

**CELEBRATING
OUR 30TH YEAR**

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*Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest
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Art conveys culture, history, values

By Mary Stamp

Guatemalan Mayan painter Benedicto Ixtamer found that he can use his skills painting to earn a living by selling art to tourists in Guatemala, and at art sales and shows in the United States.

His vibrant red, orange, blue, green, yellow and purple paintings capture the people, history, culture, faith and nature of his hometown, San Juan La Laguna, a Mayan community of 10,000 on the shores of Lake Atitlan in the Guatemalan highlands.

His art, like the Mayan textiles his ancestors made for centuries, is full of colorful patterns and indigenous designs.

Benedicto was recently in Spokane for the first time as a new vendor at the Jubilee International Marketplace at First Presbyterian Church.

He learned about that event from Sandi and Brian Thompson Royer, members of Bethany Presbyterian Church in Spokane. They are serving as mission co-workers with the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala. He helped arrange a home stay for them in his home town.

Benedicto's father wanted him to quit school after the sixth grade to



Benedicto Ixtamer's art catches elders' perspectives, a bird's eye view.

work in the fields picking coffee for \$2 a day. His father also had to feed two daughters and six other sons, but the oldest three had continued studies. He told Benedicto, "You have to work so you can eat."

Benedicto not only found ways to earn money so he could go to school and eventually earn a living as an artist, but now he also helps provide scholarships, so children from poor families can be educated, and he provides jobs through the various steps of creating paintings.

"As a young teen, I worked harder and carried sand, so I could pay 15 quetzales for tuition. I had homework, too," he said.

After three more years, he wanted to continue studies. Again, his father said, "No," but Benedicto left home at 17 to live in the city with an older brother.

He carried propane gas and paper to recycle, but he didn't earn enough, so in 1999 he went home to San Juan La Laguna. Still wanting to study to be a teacher, he walked 15 minutes to school in neighboring San Pedro, a tourist town.

One day while Benedicto was sitting on the porch of his parent's home, a foreigner stopped and asked the way to San Pedro. Bene-

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Tri-Parish celebrates its 40th year of ecumenical covenantal relationship

As laity and clergy in St. Mary's Catholic, Advent Lutheran and Resurrection Episcopal churches in Spokane Valley celebrated 40 years of informal and covenantal relationship, they reflected on the impact of these ties on their lives, the community and the world.

They gathered Sunday, Nov. 23, at the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection, 15319 E. 8th Ave., for their annual Thanksgiving Service, and to have their bishops, pastors and lay members sign and renew the Tri-Parish Covenant.

The relationship began when the late Fr. Walt Abel called the



The Rev. Neal Buckaloo

Rev. Neal Buckaloo at Good Shepherd and the late Rev. Morgan Sheldon of Holy Spirit Episcopal. They met for coffee and talked about practical ways to come together.

Morgan and Neal spoke at the St. Mary's men's breakfast, which soon invited men from the other churches, said Neal after the recent service.

In the early 1970s, Fr. Abel invited Neal to participate in a wedding between a young woman in the Lutheran church and a Catholic man.

The first Thanksgiving Vigil was in 1976. In 1977, there was a pulpit exchange during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January. They began doing a cooperative vacation Bible school in 1978.

Neal, who served Good Shepherd from 1970 until just before the first covenant was signed in 1984, and again from 2003 to 2006, said the vacation Bible school was the impetus that brought lay members together from different churches.

Continued on page 6

Tree of Sharing will fill 7,000 requests for gifts

More than 600 volunteers will serve two-hour shifts at Tree of Sharing tables open from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., from Friday, Nov. 21 to Sunday, Dec. 14, at NorthTown, Riverpark Square and Spokane Valley malls.

They have 7,000 gift requests from 46 agencies this year to help make Christmas brighter for children, adults and seniors, said the new co-directors of the Tree of Sharing, Carl and Joan McConnell.

They will visit the malls every day.

Over the years, the McConnell family has participated by picking up tags at the malls, buying gifts and bringing them back to the mall.

Carl first learned about the program in 1982, when the Spokane Mental Health Center, where he worked at the time, held a party to wrap gifts brought from the Tree of Sharing. Children he worked with over the year were some of the recipients of gifts. He coordinated the Tree of Sharing program there for 15 years.

Carl has volunteered with the Tree of Sharing for two years and managed the gift warehouse last year. From his work in mental health, he is familiar with the agencies making requests. Carl and Joan volunteered at the mall tables for five years.

Carl grew up in Spokane, earned a bachelor's in psychology in 1970 and a master's in 1986 at Eastern Washington University. He worked more than 20 years with mental health agencies—Mid Columbia Mental Health in Tri Cities and Spokane Mental Health—and 10 years as a public school counselor with ESD #101 and Central Valley Schools. He

Continued on page 3

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Cyprus is a first stop in pilgrimage to peace and justice

While the Church of Cyprus, a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC), seeks unity for its island, it and other Cypriot churches recognize the challenge of healing wounds from the Turkish invasion 40 years ago.

Participants in the WCC Executive Committee meeting Nov. 20 to 26 in Paralimni, Cyprus, prayed in a church in the Turkish region for steps to remove the border between Turkish Cypriots in the northern third and Greek Cypriots in the southern two-thirds. Metropolitan Vasilios, spiritual head of the Diocese of Constantia-Ammochostos in Cyprus, led the prayer. He lost five family members in the 1974 invasion, but he hopes for a peaceful, united island for Greek and Turkish Cypriots. His aspirations resonate with the call for a "pilgrimage of justice and peace" issued by the WCC 10th Assembly in 2013 in Busan, Republic of Korea.

The WCC general secretary, the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, called Cyprus a station for the pilgrimage, which is a way to continue the ecumenical movement and a way to move forward that offers new dimensions, opportunities and practices, he said, adding, "We have to move as the world moves into new landscapes of time and events. We need to move in ways that exemplify mission from the margins. We need to move into new relations with other churches and partners, and the new generation."

United Nations peacekeeping forces estimate that 165,000 Greek Cypriots fled from the north to the south during the invasion, and 45,000 Turkish Cypriots from the south to the north. The invasion killed 6,000 soldiers and civilians (two percent of the male population). Another 1,619 men and women, of whom 1,536 were Greek Cypriots and 83 Greeks, never returned. In 1983, the Turkish area declared itself the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Turkey, which keeps more than 30,000 troops there.

The island's separation distresses Vasilios, who spent his youth in the area now held by Turkey. He still is not used to crossing the border to attend church events. "As bishop, I attend several church celebrations there. Being told this part of the island is not my home and needing permission to enter is painful," he said.

The invasion also damaged archaeological sites, monasteries, ancient churches, cemeteries, monuments and worship places precious to the people of faith. More than 500 churches were desecrated.

"Healing wounds is hard," said Vasilios, a member of the WCC Central Committee. "Any family has wounds from the invasion from people who were killed or remain missing. Taking steps towards reconciliation is not easy, but we must do it for the sake of unity of our country."

The first step towards dissolving the border is to rebuild relations among ordinary people, he said. To do that, religious leaders must create an environment that promotes the unity of Cypriots.

"We are called to find new expressions of unity in solidarity with suffering Christians in many parts of the world," Olav said in his presentation to the committee. "We are called to unity to serve the world together in its God-given longing for justice and peace. The world with its overwhelming crises needs people of faith who are willing to let their faith be more than positions of the past or identities that separate us."

The WCC meeting considered peace initiatives in Syria and Iraq, Ukraine, North and South Korea, Israel and Palestine, Nigeria, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It condemned violence in Gaza and pledged to continue to monitor "developments closely and to accompany churches and people in their search for a just peace" in Palestine and Israel.

Other WCC initiatives include the Interfaith Summit on Climate Change; specialized ministries in development, relief, human rights, climate justice and advocacy; global response on HIV and AIDS; a timely response to the Ebola crisis; collaboration with UNICEF on children's rights, the search for unity with the Roman Catholic Church, and interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Conference looks at 'Raising Prophetic Voices'

"Raising Prophetic Voices: Faith Communities Advocate for Justice" will be the theme for the 2015 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 31, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave.

Workshops will address issues related to coal and oil transport, Avista moving from 20 percent coal generation, and climate change; Columbia River Treaty and watershed policy issues; and wealth inequality related to bills on wage theft and minimum wage.

Sarah Ahmed of the Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East, will discuss interfaith reconciliation in Iraq. Hosted in Spokane by Pax Christi, she will speak at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 29, at Gonzaga's Jepson Hall.

The Rev. Paul Benz of the Faith Action Network of Washington and a representative of the Washington State Catholic Conference will bring legislative updates on the state budget, food and hunger programs, farmers' market nutrition, repealing tax exemptions, housing and homelessness, and

environmental issues that are coming before the 2015 Washington State legislature.

