, community ministries, clergy groups and seminaries at 4 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 16, at Salem Lutheran, 1428 W. Broadway in Spokane.

Participants in this event, facilitated by Bishop Martin Wells of the Eastern Washington Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Alice

Woldt, transitional executive director of the WAC, will discuss hopes and dreams for a renewed ecumenical organization that meets the needs of Christian communities across the state.

The meeting will be an opportunity for people engaged in various ministries to meet.

For information, call 535-1813.

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Human rights include freedom and equality

Continued from page 1

Yvonne Lopez Morton of the Washington Human Rights Commission and Kathleen Mackenzie from the World Affairs Council.

Kitra McClure of Spokane Community College will be the emcee.

Golie, who teaches social work at Eastern Washington University, said the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a nonbinding declaration, but sets the foundation for conventions and treaties: the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the United States adopted, and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which the United States has not ratified.

"Most of what is in the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights were the freedoms and liberties

already in the U.S. Constitution, but the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights assures equality rights, such as the right to work and health care," she said.

"Human rights establish how governments can treat citizens," Golie said.

"Freedom rights tell the government to stay out of people's lives. Equality rights give the government obligations to assure the wellbeing of citizens, she said. "Emerging countries have adopted these rights as standards in their constitutions."

Although establishing the rights by law does not mean there is no genocide, servitude, slavery, torture or war, Golie said the declaration establishes standards that governments and citizens can aspire to achieve.

It also gives them the power to define certain actions as human rights violations, she said.

On the occasion marking the 60 years since the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Dec. 10, 1948, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has said that although the world was then "reeling from the horrors of the Second World War," the declaration provided "the first global statement of what we now take for granted—the inherent dignity and equality of all human beings."

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been translated into more than 360 languages.

The United Nations, which started with 50 countries, now has 192 member countries.

For information, call 456-2382.

Volunteers of America houses homeless, shares in Christmas Bureau assistance

With more and more individuals and families in desperate need, Volunteers of America (VOA) in Spokane has expanded its outreach to house homeless vets and men released from jail.

In addition to its regular programs serving homeless street youth, families in crisis, homeless women, at-risk children and people with chronic mental illness, the agency is again providing books for the Christmas Bureau, said executive director Marilee Roloff.

"If we can help homeless, hungry people, now is the time," she said.

This year, Volunteers of America opened a home to house five veterans and Maud's House for six men coming out of county jail or mental health facilities.

"Many in jail suffer mental illness and are on medicine in jail, but when they are released, they go off the medicine and act out. As a result, they are arrested and go back to jail," she said.

At Maud's house, in addition to job training with Goodwill, they receive "responsible renter" training and support to stay on medications, find jobs and eventually find a stable place to live.

Volunteers of America has also received funding to cover a second home to house six vets in North Spokane in May 2009. So far, the veterans have been Vietnam vets, but the agency expects to see Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in coming months and years, Marilee said.

"These new homes make it a gratifying year of helping underserved, ignored and forgotten people," she said.

"These are our neighbors," she said. "Now, more than ever, we have a responsibility to pitch in and help each other."

In that spirit of community, Volunteers of America supports the Christmas Bureau, a local program spearheaded by the Spokesman Review. Each family that comes receives holiday help in the form of food vouchers and children's gifts.

Marilee said the Christmas Bureau last year served 32,000 people and organizers expect a five percent increase to 34,000.

Each year, Volunteers of Amer-

ica contributes thousands of books—donated by Scholastic, Inc.—to the Christmas Bureau. Catholic Charities provides a new toy for each child, purchased with funds donated through the Spokesman Review.

Among nearly 400 volunteers are Carolyn and Bryan Dobbins who, with the local chapter of the Alpha Delta Kappa teachers' sorority, are helping Volunteers of America sort, wrap and hand out books.

As a teacher at Windsor Elementary in the Cheney School District, Carolyn believes children need books and books are the best Christmas gifts. While Bryan, who farms between Cheney and Medical Lake, has helped VOA carry, sort and give books for three years, this is Carolyn's second.

The Christmas Bureau will be open from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., from Dec. 10 to 20, except Sundays, at the Fairgrounds, which is now its permanent home.

For information, call 624-2378 or visit www.voaspokane.org.

Justice, faith communities challenge pending execution

While many in the region's justice and faith communities sent letters to Gov. Christine Gregoire in recent weeks to urge clemency for convicted killer D.J. Stenson, Spokane justice advocates made plans if the state proceeds with an execution in Walla Walla on Dec. 3, the state's first in seven years.

Stenson, condemned to death for a double murder in Clallam County more than 15 years ago, has seen several appeals dismissed recently. State prison staff in Walla Walla, meanwhile, was being prepared to focus Washington's resources to end his life shortly after midnight on Wednesday, Dec. 3.

Opponents of the death penalty, on short notice from the state, are rallying to stop the execution or protest it through a series of solemn vigils, said Rusty Nelson, co-director of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS).

An acknowledged authority on abolishing the death penalty, Nancy Nelson, co-director of PJALS, has worked against capital punishment for 25 years and has been honored for her humanitarian efforts by the Washington Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

In Walla Walla, a service is planned at 7 p.m., Dec. 2, at St. Patrick's Catholic Church before an 8:30 vigil at the prison. Should the execution happen in the middle of the night, the vigil will last until the announcement of Stenson's death.

In Spokane, an ecumenical service is planned at 7 p.m. at the Community Building, 35 W. Main. A Mass will follow an 8:30 service in the chapel at Gonzaga University. A vigil will be kept at the Community Building lobby, with hourly meditations, until notice of the execution.

These events are networked or coordinated by Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, which opposes any execution and educates on alternatives to violence for the community, country and planet, Rusty said.

For information, call 838-7870 or 291-4646.

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CALL 456-2382

Grandmother-sculptor’s art inspires worldwide and locally

Continued from page 1
credit to the Lord for giving me a gift and the opportunity to work for that gift.”

Since she started sculpting in 1981, Dorothy has sold and exhibited her pieces at numerous shows and galleries. Her work also can be found throughout Spokane.

“The Strongest Bond,” a life-sized statue of a mother and child, graces the garden of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Spokane, a nonprofit that provides support and temporary lodging to families of children accessing medical services.

In 2005, Dorothy unveiled an 8-foot, 600-pound bronze sculpture of Michael P. Anderson, the Spokane astronaut who died aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia two years before. The memorial, located outside the Spokane Convention Center downtown, captures the spirit of a man who was known for his faith, humility and service to others.

Before embarking on the project, Dorothy spent time talking to Michael Anderson’s family, others who knew him and the committee that commissioned the statue. She decided on a pose that depicts Michael on bended knee with one hand holding his space helmet and the other releasing a dove of peace. The kneeling position represents humility, she explained; his uplifted arm and gaze toward the heavens portray his faith, and the dove symbolizes inspiration.

“That was almost a religious piece to me because he was religious and he had such strong faith,” she said.

In addition to her sculptures, Dorothy is perhaps best known



Dorothy Fowler

Photo provided by Dorothy Fowler

in the area for her artistic work on the bronze doors of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes.

The project was a labor of love for Dorothy, who spent two-and-a-half years working on the doors—three that are 14-feet tall at the main entrance and another that’s nine-feet tall.

It also was an answer to her prayers. In 1999, Dorothy was looking for a new project, a way to leave something of herself in her own community of Spokane. At the time, she had an exhibit at the Spokane Club, which caught the attention of the Rev. Monsignor James Ribble. As the cathedral’s rector, the monsignor had spent several years traveling all over the country looking for the right artist

to design the cathedral doors. The person he was searching for was in Spokane all along.

When Dorothy received the monsignor’s call, she was caught by surprise. Never before had she done bas relief, sculptured artwork in which a modeled form is raised from a flat background. She told Monsignor Ribble that she was afraid to tackle such a project.

As she proceeded to make excuses, “a little light came on in my head,” she said, recalling the conversation. “This was the Lord answering my prayer.”

Dorothy immediately flew to the Scottsdale Artists’ School in Arizona, where she spent weeks studying with Eugene Daub, an artist and expert in religious bas-relief sculpture. After she showed a few sample panels to Monsignor Ribble, he commissioned her to do the doors.

Still unsure of her abilities, Dorothy traveled to Florence, Italy, to continue her studies in bas-relief sculpture. By the time she came home a month later, she felt confident that she could accomplish the task.

“I am a perfectionist and didn’t want to do it halfway,” she said. “I had to rise to the challenge.”

Like her other pieces, her goal was to capture the emotion and feelings of the images she sculpted. As she proceeded with the design, she created images based on photographs that she took of parishioners at the cathedral.

When the doors were cast and installed in 2001, the dedication included cathedral members, other Catholics and people from First Presbyterian Church, which Dorothy has attended for 42 years.

“It was rewarding,” she said. “It unified the two churches.”

In 2004, Dorothy was commissioned to create the 14-foot bronze doors as part of restoration of St. Ann’s Cathedral in Great Falls, Mont. The entrance of the cathedral depicts the Virgin Mary’s mother, Ann, giving her instructions in the Jewish faith. The doors also include an image from Jesus’ first miracle at Cana,

when water was transformed into wine.

Her bronze cathedral doors in Spokane and Montana eventually led to another project: the creation of the entrance to the new Church of the Sermon on the Mount, one of the largest churches in Israel’s Galilee region.

Located on the campus of Mar Elias University, the church is part of the campus that was established by Archbishop Elias Chacour, who has traveled to Spokane several times and has received support from First Presbyterian and other churches in the area.

