

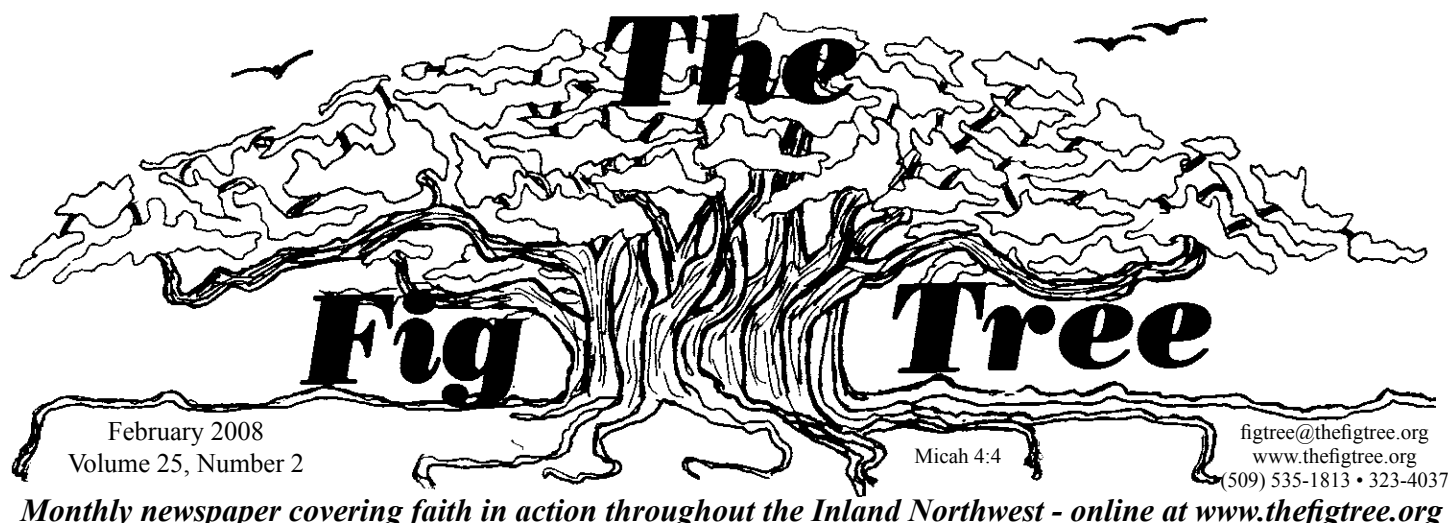
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Fair trade makes world neighbors

By Mary Stamp

Trekking in the Himalayas in Nepal wearing sweaters knit by a Tibetan refugee diverted Denise Attwood and Ric Conner from other career plans into what has become the fair-trade movement.

Their business today, Ganesh Himal Trading—named for a favorite mountain in the Himalayas—was one of the early fair-trade ventures and helped shape that movement.

The refugees wanted to sell the handmade sweaters in the United States so they could earn enough to send their children to school.

Impressed by the quality of the sweaters, they agreed to send a box home and try to sell them.

Denise, a 1977 graduate of St. George's School in Spokane, met Ric, who grew up in Seattle, at Huxley College of Environmental Studies at Western Washington University in Bellingham. They graduated in 1983 before their six-month trip to China and Nepal.

On their return, Denise's parents, Wayne and Joy Attwood, rented the Civic Theatre and invited friends to see and buy the sweaters.

"The people who bought them loved them," Denise said.

They sent money from the sales



Denise Attwood shows a sweater, like those that led her husband and her into fair trade.

to the producers and had enough for Ric to go back and buy more.

Denise, who entered law school at the University of Washington to work for social justice, helped Ric sell sweaters at summer festivals. He sold them on college campuses the rest of the year. In her second year, she realized selling the sweaters was a way to work for social justice that had a direct impact on people's lives.

While selling sweaters, Denise and Ric talked about the lives of Tibetan refugees. They became involved in the Tibetan Rights Campaign. When they moved to Spokane in 1988 after she finished law school, they became Eastern Washington coordinators for the campaign.

"We exposed people here to concepts they had not considered," she said, "and they were receptive."

"We became world neighbors," Denise commented.