Roberta Wilburn, associate dean of graduate studies in education at Whitworth University, will speak on proposals related to K-12 education, the school-to-prison pipeline, the need for more faculty of color and other education issues.

The Fig Tree, Catholic Charities of Spokane and the Faith Action Network are organizing the event.

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

Organists organize carol sing and walk

The American Guild of Organists (AGO) in Spokane is starting what it hopes will be a new Christmas tradition for people to involve families and friends.

They are sponsoring the first annual Downtown Spokane Christmas Walk and Carol Sing from 4 to 6 p.m., Friday, Dec. 26, beginning at Central United Methodist Church, 518 W. Third.

Two other downtown churches will share in hosting the event, which will feature "hearing beautiful organ music, enjoying Christmas decorations with family and friends," said Carolyn Payne of the AGO.

After singing carols at Central United Methodist, people will walk from 4:30 to 4:45 p.m. two blocks west to Westminster

Congregational United Church of Christ, 411 S. Washington St.

Then at 5:15, the people will walk two blocks to Central Lutheran Church, 512 S. Bernard, for more singing, organ music and refreshments.

Parking is under I-90 across from Central United Methodist.

For information, call 535-7145 or email thepaynes@comcast.net.

Local group plans consultation on UN goals

The United Nations Association (UNA) of Spokane and Gonzaga University's Center for Global Engagement are holding a Community Consultation from 2 to 4:30 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 6, in Room 101 of Gonzaga University's College Hall.

Spokane City Council President Ben Stuckart and Mark Kadel, director of World Relief Spokane,

will give an overview of issues, such as affordable housing, transit systems, food production and refugee concerns, followed by small group discussions.

"The United States, other UN member states and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are preparing Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and seek input from our community," said

Stacy Taninchev, coordinator.

As the Millennium Development Goals expire in 2015, this effort will engage countries in setting their own national targets.

Other participating organizations include the Center for Justice, Futurewise, Refugee Connections and World Relief.

For information, call 313-3610 or email taninchev@gonzaga.edu.

Events reflect on themes of Advent season

The Dec. 17 Coffee and Contemplation session at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center features a spiritual discussion and prayer for people across denominations with Carolyn Terry on "The Gift of Wait Time: How do we learn the value of waiting in the midst of a fast service culture?"

Carolyn was an Episcopal missionary in the Philippines for five

years, and a public school and Christian educator for adults and children for 50 years.

Fr. Armand Nigro, SJ, and Sister Sharon Borgiomo, FSPA, will lead an Advent Weekend Retreat on "Walking with Mary through the Advent Season" Dec. 19 to 21. It includes guided sessions on mysteries of the season.

Fr. Mitch Pacwa, SJ, will lead

a Weekend Retreat for Men and Women Jan. 23 to 25 on "How to Listen When God is Speaking: A Guide for Modern-Day Catholics."

These events will be held at the retreat center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd.

For information, call 448-1224, ext. 109 or email programs@ihrc.net.

German Christmas service is Dec. 21

The annual German Christmas Service will be held at 3 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 21 at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave.

The service will be given in German and English and will be officiated by Pastor James Stern.

Traditional German Christmas Carols will be sung before and during the service by the Concordia Choir.

A reception will follow the service at the Deutsches Haus at 25 W. Third.

For information, email info@germanamericansociety-spokane.org.

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Tree of Sharing gives shoppers chance to buy gifts

Continued from page 1
retired in August 2013.

In 1978, he met Joan, who graduated from the nursing school at the university of Wisconsin in 1971 and earned a master's in psychiatric mental health nursing from the University of Washington in 1977.

Joan taught nursing at Washington State University/Intercollegiate Center for Nursing and did nursing administration work at Eastern State Hospital and Sacred Heart Medical Center before working in Residential Care Services for the Department of Social and Health Services. She retired in May.

Spokane Mental Health's Child and Family Program was a part of the first year of the Tree of Sharing, when 650 gifts were received. They are still part of it.

In 1980, Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ started the Tree of Sharing, an independent nonprofit since 2011. KREM TV became a sponsor in 1982. Run by volunteers, the project continues to serve a growing number of agencies and individuals.

This year Christ Kitchen and four agencies who serve young children are new to the program.

Agencies make gift requests by mid October. If people call in December to request gifts, volunteers refer them to Toys for Tots, the Spokesman-Review's Christmas Bureau or other agencies.

Joan said that notebooks at each of the mall tables describe the work of participating agencies.



Carl and Joan McConnell take over leadership.

After requests come in during October, volunteers prepare tags with descriptions of requests.

"Some people are at assisted living centers and have no family or friends to give them gifts, so a Tree of Sharing gift can make their day," Joan said. "Some people have no one in their lives. Volunteers do the work out of the goodness of their hearts."

This year, NorthTown mall gave them a 3,000-square-foot space in an empty store to use for four weeks as their warehouse.

After gifts are taken to Tree of Sharing tables at the malls, the Washington Air National Guard picks them up twice a week and takes them to the warehouse. Volunteers sort the gifts based on the bar-coded tags. Agencies that made the requests pick up the gifts at the warehouse.

"Some agencies have many requests, so we try not to save up

gifts, but to sort them and have agencies pick them up two or three times," he said.

The program also needs financial donations, volunteers and people to pick up tags.

"It's a small effort with a small budget," Carl said. "If some tags are not filled, donations from individuals and some local corporations help fill requests. Numerica Credit Union, Cancer Care Northwest, Life Center and several other agencies each take up to 200 or more tags. Some put up their own trees with the tags."

Advance organizing happens from August to December.

Tree of Sharing partners are Asuris, KREM, the Air National Guard, the STCU and Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ.

For information, call 808-4909 or email mcconnelltos@gmail.com.

Fig Tree's year-end goal is to raise \$7,500

As The Fig Tree's 30th anniversary year, 2014, draws to a close, it is sending out its annual year-end donation notices, inviting readers to renew their sponsorship or become sponsors.

"The end of the year is when we receive the most donations beyond our Benefit Breakfast and Benefit Lunch," said editor Mary Stamp.

This year, The Fig Tree's year-end goal is to raise \$6,500 more from individual sponsors, plus \$1,000 more for bulk sponsors.

"Beyond that, we also welcome people to consider three- to five-year pledges to help us reach the goal of \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year to cover the cost of additional staffing," she said.

"With donations received and pledges, we received \$10,000 beyond the annual benefit event goal of \$20,000, and we plan to reach out to invite some major donations during 2015 and beyond."

The Fig Tree is also gearing

up for its 2015 benefits and has begun to recruit hosts for tables.

"We welcome people to call us about hosting a table or reserving a place at a table," Mary said.

The Fig Tree recently sent a letter to congregations that receive bulk orders of the print newspaper to distribute to members after worship or at events.

"We seek to learn how they are using the copies and the stories that we share, what stories they have to share and whether they would like us to visit and share our story," Mary added.

The Fig Tree is also recruiting volunteers to help write, edit, deliver, plan events, and do mailings, displays and office work.

During 2014, The Fig Tree received several grants: \$1,000 from Sisters of Providence for the 30th anniversary, \$250 from the Catholic Foundation for web development and \$3,000 from the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary for capacity building and volunteer recruitment.

For information, call 535-1813 or 535-4112, or email mary@thefigtree.org.

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FAITH ACTION NETWORK Catholic Charities Spokane The Fig Tree

Artist persisted to work hard and support his studies, now helps others

Continued from page 1

dicto was going there and said he would walk him there. The man did not speak Spanish, and Benedicto did not speak English. The road was rough. Benedicto told him in Spanish to be careful. The man said the same in English. They learned that when they found a translator in San Pedro.

The tourist asked Benedicto to be his guide for a hike to the volcano. When he finished the hike, the man asked, "How much?" Benedicto realized a walk to the volcano could be a job. The tourist paid him 300 quetzales (\$50), a lot of money for him, and then took him to lunch.

Benedicto paid two months tuition, became a tour guide and started to learn some English from friends and tourists. Now he can translate not only from Spanish but also from his native Tz'utujil Mayan language.

In primary school, a teacher had seen that Benedicto enjoyed drawing and asked him to draw the subject for the class and then hang it on the wall. One day, an old woman asked him to paint a mother and child for Mother's Day. She asks him every year.

"I painted with crayons first and then with oil colors. When I asked my father for oil colors, he gave me three colors, blue, red and yellow. With that, I painted on cardboard and then used my mother's backstrap weavings as canvas. I kept exploring and building skill painting," he said.

His father continued to question the value of art.

"I did not know I could make a living with art," Benedicto said.

"I had a wall two meters by three meters filled with paintings. A foreign visitor I guided to the mountain asked to see my paintings, so I took him to my home after a tour. He wanted to buy all the pieces and paid me well.