“My faith has set the tone for my life. Without my faith, my life would have no meaning,” Dorothy said in describing the inspiration for her work.

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Martin Luther King events set in January

The Annual Martin Luther King Day celebration and march in Spokane will be held Sunday and Monday, Jan. 18 and 19.

The Citywide Celebration Service will be at 6 p.m., Sunday, at the Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct.


The march begins at 10 a.m., Monday, at the INB Performing Arts Center and ends at Riverpark Square with music, speeches and a resource fair.

The Cathedral of St. John also plans a fund-raising concert for Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center at 6 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 11, at the cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave.

The concert will feature the Spokane Community Gospel Massed Choir, directed by Sharon Cowan; the Bethel B.A.S.I.C.

Gospel choir, directed by Elisha Mitchell, and the Montana Trombone Chorale.

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Organizations that address abuse can spend their energy productively

Continued from page 1
 fortified by God's presence and can experience God's caring through caring people," Nancy said. "For some, however, church is the place they have been traumatized and silenced."

Carl Green, director of COR's Institute for Congregational Leadership and lecturer on interpersonal relationships and group dynamics at Whitworth University since 2005, said that because religious organizations are about compassion, empowerment and justice, "we feel different about a violation there than in the dog-eat-dog world. The breach of idealism is more traumatic, because people are often in denial when their ideals are undermined."

Because COR's consultants believe organizations should be safe places for their members, they are committed to help congregations, nonprofits and other organizations resolve conflict, build trust, renew compassion and restore health.

"People want God to be a part of their 'meaning-making' process along with friends and family," she said.

"Many churches stay healthy by working hard to do so, but others will deny any problem that appears, a sure prescription for a painful future," she added.

When an organization chooses not to heal, Nancy said, it risks becoming a "culture of rumor or institutionalized silence". Some people form cliques, and then blame and scapegoat others. People second-guess and distrust each other. Miscommunication abounds.

Nancy pointed out that individuals, families and groups in congregations may even pass dysfunction generation to generation, leaving the next generations to deal with issues that are even more inflamed. Assuming they know what's best for the church, some people are blind to how their behavior affects others.

At a recent national gathering in New Orleans with executive directors, priests, bishops, financial officers and attorneys related to Catholic Charities, Nancy gave the keynote address on COR's healing work with parishes in the Catholic Diocese of Spokane, and other religious organizations in pain after crises. She also led a workshop there on how "rolling crises" occur, each one building to create a new crisis.

Nancy said COR workshops start by helping people talk about



Nancy Isaacson and Carl Green deal with divisive issues to restore organizations' health.

issues in their organization.

Healthy organizations discuss problems openly, care for individuals, talk about how they might work better and act on those ideas.

Such sharing can be a time for confession, a faith tool to move people to redemption, she said.

"In situations like the one faced recently by the Catholic Diocese of Spokane, financial and legal issues overwhelm everything else, and people may easily overlook that there are human issues at the center of the experience that require caring, forgiveness and restorative justice," she said.

Carl, who served the Northwest District Office of the Church of the Nazarene for 12 years and served as pastor of four churches over 21 years, advises also hearing the voices of public relations, theology and ethics.

"While it's good to know legal repercussions, we must also realize how important caring, loving disclosure and truth telling are to healing. Covering up creates rolling crises, rationalizing, paranoia, faith crises and people leaving. If we avoid truth and confession to put the sexual abuse behind us prematurely, its ripples go underground," he said.

"As media retold details of abuse and continued to dig up things people thought were settled, it furthered people's reticence to talk, along with requirements of confidentiality on personnel matters," Carl added.

With pressure men face, Nancy said, it took courage for them

to speak. As their numbers grew, they drew attention. Beyond that abuse, she knows women also have experienced abuse.

"It has taken enormous courage for survivors of abuse in all faiths to come forward in the past, both men and women," she said. "Abuse of power by authority figures leaves *any* less powerful person aware it's her or his word against the powerful person."

COR's resources promote awareness of boundaries in relationships to prevent abuse of power of any kind.

From listening to story after story, COR consultants have learned to recognize patterns of abuse of power as a few people pursue self-interest at the cost of the common good and just relationships.

"It's easy to dismiss someone overwhelmed by abuse as difficult, but when other people see someone who complains silenced, they remain silent, too," she said.

"Until enough people speak, it's hard to build traction," said Carl. "So we help people discern patterns and connect their own dots to identify systemic issues. We remind people that if they don't talk about concerns, abuse of power happens again."

"Any organization in which power is an issue, people will have a difficult time speaking about it,"

she said. "Even if consultants are invited to come in to help, they may become scapegoats, and their help may be rejected. It's just to scary for people."

Organizations seek help when they recognize there are problems, she said. COR can only help when people in an organization want to be healthy. If any powerful individual or faction blocks help, COR can't help.

Eventually, an organization will realize it needs help, because people talk with their pocketbooks and do not stay in or want to sustain an unhealthy organization.

Carl said a church may experience multiple problems before it understands the problems are systemic, not isolated situations.

COR's work is with both secular and religious organizations, but it has seen an overwhelming increase in invitations from churches and religious organizations in the last few years. Because churches have few financial resources, COR works on a sliding fee scale.

"Many small congregations are stressed trying to pay for health insurance and pastors' salaries," Carl said. "Once a church with 50 members was viable. Now most focus on survival and hope to find a good pastor."

Carl knows there's more at play. He left one congregation after five

years because of dynamics previous pastors also experienced. The next pastor left five years later for the same reason—a power player manipulated the church and no one would speak up.

To heal, people need to tell the truth so it's heard and relationships improve. Sometimes it takes several people, and sometimes a pastor can be a catalyst, Carl said.

In one church he served, a power player challenged him about a decision the board made the previous evening. Knowing that she often tried to undermine decisions, he said he could not change the board's decision, but she could raise her concern at the next board meeting. She came to the meeting angry. Other members, who had not seen her like that, lovingly told her that her behavior was inappropriate.

As COR's facilitators help an organization recognize behaviors that undermine its mission. As outsiders, they can often ask questions and make comments that insiders can't. The outside voice sometimes nudges people to take a different look at their own behavior and what it's doing to the health of the congregation.

"There is not one right approach. We always have to adjust to a group's unique culture," Nancy said.

"Christians want to think that if they love Jesus, healthy relationships will just happen. Sometimes people assume any behavior is okay, but misbehavior and conflict cause things to backfire, so we help identify inappropriate behavior," she said.

Carl pointed out that a successful marriage is not one without difficulties, but one in which the couple learn to talk about the difficulties. The same is true for churches, he said.

Nancy reaffirmed: "Churches that address abuse can spend energy more productively."

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Faith in Action Dialogue 2008

Over bread broken and shared in dialogue and daily life

Church leaders celebrate unity, urge more common action

People from various countries and congregations processed and placed bread on a table as a visual reminder of the brokenness and unity of those attending the Nov. 6 Fig Tree Faith in Action Dialogue at the Cathedral of St. John.

Editor Mary Stamp said the processional song, "One Bread, One Body," sung in many churches, is a reminder of "our common faith" and of the divisions that remain over communion or Eucharist.

"Around the table, we face our hunger for unity. We are fed to feed others with food and to nourish justice and peace," she said, introducing panelists who shared insights on challenges and opportunities for ecumenism today.

Bishop Walton Mize of Christ Holy Sanctified Church likened the camaraderie of a family gathering for a meal to church life.

"Our church eats together often," he said. "It's hard to focus on the bad things when we sit, eat and talk with people about spiritual bread. I have broken bread with many people of many different faiths."

He told of eating together being a way to break through divisions. When he first came to Spokane, a woman asked him how she could meet a black person. "What are you doing for lunch tomorrow?" he asked. "We broke bread and shared," Bishop Mize said.

Bishop William Skylstad of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane said the gathering "inspires, encourages, witnesses to and challenges us to be what we should be according to Jesus' prayer that we may be one."

In more than 40 years of dialogue since Vatican II, he said the Catholic Church has taken the prayer seriously.

"We see strong relationships here as bishops and executives have been breaking bread Wednesday mornings for breakfast for 45 years. I hope it continues many years," he said. "Pope John Paul II called for relationships and dialogue. Although there aren't always results, we are to continue to meet, talk and be in relationship."

He quoted Catholic Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor who said recently: "We are on the road to



Bishop Walton Mize, Bishop William Skylstad, Bishop James Waggoner, Jr., Bishop Martin Wells and Alice Woldt

ecumenism and there is no exit."

"Events like this dialogue, the Fig Tree, our prayer and our common action and advocacy speak of unity," the bishop said. "They are part of the search for unity for which Jesus prayed. We look to the future with hope, encouraged with our support of one another as brothers and sisters in Jesus and the gift of faith we are."

Bishop James Waggoner, Jr., of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane enjoys open forums and "times for questions, dialogue, listening and learning to be connected with one another because we can do much more together than we can do separately."

He knows gathering for dialogue is contrary to the conflict and separation that plague church and culture: "Speaking of my faith, my truth, my church, my ministry is contrary to the reality that it is *our* faith, *our* truth, *our* church and *our* ministries."

"We have our unique holy histories and our differences, but how good it is to come together in a spirit of appreciation, not just tolerance, so we can move on with our common mission of feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, healing the sick, giving hope to the hopeless and being light in darkness," he said. "If my neighbor is hungry, it's a spiritual issue for me."

"God's agenda is bigger than any of our particularities. God's hope brings hope, health and new

life," he said. "We have done much ecumenically. There is more to do. We are called to do more."