They settled on the West Plains. After two years, Denise went back to Nepal to develop relationships so they could work with other groups interested in keeping their cultural traditions and helping the most marginalized producers.

Continued on page 4

Faith community has visible presence in 2008 Martin Luther King Day events

Participation of the faith community in Spokane's 2008 Martin Luther King, Jr., commemoration service, rally and march was more visible than in the past.

Spokane's Catholic bishop and Jewish rabbi joined Protestant clergy as speakers at the commemoration Sunday, Jan. 20.

Members of Salem Lutheran, Emmanuel Lutheran, St. Paul's Lutheran, St. Joseph's Catholic, Holy Trinity Episcopal, West Central Christian Center, Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ and the Baha'i faith joined school and community groups, carrying banners for the rally and march Jan. 21.

Some marched from churches to the rally honoring the minister

who was assassinated 40 years ago for advocating civil rights.

Despite single-digit temperatures, about 2,000 joined the 2008 march 26 years after Spokane's first march to honor King in 1982. That year, 49 people made a butcher-paper sign and marched from the County Jail to the Federal Courthouse in Spokane.

"We were nervous and did not know how Spokane would respond," said Ivan Bush, who has been on the organizing committee for many years.

Business people came out of their stores and acknowledged the first marchers. Some passing in cars honked their horns in agreement, and others in cars stopped and joined the group.

"Through the years," said Ivan, "one hope was that the community would acknowledge Dr. King by naming a street after him, as have 400 other U.S. communities."

"It's time, Spokane!" he said to those gathered.

At the commemoration service, the Rev. Ezra Kinlow of the host church, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, said King's "I Have a Dream" speech speaks of three dimensions of love—love of God, love of self to realize God resides within, and love of others as neighbors and as "the least of these" Jesus spoke of.

"In this century, more doors of opportunity are open, but many areas of the dream have not been touched," he said. "We need more dream makers and more dream-reality makers."

He called for those gathered to live the dream year round both by inclusion from the white community and by blacks dropping the chips off their shoulders and forgiving.

At the celebration, Spokane Mayor Mary Verner said she

Continued on page 6 and 7

Religious groups historically have influence on public life

To inform the Inland Northwest faith community about issues before the 2008 Washington State Legislature, representatives from the Washington Association of Churches, the Lutheran Public Policy Office, the Religious Coalition for the Common Good and the Friends Committee on Washington Public Policy discussed proposals during a Legislative Advocacy Event on Jan. 13 at Spokane Friends Church.

Darel Grothaus, director of the Washington Association of Churches (WAC), said the 32-year-old partnership of Protestants and Catholics recently formed the Religious Coalition for the Common Good to include more voices.

"Public attention in recent years to the religious right diminished the voice of historical faiths—Jewish, Catholic and Protestant—concerned about the common good being served by sharing the common wealth and by producing peace and justice," said Darel, noting that the governor and legislators have expressed appreciation for the coalition's uniting voices of eight partners on a common agenda.

At the event, Dale Soden, professor of history at Whitworth University, described trends among historical faiths in the "none zone" of the Northwest, where most people check "none of the above" when asked to list their faith.

In a book he is writing, he describes the 170-year history of Protestants, Catholics and Jews seeking to influence legislation and public life in the Inland Northwest and Northwest.

Because extracting resources—gold, silver, timber and wheat—spurred economic growth in the early 20th century, many young, single working-class men settled in Spokane, living in cheap boarding houses. There were 250 saloons and more than 300 women in prostitution.

Continued on page 3

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WCC head says shared communion is his goal

By Peter Williams
Rome (ENI). The general secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Rev. Samuel Kobia, hopes that by the middle of the 21st century Christians will have reached a level of unity that they can share Holy Communion. He said this in a front-page interview published Jan. 25 in the official Vatican daily newspaper. That day the WCC leader prayed with Pope Benedict XVI at a ceremony to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

“My vision for the ecumenical movement is that by the mid-21st century Christians everywhere regardless of their confessional affiliations, can pray and worship together and feel welcome to share in the Lord’s Table at every church,” Samuel said.