"He inspired me to make painting my job. My father couldn't believe it when I sold the paintings," he said. "I painted more and bought more art supplies."

Through connections with tourists, he started in 2004 to come to the United States to sell art in art shows.

He still teaches Spanish in a Spanish school run by his family in his hometown, but basically his life is about his art.

In 2005, he went to the university in Xela Quetzaltenago to study communication, radio, TV and newspaper. He did an internship with Mayan TV. He quit for a while, but went back in 2007 and graduated in June 2014.

"I want to do art, write newspaper stories, and tell stories on TV and the radio. Media are also art expressions," he said.

Now Benedicto and his wife, Maria, who in her early years also worked hard, picking up rocks and filling bags to sell for building, raise funds with friends for scholarships to help 50 children from poor families go to school through graduation. Some are now teachers, accountants and secretaries.

They also coordinate a food program for poor families.

Friends from the United States help buy food so they can provide corn, beans, eggs, rice and other basics. They run a community

garden with friends, planting vegetables and harvesting them, so they and others can eat greens.

Their first child, who is now 12, is part of their team. They also have a two-year-old.

"We respect everyone in different religions. In our programs, we do not see religion. We serve anyone," said Benedicto, who has faith that God will help him through difficulties as God has in the past.

His art production involves and employs more than Maria and him.

"My art is like a string, connecting people who need work," he said. "I'm happy to sell to people who want to learn about our culture. They provide money, so I can provide more jobs. We all hold hands and work together. I meet many nice people in the process.

"What we need is for the world to work together as a team," he said, describing some of the different tasks he hires people to do.

- Guatemalan mothers weave the canvas.
- Others make the yarn they use.
- A backstrap loom is just 26 inches wide, so he also involves some weavers who use foot looms.
- Young people come, stretch canvas and staple it on wood frames.
- Carpenters make the frames.
- Benedicto talks with Mayan elders to gain ideas. The Mayan culture is the cornerstone of his art.

"I listen to them as they talk in colors, images and history. I love to capture the history, life and

culture of the people in drawings. I take them home and then work in colors to paint.

"Part of our history is not written. The grandfathers, who are 97 to 100, are dying. They tell stories from 1524, stories they heard from their grandfathers. Some ancestors went up the hill to escape the conquistadors. They came back as birds, flying over the town to see what was happening. There are sculptures of birds on roofs. Birds are also guardians watching over and taking care of us."

Benedicto seeks to capture the history elders share in his art.

In his art, he helps people see from different perspectives, looking at people and culture through a normal, native view, from a bird's eye view, from a fish view (at an angle) and from an ant's view.

For example, he explores how a fish would see people from the lake. The sky is the background with the sun at the center. People have big hands and feet.

"God is big and makes things

simple and in color. That's included in my art and expression," Benedicto said.

To bring paintings to the U.S., he takes them off the frames, rolling them and putting them in tubes. Then he stretches them to display.

In the U.S., he has shows at galleries, festivals, art shows, corporate headquarters, universities and wherever he makes contacts.

Benedicto spent two weeks in Spokane and then went to Fox Island to meet people who are helping in Guatemala. He was in the United States this time for two months to do sales and networking.

For information, call 563-594-8479, email benedictomayanartist@gmail.com or visit www.benedictomayanartist.org.

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Diocese chooses Fr. Michael Savelesky as administrator

Father Michael Savelesky has been elected administrator of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane by its College of Consultors.

He will be in charge of the diocese until a new bishop is selected, reported Eric Meisfjord, editor of The Inland Register.

"On Sept. 20, the transfer of Archbishop Blase Cupich from Spokane to the Archdiocese of Chicago was announced. The See of Spokane became vacant on Nov. 18, when he was installed as the Archbishop of Chicago," he said.

Church law requires the College of Consultors to meet within eight days to elect the administra-

tor. The College of Consultors is a group of seven priests, selected by Bishop Cupich from the Presbyteral Council.

There is no formal liturgical ritual to install the administrator. After accepting election as administrator, Fr. Mike made a profession of faith to the College of Consultors.

He will govern the Diocese of Spokane until a new bishop is appointed by the Pope and takes canonical possession of the diocese. He exercises the administrative authority of a bishop, but cannot initiate new policies, programs or ministries, nor substantially alter existing ones, Eric said.

Fr. Mike was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Bernard Topel on Aug. 4, 1973. He served as director of deacon formation, rector of Bishop White Seminary and editor of the diocesan newspaper, the Inland Register. He has been pastor of St. Patrick and St. Francis of Assisi parishes in Walla Walla, and of St. Peter Parish and then Assumption Parish, in Spokane. He has also been vicar general for internal matters

He presently is the diocese's moderator of the Curia, pastor of the parishes in Rosalia and St. John, and administrator of the parish in Cheney.

For information, call 358-7340.

Immaculate Heart Retreat Center

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Pastor continues to share King's dream and challenge youth to work hard

The Rev. Happy Watkins will give Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech at the 2015 Martin Luther King Day rally and march in Spokane, as well as throughout the community and region.

The rally begins at 10 a.m., Monday, Jan. 19, at the Spokane Convention Center.

For many years, he served on the Martin Luther King Day planning committee with Ivan Bush and on the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center board.

Two years ago, he gave the speech that day at the Idaho State House in Boise. Last year, he did not come to the Spokane event.

"Some people thought I wasn't doing it any more," he said, "but I continue to do it."

Many years, he would give it 20 to 25 times in the two weeks before Martin Luther King Jr. Day at elementary, middle and high schools, and universities. Because he has had two knee replacement surgeries, he expects to speak just 15 times in 2015.

He has spoken at 12 high schools, six middle schools, three grade schools in Spokane and Spokane Valley, plus elementary, middle and high schools in Cashmere, Cheney, Chewelah, Clarkston, Colbert, Colville, Creston, Deer Park, Fairchild, Hunters, Medical Lake, Moses Lake, Pasco, Springdale and Wilbur in Washington, and Coeur d'Alene, Genesee, Lewiston, Post Falls, Rathdrum, Sandpoint, Spirit Lake and Boise in Idaho, and Portland, Ore.

He has also presented it at Holy Family, Deaconess and Sacred Heart Medical Centers and at Whitworth, Gonzaga, Eastern Washington and Washington State universities, the University of Idaho, Spokane Falls Community College, Spokane Community College and North Idaho College.

Happy, who is pastor at New Hope Baptist Church in Spokane, listed about 25 high schools, 10 middle schools, 20 grade schools and five area universities where he has spoken since first reading the speech in 1968 at Hutton Elementary School in Spokane.

If his knee is okay, he will go to his home in the Bronx and preach the speech the second Sunday of January for his six living brothers and sisters, his many nieces and nephews, and the congregation at the Mt. Zion Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

"Everywhere I go, I want to dispel the image this area has," he said.

Beyond the words about King's dream—that "one day" sons of former slaves and former slave owners would sit down at the



The Rev. Percy "Happy" Watkins continues to speak.

table together, that valleys would be raised and mountains lowered, and that black and white boys and girls would hold hands—his message challenges people to work hard.

While some may think the dream is just for the hereafter and not to be realized on earth, Happy said that "we can continue to work for racial equality, as we worked to alleviate segregation and Jim Crow laws."

Happy said King knew his death was on the horizon when he spoke April 3, 1968, in Memphis about having "been to the mountaintop and having seen the other side." He knew he would not get there with the people, but believed they would enter the Promised Land.

"Think of how people gave up their lives in the civil rights movement, trying to fulfill the dream here," he said.

People have persisted in working hard to help young people be educated and find jobs, he said.

Speaking for the 2014 Juneteenth Day in Spokane at the Airway Heights Corrections Center, he saw more black men than there are in area universities, community colleges and trade schools.

Many tell him, "I didn't listen to my Mom and Dad."

Happy has met with men and women incarcerated at Pine Lodge and Geiger, as well as with men at Airway Heights.

"Hearing their stories, I realize that if they would focus on family, home and the kitchen table, it would reduce recidivism," he said. "We need to have young men and women go back to raising their families."

On the day of the interview with The Fig Tree, he knew that

10 young men were waiting at the county courthouse to be sentenced. They came from good families, from church families.

"Dr. King's message to young people was for them to be the best they can be," said Happy, whose message to children and youth is for them to work hard in studies and at work, as King did.

"It's not just a black dream. It's for all races. It's also about the fight for legalizing immigrants and respecting the first African American president," he said.

Along with the "I Have a Dream" speech, he gives a message for young people.

"It comes down to family, home and the kitchen table," Happy said. "I talk about that everywhere."

"Our first and best teachers are our parents. Our first school is our home. Our most important piece of furniture in our house is the kitchen table. Our houses are built of walls, but a home is built of love and dreams."

Happy often asks children what the most important piece of furniture is. It's not the couch, computer, chair or bed. It's the kitchen table.