Bishop Martin Wells of the Eastern Washington Idaho Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) expressed gratitude that "The Fig Tree helps us be a better, more connected church, introducing us to one another." He also expressed gratitude for "Octet" friends and colleagues who support each other in a personal way at breakfast each week in ecumenism of the table.

"We are companions. In French that means 'with bread.' For us, it's with toast, English muffins and oatmeal and an occasional slice of pie," he said. "Ecumenism begins in relationships, in stories that build trust. We are moving the same direction in different institutions."

He told of ELCA's ecumenical commitment, pronouncing in 1981 that "we are called by Jesus to express unity visibly and structurally. We have been called to move to deeper stages from disunity to cooperation to bilateral relations to unity, and we are called by the World Council of Churches to be in relationships of full communion with mutual recognition of baptism, Eucharist and ministry."

The ELCA has relationships of full communion with Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Moravians, the United Church of Christ and the Reformed Church. In 2009, it

will vote on full communion with United Methodists.

"After 50 years of talking in parallel rounds of dialogue we look forward to the Joint Declaration on Justification with the Roman Catholics and a joint statement on Eucharist," he said.

"The ELCA sees ecumenism as a sign of hope in a divided and hurting world, a sign of respect in the human family. The Fig Tree is a partner in sharing expectations and calls us to deeper respect," Bishop Wells said.

Alice Woldt, transitional executive director of the Washington Association of Churches, has seen changes in the ecumenical movement in recent decades since its heyday in the 20th century. She invites Spokane to celebrate the 101st Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January.

"In recent decades, we have seen new division among Christian churches, reflected in ecumenical opportunities people have not caught and challenges to ecumenical agencies like the Washington Association of Churches," said Alice who has worked 20 years in ecumenical agencies.

"Some invested in faith-and-

order issues that few people in the pews or clergy knew much about," she said. "It's too bad if we leave the ecumenical movement out of our lives and have divided church. It's not the model we should have."

Woldt said church and ecumenical structures have been affected by social, economic, technological and political changes. As some welcome change and others resist it, she said there are fissures in churches between those who believe in absolute truth and those who believe truths change over time. Many do not even believe in the doctrines ecumenical leaders discuss as divisive.

"The gift of unity can't work when we stay in our silos and use the business model based on scarcity, rather than the model of faith that God is going to provide," said Alice, noting that the WAC is discerning what God is calling the 33-year-old ecumenical organization to do today.

Plans to transform it include expanding its membership beyond denominations to include the church community in different forms of ministry.

Continued on next page



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Participants urge more interfaith dialogue, progress on Eucharist

Continued from page 5

“We can be a connector to network and replicate good models of ministry across the state,” she said. “We will continue to do public witness to advocate for the poor as we have done through the WAC’s history.”

“Ecumenical work builds bridges by focusing on common values rooted in the Gospel to build common ground and relationships in an era when we again see divisions and fissures in churches and communities.”

“We are called to be one. If we can model what it is to be one with God in one faith and one baptism, we will be better,” Woldt said.

After participants talked at their tables, several offered some comments:

Bonnie Douglas said Diakonia, an interfaith group in Coeur d’Alene, shares prayers of the different faith traditions, enabling participants “to see where our faiths not only are parallel but intersect.”

Agnes Broncheau, a descendant of Chief Joseph, expressed appreciation for interfaith dialogue and said she prays for everyone in the four nations of the world—red, yellow, black and white. She has attended, respected and been influenced by many churches.

David Campbell of VOICES called for common action through the Spokane Alliance by the faith community on tax reform in the state, where the poor pay 17.6 percent of their income and the rich pay 3.4 percent.

Suzanne Harris, who attends St. Aloysius and the Cathedral of St. John, said most lay people focus on similarities and differences that affect them. She recognizes the challenge of bringing together people of different faith traditions to talk of ecumenical spirituality, to respect differences and to find common ground.

Sara Weaver of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ asked, “Who is missing?” She is concerned about obstacles to relationships with churches of different races arising from her church’s decision to be open and affirming. She hopes it’s possible “to bridge differences that seem like chasms.”

Joe Kramarz of Interfaith Hospitality Network of Spokane, which houses homeless families in 12 churches, said how important their group thinks the “interfaith” part of their name is.

The Rev. Dale Cockrum, Inland United Methodist district superintendent expressed appreciation for the move to respect one another in community and



Bishop Walt Mize and Bishop William Skylstad value their weekly ecumenical breakfast.

have more dialogue: “While organizational unity is not possible, we can respect one another’s traditions and connect across the lines through involvement in such efforts as Stephen Ministry of lay pastoral care; the Walk to Emmaus and organizations that do hands-on service to make a difference in people’s lives. In such events we have opportunities to build relationships with different churches and gradually walls come down.”

Tito Williams-Tinajero, who works with web and new technologies, wondered if the church and ecumenical organizations are effectively using “the powerful networking tools of the web, including blogs and YouTube.”

Mary Stamp told of developing the Fig Tree model of peace-and-justice journalism in partnership with the WAC to spread communication statewide and nationally.

Yvonne Lopez Morton of St. Ann’s Church said her church enjoys singing in different languages and celebrating Spanish and African Masses: “We need to remember there are many voices, faces and traditions in our faith communities.”

Sister Rose Theresa Costello, SNJM, who volunteers with Our Place, finds “beautiful examples of people of all faiths coming together to meet the needs of people. As more and more people come for free help, it’s an example of what we need.” She also hopes churches will come together to consider unity in communion: “Christ is our unity.”

Steve Blewett of Our Lady of Fatima said that his table talked about the Eucharist being “the Lord’s meal, not our church’s meal or a personal meal. The Lord wants all to share in it.” He also

celebrates the election of a man of color as President, a man who is reaching across boundaries to those who did not vote for him: “I hope we can gather with him and others to make the coming years opportunities to bridge the divides and come together, to move beyond the divisiveness of faith to the inclusiveness of faith.”

After that sharing, the panelists offered some responses:

Bishop Mize, who grew up Catholic, said he received “Jesus Christ as my personal savior” 50 years ago. He did not understand then how he could make a difference, but has been involved with his former church since.

“I wanted to live the example of tolerance, love and appreciation with those who think of differences. We have much in common and theological connections,” he said, encouraging laity not to wait for bishops to move around barriers.

He considers those who share his belief in Jesus Christ as his brothers and sisters regardless of their denominations.

“I love those who are of my denomination and I love those who are not of my denomination,” he said, amazed that he as a Pentecostal sits each week with people who are Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran and Episcopalian.

“These are my brothers. We have a good time at the breakfast table. What God wants shouldn’t be a strain. Life is too short to be encumbered,” he said. “Although my denomination does not agree with all I do, I will love and work with whom I choose.”

He realizes God sent him to Spokane to “sit with these people I now love.”

Bishop Skylstad added, “Ecumenism is evident at Our Place, in

a covenant among three Spokane Valley churches and in rural communities.”

Bishop Waggoner offered three thoughts:

- “We are on parallel tracks that do not intersect, but I hear a prayer that we interact without fear of what others believe when we share ecumenically or interfaith. I pray we share, not to change others but to be honest about our beliefs and mission, without thinking others need to be the same.”
- At the Lambeth Conference this summer in Canterbury, about 700 Anglican bishops across the globe met: “We sat with people from China, Australia, Tanzania, Sudan and many countries. A

Catholic cardinal, a Jewish rabbi and a Russian Orthodox patriarch joined us.”

A bishop asked the patriarch, “What can we do to help you accept or agree with decisions?” The patriarch replied, “Nothing you do can make me accept your decisions, but I can agree to love you and work together in mission.”

“We must talk about our differences,” Bishop Waggoner said, “but we can’t be captive to them. We can go on to greater unity.”

• Networks, people not just wireless ones, help make organizations successful: “I hope we network in creative, intentional ways. God is always doing a new thing. We must ask where God is leading us and what we can do ecumenically.”

Bishop Waggoner concluded: “Who is not here?” is always the question to ask.

Bishop Wells said part of his work is provocation, asking questions. He wondered how the conversation sounded to young people at one table. He marveled at the new President and the healing at Grant Park in Chicago with 100,000 people celebrating life and hope, leaving behind contentious issues of the 1960s. He asked: “What would it mean for the church to be an icon of hope at the center of our common life?”

He suggested an alternative to sharing bread is foot washing, a sign of mutual servanthood as churches come together. He is aware that issues like death with dignity and same-sex marriage

Continued on next page

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Bishops suggest some concrete actions, such as renewed apology to tribes

Continued previous page
continue to be divisive concerns for churches to address.

"Is ambiguity an okay part of our witness or is it an unnecessary mishandling of our faith that we need to work on?" he asked. "I also wonder if ecumenical questions have shifted to interfaith relations.

"Our Catholic brothers led us with the letter on the Columbia Watershed. On its ninth anniversary, Lutheran bishops will sign it. How will churches contribute to the conversation on water in the West?" Bishop Wells asked.

On the 20th anniversary of the WAC-developed letter of apology from religious leaders to Northwest tribes, he will add his name to the apology and offered to take it to Agnes Broncheau's home.

WAC director Woldt sees opportunities as people emerge from disillusionment and hopelessness. Saying that she sees opportunities for the WAC to build relationships



Bishop James Waggoner, Jr., Bishop Martin Wells and Alice Woldt delved into wider ecumenical initiatives that enrich and advance local ecumenical and interfaith life.

in local communities, she introduced Malcolm Haworth who will work in Spokane for the WAC, as well as the Interfaith Council and The Fig Tree.