Neither the Roman Catholic Church nor Eastern Orthodox churches allow other Christians to share in their celebration of Eucharist. Samuel hopes that by the example of Christians sharing in the Eucharist together, “the Church can help humanity overcome divisions and the people of the world be able to live together in peace and harmony regardless of their backgrounds and identities.

“Towards that end I am convinced the relationship between the WCC and Rome needs to be stronger and deeper,” he said. “I am committed to take that relationship to greater heights.”

Kobia, a Methodist from Kenya, who in 2004 became the first African to head the WCC, noted that 100 years ago, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity began in order to challenge the enmity that pushed so-called Christian nations into the First World War.

“Ecumenical cooperation and the search for unity among the churches has played a role in overcoming the heritage of two world wars and building peaceful relationships in Europe,” he said.

“Who would have thought at the beginning of the 20th century that some decades later Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans, Reformed, Methodists, Baptists and churches of other traditions would work together in the World Council of Churches?” he said. “Surely, the Second Vatican Council was a watershed and opened the door to meaningful ecumenical cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and many WCC member churches.”

Samuel met the Pope in a private audience along with members of the Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC, during a yearly working group meeting Jan. 21 to 26 in Rome. The group is an advisory body on common concerns of the Catholic Church, the world’s largest church, and the WCC, the world’s largest grouping of churches.

U.S. Baptists meet to forge new alliance

Oxford, Ohio (ENI). Nearly 20,000 participants from 30 U.S. Baptist groups met recently in Atlanta with hopes of promoting Christian unity and forging a Baptist alliance for the first time since the American Civil War, which ended 143 years ago.

Skateboard kings minister to boarders

Oxford, Ohio (ENI). Scruffy, tattooed skateboarders performing high, 360-degree turns and flying through U-shaped ramps are accustomed to stares from parents who don’t know an ollie from a hippie jump.

Darren Wells, cofounder of King of Kings Skateboard Ministry, is part of a growing attempt to connect with a subculture of youth who feel alienated from the mainstream: “We Christians are called to let this generation know about Jesus.” After winning audiences through vertical climbs and flipping the boards or themselves, the skateboarders tell how Jesus changed their lives.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Feed Spokane director plans Lenten fast

Maurice Smith, director of Feed Spokane, will do a 40-day fast during Lent, beginning Ash Wednesday, Feb. 6, to highlight the growing need to feed the hungry in Spokane.

Feed Spokane rescues food from area restaurants and delivers it to meal sites for those in need.

“Rather than disappearing, hunger is acute and growing,” Maurice said. “As a result of an increasingly competitive business environment and such efficiency practices as ‘on-time’ or ‘as-needed’ ordering and delivery, there is less surplus food.”

So food banks, meal sites and other agencies have fewer resources to draw upon, while they

are experiencing record demand. “Eliminating hunger is not something that one agency alone can accomplish. It requires a genuine community effort,” said Maurice, who challenges churches, community organizations, restaurants and individuals to become involved in efforts to end hunger in the community.

Feed Spokane began nearly three years ago as an outreach of Spokane Neighborhood Action Programs (SNAP) and became a separate nonprofit last year. They work with 22 restaurants and deliver food to more than 15 meal sites.

As part of the “Fasting To End Hunger,” Feed Spokane asks:

• Churches and community groups to hold Lenten food drives for area food banks and to serve meals to low-income families.

• Restaurants to join the “Adopt-a-Meal Site” campaign and be matched with one of 30 sites that regularly feed those in need.

• Individuals and organizations to help the “Cell Phone Round-up” drive to collect used cell phones. Proceeds will fund Feed Spokane’s food rescue efforts.

• Supermarkets and food outlets to stop throwing food away and to donate prepared, perishable and shelf-stable food items to meal sites and food banks.

For information, call 475-8797 or visit www.feedspokane.com.

Our Place plans Feb. 17 benefit program

Our Place, an emergency services center in West Central Spokane, will present a benefit afternoon of music, poetry and readings in celebration of love from 2 to 4 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 17, at the Corbin Senior Center, 827 W. Cleveland.

The program includes the chil-

dren’s choir from Trinity School, jazz music by David McRae, vocal performance by the Rev. Todd Scranton of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church and a Love Song Sing-Along, accompanied by Karen Conlin and Kay Heberling.