He also asks children and youth what their goals are.

At two Spokane Catholic schools, they were clear: vet, radiologist, CEO, dentist, doctor or scientist. When he asked about student's goals at a small town school, they said they wanted their parents stop to fighting or stop doing drugs. Happy left crying.

In a North Idaho community, he found that a high percentage of teens were abusing alcohol, addicted to drugs or pregnant. He told them that they can be what they want to be and urged them

to start working for it.

Happy was heartened when a high school teacher in Sandpoint asked for his address, and a few days later a box arrived with 90 neatly typed letters from students telling him that his speech inspired them to want to finish school and go on to college.

"When I feel down, I read those, and it picks me up," he said.

Another time, when he came into a school, a girl with Down syndrome broke away from her group to come over to hug him. During the assembly, he called her to come up and said, "If the world saw through her eyes, what a wonderful world it would be."

In Cashmere, he saw children of orchard owners going to school with children of Mexican workers.

By taking time to talk with children, Happy has done much to educate many generations of children over 46 years.

"I want kids to know that somehow, someday, something will happen if they believe in themselves and work hard," Happy said.

Families who gather around the kitchen table sit, talk and share life, stories and dreams, he said.

"I was the oldest of 10 children in a poor family in the Bronx. My mother would cook lima beans, red kidney beans or pinto beans, and it was enough to feed us. She told us to study, be good citizens and do the best we could. Before we went to bed, she prayed. Then she gave us each a spoonful of cod liver oil," Happy said.

Spokane lacked the diversity he knew growing up, and he at first wanted to go back to the Bronx, but he decided to stay.

Schools will start calling Happy in December to set up times in the first two weeks of January—as his health allows—for him to give the "I Have a Dream" speech and talk with children and youth.

"The dream has validity," he said. "We as people need to work together toward it. We need to remember that the measure of men or women is where they stand in moments of challenges and controversies."

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Bishops, pastors and lay people sign the new covenant agreement

Continued from page 1

“Each church hosted a different age group, and the staff at each church was mixed,” he said. “It was part of the ecumenical spirit of the times.

Lay people told each new priest and pastor the Tri-Parish was important. The commitment of lay people is what has sustained it, Neal said.

The churches held open houses and did combined youth retreats, said Diana Sanderson, chair of the Tri-Parish Covenant Committee. She was youth minister and then adult education minister at St. Mary’s for 30 years, retiring six years ago.

In 1980, they held the first Shrove Tuesday Pancake Night at the Episcopal Church, and the St. Mary’s school children acted out Good Friday Stations of the Cross, followed by soup and bread.

Sometimes the churches challenged each other to see who would bring more turkeys or food for the Valley Center.

“I keep involved because we have so much in common. We use the same prayers and readings in our worship,” she said. “For some who are married to people in the other churches, it’s an opportunity for the family to come to church together.

“We painfully await the day when intercommunion will be possible, and we continue to work and pray for unity in the Body of Christ,” Diana said.

Amaryllis Otteman of Advent Lutheran has been on the committee for more than 25 years because “Christ called us to be one. With our differences, we can’t be completely one, but we can celebrate our similarities.”

She said the 30-voice combined choir’s anthem this year, “A Family of Faith,” expresses what the covenant is about.

Having lived in the area and being Lutheran all her life, she believes the covenant relationship creates a positive feeling about religion, as people see Christians associating and cooperating with each other.

“It makes Christ’s name spread,” said Amaryllis, who taught second and third grades in the Central Valley School district until she retired in 1994.

She also liked the progressive dinner the churches did for a while, going from church to church for different courses.

She said Thanksgiving services and dinners have drawn 150 to 270 people.

Nola Combs has represented Resurrection Episcopal since 1999. For her, the value is in coming to know people in the other churches from working on the committee and attending events.

“Our common goal is the unity of the community. It is a gift for me to know the people and learn about their walk in faith. It has been part of my growing walk with God,” said Nola, who has lived in the area and joined Holy Spirit Episcopal when her son was a year old. “The Tri-Parish is my extended family.”

In 1994, Good Shepherd Lutheran, Holy Spirit Episcopal and St. Mary’s Catholic churches signed a renewal of the covenant. It was signed again in 2004, and this year.

In 1996, Holy Spirit merged with All Saints Episcopal and formed the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection. After several years, they sold All Saints’ building and built an addition in 2002.

In 2008, Good Shepherd Lutheran at 810 S. Sullivan merged with Christ Lutheran to form Advent Lutheran, using Christ Lutheran’s building at 13009 E. Broadway, and renting out the former Good Shepherd building.

When he was 11 years old, Fr. Pat Kerst, who is now the priest at his home parish, remembers that St. Mary’s entered into relationship with two neighboring churches.

“The committee and pastors are on board, so the congregations feel good about associating with each other,” said Fr. Pat, who attended St. Paul Seminary in Minnesota, was ordained in 1990, and served parishes in Walla Walla, Pasco, Brewster, Twisp and Bridgeport before coming back to St. Mary’s two years ago.

St. Mary’s parish, which is at 304 S. Adams, is committed to the Tri-Parish relationship, he said, especially for old timers, the Tri-Parish Covenant is now like old shoes: It’s comfortable.

“Since Vatican II, there has been openness to ecumenism, and the Roman Catholic Church has ongoing dialogues with many Christian churches and other world religions,” Fr. Pat said.

The Rev. Matt Larson has served eight years in Spokane Valley, first as pastor of Good Shepherd and then Advent. He also attributes the success to lay leaders’ desire to continue the relationship. Advent’s vote to continue in the Tri-Parish was unanimous, he said.

Since participating in the 1999



Tri-Parish Committee watches as Episcopal Bishop James Waggoner, Jr., the Rev. Linda Bartholomew, Lutheran Bishop Martin Wells sign covenant.

celebration the Lutheran-Episcopal full communion agreement, Called to Common Mission, at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., Matt has followed the ecumenical movement that began with the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, and continues through the World Council of Churches, including the document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry in 1982.

After graduating 15 years ago from Pacific Lutheran Theological School in the San Francisco area, he served the Lutheran and Presbyterian churches in Potlatch. For three years, he was the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod representative to the Lutheran Ecumenical Resource Network.

The Rev. Linda Bartholomew, priest for two years at Resurrection Episcopal, rejoices that Pope Francis’ spirituality undergirds what the churches are doing.

“Few Christian communions covenant to think, pray, plan and play together,” she said. “Our congregations’ welcoming and ease of being together took years to cultivate. Now it’s the norm.

“At this point, we are asking what’s next and how we use the covenant to benefit the wider community,” said Linda, who grew up Catholic and served many years as a parish associate in three parishes in Cincinnati, Ohio.

While participating in a similar ecumenical cluster, she shared her call to ministry with an Episcopal priest. He invited her to become Episcopalian. For 17 years, she has been an Episcopal priest, serving in Cincinnati and New York City before moving to Spokane Valley.

Her master of divinity degree is from St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee, Wis., and doctor of ministry degree from McCormick Seminary in Chicago. She learned about Anglican tradition



Diana Sanderson, Amaryllis Otteman and Nola Combs

at Seabury-Western Seminary in Chicago.

“When I came to Spokane, I didn’t know about the covenant. It is a lavish gift,” she said. “A

covenant takes commitment. It is a sacred word for Christians between God and us. After we do our best, God steps in.”

Continued on page 7

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Three congregations inspire each other on community projects

Continued from page 6

For the pulpit exchange, a Catholic priest has to be at the Mass to celebrate the Eucharist, so one of the parish priests stays at St. Mary's and the other one preaches at the other churches on two Sundays.

The Lutheran and Episcopal churches have agreements for intercommunion, so the pastors can do the full services at each other's churches. For four years, their pulpit exchanges have included Eucharist.

"We express and experience the pain and tension that only two churches are in full communion," said Linda.

The Christian Church dreams of having a common voice to offer to the world, she said, telling of discussions about having a sister church in Burundi to address hunger there with community gardens.

The three parishes work with other congregations in Spokane Valley Partners and the Valley Food Bank. Many members connect with different groups to engage in ministries.

Advent Lutheran partners with Food for Thought, helping fill 150 backpacks of food for Spokane Valley children to take home on weekends.

St. Mary's also has an emergency food pantry available to anyone and facilitated by the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Resurrection Episcopal connected Advent Lutheran with Hearth Homes, a transitional center for homeless women and children. Resurrection members helped furnish a room and helped set up raised beds for a community garden.

Advent worked with Hutton Settlement on raised garden beds.

The churches inspire each other.

The Scripture for the Thanksgiving service was about the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

"We are on a journey together, finding Jesus in the midst of our three denominations' proclaiming Jesus, feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless," Matt said.