"Many councils are into interfaith work. In some ways, it is easier than working on the ends of the spectrum in the Christian Church," she noted. "There is

work to do in both areas.

The WAC has some new visions for grassroots ecumenical efforts, using technology to nurture networks, share information, include people geographically distant in meetings, replicate successful ministries and communicate with elected officials.

In 2009, the Week of Prayer

for Christian Unity will begin with the Martin Luther King, Jr., celebration and end with the Week of Prayer worship, creating an opportunity to work with the African-American community.

Fig Tree editor Stamp said The Fig Tree Board is concerned how media spread division: "We need to move from hate and fear as ways to build unity to build ways to share real unity."

During the closing worship, the Rev. Happy Watkins, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Spokane spoke on the story of the feeding of the 5,000.

"What's in your bag?" he asked, sharing Jesus' response to disciples' worried they didn't have enough food or money to feed the crowd gathered to hear Jesus.

"Philip looked in the treasury, and there was only \$32.77, not enough money to feed them. Philip and Andrew found a boy with

five barley loaves and two smelt, still not enough. What could they do to feed the crowd?

"If we set aside human reasoning, a new religion will come forth called compassion," Happy said. "We talk about differences and can't ignore or explain the new religion of compassion."

He reminded the group that Martin Luther King, Jr., believed all people have the right to have three meals a day for their bodies; culture and education for their minds; dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits; health, education and welfare; and to affordable homes, jobs and knowledge of their history.

"The measure of a Christian is not where he or she stands in times of comfort and convenience," he said. "It's okay to live on the South Hill, but don't forget those who live in Peaceful Valley."

"I ask each of you, 'What is in your bag?' Hopefully compassion and hope," he said, quoting a poem: "I sought my soul, but my soul could not see. I sought my God, but my God eluded me. I sought my brother and found all three."

For information, call 535-1813.



The Rev. Happy Watkins

New coordinator expands Fig Tree's capacity

The Fig Tree's new community outreach coordinator through AmeriCorps, Anna Marie Martin, took responsibility for many arrangements for the dialogue.

Her responsibilities include constituent relations, volunteer development, events coordination, administrative tasks, editing copy, assisting with the website and directory, and more.

Since coming to Spokane in 2006, she has done pulpit supply at Centenary United Methodist Church and served as an administrative assistant in various agencies. She has assisted in religious education at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Spokane, where she is a member.

Anna earned a bachelor's degree in English and theater in 1995 from Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, Va., and a master of divinity degree in 2004 from Union Theological School in New York City. From 2005 to 2006, she counseled bereaved clients with Continuum Hospice Care in New York.

Anna said she was drawn to work with The Fig Tree because it's an opportunity to work for a nonprofit that shares her commitment to furthering social justice, healthy communities and compassion for marginalized people.

"I hope to gain skills in leadership, community organization and communication with people whose views differ from my own," she said.

Anna is focusing on recruiting volunteers to add to those on



Fr. Roger Xhu Xin Xiang of China and Anna Marie Martin share bread.

board helping The Fig Tree be present in congregations and other community settings through a speakers bureau and displays.

Soon, she will be recruiting people to participate in a Fig Tree speakers' bureau that will be

available to visit congregations to offer in-person mission moments and full-length programs.

She works at The Fig Tree's office at Gonzaga's Unity House, 709 E. Desmet.

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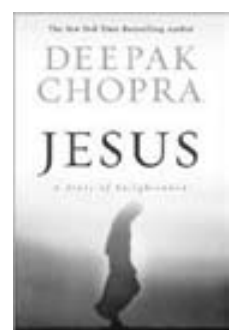
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State association honors Fig Tree and editor for ecumenical leadership

The Washington Association of Churches will recognize the work of Mary Stamp as The Fig Tree editor, honoring her with one of two awards for ecumenical leadership.

“We recognize her contributions not just on the East side of the mountains but throughout the state as a leader in spreading the news on ecumenical activities,” said Alice Woldt, transitional executive director of the Washington Association of Churches (WAC).

The WAC will present the award during its Annual Awards Dinner and Celebration, “Follow the Light,” at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 4, at Campion Hall at Seattle University, 901 12th Ave.

The other award will go to the Puget Sound Interfaith Youth Camp, which offers a place for youth from various religious traditions to discover understanding of their common humanity.

Keynote speaker for the event will be David Domke, University of Washington professor of communications. He will discuss how the faith community can commu-

nicate a message of transformation and hope.

Mary is editor and founder of The Fig Tree, which now produces a newspaper, website, directory and other media that cover the faith and nonprofit communities of the Inland Northwest. It seeks to break through divisions among people of faith to build understanding, and promote unity and action for the common good. Mary is a professional journalist with a commitment to ecumenical and interfaith relationships, nurtured by attending graduate studies and assemblies with the World Council of Churches.

After earning a bachelor’s degree in journalism in 1967 at the University of Oregon in Eugene, she worked for two retail trade journals before spending 1969 and 1970 in the graduate program of the World Council of Churches’ Ecumenical Institute near Geneva, Switzerland.

“From living in community with 60 people from 40 nations for six months, I realized we need to set aside pride, fear and our



Mary Stamp

personal, political and religious agendas to discover who people are beyond the barriers of language, culture, nationality, status and faith expression,” she said.

The experience sharpened her interviewing skills to ask questions that search for understanding, insights, differences and similarities.

Returning to the United States, she wrote free-lance features for

the Daily Astorian, The Fresno Bee, InterChurch—an ecumenical publication she started as a free-lance venture—and The Standard Register in Tekoa before coming to Spokane in 1984 to start The Fig Tree through the then Spokane Christian Coalition. The coalition later became the Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries and is now the Interfaith Council.

Co-editor and founder Holy Names Sister Bernadine Casey, other founders like editorial writer Jo Hendricks and bulk distribution coordinator Carl Milton, many committee and board members, and volunteers are behind The Fig Tree’s 25 years of growth and success, Mary said.

In 2000, The Fig Tree became an independent nonprofit organization, covering and connecting the faith and nonprofit communities in the Inland Northwest.

The Fig Tree now seeks to hire a multi-tasking journalist, someone with an entrepreneurial spirit who will work in partnership with Mary as The Fig Tree expands on the web to include stories from

Western Washington.

In addition to Malcolm Haworth and Anna Marie Martin, the contract staff includes Lorna Kropp, assisting as website consultant to prepare the website for content from around the Northwest.

“Our goal is to empower people in the region and globally simply by connecting them,” Mary said. “Each interview for me is an ecumenical or interfaith encounter that touches my life. It’s a gift to pass on information and inspiration that move people to act.”

Recently she has noted that journalism schools at major universities are beginning to talk about “peace journalism,” which focuses on solutions rather than on the approach of what she calls “conflict journalism” which tries to balance the few at extreme ends of opinions who do not talk with or respect each other.

“Most people, in fact, work to resolve problems and set aside fear to learn from each other,” she said. “It’s a joy to cover stories of people who act on their beliefs.”

For information, call 535-1813.

Malcolm Haworth begins service as ecumenical, interfaith consultant

As an ecumenical and interfaith consultant, Malcolm Haworth began work in November that will interconnect three organizations.

He is the director of the Interfaith Council of the Inland Northwest, directory editor and development director for The Fig Tree, and the Eastern Washington liaison for the Washington Association of Churches.

His knowledge of the faith and nonprofit communities from researching, editing, updating and distributing the 2007-08 and 2008-09 editions of the Directory of Congregations and Community Resources gives him awareness that will help as he works to restore, carry on and build these programs.

Producing the directory was the focus of his work as community outreach coordinator through AmeriCorps with The Fig Tree, when it took over the directory in and he began in February 2007.

With the Interfaith Council, which has operated only with volunteers in the last two to three years, Malcolm’s initial focus is to rebuild the board, expand participation, build on past dialogue and celebrations, restore some programs and envision the council’s role in the region.

“To have a fresh start with the Interfaith Council,” he said, “we



Malcolm Haworth

seek to foster rededication to ecumenical and interfaith endeavors in this region. We seek to be a strong partner with the Washington Association of Churches, The Fig Tree and other ecumenical and interfaith ministries.”

Malcolm, who grew up in Spokane, earned a bachelor’s degree in history in 2001 at Washington State University in Pullman and a master’s degree in history in 2005 from Eastern Washington Univer-

sity in Cheney. While his focus was on cultural and intellectual history, particularly that of social movements, he became involved with the EWU Indian studies program and with the modern foreign languages department through which he collaborated on several courses as an adjunct and guest lecturer.

He also has global experience, including study abroad for a year in Vienna, Austria, visits to partner church friends in the reunited Germany and a seminar at the World Council of Churches’ Ecumenical Institute at Bossey near Geneva, Switzerland.

While at WSU, Malcolm was active in the ecumenical campus ministry at Koinonia House, serving as a peer minister, networking community and campus groups on peace and justice action, and helping plan an interfaith dialogue among student groups.

“In my studies, I learned about religion from a historical and anthropological perspective, and gained a spiritual perspective through engagement in fellowship and advocacy in campus ministry,” Malcolm said.

He continued his involvement in United Ministries in Higher

Education at EWU, and still serves on that board.

He has participated through campus ministries in building a house in Mexico and in urban ministries activities in Spokane.

Through membership in Cheney United Church of Christ, he has been a delegate to annual meet-

ings of the Pacific Northwest Conference. As part of The Fig Tree and campus ministry, he has also attended some Presbytery meetings, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Synods and Episcopal Conventions.