Proceeds will benefit Our Place

programs that provide food, clothing, hygiene products, transportation and utility assistance.

Earlier this year, Our Place opened a laundry center, which offers a free or low-cost laundry facility for West Central area residents.

For information, call 326-7267.

Ugandan describes conflict in his country

James Ochwa-Echel, faculty fellow for diversity at Eastern Washington University, will discuss “The United Nations response to the Northern Uganda Conflict” at 7 p.m., Monday, Feb. 11, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Fort Wright Dr.

He will trace origins and characteristics of the conflict and response of the UN agencies such as Office for Humanitarian Af-

fairs, UNICEF and World Food Program.

Before coming to EWU, James was a lecturer in the department of African-American studies at Oberlin College from 2001 to 2006. He was a program specialist for a conservation project and a secondary school teacher before leaving his native Uganda.

He holds a doctoral degree in education and master’s degrees in international development and international relations.

He is now building a school to train nurses and do counseling to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission in his home village in northern Uganda.

For information, call 456-2382.

Season of Peace is Jan. 30 to April 4

The theme for the sixth annual Season for Peace and Nonviolence from Jan. 30 to April 4 is “I Am the Peace I Want to See in the World.”

The event commemorates the lives of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., over a period of 65 days.

Events sponsored by Unity Church in Spokane include workshops on meditation, radical forgiveness, nonviolent communication and Nobel Peace Prize winners.

For information, call 624-2700.

The deadline for updates to listings in Directory of Congregatons and Community Resources is March 1

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• Policy Briefings from the Washington State Catholic Conference and the Lutheran Public Policy Office
• Environmental priorities with Earth Ministry on Faith & Environment
Send \$15 fee or \$12 in group of 5+, \$20 after Feb. 8 to Catholic Charities, PO Box 2253, Spokane, WA 99210
For more information, contact Scott Cooper at scooper@ccspokane.org or 509-358-4273

Advocates introduce proposals that address justice concerns

Continued from page 1

From the 1880s to 1910, the business community supported prostitution as a "necessary outlet" for men and in order to "protect respectable women." Prostitutes who did not register were fined, adding to the city's coffers, Dale said. A coalition of downtown churches opposed to prostitution persisted in a two- to three-decade battle with the business community and city.

The church leaders challenged business and city arguments about the economic advantage of prostitution. Eventually, the churches ended legal prostitution, a sign of their influence in this least-church area, he said.

Dale discussed the impact of the area's faith communities:

1) **Ecumenical activity** has a long history here because missionaries were at their core ecumenical. In 1919, councils of churches formed in Seattle, Spokane and elsewhere.

2) **The Northwest** has a high level of ecumenical activity, partly because the "thinness of denominations" makes them "realize they need each other," he said.

3) **Despite their small numbers**, mainline churches contribute to the social capital through social services, food banks, legislative advocacy and civil rights.

4) **Commitment to social justice** is strongest when linked to a theological world view—such as Catholic social teachings, the Calvinistic biblical mandate, the Lutheran love mandate or the United Church of Christ commitment to justice, he added. People will listen, respect and acknowledge the theological values, even if they do not agree.

5) **Churches have been** at the heart of cultural conflicts in the last 40 years in the Northwest. Since the 1960s, when polarized divisions among people as liberals or conservatives left little room for compromise, ecumenical churches challenged those divisions.

6) **Ecumenical churches** have sought to break through stereo-



Paul Benz, Darel Grothaus and Alice Woldt

types, aware that not all evangelical churches are among the religious right and not all liberal Christians are biblically illiterate. Their strategy is to reach out, listen and collaborate with those sharing common concerns.

Alice Woldt of the Religious Coalition for the Common Good (RCCG) reported on gathering input for the 2008 priorities and on resources available through weekly Alerts at thewac.org.

On the housing crisis and homelessness, Alice told of a request to add \$100 million to the Housing Trust Fund to subsidize low-income housing providers so they do not focus on middle- and upper-middle-income homes.

On health care, she said there is a request for state households earning up to 320 percent of poverty level to be eligible for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) vetoed at the federal level.