Speaking at the service, Lutheran Bishop Martin Wells thanked the Tri-Parish for "40 years of a public promise," a promise that was not required and is "in a day when fewer promises are made in public."

He referred to a reading in Matthew about good fruit coming from good trees, and thanked the Tri-Parish for "planting good trees," calling their public covenant promise a good tree that "anchors communities in self-discipline, respect for the threat of self-serving sin and predictability



Fr. Pat Kerst of St. Mary's Catholic, the Rev. Matthew Larson of Advent Lutheran and the Rev. Linda Bartholomew of Resurrection Episcopal found some old posters promoting the Thanksgiving service and the vacation Bible school. Tri-Parish churches celebrate common beliefs, pray for each other, promote cooperation among church groups on area social, education and spiritual concerns, welcome each other's members to services and programs, and continue to work and pray for unity in the whole Body of Christ.



Combined choir sings about the "Family of Faith."

in a day when little else seems predictable."

Behind their promise is a "Promise-Making God," Martin said, and the fruit from their covenant is shared prayer, fellowship, education and service, a gift for the Spokane Valley community.

"Why extend God's promise today when it may seem to fall on deaf ears?" he asked. "In the promise we have found life and we believe others will be looking for such an ordered, sustaining life when the fruit of a self-serving life proves to be rotten. We pray for all who are looking for a purpose in life. In this season of feasting, we pay attention to the hunger of others and, breaking ourselves open in compassion, pass along the promise and the goodwill of Christ."

Episcopal Bishop James Wagoner, Jr., expressed gratitude for those who "took a step of faith 40 years ago to act in faith and move from coffee to covenant. A covenant is a serious commit-

ment. We do not know the future, but we commit to be in it and see where God will lead."


Jim said the covenant's purpose is to make a difference by working in unity that respects each tradition.

"In promise and purpose there is power, coming together and knowing that we can do more than any one group. I am hopeful about what is yet to come," Jim said.

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Smart Justice speakers report how their communities reduce crime

Smart Justice Spokane, a coalition of 30 organizations that started three years ago with the goal of reforming the criminal justice system, has made progress, achieving better outcomes for people charged with crimes and for victims, said Julie Schaffer of the Center for Justice.

A sign of its growth is that 100 attended the Smart Justice Spokane Symposium two years ago, and 350 attended in November.

Organizers shared other signs of progress.

- The city has a Criminal Justice Commission, which developed a Blueprint for Reform, calling for a Regional Law and Justice Council.

- In 2013, the Spokane Community Court began to hear misdemeanor cases of non-violent offenders, implementing a problem-solving approach that promotes community service, supervision and treatment.

In opening the event, Liz Moore, director of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS), said Smart Justice Spokane was sparked by opposition to a proposal for a new, larger county jail, especially given the disproportionate number of people of color, and people suffering from mental illness and addictions who are in jail. Many are also in jail because of failure to pay fines.

"The county spends 70 percent of its budget on criminal justice, and jails house too many non-violent people who need treatment," she said.

"The system is a revolving door because of obstacles to re-entry," Liz said. "We spend too much money to warehouse people, rather than spending it on ways that reduce crime."

The coalition seeks alternatives that foster racial equity, criminal justice reform, jobs and housing, home monitoring, and treatment for mental illness and addictions.

Two of six people who experienced incarceration and shared their stories during the morning session exemplify issues.

Layne Pavey, who founded the organization, I Did the Time, to promote opportunities for ex-offenders after re-entry from incarceration, earned a master's degree in social work at Eastern Washington University, and is now a peer counselor and mental health clinician.

"Many people do not understand that sometimes all it takes is one person in the prison system to help us believe in ourselves again, believe we are worthy of recovery and can be successful in society when we're released," she said.

The subtle, encouraging way



Julian Adler



Jennifer Kim

one social worker interacted with her the second night in county jail for drug charges influenced how she did the rest of her 20 months in prison. She voluntarily participated in treatment.

"When the system treats us like we can recover, recovery happens," she said.

Across the nation, peer counselors, people who have "been there," are being trained to help incarcerated people work through the system with accountability and hope for successful re-entry.

"Often we forget that people in jail have experienced a multitude of traumas in their lives. When attorneys are trained in the trauma-informed perspective, they learn to understand how the impact of trauma affects an offender in the courtroom, which helps an offender feel hopeful about solutions offered in the jail systems," Layne said. "There is a direct correlation between how we are treated by our judge at sentencing and how willing we are to engage in treatment. When judges interact from the trauma-informed perspective, they can help break the cycle of recidivism."

Just as the system asks people to take responsibility for what they do, Layne believes it's time for the system to take responsibility for what it can do to break the cycle.

Steve Sivertsen, who recovered from 20 years of meth addiction that led him into 17 felonies and 20 misdemeanors, realized that the person he was hurting was himself. In 2009, he entered Oxford House and learned how to handle money responsibly.

For four years, he was a reentry specialist there and became board president of Open Gate Reentry. He sponsors a Narcotics Anonymous Program and Washington Drug Court.

In 2012, he earned an associate degree in electrical engineering and is employed in the aerospace industry.

"Treatment was vital. I gained tools I could use later. I still have work to do," Steve said.

Two keynote speakers, Julian Adler and Jennifer Kim, shared possibilities for action.

Despite resistance to changing an entrenched system, Julian, director of the Red Hook Community Justice Center, a multi-jurisdictional community court in Brooklyn, N.Y., said that "it's doable. I am speaking broadly about justice reform more than discrete alternative programs, because what we need is a new norm, a paradigm shift away from the jail/prison-based system," he said.

Julian said the current jail-based system is bolstered by "the myth of the trial," because more than 95 percent of convictions result from plea bargains.

Procedural justice in community courts, like Red Hook, drug courts and mental health courts works, because when people believe their cases are handled fairly, they are more likely to participate in treatment, he said. In contrast, outcomes of distributive justice are about winning or losing.

Julian listed four elements for procedural justice:

- 1) Voice: The defendant's side is heard.
- 2) Respect: The defendant is treated with respect before, during and after.
- 3) Neutrality: The decision is unbiased and consistent.
- 4) Understanding: The defendant understands the decision, the reasons for it and how laws were applied.

A defendant is more likely to accept a just decision, increasing compliance, decreasing future violations and reducing the court docket, he said. The Red Hook community court offers treatment and has social workers on site.

He reported a 10 percent reduction in recidivism—repeat offenses—over two years and that reduction has been sustained in

subsequent years.

That drop resulted in two-to-one dollar savings, because of increased compliance, he said.

Julian promotes evidence-based practice to limit the influence of bias using qualitative and quantitative evidence, he said.

He said the current understanding of "criminogenic risk factors" overlooks the trauma and victimization of an offender.

"Jail is criminogenic, increasing the odds that people reoffend, so we need to look at alternatives that assure public safety through creative non-custodial approaches," said Julian, calling for diverting more people into mental health and addiction treatment.

Jennifer Kim, the policy and field director for the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in Oakland, Calif., described advocacy to advance racial and economic justice by ending mass incarceration.

The center helped close five of California's eight abusive youth prisons through its Books Not Bars campaign and helped support passage of Proposition 47 to change some felonies into misdemeanors, helping people avoid felony convictions that would inhibit employment.

While she was in law school, another law student challenged her assumption that only way to achieve public safety was to lock people up.

So did a film by the Ella Baker Center on the failure of the justice system.

"I had not understood the racial and fiscal basis of policies," she said. "To transform injustices, we must organize to insure dignity and opportunities for low-income people and people of color."

In the prisons that Books Not Bars closed, youth faced daily violence and isolation. They held youth—91 percent youth of color—from ages 13 to 23. They had an 81 percent recidivism rate and cost \$200,000 per youth per year, she said.

"The system is an abysmal failure. California has the most powerful prison guard union," Jennifer said, identifying a primary entity blocking reform.

"Any other business with an 81 percent failure rate would not stay

in business," she added

Books Not Bars organized families, convinced lawmakers of policy needs and educated the public through media advocacy. They held protests, marches and vigils.

"Two youth in solitary confinement committing suicide on the same day drew attention and action," she said. "California locks up youth for longer than any other state because of 'time adds' based on behavior."

"Books Not Bars advocated shuttering of the youth prisons in favor of investment into education and alternatives to incarceration," she said. "From 2000 to 2014, spending rose 19 percent for higher education, 40 percent for K-12, 99 percent for health and human services, and 130 percent for corrections."

"Through organizing, policy and media advocacy, we can expose abuses, change the narrative and create a culture shift that moves us from the purely punishment model that has devastated our communities," she said.

She quoted Father Gregory Boyle of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles: "You are so much more than the worst thing you have ever done."

"We need to learn from our mistakes and talk about solutions," Jennifer said.

Books Not Bars found power in giving grieving mothers a voice, in having directly-impacted people be at decision-making tables. They also learned about the influence of collective action, using narratives and collaborating with unlikely allies.