For information, call 216-6090 or 535-1813.

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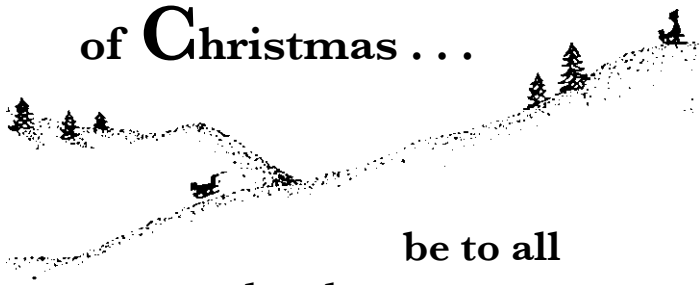


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Two local Reform Jewish congregations become one: Emanu-El

Two liberal Reform Jewish congregations, Ner Tamid and Beth Haverim, officially merged Nov. 2 to form Congregation Emanu-El, which means “God is with us.”

“I couldn’t be happier,” said Mary Singer, formerly president of Ner Tamid and now co-president of Emanu-El with Fran Snively, who was formerly president of Beth Haverim. “We realized we have more in common than different, so we became one congregation.”

The two congregations initially formed out of one informal group that met in homes and then at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 Ft. Wright Dr.

In 2001, Beth Haverim formed and affiliated with the Union of Reform Judaism. They gathered twice monthly at the Unitarian church. Congregation Ner Tamid formed in 2002 and met at Manito United Methodist Church.

Both congregations had about 30 members each, so the new congregation will have more than 60 members.

“Being together means we will have more energy, more people, more ideas, a larger budget, the ability to offer religious education for our children, be able to worship together as one large congregation and be able to do more social action,” Mary and Fran said.

Mary added that it means they will be

able to leave something future generations can build on.

“We both were doing the same things,” Fran said. “This means we can do more tikkun olam—healing the world.”

The name builds on the past, because Temple Emanu-El was the name of a former liberal Reform Jewish community in Spokane that merged with Orthodox Temple Keneseth Israel to form Temple Beth Shalom. In 1965 and 1966, that merged congregation met at the Unitarian Universalist Church until the building was completed at 1322 E. 30th.

“The merger of Ner Tamid and Beth Haverim was a simple name change, combining bylaws, boards and officers until next June when a new board will be elected. It’s like a family reunion,” said Mary, a retired nurse who has been in Spokane since the 1970s.

Fran, a retired nurse midwife who moved to Coeur d’Alene from Southern California three years ago, said the bylaws were similar.

She and Mary had met for coffee informally over the past year and decided it was time to heed the encouragement of the Union of Reform Jews to be one congregation.

“We are still a small congregation, which I think gives more room for creativity,” she said.

The congregations had crossover members, attended each other’s services and celebrated Passover Seder and Chanukah parties together.

“We realized it was silly to maintain two institutions,” said Mary. “Out of genuine caring and warmth, we wanted to be one strong congregation.”

The one congregation, which draws people from Spirit Lake, Colbert, Coeur d’Alene, Cheney and even California, will continue to hold services twice a month and for holidays. One service a month is led by a student rabbi, Jessy Gross, and the other led by lay leaders.

Members are also involved with services and celebrations at Temple Beth Shalom, including helping with the annual Kosher Dinner.

“We are one big extended family,” Mary said. “While Reform Judaism is more religiously and socially liberal, there’s crossover on that, too.”

The new congregation held its first joint service on Friday, Nov. 7, and held its first board meeting on Sunday, Nov. 16.

In email discussion since the merger, Mary said one member asked, “Why do we call it a congregation, because the old Emanu-El was a temple.”

Another member replied: “A temple is a building, which may or may not

have permanence, as history shows. A congregation is the people and the people endure.”

Mary then shared a bit of that history:

Congregation Emanu-El completed building and dedicated the first Reform Jewish synagogue, Temple Emanu-El, in the state on Sept. 14, 1892, four days before Seattle’s Ohaveth Sholom was dedicated on Sept. 18, 1892.

The city’s first Jewish person, Simon Berg, settled in the Spokane area in 1879 and built a store. Other Jewish merchants came and the first Jewish services were held in a home in 1885, and in 1890 they formed Congregation Emanu-El. In the 1920s, a new temple was built at 8th and Walnut. There is a plaque in the sidewalk at Third and Madison where the original building once stood.

The Orthodox Keneseth Israel Congregation formed in 1901 and finished building a synagogue in 1909 at Fourth and Adams. By 1926, it joined the Conservative movement.

Plymouth Congregational Church bought Temple Emanu-El in 1966, after Temple Emanu-El merged with Temple Keneseth Israel and formed Temple Beth Shalom.

For information, call 835-5050 or visit www.spokaneemanu-el.org.

Congregation Emanu-El begins its life with its own Torah scroll

By Virginia de Leon

The new Congregation Emanu-El begins its life with its own Torah scroll.

While members of the former Congregation Beth Haverim were dedicating the new Torah for their Oct. 24 Simhat Torah holiday for reading Torah, Congregation Ner Tamid marked Simhat Torah by saying goodbye to the Torah they had on loan for five years from Temple Beth Shalom.

The Torah—parchment scrolls that contain the handwritten, Hebrew text of the Five Books of Moses—is vital to Jewish spirituality and worship as a congregation, said Jessy Gross, the student rabbi for Emanu-El. The Torah is read aloud on Shabbat and during many Jewish observances.

Not every congregation has a scroll, she said. Some are old and illegible. They can be expensive, ranging in price from \$10,000 to \$100,000.

“The story isn’t about how a small congregation could raise the funds to buy a used Torah or the search in New York for a suitable scroll that’s legible and in reasonable repair,” said Karen Michaelson, a member of the congregation. “It’s about the centrality of Torah to Jewish life and what it means to a congregation to have its own Torah for worship.”

The Torah was obtained by Beth Haverim members Patti and John Barber, who undertook the search for a Torah.

The arrival of the congregation’s Torah this fall was symbolic for many members. Historically, Sukkot in October commemorates the 40-years the Israelites spent wandering in the desert.

To obtain a Torah denotes a certain permanence, said Jessy, who is preparing to become a rabbi at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles. It represents the congregation’s loyalty and faithfulness to each other.

“A Torah scroll is a symbol of community,” she said. “There is a level of commitment that is assumed. Having a Torah helps



Members of the former Congregation Beth Haverim at the dedication of their Torah scroll.

Photo by Miriam Berkman

authenticate the affirmation that we are a Jewish community.

“It’s the same journey the Jewish people who received the Torah experienced. There has always been this notion that the Torah was the grounding component of their nomadic movement,” she said.

The Torah, as a representation of their Jewish faith, Jessy said, is treated with respect and reverence. When it is damaged or destroyed, a Torah is buried.

“The Jewish community treats the Torah like a person,” she continued, explaining that in a minyan, the congregational quo-

rum required for public prayers, the Torah can count as the 10th person.

“The Torah is that communication between God and the Jewish people,” said Jessy, who spends one weekend a month in Spokane leading services and educational programs, and facilitating discussion among members.

During the Simhat Torah celebration, members rolled out the Torah scroll from beginning to end and made a circle around the members without letting it touch the ground.

Like other Torah scrolls, it is

made of a kosher animal’s skin and written in Hebrew calligraphy.

Jessy said the work is a labor of love, created by a specially trained scribe with a quill and special ink.

One mistake and the person has to start over. It takes about a year to complete a Torah scroll.

As a written document, the Torah can mean different things to people, Jessy explained.

“The Jewish community agrees that there is divine inspiration in everything in the Torah,” she said. “Because there was human editing and human input in the document, progressive Jews believe on different levels that as we move into the 21st century, we need to be in dialogue with the Torah.”

Emanu-El’s Torah was written by a master scribe in Poland in the 1880s. Light-weight for a full-size Torah, it is considered in excellent condition. The writing on the natural parchment is dark and clear. It came to the United States before World War I. The congregation bought it from the J. Levine Co., a family business in New York that has sold books and Judaica since 1890.



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Life Center helps build a Habitat home for a member of their church

Building a Habitat house for a church member has drawn some members of Life Center Four-square Church from the pews into volunteer community service.

It's part of acting on the church's motto: "Loving God, loving people," said Randy Sylvia, men's pastor and leader for outreach and recovery ministries.

He said the outreach focus began when senior pastor, the Rev. Joe Wittwer, realized members needed to be involved in the community so Life Center would have a visible impact on Spokane.

Life Center held its first Ministry Fair several years ago to introduce the nearly 2,500 people who attend its services Sundays to opportunities to volunteer with different parachurch organizations. Now 4,000 to 5,000 attend and fairs are held twice a year.

Habitat for Humanity Spokane



Reachal and Benny Gallagher know the love behind the walls of their Habitat for Humanity home.

was among the organizations that involved individual members, but recent participation dropped.

Three years ago Habitat asked Randy if Life Center would do a corporate build, co-sponsoring a house with several other churches

in the community. Life Center was in transition to its new building at 1202 N. Government Way, so the staff decided to wait.

Last year, they learned a family accepted by Habitat was a member of the congregation.

"We asked if the church would help build a house for Benny Gallagher and his daughter Reachal, now 18. This time the answer was 'yes.' We decided to finance it ourselves," Randy said.

In addition to members who have volunteered individually for Habitat, hundreds had the opportunity to sign up online to fill the building schedule slots for about 30 people a day.

One Sunday Benny shared his story, and the congregation donated most of the money they needed. In addition, contractors in the congregation donated services for excavation, wiring and other construction.