Paul Benz of the Lutheran Public Policy Office (LPPO) discussed environmental stewardship, tax fairness, health care and immigration reform priorities.

• One proposal would let schools use subsidies to buy local food, link local farms with school cafeterias and food banks,

and allow use of WIC (Women's Infants' and Children's) vouchers at farmers' markets.

• To promote tax fairness for working families, another proposal would provide a state tax credit based on the federal Earned Income Credit to help people rise out of poverty. Another bill would require those who receive tax breaks for providing jobs to show they actually do provide jobs.

• An immigration reform initiative would promote the naturalization of 135,000 legal permanent residents. Paul pointed out that the immigrant community is "important to our state's economy, so we should exhibit hospitality. Immigration is a state, as well as a federal issue."

Carol Estes, state advocate for the Friends Committee on Washington Public Policy, finds in teaching college classes at the Monroe Correctional Center that it's hard for inmates to re-enter the system. She said one bill would establish a corrections ombudsperson to help people regain control over their lives and re-establish their rights.

She also suggests a moratorium on interest that inmates now pay on legal financial obligations while they are in prison. Now

their debts accumulate 12 percent interest a year. Until those debts are paid, released prisoners cannot have their voting or other rights restored, she said.

Cathy Mann of VOICES (Voices for Opportunity, Income, Childcare, Education and Support) in Spokane summarized the \$22 million antipoverty package, which includes grants to help low-income high school graduates go to college; an increase in housing stipends for disabled workers, and revising the asset limits for those receiving food stamps.

She urges rental assistance to reduce costs to the state when people become homeless and

the elimination of asset levels for qualifying for Temporary Assistance for Needy Funding (TANF) and General Assistance for Unemployed (GAU).

RCCG, Lutheran and Washington State Catholic Conference leaders will share updates at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, organized by Scott Cooper of Catholic Charities.

It will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday Feb. 16, at Our Lady of Lourdes Cathedral, 1115 W. Riverside.

For information, call 358-4273 or 206-625-9790.

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Customers use purchasing power to bring justice and impact lives

Continued from page 1
In 1986, they began working with the Association of Craft Producers, organized in 1984 by a Nepali woman to help widowed and abandoned women. It now includes 1,200 women throughout Nepal. They also connected with the Bhaktapier Craft Printers (BCP), which UNICEF started.

They met traditional Tibetan artists, jewelers and silversmiths, whose children no longer wanted to continue those traditional arts. “Parents feared the skills would be lost,” Denise said, “but because there is now income in the work, the children are coming back to their traditional family work as jewelers, finding stable income and keeping family ties.”

When they first started Ganesh Himal, the only peers they knew were Self-Help Crafts (now 10 Thousand Villages), Pueblo to People and Equal Exchange fair trade coffee. The term “fair trade” didn’t yet exist.

As others started, they began to develop principles of “alternative trade,” which included discussing unfair trade issues, and establishing a partnership of consumers and producers.

When they established Ganesh Himal in 1986, they decided to be a for-profit rather than a nonprofit business. As a sole-proprietorship, they do not need to make profits.

“We believe it’s important for people to see that a small business can be socially responsible, so we decided to be profit-making, but stick with our principles. That way, we bring fair-trade principles into the market,” she said.

Denise discussed some of those principles:

One principle is to assure an equitable, fair wage that does not change the economic balance for producers in their communities. “To pay producers too much would throw their local market off balance, to pay too little is unfair,” she said. “Our Nepalese partners decide what are fair prices based on their costs and what they need for a living income. They know the nuances of their system and culture.”

Ganesh Himal Trading, which now sells wholesale to about 200 stores in the United States and Canada, adds the cost of shipping and marketing the items, and enough to make a living.

Often people tell Denise and Ric they “should make more,” but the couple just want a roof, food and a living wage so they can send their son, Cameron, to school, have health care and a pension, and contribute to the community.

A second principle of fair-trade is long-term, sustainable relationships, equal partnerships based on mutual trust and transparency. Fair trade particularly includes people of color, women and refu-

gees, who are marginalized from the major markets.