"Statistics don't go viral. Stories do," Jennifer said. "They have the power to change hearts and minds."

Smart Justice Spokane Symposium workshops delved into a variety of issues.

"It takes people acting together," said Liz of PJALS in closing.

"The next steps," she said, "are to share stories, facts and ideas, to share experiences, to contact elected officials and to work with criminal justice officials."

For information, call 838-7870 or visit www.smartjusticespokane.org.



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Jingle Books collections seeks to bring in 4,000 books in Coeur d'Alene

By Kaye Hult

Sharing a passion to make sure children learn how to read before they leave the third grade, Greta Gissel and Dave Eubanks recently instituted a book drive they call "Jingle Books."

They plan to collect donations of 3,000 to 4,000 gently used and new books appropriate for reading by kindergarten through third grade children.

With a crew of volunteers, they will sort books and distribute them to children throughout the Coeur d'Alene school district before the holiday break.

Volunteers have set out collection boxes in Coeur d'Alene, Dalton Gardens and Hayden.

Boxes are at schools, libraries, bookstores, businesses, the North Idaho College student union, high school clubs and dances.

Those who prefer can donate financially to the school district to purchase additional books.

Volunteers will begin collecting the boxes on Dec. 11. They will sort through the books the following weekend to make sure they are age-appropriate. Then they will distribute the books to elementary schools, beginning with those that have the greatest need—Borah, Fernan, Bryan and Winton. Children can choose a book in a book fair at school from Dec. 15 to 18.

They hope that all K-3 children in the district will receive at least one book this season, either through Jingle Books or from their families.

Dave said the Coeur d'Alene school district is the third largest in the state. Even so, said this teacher of 43 years and current school board member, "the lack of opportunity for students is staggering."

Many students live with constant toxic stress that compromises their ability to learn, he said.

Greta added that 44 per cent of the school district live in poverty. Dave said this is not only in downtown Coeur d'Alene, but also in new tract homes.

"Children must be proficient in reading by the third grade," said Greta. "They spend these early years learning to read. From fourth grade on, they are expected to read to learn. By encouraging children's reading ability, we can change their economic destiny."

She said that many people in jails have only a fifth grade reading level.

Greta learned to offer community service from her parents, Norm and Diana Gissel.

Her father served on the library board for 12 years and was instrumental in moving the Coeur d'Alene Library from 7th St. to



Dave Eubanks and Greta Gissel wear hats to convey the spirit.

Harrison. When the new building was constructed, he made sure the below-ground children's section was accessible by a ramp.

Norm and Diana, who were also part of the beginning of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, stay active with that group.

Norm served on the North Idaho College board of trustees, so he could hand Greta her associate of arts degree when she graduated. She later earned a degree in elementary education from the University of Idaho.

Greta quoted a line her father said in the movie, "The Color of Conscience": "The opportunity to live a purposeful life is a beautiful thing."

Her mother, a photographer and artist, was born in Palestine and has lived in Santiago, Chile, Mexico and Moscow, Idaho.

Greta was born in Coeur d'Alene. Her parents taught her that she has "a moral obligation to serve the community."

Eating Arabic food during her childhood fostered her love for food, travel and culture.

After her studies, Greta moved to Albuquerque, N.M. She then taught for two and a half years in Japan. She lived in the San Francisco Bay area and Seattle before returning to Coeur d'Alene about two years ago.

She was a stay-at-home mother to daughter Isabelle until a year ago, when she developed and directed KIDS Camp, where she helped campers develop knowledge, independence, direction and success by improving their reading skills.

Her goal is to inspire children to read.

Greta works in an after-school program for children in the first through fifth grades with Community Development Affiliates for Kids, a school district grant-driven program advocating education. Students come from Atlas,

Borah, and Fernan schools. The program helps them with tutoring and homework, and has motivational speakers.

Along with her mother and father, she works with the Kootenai County Task Force for Human Relations. She also does anti-bullying training at schools.

In one anti-bullying exercise, she has participants write where family members are from, and whether there are any gay, lesbian, bisexual or transvestite members, different ethnicities or mental disabilities in their families.

"It's incredible how many ethnicities exist in this community," she said. "You just can't see it."

Dave, who grew up in California, said that because he is grateful for his upbringing in a stable Christian home, he seeks to share the love he experienced with others, especially by being there for children.

He received a bachelor's degree in history in 1968 from the University of California in Los Angeles and a master's in history in 1992 from California State University at Northridge. In 43 years as a teacher, he has taught every grade but fourth and has coached basketball.

"I could teach for 43 years because I moved around," he said. "I didn't want to be a detriment to children. When I knew what I was teaching in my sleep, I had to move on or become stale."

Dave moved to South Africa for three years to write a book about apartheid. He married instead of writing the book. He has 10 children, including five who are adopted and have Down syndrome. He has a lifetime commitment to them. He also has seven grandchildren.

The last 15 of the 18 years he has lived here, he taught at Lakes Middle School. He also taught local history.

After he had a heart transplant, he began to "ramp it up and do

even more for children."

He is involved with Panhandle Kiwanis, which helps children. He is also on the Museum of North Idaho board.

His signs when he campaigned for the Coeur d'Alene school board to help children simply had his name and "for the kids."

"North Idaho is changing. It may not be visible, but when people are riled enough to vote, every time lately, conservatives have lost," he said.

Both Dave and Greta celebrate the ways the Coeur d'Alene community gives.

"Volunteering for a year, I have met hundreds of people who give to this community in one way or another," Greta said.

"It's amazing how we can have such a partisan divide, yet when given a project that depends on generosity, people will come together," Dave said.

Both have high hopes for the success of the first Jingle Books campaign.

For more information, contact Greta at 208-819-8345 or greta.gissel@gmail.com, or contact Dave at 208-676-1084 or mom-szoo@earthlink.net.

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Community grows as we connect in person and even through media

We tend to think of community in small, face-to-face connections, but community extends to our locale, region, nation, globe and the less geographically bound virtual community, which includes media.

A poster in the window of Kizuri fair trade store in the Community Building offers ideas on how to build interpersonal community, such as turn off TV, know the neighbors, honor elders, read stories aloud, ask for help, sing together, share skills, listen to understand and challenge injustice.

Speaking on “Celebrating Community” at the 2015 Interfaith Thanksgiving service, Joan Milton told about Mid-City Concerns Meals on Wheels starting in 1964 when

several congregations downtown “saw a need, got together and met the need.” In joining together, they feed bodies, nurture souls and save lives, because volunteers who deliver meals often also visit with the people and build relationships.

Sr. Mary Eucharista, a Sister of Mary the Mother of the Church, added “community is a wondrous concept, but it’s not easy to live. It requires sacrifice, denying ourselves to leave room for others, and regarding others as persons of intrinsic worth.”

That aspect of community embraces mutual accountability, such as the United Nations recently challenging U.S. police shooting African Americans as one part of

police brutality that includes interrogations, maximum security, solitary confinement and the death penalty. The UN challenges the idea of police acting with impunity as if they are not part of or accountable to the wider community—the world. It’s a challenge for each of us to work for change.

As I perused Facebook to learn how friends and family spent Thanksgiving. It included a Rick Steves’ challenge of systemic hunger, concern about inequality in Ferguson, a cousin’s cute Thanksgiving dress, a dad released from the hospital, 30 people at a Walmart protesting for fair wages, a first Thanksgiving with a grandson, a family around a candlelit table, and

a quote of Martin Luther King Jr. that hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do it.

Social media do keep us “in touch” and challenge us to think and act. Media do not replace personal interactions, but can connect people with each other. When we see glimpses into people’s lives and thoughts, we can begin to see beyond our own entrenched perspectives.

I find community in final stage of editing The Fig Tree, allowing an interviewee to review an article, so it reflects what the person means. In listening, how often do we check back to confirm if what we think we heard is what the speaker means?

Mary Stamp - editor

Ignorance and disinformation campaigns influence current issues

An agnotologist studies ignorance, and there are different kinds of ignorance.

Robert Proctor, a professor of the history of science at Stanford University, coined the term “agnotology,” using the Greek term “agnosis,” which means “not knowing.” It is also the root word for “agnosia” and “agnostic.”

He describes agnotology as “a term to describe the cultural production of ignorance (and its study).” He describes his specialty in the history of science as, “the history of scientific controversy and what I call the ‘social construction of ignorance.’”

In 1999, he was the first historian to testify about the misuse of scientific information by the tobacco industry, as it fought to minimize the role smoking played in lung cancer.

It is remarkable, he said, “how little we know about ignorance ... given a) how much ignorance there is, b) how many kinds there are, and c) how consequential ignorance is in our lives.”

Two categories of ignorance described in a paper he wrote are active in our culture. They are ignorance as a native state and ignorance as a strategic ploy.