Benny said that after he divorced in 2006 in Florida, he brought his daughter to live with his sister for a summer to move her from a neighborhood with drugs and sexual predators. Reachal helped

in her aunt's preschool. Benny decided to move to Spokane and has been living with his sister, a member at Life Center.

He began attending, saw a pamphlet on Habitat for Humanity and decided to apply, because there was not enough room in his sister's house.

"I would never have thought of going up and speaking before more than a thousand people," he said, astounded that the church raised \$65,000 to fund the house.

In one week, the house exterior walls and roof were done.

"Without the church and without God, I would not be having a Habitat house," said Benny who works for a clothing retail chain.

The 400 hours of sweat equity he and Reachal are doing include working on their house and other Habitat houses, gaining construction skills and meeting people.

Men's and outreach minister finds that he receives when he gives

Randy Sylvia, who grew up in Davenport, said he lived a "precarious" life until he entered recovery in 1985 and was saved at Life Center in 1988.

That started him on the pathway to opening doors for others to heal and serve. In 1990, he started Christ-centered recovery at Life Center. He helped in that ministry and volunteered in other lay ministries until 2003, when he was hired as men's outreach and recovery pastor. His wife has been on the staff for 11 years.

As men's pastor, he helps men "become wholehearted followers of Christ and develops leaders by identifying men with the capacity to develop other leaders."

Randy said Life Center's recovery ministry includes Final Freedom for men struggling with sexual addiction; Lifeline for their wives; Steps of Life, a Christ-centered 12-step program for persons struggling with addictions; Celebrate Recovery small groups; DivorceCare for people healing from separation or divorce; Abuse Recovery Ministry and Services (ARMS) for people experiencing domestic violence, and the GriefShare support group. These groups meet at the church and serve community people.

Randy coordinates efforts of members to recruit volunteers for Life Center's Community Impact Ministries.

Members can sign up on cards at church or online to volunteer with such programs as: Christ Clinic, Friend to Friend, Habitat for Humanity, Life Services, the Salvation Army, Union Gospel Mission, Anna Ogden Hall, Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery, Truth Ministry, New Hope Ranch, and Off Broadway. They can also sign up for Life Center's Help Fix-It Ministry, a "One Day" community project or evangelism.

"We develop leaders to oversee



Randy Sylvia

volunteers for these ministries so the burden does not fall on one person," Randy said.

Along with assisting at the Salvation Army food bank, Life Center raised \$20,000 in 2007 for Tom's Turkey Drive with Second Harvest. The church also helped distribute 200 turkey dinners to people they knew were in need.

These outreach ministries, he said, are "simply doing what Christ said we were supposed to do: feed the hungry, care for the poor, and visit people who are sick or in jail.

"Most people have it backwards. They think believing in Jesus is about what you receive rather than about what you give," Randy said. "I find that I receive more when I give."

He seeks to spread his experience by inviting people in the

church to go into the community to serve, so "we make a difference. We honor God by helping people become whole-hearted followers of Christ through service and evangelism."

When people serve people in need, their service builds relationships that open doors for people to ask questions, which naturally lead to sharing faith, he said.

"We want to build relationships, trust and respect," he said.

"A person does not need to be special to do ministry. One just needs to be willing," Randy said. "Through service people grow in faith. 'It makes a difference in our lives when we give of our lives. We can't out-give God. When we give, God gives back.'"

Randy sees transformed attitudes in people who give.

"I was saved through 12-step recovery. Being saved, I have done many ministries over the years. Now helping others do direct service, I hope to multiply what I do," he said.

He believes the cycle in church life is to come and be fed spiritually and then to go out and minister to others.

Given that people are in varied places in their spiritual journeys, the church offers ways to be involved in the church with child care, ushering, greeting, parking lot security, student ministry, worship and performing arts, life groups, adult classes, youth groups and more.

"We offer many small groups

as a way to bring people into relationship with God, build friendships and grow spiritually," Randy said. "It takes time to spread the

vision that people need both to be served and to serve."

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Agency on aging director expects baby boomers to boost needs

Observing that most people age gracefully, Nick Beamer, director of Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington (ALTCEW), expects that a bulge in the aging population—fueled by baby boomers and miracles in medical science—will bring both opportunities and challenges in coming decades.

According to census figures, there were more than 72,000 people 60 and older in Spokane County in 2005 and projections suggest there will be nearly 121,000 by 2020, he reported.

For those needing assistance as they age, ALTCEW promotes wellbeing, independence, dignity and choice for them and others needing long-term care.

The agency serves about 9,000 seniors in Spokane, Whitman, Stevens, Pend Oreille and North Ferry counties—13 percent of the population of older people.

He expects, for example, that nonprofits will gain volunteers with experience and expertise.

“Retirees will be a resource for our communities,” said Nick, who promotes creating “livable communities for all ages.”

While society continues to focus on youth, he challenges communities to plan to accommodate more aging people with more long-term care homes, improved health care, more adult day care, more grannie flats, increased public transportation and universal designs to make new homes accessible.

Challenges for older people include their current top concerns about access to affordable health care, housing and transportation.

Nick said three issues that create need for Aging and Long Term Care services are:

- 1) multiple medical problems;
- 2) loss of companions, friends and families—the natural caregivers, and
- 3) isolation that may lead to depression.

He also sees a need to address ageism and injustice in workplaces and society, as corporations lay off older workers first and reduce health care benefits or pension plans for people after they retire.

Recent changes in laws undercut seniors’ financial security, and Social Security is not enough income to keep up with the rising cost of living, he said.

Nick, who grew up in Spokane, earned a bachelor’s degree in bacteriology and public health at Washington State University in 1968. He worked for the Spokane County Health Department and then the City Health Department. The two agencies became the Spokane Regional Health District



Nick Beamer

in the early 1970s.

His shift from health planning to environmental health planning led him to graduate studies at the University of Michigan in health planning and administration in 1975 and 1976. He then returned to work with the Regional Health Systems Agency.

In 1987, he began work at the Eastern Washington Agency on Aging, where he could apply his health planning skills to concerns of access to care for aging people.

Started in 1978, the Eastern Washington Agency on Aging was among 700 agencies established across the nation after 1973 amendments to the 1965 Older Americans Act.

In 1994, the agency changed its name to Aging and Long Term Care in Eastern Washington to include its delivery of programs for people 18 and older, not just senior citizens. Younger people with disabilities face issues similar to those who are aging and want to remain at home.

Nick said that ALTCEW distributes federal and state funding, 93 percent of which it allocates to other public and private community agencies with which it contracts and collaborates to provide direct services. It connects people with services.

Forexample,ALTCEWcontracts

with the Spokane Neighborhood Action Program for home repairs, with the Regional Health District for senior nutrition, and with University Legal Services for legal advice. It also contracts with 3,000 individual providers in the region and monitors their service delivery.

It works through Rural Resources in Stevens and Pend Oreille counties, with Ferry County Counseling Services, with Elder Services in Spokane and with the Council on Aging in Whitman County.

In addition to the agencies with which ALTCEW collaborates, it also works with congregations and church groups.

Nick, who grew up Episcopalian, married 36 years ago and attended Covenant Christian Church for many years. Since 1993, he and his wife, Sueann, have been members of First Presbyterian, where he heads the Senior Adult Ministry Unit.

“We are to be servants for all populations,” he said. “My work at ALTCEW is an extension of his belief that we all have responsibility to care for others.”

Church agencies also assist. Catholic Charities offers volunteer transportation to take people to medical appointments and essential activities. Other church groups provide transportation informally.

ALTCEW also provides funding for delivering meals and transporting some people to senior nutrition sites.

“Congregations provide volunteers to transport Meals on Wheels and serve meals at senior centers,” Nick said. “As the need continues to rise for home-delivered meals, there is need for more volunteers.”

Nick says that congregations can also help people face medical problems, loss of caregivers and isolation by phoning and visiting homebound members and neighbors.

Friends, families, congregations, bridge clubs and granges provide natural networks of support.

“Today, families are spread out around the nation, so an older person in Spokane, Colville or Colfax may need support to stay at home,” he said.

“Even if family is in town, many cannot care for their aging parent(s) because both spouses work to support their family. If one quits—often the daughter—it reduces the family’s income. Divorce fractures families, often leaving no one to care for an aging or incapacitated person,” he said.

“We can’t replace the caregiving of families, but we can augment it by offering adult day care programs where the aging family member can spend the day while family caregivers are at work. In addition, there are in-home caregivers.”

“Seniors who are aging

successfully are a source of volunteers to provide some of these services,” Nick said.

As volunteers are stretched, he hopes people who will be retiring in the next few years will fill volunteer roles and that churches will provide more volunteers to visit, transport and deliver meals to shut-ins.

Acknowledging that care giving is stressful, he encourages thinking ahead to develop new models that adapt to the population shift, such as businesses providing adult day care, flexible hours, work via internet and family leave so employees can care for family members.

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Words shed light on ways the holy seasons can season our lives

Sure, you can sleep in our shed tonight:
out of the crowds
out of the cold
out of the way.
We don't have room in our
too busy over-worked
too full over-fed
too timed over-stretched lives.

Sleep in our shed
out in the fields
out of our sight
our of our minds.

Bear your Child—our children
out on the streets
out of fuel
out in the cold
outside the system.

It's the shed . . .

or going on begging
door-to-door
heart-to-heart
hand-to-mouth.

It's not enough,
but it's something.
It's dirty and undignified,
but it's something.
It's unsanitary and risky,
but it's something.
It's out with the animals,
but it's something.