“We are friends with everyone we have worked with,” she said. “We collaborate with Nepalese craftspeople as partners to develop new products or designs. Sometimes we suggest ideas that will sell in the U.S. market or design changes to save production costs and improve marketability, keeping their interests in mind. They choose products they can continue to produce so they have a stable market.”

A third principle is to use local materials, such as hemp grown without pesticides in Nepal. Most craftspeople work in their homes or in small group workshops, not in factories.

A fourth principle is engaging in discussions with customers, many of whom oppose war and are interested in fairness, equality, Tibetan rights, the environment and U.S. policies. So along with generating money for families, Ganesh Himal provides a platform for political discussions and education.

Many consumers want to use their purchasing power to engage in social justice action.

In the early 1990s at an alternative-trade conference in Washington, D.C., with 14 others doing similar forms of trade, they decided to call their movement “fair trade.”

Denise is on the board of the Fair Trade Resource Network—at www.ftn.org—and Ganesh Himal is a long standing member of the Fair Trade Federation—at www.ftf.org. FTF organizes producers, wholesalers and retailers.

Over 20 years, the movement has taken hold. At a Fair Trade Federation conference two years ago in Chicago, there were 750 participants.

The North America Fair Trade Association helps build the business framework for fair trade, while the Fair Trade Resource Network focuses on fair-trade education, in K-12 classrooms and on World Fair Trade Day. There are events in 60 U.S. communities.

In Europe, Denise said, fair trade is mainstream in supermarkets and Third World Shops. There is also an International Federation for Alternative Trade—at www.ifat.org.

Now that “fair trade” has become a “buzz word,” the fair-trade principles and consumer education help prevent other businesses from co-opting the term.

Fair-trade education helps consumers understand effects of their buying choices and teaches producers their rights, so they are treated fairly and have a voice.

Sometimes corporate buyers offer to buy large quantities of sweaters for low prices—half the price of fair-trade orders.

“Nepali producers who know fair-trade principles walk out of negotiations that do not follow fair-trade practices. They know fair-trade buyers will pay more and not make huge profits off their work,” Denise said.

She and Ric have worked with some families for a generation.

They have seen people do what they said they wanted to do: provide education for their children, including girls and young women. They have gone to school, earned degrees and returned to their communities to educate more people.

One woman, who once had to give the money she earned weaving to her father and then to her husband, had put her loom away when her children were small. As they grew up and she wanted income to send her daughter to school, Laxmi started working 20 years ago with the Association of Craft Producers (ACP). She asked the ACP to help her put her loom back together in a small workshop near Kathmandu.

When Laxmi received her first pay, she cried, realizing her power. She set up savings accounts to send her children to school. Her daughter, Sudha, earned a master’s degree in social work and worked with the government, until she realized the most important social work would be to go back to her village and work with her mother to organize women to weave so they could earn money. Another young woman is a doctor.

“That’s powerful social change,” Denise said. “Her acknowledging the value of her mother’s work has been incredible.”

Some customers also donate to the Girl Child Education Fund.

“Women are capable, but need opportunities to participate,” she said. “We are happy to help create positive change in homes, families and villages. As they do well, they have economic, emotional, social and spiritual impact.”

Fair trade is growing locally. Lisa Brown, Nancy Nelson and Denise were among those who decided to start a fair trade store in Spokane, starting in a room at the Peace and Justice Action League office on Fifth Ave. Global Folk Art was in several locations until Jim Sheehan offered the fair-trade store space at the Community Building, 35 W. Main.

Producers save their income to educate their children and improve their lives.

Other area fair-trade retailers and wholesalers include Felipe and Maria Gonzales of Moonflower Enterprises, selling Guatemalan crafts; Nancy Spada and Roger Gee of the Singing Shaman, Mexican products; Oscar and Penny Haupt of ConoSur, Chilean imports; Barbara and Terry Novak, Far East Handicrafts in Seattle; Pauline Dingman of Devtan in Northtown Mall, handmade items; Gloria Waggoner at Rosa Gallica, boutique items; Nancy Nydegger’s Just Trade in Pullman, crafts; Paul Fish’s Mountain Gear catalogue, gifts, and Rivers Odyssey West in Coeur d’Alene, some rowing accessories and clothes.