Ignorance as a native state is the most common. It is easily manipulated. We are born with it, but we learn gradually with all our senses. It is something we want to grow out of and hope goes away, “a of hollow space into which knowledge is pulled.”

Descartes and other 17th century intellectuals thought all scientific problems would soon be solved. The rapid growth of technology led some in the 19th century to think that soon everything possible would have been invented and the Patent Office could be closed. A 19th century British historian—Lord Acton of “power corrupts” fame—had so much faith that his era was the epitome of civilization that he would soon have all the information he needed to write the ultimate history.

The books “for Dummies” today play into our feeling that we can and must fill

those hollow spaces of ignorance. The do-it-yourself section of libraries and bookstores encourages both our feeling of competence and our need to fill the spaces.

Ignorance as a strategic ploy is manipulative and often plays on our doubt and uncertainty, creating “manufactured ignorance.”

In the 1950s, the tobacco industry began its campaign to convince people it had not been proven that smoking caused lung cancer. The purpose is summarized in an internal memo at the Brown and Williamson Tobacco Company in 1969, “Doubt is our product.”

The industry spent millions on advertising, telling people no study had yet absolutely proven that smoking caused lung cancer. It continuously called for “more evidence” and funded front organizations and friendly research for popular magazines to publish. When secondhand smoke became an issue, smoking was presented as an expression of free speech.

The tobacco industry also spent millions

on research to manufacture ignorance about the link between smoking and cancer. They published a slick monthly newsletter, “Tobacco and Health Report,” which was sent to physicians and key people in industry, government and journalism.

It contained articles on “Rare Fungus Infection Mimics Lung Cancer,” “28 Reasons for Doubting Cigarette-Cancer Link” and “No One Yet Knows the Answers.” It blamed bird-keeping, genetics, viruses, air pollution and everything except tobacco for causing the lung cancer epidemic.

These fellows practically wrote the play-book for disinformation campaigns. We can see their handiwork as we try to sort through some of what passes for information about climate change, immigration reform and other major issues.

Journalists and poll takers regularly ask what people think and know about current issues. Perhaps they should investigate what people don’t know and why.

Nancy Minard - contributing editor

Commentaries

Sounding Board

Challenges

Faith leaders offer perspectives on Ferguson shooting and need to challenge racism

The following are excerpts from statements by various faith groups on Nov. 25 after the decision by the grand jury in Clayton, Mo. not to bring charges against the police officer who shot Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.

The Faith Action Network stands in solidarity with all those who have experienced and continue to experience institutional racism and violence in our nation. We call for a dialogue that results in action to address the challenges inherent in our institutional structures. May this be the time and the moment when justice and healing begin, here in Washington and across our nation.

We close with Ella’s Song (lyrics and music by Bernice Johnson Reagon, sung by Sweet Honey in the Rock):

Until the killing of Black men, Black mothers’ sons, is as important as the killing of White men, White mothers’ sons, we who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.

Faith Action Network Board - Seattle

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA is disappointed that the grand jury did not indict Officer Darren Wilson in the murder of Michael Brown.

An indictment would not have been a conviction nor judgment of guilt. It would have permitted him to be tried before a jury of peers where his innocence or guilt would have been decided. Without an indictment, it seems unlikely that justice will be done.

We reiterate our call in this time of tension, for citizens, law enforcement officials, justice-seekers and others to respond non-violently. We join with Michael Brown’s father’s plea that protests not become violent.

Hope is not lost. We will not forget Michael Brown nor cease to advocate for justice related to his death. His death has

helped galvanize across the country a moral will to address the crisis our country faces in the systemic marginalization of young men of color.

**National Council of Churches
Washington, D.C.**

The grand jury’s decision is another sign that all America’s sons’ lives are not yet valued equally in the eyes of courts. All of America’s fathers, mothers and children should stay outraged and in motion for progress until we are what we say we are: One Nation, Under God, Indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for All.

We must ensure police can be held accountable for killing unarmed civilians. We must win national standards for the use of force and use-of-force-training. We must require use of body cameras on police officers. We must remove any mayor or police chief who cannot ensure the minimum of public safety: that police uphold their oath, and protect and respect lives of all civilians.

The time has come for the behavior of America’s police to reflect people’s values by respecting the sanctity of each of our lives no matter our race, gender or class.

The path to these goals is advocacy and non-violent direct action. Those are the strategies that led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act and Civil Rights Acts 50 years ago and the outlawing of racial profiling in New York City just two years ago.

Today we are all Michael Brown. Tomorrow we must ensure each of our lives is valued equally in the eyes of our nation’s laws, law enforcement officers and courts.

Rabbi Michael Lerner - Tikkun Magazine - Berkeley, Calif.

The tragedy in Ferguson makes it imperative that Americans of all races and backgrounds initiate national action to address the issues of systemic racism and

police profiling that the shooting brought to the surface.

We question the conduct of the prosecutor’s office in the grand jury as demonstrated by unprecedented deference to the officer, a potential criminal defendant.

We urge Americans to contact elected officials to urge passage of the End Racial Profiling Act (ERPA) and any legislation that addresses unconstitutional actions by law enforcement.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, is also concerned about militarized response of law enforcement to peaceful protesters in Ferguson or in other cities.

If any good comes of this heartbreaking incident, it will be in recognizing that many Americans still feel the impact of institutional racism and there is still much work to do to create a society in which people “will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

We reaffirm our commitment to fight for racial and social justice—to end racial profiling and injustices perpetrated against racial, ethnic or religious minorities.

Council on American-Islamic Relations - Washington, D.C.

The hope that there would be an indictment was a hope that our brokenness would be acknowledged and we would begin truth telling that would lead to reconciliation. The system has affirmed what many know: From Dred Scott to Mike Brown, the system fails to protect and support freedom, justice and life for Black and Brown persons. The system protects property rather than persons and criminalizes poverty instead of realizing that the existence of poverty in a resource rich country is itself a crime. In systems of dehumanization and injustice, the image of the divine in each of

us is distorted and diminished.

In seeking justice for all, we re-affirm the principles of nonviolence that ground us in these truths: No one is reducible to the evil they commit. Nonviolence is on the side of love, not hate. Healing requires creativity, and the universe is on the side of justice.

The Rev. Kristin Stoneking - The Fellowship of Reconciliation

The shooting death of Michael Brown, an unarmed African American teenager, has reverberated far beyond that small community because it raises issues of justice and respect for the inherent dignity of every human being. We take comfort in knowing that people of any race who are prepared to recognize the common woe of all injustice, the fragility of all life and the need to reach out loving hands to all who suffer, can eventually change the world.

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee - Washington, D.C.

Our prayers for justice have been fervent but the truth remains that in communities around the country, racial profiling of people of color by law enforcement, and particularly of young African-American men, far too often has lethal consequences.

Our United Church of Christ statement of faith reminds us that God promises to all who trust in God “courage in the struggle for justice and peace.”

Disappointment, frustration and anger abound, but to engage in the struggle for justice and peace takes courage and a renewed commitment to advocacy and action, to deepening racial awareness by engaging in sacred conversation and to truthfully examine, then dismantle, the systems of privilege set in place by racism.

Rev. Geoffrey Black - general minister and president, United Church of Christ - Cleveland, Ohio

Author reports on 'Black Spokane'

The Gonzaga University History Department has invited Dwayne Mack to give an evening presentation on "Black Spokane: The Civil Rights Struggle in the Inland Northwest" at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 3, in the Barbieri Courtroom at the Gonzaga University School of Law.

In 1981, the City of Spokane joined other American cities and broke a significant color barrier by electing James Chase as its first African American mayor. His election was one of the visible achievements of the civil rights movement in Washington State and the Inland Empire.

His story reveals previously neglected histories of civil rights activism, African Americans in the Pacific Northwest and everyday struggles for justice.

Dwayne's program traces the history of African Americans in the Inland Empire and highlights ways civil rights activism in Spokane was unique to the region and part of larger, national civil rights struggles.

Dwayne, the Carter Woodson chair in African American history and associate professor of history at Berea College in Berea, Ky., is the author of *Black Spokane: The Civil Rights Struggle in the Inland Northwest*, published this year, and of articles on African American history.

Sponsors are Gonzaga's History Department, Unity Multicultural Education Center, Faculty Senate Speakers' Committee and Office of Diversity, Auntie's Bookstore and the Center for Justice.

For information, call 835-5211 or email dwayne_mack@bera.edu.

NAACP elects Rachel Dolezal

The Spokane Branch of the NAACP recently elected Rachel Dolezal as its president, succeeding James Wilburn, who served two years. Rachel, former director of the Human Rights Education Institute in North Idaho, is a professor in the Africana studies program at Eastern Washington University and serves on the Office of the Police Ombudsman Commission.