Again and again
the Holy One comes with nothing—
weak
poor - wanting
hungry - worried
thirsty - willing
different - caring

and overcomes
dominance
dollars
desires
distrust
disinformation
defeat;
the Holy One leaves with nothing—
giving all
giving love
giving peace
giving strength
living the Word of God;
so we will want nothing
but to give ourselves freely
to those in the least
who may be the Most;
just so we can live
in the peace God intends
in the justice God plans
in the hope God gives.

This verse I wrote in 1990 reminds us in every season to be open to simpler living that our frenzy to succeed leaves behind and leads us to fear. With many of us experiencing, or having family, friends, colleagues or faith community members hit by the “economic downturn,” may we be open to invite people into our lives—to hear their complaints and pain, to help where we can, to heal where business and humanitarian organizations alike fail their employees.
May we be emboldened and empowered to raise the challenges needed to heal people, to heal faith organizations, to heal communities, to heal our nations, to heal warring peoples, to heal the world. May The Fig Tree inspire readers to deepen their faith, caring and action as we leave one year and enter another.
Mary Stamp - Editor

Negative words have consequences as real as theft, murder, adultery

We are to fear and love God so we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them or destroy their reputations. Instead, we are to come to their defense, speak well of them and interpret everything they do in the best possible light. That's the meaning of the eighth commandment from Martin Luther's small catechism.
After enduring many months of political rhetoric, we witnessed the eighth commandment—you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor—being ignored and violated on every side with gusto. After all, what would politicians do if they couldn't “spin” the issues and misrepresent their opponents in the worst possible light?
As the negative ads swirled around us, most of us were plain old disgusted, yet every study will tell us that those nega-

tive ads are used because they are always most effective. Even though we don't like them, we believe them and they powerfully shape the way we think about the other candidate.
God knows how much damage we can do to others with our words. Our negative words have lasting consequences that are every bit as real as stealing, murdering or committing adultery, yet this is the commandment we most consistently break, isn't it? We are wired to put the most dramatic spin on what someone else has done, so we have a good story to tell. If we doubt it, we can just listen to our children when they tell us how a brother or sister has wronged them.
What would it mean for us if every time we talked about another person—especially those we don't like and don't agree with—

we came to their defense, spoke well of them and interpreted everything they did in the best possible light? Would it change the conversations around our dinner tables, in school hallways, at the office or at church? What would it mean if we quit talking about all “those” people and what “they” did, and instead sought ways to build them up and support them?
The truth is, it would change us and change the world more profoundly than we realize. If we keep the eighth commandment, we can have helpful conversations with those with whom we disagree, searching for common ground as we both seek the common good. If we keep this commandment, we will be unlikely to “demonize” groups of people and be more likely to find ways to work together to make a better community.

This is the commandment we would do well to hang on our television, telephone and walls to keep us from so easily slipping into that negative spin that has so much power. If fact, we might just want to do that, to remind ourselves that God has a better way to do things.
The other promise in this commandment is that even when our neighbors look to tear us down or we are lost in that spin cycle ourselves, we have one who always speaks well of us and always comes to our defense.
We can thank God for the grace and love of Jesus for us, even when we don't deserve it. May that grace transform us and our words.
The Rev. Janine Goodrich
American Lutheran Church - Newport
Guest editorial

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

Economic language can often sound like religious language. We are in a time when fear can easily take hold. For some, that fear is real.
As one who worries about money, I know the concern about money can be real. Is it any wonder Jesus talks more about wealth and money than anything else in the Gospels? Jesus understands that many people worry if they will have enough, and yet he calls us out of our fear to trust that we don't need to stand alone in our faith.
Sure we can have “assurance of things hoped for.” That assurance, though, will find its rest in Christ and in community as we are called to be little Christs to one another. As we face uncertain times we have the opportunity to draw closer together. Do not think your problems, financial or other, need to be faced alone.
Through our community Christ will continue to work that we may be nudged toward the understanding that faith is indeed the assurance of things hoped for.
The Rev. Eric Dull
St. Mark's Lutheran

Mid-November's Gospel lesson was the Parable of the Talents, with the line, “you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and I would have received what was my own with interest.” Many have seen savings and investments greatly diminished so far, and who knows when this financial turmoil will end?
Jesus responds to the anxiety of his day with advice that is eternally relevant: “Seek first the Kingdom of God, and its righteousness” and everything else you truly need will be available.
While we're discovering “the bottom of the market,” we have a Spirit-filled opportunity to discover the “bottom of our

appetites,” to see with fresh eyes what is “enough” for our lives, enough and then some, an acceptance of sensible limits that isn't deprivation at all, but a celebration of simple abundance.
The financial news is ever-changing. There are predictions for long-term “tough times,” and the way forward out of this mess is uncertain to say the least.
Generosity is the traditional treatment for scarcity fears. The best way to feel better about your losses is to contribute to help others in worse shape.
Life itself, family, friends, community, work, health, clean air and water, the freedom to vote, and the responsibility to vote for the best interests of the future: We have so much to be grateful for, so much to energize us to help other people through these tough times.
The Rev. Jan Griffin
All Saints Episcopal - Richland

As each week brings us even more devastating news about the global economy, we are wise to offer our support for our retirees who have seen their savings drop dramatically. We are wise to offer our generous gifts to those who are most exposed: the jobless, the aged and those beyond this community who are barely able to survive.
Our own sacrificial giving is a sign that we know that we are owned wholly by God, and that all we have is a gift from God to be used to proclaim God's glory and light in the world.
The Rev. Mary Beth Rivetti
St. James Episcopal Church - Pullman

We can't help but live with concern for the state of our planet, the global economic downturn, (dare we use the word

“recession”?) and the rising costs of food and health care.
It seems that, no matter where we look, there is more bad news. In times such as these, we easily find ourselves operating from a perspective of fear and scarcity. “There's not enough to go around... We've got to hang on to what we've got.” Living out of this mindset takes its toll on people—fearful people easily become divided, angry, even sometimes “hate-filled” people.
When things seem scarce, we easily let go of a broader perspective. Our vision and our compassion close in like a tightly-clenched fist to protect ourselves and the ones like us, and yet we share a faith that is based, not upon scarcity, but abundance. Our spiritual practice is not one of hoarding, but of sharing. Our material resources, our individual talents and successes are not our birthrights, but gifts from a creative and ever-creating God.
The Rev. Kristine Zakarison
Community Congregational United Church of Christ - Pullman

What fearful times we live in. I guess every one of us has harbored fear and anxiety lately. All we have to do is turn on the news, listen to the reports, watch the stock market go up and down, see banks failing and wonder if the government can do anything. A little fear can sometimes be healthy if it causes us to think in new ways or pushes us to do things better.
The problem is fear can become a way of being and then it will kill the human spirit. It will rob us of the job of living. Like the third servant in Jesus' parable of the talents (Matt 25: 14-30), we can let fear control us. Why do we lie? Because we fear losing something. Why are we jealous? Because we fear losing someone. Why are we self-

ish? Because we fear losing our security.
In the parable, Jesus says, “Turn loose.” Let go of the fear that would control you. Let go of the fear that will lead to faithlessness. Be faithful and know that the same God that created the universe will carry you through these fearful times. As 2 Timothy 1:7 says, “For God did not give us a Spirit of fear, but of power and love and self control.” Let us live that, not only with our minds, but also with our very spirits as well.
The Rev. Ray Smith - Northwest
United Protestant - Richland

I believe The Fig Tree represents the best in Christian ecumenical journalism. As I read each issue, I become aware not only of editor Mary Stamp's careful choice of contributors and stories, but of her personal contributions that provide hope and inspiration. Hers is a voice that does not preach, but embodies the essence of Christ's mission on earth.
Where the corporate media elites have joined the ranks of the rich and famous, The Fig Tree sounds the call to justice for the poor! Yours is the voice of the prophets and Jesus, linked by the gospel to those marginalized by the greed of corporate elites. Following in Jesus' footsteps, you see the “big picture,” not blinded by single issues, more internationally minded than nationalist, and looking toward peacemaking and conflict resolution rather than fear mongering and culture wars!
You understand the integral link between personal ethics and social justice. You rightfully leave judgment in the lap of God. In terms of weaving together personal and social responsibility for the common good, The Fig Tree “gets it”! Thank you.
Jim Wallrabenstein - Spokane

NCC celebrates 100 years of ecumenism, raises concerns on immigrants, human rights

The recent annual General Assembly of the National Council of Churches (NCC) and Church World Service (CWS) in Denver celebrated 100 years of ecumenism and a renewed hope that the future of this “communion of communions” is bright.

The optimistic spirit was sparked before it began by a gathering of young adult ecumenists called “New Fire,” and organizers said it continues after the celebration, marking the 100th anniversary of the NCC’s predecessor, the Federal Council of Churches.

The assembly passed resolutions on immigration reform, the United Nations Human Rights Covenants and called for an end to the persecution of Christians in India. They also called the NCC and CWS to speak out on the current worldwide financial crisis.

The delegates asked the NCC

Governing Board to create a young adult ministries staff position, to work closely with world ecumenical bodies to create a common calendar for worldwide ecumenical events and a website to link to ecumenical bodies.

Noting messages of good will from international colleagues on the recent presidential election, delegates asked NCC general secretary Michael Kinnamon and CWS executive director John McCullough to write them letters “expressing gratitude for their concern and affirming our continued concern for their social and political contexts.”