Ganesh Himal Trading, which now has four other part- and full-time workers, receives a shipment of 3,000 pounds of goods every two months. That cycle provides producers—paid before the shipment arrives—a regular income.

Until two years ago, Ganesh Himal operated out of a mobile home. Now they are in a warehouse at 13312 S. Austin Rd. Ric

designed the building and had a “green builder” build it with environmentally friendly features.

Even though the U.S. economy has been down, the last two years have been the best for Ganesh Himal, Denise said.

From growing up in Covenant Christian Church and from her travels, Denise has come to appreciate the variety of spiritual traditions she has encountered in Nepal, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Zoroastrianism, as well as Christianity.

“The common spiritual practice is right livelihood, living as mentors and taking care of our own spiritual health, not telling others what to do,” she said.

“Great teachers of faiths talk of similar issues. We are to put their teachings into practice. The more we put them into practice and listen to needs of others, the more we realize the teachings work,” said Denise, who finds her niche in fair trade a way to live the values of many faiths.

For information, call 448-6561 or visit ganeshhimaltrading.com.



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—

Sun Feb 10
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Adoptee claims both his Indian and white cultures and families

By Virginia de Leon

Through faith, love and music, Shane Ridley-Stevens brings two worlds together.

Adopted the day after he was born, Shane has become known for teaching others about his Native American culture even though he grew up in a white family and predominantly white community.

He was one of just a few people of color in his hometown, Hayden, Idaho.

The fact he didn't look like other members of his family made little difference to those who knew him, he said, especially to members of his faith community, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS).

"I was one of the six Stevens children," said Shane, expressing that he didn't feel he experienced discrimination.

Still, he wondered about his birth parents. He knew from the caseworker who handled his adoption that both were Indian. His mother was Shoshone, and his father was a member of the Washoe Paiute Tribe.

He longed to learn more about his Native American culture.

"Be proud of who you are," his adoptive parents often told him.

"It was sometimes hard to be proud of who I was, because most movies I saw showed the Indians as the bad guys," Shane said, recalling his childhood.

When he was 19 years old, Shane experienced Native culture for the first time.

For his mission, the LDS Church sent Shane to the island village of Bella Bella on the central coast of British Columbia. For five months, he lived among the Heiltsuk, one of the Canadian First Nations, known for their music, dancing and ties to the land.

The experience was daunting at first.

"I was scared," he said, because even though he's Indian, he grew up white.

The people of Bella Bella embraced him and treated him like one of their own. The Heiltsuk people taught him their traditions and history. They also immersed him in their culture, showing him how to sing, play drum and dance in the name of the Creator.

While there, Shane found a mentor. Moses Humchitt, a Heiltsuk elder, who was in his late 70s, agreed to teach him.

One day, Moses handed him a piece of paper and said: "This is a schedule for your classes."

He told Shane, "You may never find out who you belong to, so you will be taught our ways."

The experience at the village transformed Shane. For the first time, he discovered a part of himself that he never knew existed.

"Growing up, I always felt there was this big hole inside of me,"



Shane Ridley-Stevens and his daughter Ne'Hovia

Photo by Virginia de Leon

he said. "When I started learning from the elders, the hole became smaller and smaller. I felt like I was becoming complete."

When he finished his mission, Shane returned to North Idaho determined to find his birth family and learn more about his Indian roots.

With the blessing of his adoptive parents, he talked to the attorney who handled his adoption and did some investigative work.

A year later, he was in Elko, Nev., knocking on the door of his birth mother's home.

"I knew in my heart she was my mom," said Shane, who had spoken to Barbara Ridley on the phone several times before visiting her.

The two hugged immediately when they saw each other for the first time. Then, without missing a beat, Barbara told Shane to help her brother take a battery out of the car.

"It was like coming home from a long vacation," Shane recalled with a laugh.

His birth mother and adoptive parents, Laura and Larry Stevens, have become friends. They talk on the phone and exchange Christmas cards every year. Barbara and Laura even swap recipes.

Last summer, members of both families gathered in Coeur d'Alene to watch Shane dance at the annual Julyamsh Powwow, a major Northwest powwow.

The alliance between the families also is reflected in Shane's hyphenated last name: Ridley-Stevens.