For information, call 443-4884 or email spkncpbr@gmail.com.

Calendar of Events

- Dec 1-20** • **L'Arche Christmas Tree Lot**, Safeway at Hamilton and Mission, 483-0438
- Dec 1-14** • **Tree of Sharing**, Northtown, Riverpark Square and Spokane Valley malls, 808-4909 or email mcconnelltos@gmail.com
- Dec 3** • **The Fig Tree mailing and delivery**, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave., 9 a.m.
- **"The Resiliency Project: The Story of Like in Unlikely Places,"** Youth for Christ youth sharing stories of resiliency through music, art, dance and poetry, Bing Crosby Theatre, 901 W. Sprague Ave., 327-7721, anniemay.brown@spokaneffc.org
- **"Black Spokane: The Civil Rights Struggle in the Inland Northwest,"** Dwayne Mack, Barbieri Ballroom, Gonzaga Law School, 7 p.m., Gonzaga.edu/StudentLife/UMEC/Events.aspx
- Dec 4** • **The Fig Tree Board**, Emmanuel Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., noon benefit and 1 p.m. board, 525-4112
- Dec 6** • **United Nations Association-Spokane** Community Consultation, College Hall Room 101, Gonzaga University, 2 to 4:30 p.m., 313-3610, taninchev@gonzaga.edu
- **"Advent: A Time of Waiting,"** A Day of Prayer and Reflection, Sr. Patricia Novak, OSF, The Franciscan Place, 1610 N. Superior, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 483-6495, sjfconline.org
- Dec 8** • **"MLK 15: The Dream Behind Bars: Art for Social Change Competition,"** deadline for Washington State University undergraduate artists to submit creative art, <http://mlk.weu.edu/art-for-social-change-competition/>
- Dec 9** • **YWCA Race/Social Justice Book Club**, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors and the Collision of Two Cultures*, by Anne Fadiman, 5:30 p.m., 326-1190
- Dec 10, 11** • **"King of Kings,"** Singing Nuns, Bing Crosby Theatre, 901 W. Sprague, 2 and 7:30 p.m., 227-7638
- Dec 10-19** • **Christmas Bureau**, providing food vouchers and books and toys to families in need, Spokane Fair & Expo Center, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., not open Sunday, 509-358-4254, jlee@ccspokane.org
- Dec 12** • **Michael Lindra's Celtic Yuletide**, "Christmas from Ireland," The Bing Crosby Theatre, 901 W. Sprague, 7:30 p.m.
- Dec 14** • **Gingerbread Build Off**, "Christ Kitchen Fundraiser," Davenport Hotel, 10 S. Post, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., children's activity 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., ccckministry.org/cms/portfolio/annual-gingerbread-build-off-121514
- **"Handel's Messiah,"** Community Sing-Along, First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar, 2:30 p.m. rehearsal, 4 p.m., 747-1058
- Dec 17** • **"The Gift of Wait Time,"** Coffee and Contemplation with Carolyn Terry, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224, programs@ihrc.net
- Dec 19** • **Harmony for the Holidays**, benefit for Catholic Charities Foundation, Bing Crosby Theatre, 901 W. Sprague, 8 p.m., 800-325-7328
- **Fireside Discussions of Baha'i Faith**, Joseph Urlacher, Spokane Valley Library, 12004 E. Main, 5 p.m., 599-2411
- Dec 19-21** • **"Walking with Mary through the Advent Season,"** retreat with Fr. Armand Nigro, SJ, and Sr. Sharon Borgionio, FSPA, IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224, programs@ihrc.net
- Dec 21** • **German Christmas Service**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th Ave., 3 p.m.
- Dec 26** • **Spokane Christmas Church Walk and Carol Sing**, American Guild of Organists Spokane, Central United Methodist Church, 318 W. Third, Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, 411 S. Washington, and Central Lutheran Church, 518 S. Bernard, 4 to 6 p.m., 535-7145
- Dec 31** • **The Fig Tree mailing and delivery**, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave., 9 a.m.
- **First Night Spokane**, downtown, 4 p.m. to midnight, 795-8691, firstnightspokane.org

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Holiday Program Schedule at SpokanePublicRadio.org/holiday

Many thanks to the Fig Tree's advertisers who make this publication possible!

Women's Hearth offers warmth of shelter, safety and community

By Sr. Sue Orlowski, SP

Many first time visitors to Transitions' Women's Hearth comment on the immediate sense of warmth and vitality they feel when they walk in the door, said Susan Tyler-Babkirk, program director.

For some women, the impact of this downtown Spokane drop-in day center is immediate, meeting their needs for a safe place off the street, a warm shower or a coat to stave off the winter chill.

For many, the impact is not immediately apparent. Its influence on the lives of women who come seeking safety, community and services is more subtle.

"We create space to let good things happen and we treat women in a non-judgmental way," said Susan.

She describes the Hearth as a setting for women who seek a supportive community and connection to resources. Many are marginalized by challenges of isolation, homelessness, cognitive disabilities, mental illness and recovery from alcohol or drug abuse. The openness, forgiveness and acceptance of staff and volunteers are the groundwork to help participants find success.

The Hearth is one of the Transitions' programs started by the Sisters of Providence, the Sisters of the Holy Names, the Dominican Sisters and the Franciscan Sisters of Philadelphia. Other programs include the Transitional Living Center, Miryam's House, the New Leaf Bakery Café and EduCare.

"The Hearth is a mission- and values-driven program that main-



Susan Tyler-Babkirk stands with a woman tree. The paper hands have inspirational phrases the women wrote.

tains a respectful, positive atmosphere," Susan said.

"The Hearth creates community. It engages women where they are in their lives with few demands," said Susan. "Women can be where they are. That approach fits our mission and values."

That approach for her is a spiritual practice that was part of her values growing up in a family who were active in the community.

Her parents were role models in lending a hand to people in their community in and through the Unitarian Universalist church and their neighborhood.

At church, she learned she could have an impact that mattered. Susan's mother had a heart for the marginalized and was kind to people. Because her parents, especially her father, were civic-minded, her family often discussed politics around the dinner table when Susan was young.

Growing up in the 1980s under "Reaganomics," she saw the divi-

sion between the rich and the poor. That strengthened her commitment to care for people in need.

Susan was six years old when her family came to Spokane. While studying political science at the University of Washington, she did an internship with the American Civil Liberties Union. After college she earned a certificate as a paralegal.

Her career included work in the King County District Court and the Spokane County Prosecutor's Office, including six years in the family law division where she coordinated a mediation program that helped unmarried parents negotiate the legal system.

"Aware that I was a person of privilege, I felt that I had information others needed to make difficult decisions in their lives. I could pass on some of what I knew to help people," Susan said.

With the court system, she networked with nonprofit organizations and interacted with

volunteers.

When the position of volunteer coordinator at the Women's Hearth opened, she applied because she felt the Hearth's mission matched her values.

At the Hearth, she started the Legal Preparedness Program to help women who needed legal services. Since its inception and under her successor, Kathy McFaul, that program has grown to include regular legal information clinics with community partners, the Spokane County Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyers Program and Gonzaga Law School.

Susan said services at the Women's Hearth include recovery support, activities, art, music, hygiene supplies, showers, computer/internet access, voicemail, housing referrals and more.

It offers classes for the women who do not fit into traditional classes or social clubs. Classes include ones that focus on life skills and ones on fine arts—art, music, dancing and reader's theater.

Many people help the Women's Hearth. There are four full-time and four part-time staff, more than 50 volunteers, two AmeriCorps volunteers, students from Whitworth, Gonzaga and Eastern Washington universities, members of churches, and other individuals and groups.

Because students often come from different socioeconomic backgrounds than the women, Susan said, they gain first-hand experience of the challenges that homeless and poor women experience on a daily basis.

With federal funding cuts in re-

cent years, Susan said the Hearth functions on a "tight budget," so volunteers are vital.

After five years as volunteer coordinator, Susan left the Women's Hearth and worked for Adult Protective Services.

When the position for program director opened up at the Hearth, she jumped at the opportunity to return to the "program I love."

Her experiences at Adult Protective Services, however, added to her knowledge for working with poor and vulnerable people. Her position includes grant writing and collecting statistical data.

"Grant writing is important, but challenging because it is time-consuming and the information required by the foundations changes frequently," said Susan, whose heart is with the women.

"My best days are when I have time to enjoy this wonderful community along with doing the administrative tasks," she said.

Data collecting is an important part of raising funds necessary for the program to run.

"I have to balance the head work with the heart work," she said.

Susan feels that the women at the Women's Hearth impact her life every day with their gifts of strength, joy and participation in this amazing community.

"Because Hearth programs treat the women with care and dignity," she said, "the women learn to not let the pain in their lives define them."

For information, call 328-6702 email info@help4women.org or visit www.help4women.org.

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