The Rev. Otis Moss III, pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, said the election of Barack Obama as President stirred joy globally, but he is concerned that many think racism is over.

“Success is not defined individ-

ually. It is defined collectively,” Moss said. “This moment did not just happen overnight. People of the (preceding) generation sacrificed so this moment would be possible. As collective history, a history of struggle, we stand on the shoulders of those who have allowed us to be where we are.

“As a community of faith, we cannot be satisfied so long as 40 million are without health care, we have a drop-out rate of 50 percent, and there is illiteracy,” he said. “We cannot be satisfied until we see justice roll down like a river, beat our swords into plow shares, see lions living with lambs, know every child who is hungry can be fed, then we can be a perfect union. There is a crown above our heads that one day we will be tall enough to wear.”

For information, call 212-870-2228 or visit ncccusa.org.

40th ‘Messiah’ sing-along is Dec. 7

For nearly 40 years, First Presbyterian Church of Spokane has hosted a community sing-along of Handel’s “Messiah.” The 2008 sing-a-long will be performed at 7 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 7, at the church, 318 S. Cedar. Singers will rehearse at 5 p.m.


Justin Mather conducted the first performance of “Messiah” at First Presbyterian in December 1910, six months after the building was dedicated. He and other directors led performances in the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1956, Milton Johnson, head of Whitworth’s music department, organized annual choral/orchestral performances of “Messiah” at the Coliseum with First Presbyterian soloists and choir. He became music director at First Presbyterian in 1959. Annual community sing-alongs of “Messiah” at Christmas began in 1968.


The 1975 and 1976 performances were in the new Opera House. After Milton retired in 1988, the church’s choir directors continued the event with Spokane Symphony musicians and the church’s quartet.

For 2008, Paul Featherstone, pastor of worship arts and administration at Fourth Memorial Church in Spokane, returns as guest conductor.

For information, visit www.spokaneffc.org or call 535-2166.



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Calendar of Events

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| To Dec 14 | • Tree of Sharing , Valley, Northtown and Riverpark Square Malls, Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ - 624-1366 |
| Dec 4 | • “Posada,” Catholicism for the New Millennium, Mark McGregor, Scott Cooper and Ivonne Guillen, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:30 p.m. |
| Dec 5-7 | • The Nutcracker, Alberta Ballet & Spokane Symphony , INB Performing Arts Center, Friday, 7:30 p.m., Saturday, 2 and 7:30 p.m., Sunday, 2 p.m., 800.325-SEAT |
| Dec 6 | • “A Time to Be Born,” Shonna Bartlett, The Ministry Institute, 405 E Sinto, 10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., 313-6012 |
| Dec 7 | • Alternative Gift Fair , Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Ft. Wright Drive, 10:15-11 a.m. and noon-2 p.m.
• “A Christmas in Wales,” Connoisseur Concerts, St. John’s Cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave., 4 and 7 p.m., Spokane Youth Orchestra ensembles play pre-concert music, 3 and 6 p.m.
• Messiah Community Sing-along Concert , First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar St., 5 p.m. Community singers rehearsal, 6 p.m. concert - 747-1058 |
| Dec 8 | • Interfaith Council Board , Center for Creative Living, 32nd & Grand, 5 p.m., 212-6090 |
| Dec 10 | • Human Rights Day Community Celebration , Hagan Centre, Spokane Community College, 1810 S. Greene, 6:30 p.m., 456-2382 |
| Dec 11 | • The Fig Tree Board , Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 1 p.m. |
| Dec 11,12 | • Singing Nuns , Bing Crosby Theatre, 3 and 7:30 p.m. |
| Dec 12, 13 | • Whitworth Christmas Festival Concerts , First Presbyterian, 318 S. Cedar, Friday, 8 p.m., Saturday, 3 and 7 p.m., 777-3280. |
| Dec 16 | • Washington Association of Churches gathering with ELCA Bishop Martin Wells and WAC director Alice Woldt to discuss renewed statewide ecumenical ministry, Salem Lutheran Church, 1428 W. Broadway, 4 p.m., 535-1813 |
| Dec 21 | • German American Christmas Service , Concordia Choir, Eberhardt Schmidt, St. Mark’s Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 3 p.m. |
| Dec 31 | • First Night Spokane , visual and performing arts, downtown Spokane, 4 p.m. - midnight - 252-5027 |
| Jan 7 | • Fig Tree distribution , St. Mark’s Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m. |
| Jan 8 | • Fig Tree Board , Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 1 p.m. |
| Weds-Sat | • Habitat-Spokane work days - call 534-2552 |
| Thursdays | • PJALS street vigil against the Iraq War , Riverside and Monroe 4:30 p.m. - 838-7870. |
| Fridays | • Colville Peace Vigil - 675-4554 |
| 1st Sat | • Ministers’ Fellowship Union and Minister’s Wives/Widows Fellowship , 806 W. Indiana - 624-0522 |
| 3rd Mons | • NAACP - 467-9793 |

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Women gain voices through photographic art in a traveling exhibit

By Deidre Jacobson

With donated cameras and film, 12 women at the Women's Hearth gained voices and self-awareness as they participated in 10 weeks of photography classes and created photographs for the "Eye C: Perspectives" photography exhibit last spring.

Photos of birds in leafless tree branches, Spokane Falls, a toilet, hands knitting, a close-up of ice, a street at sunset and a boy swimming were among images inspired by poetry on eight themes about women growing and changing. The themes were February, wind, community, infinity, fortress strength, magic suitcase, growth and self-portrait.

The exhibit, which was part of the 2008 Spokane Art Walk on May 2 gained renewed recognition in October when the Women's Hearth received the 2008 Bold Strokes Special Achievement Award from the Spokane Arts Commission.

The award was granted to the organization for "changing the community through art," by helping women grow, change and contribute to the community.

The "Eye C: Perspectives" exhibit was on display in November at the Intercollegiate College of Nursing, 2917 Fort Wright Dr., and will be on display in December at the Community Building, 35 W. Main. The plan is to keep it circulating in different locations. Photographs were also used for the 2009 Transitions calendar given out at the Women Who Care Breakfast and Luncheon in November.

Plans are in the works to start another class.

Art forms continue to flourish at the Women's Hearth day center for low-income, homeless and other women downtown.

Women have sculpted, written and painted their way to healing from abuse, isolation, addiction and broken relationships since the Dominican Sisters, Sisters of the Holy Names, Sisters of Providence and Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia started the Women's Drop-In Center in 1991. It is now part of Transitions, which was formed in 1995 and includes Miryam's House, EduCare and the Transitional Living Center.



Michelle Schlinger speaks at a photography exhibit event at the Unitarian Universalist Church.

Other arts include writing and poetry, knitting and crocheting, copper tooling, crafts projects and music, including a drumming circle, piano lessons and a singing group.

Encouraged by Mary Rathert, Women's Hearth director for 10 years, the arts have been integral services for the women as well as 12-step meetings, support groups, life-skills classes, access to basic needs, referrals for social services and a technology center.

They are as important in building self-esteem and fostering community as meals, meetings, speakers and events, said Mary.

She sees healing and growth in the women when they are encouraged to use their creative gifts.

"The arts bring so much out in the women," Mary said. "As we witness the growth of their talent and creativity, we see that art builds self-esteem. In our need for affirmation, love and friendship, we are more alike than different. There is power in realizing one's talents."

Through AmeriCorps, the Women's Hearth now has an arts coordinator position, which is filled by Stephanie Burgess, who has a master's degree in music and wanted to do something directly with women in need.

She organized the "Eye C: Perspectives" photography project, inspired by a 2004 documentary, "Born into Brothels," in which women were given cameras to

explore their world and educate people.

"I found the photographers' perspectives made their art remarkable," said Stephanie.

"I was moved by the pride the women took in their work and their joy in sharing it with the community. At the Women's Hearth, we emphasize support of women's art, so women feel affirmed and are encouraged to create, share and grow in their artistic capabilities."

Dorothy Detlor, a photographer who retired as dean of Washington State University's Intercollegiate College of Nursing, volunteered as the primary instructor for the photography classes. Gonzaga students, Kat Brauer and Adam Membrey, and AmeriCorps member Megan Mulcaire-Jones helped select photos for the display and advised on photography skills.

Classes included lessons on basic, technical aspects of photography.

After each lesson, women discussed the images they took the previous week and what meaning they found in the photo. Sharing what the photos said about their lives was therapeutic and supportive for many, said Stephanie.

At the close of each class, the women received a copy of a poem and a theme for the week's photographs based on the poem.

Themes progressed from the external world to the internal world of self.

In 2002, the then Women's Drop In Center participated in Spokane's First Friday Art Walk, showcasing the participants' drawings, sculpture, poetry and self-portraits.

In July 2004, with opening the new site at 920 W. Second and the name change to Women's Hearth, staff, volunteers and participants marched to the new building carrying pieces of art to decorate the new "home away from home" for many downtown women.

Former Transitions board member the Rev. Brenda Tudor, nominated the program for the Bold Strokes award.

"The Women's Hearth's work of feeding, clothing, housing and educating is basic, but for the spirit to thrive, the women must have art," she said.

For information, call 455-4249.



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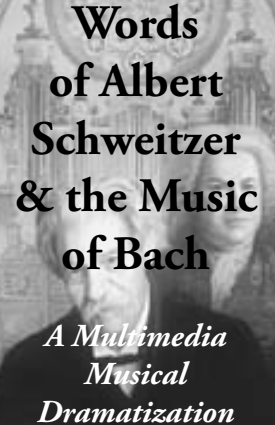
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