After discovering Native culture and reuniting with his birth mother 18 years ago, Shane started expressing his Indian side that had been dormant.

He sought knowledge from elders of area tribes. He learned their stories. He danced and drummed at powwows.

In 1990, during a powwow at Fort Hall, the Indian reservation of the Shoshone and Bannock people in southeastern Idaho, Shane picked up a flute for the first time.

The instrument, carved by hand out of alder wood, immediately caught his eye because a small woodpecker had been whittled near the mouthpiece.

Shane had no money, so he gave

the man selling the flute an eagle feather in exchange.

When he played it, a feeling of peace swept over Shane. Like the music he first heard in Bella Bella, the sounds from the flute were surprisingly familiar to him, as if they had been a part of him throughout his life.

When he travels, he takes the woodpecker flute and several others he has carved over the years.

When he's not working at Home Depot, the Spokane Valley resident plays the flute and shares his traditions at school assemblies, festivals, college classes and other gatherings.

In addition to his performances, he works with small groups and talks with youth about living a drug- and alcohol-free life.

The way he integrates his LDS faith life with his Native American culture influences the lessons he teaches children and others.

"I see and I understand both

worlds," said Shane, who belongs to the 15th Ward in Spokane Valley.

He finds the stories of Indian elders similar to Christian beliefs.

He also said that native traditions are similar to the LDS way of life, which promotes family, self-sufficiency, respect for elders, and care for the land and community.

"Even before Christianity came to Indian people, they lived a Christian life," Shane said. "They took care of each other. An auntie or uncle is just as much as a mom and dad to a nephew or niece."

Their lives are family-oriented, he said.

Shane and his wife, Michelle Luna, who has four children from her previous marriage, now have a six-month-old daughter, Ne'Hovia.

Her name means "my song" in the Shoshone language.

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Faith, community leaders urge making dream a reality

Continued from page 1
felt it unacceptable when people told her she was “lucky” as the daughter of a Muskogee Indian “of darker hue” and an English-, Irish-, German-descent mother “of a lighter hue,” because she could “pass” for white.

“It’s not okay to ‘pass’ as anything,” she said.

“We honor King for his intellect, truthfulness and courage, calling us to uphold fundamental ideas of life, liberty, justice and equality,” she concluded.

Center promotes King’s dream

Ben Luety, president of the board of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Family Outreach Center, who grew up Lutheran in Missoula, feels honored to be on the board of an organization working to improve the quality of life for children, youth and families through providing multicultural education, a preschool, teen leadership and parent education to help people accomplish King’s dream.

In introducing Catholic Bishop William Skylstad and Rabbi Jack Isakson of Temple Beth Shalom, the Rev. Happy Watkins, co-organizer of the 2008 events with Ivan, said he has long sought to fulfill King’s dream by bringing together Protestants, Catholics and Jews to speak.

Bishop urges right relationships

Bishop Skylstad said the prophet Isaiah was also being a dreamer—envisioning dry land blossoming, the crooked being made straight, leveling mountains, turning spears into pruning hooks and swords into plowshares, the wolf being the guest of the lamb and the calf being with the young lion.

Recounting that God had to call Samuel three times before Samuel heard, the bishop said “God calls and calls and calls us here and now” to live the vision of the kingdom Jesus gave, the kingdom of justice, peace, joy and right ordering of relationships.

“We have much right ordering to continue to do,” he challenged, calling for response to God’s call to “realize we are all brothers and sisters in God.”

Rabbi committed to civil rights

Rabbi Jack asked participants to imagine what it was like for him to stand in the pulpit of Ezra Kinlow “under my kippah” (Jewish skull cap).

At the end of World War II an American tank entered the concentration camp where his father had been held. The first American to emerge from the tank was a black man.

“Today, I am a rabbi speaking in a church celebrating a man of the same color as the man who liberated my father, a man who emancipated descendants of slaves.



Bishop William Skylstad, Rabbi Jack Isakson, Terry McGonigal and Nancy Stowell, center, were among speakers at the commemoration service. Sharon Jones, left, directed the community choir.

“Can you imagine how I feel? It’s amazing!” he said, acknowledging that there’s more to do.

The week’s Torah readings from Exodus 14 and 15 told of the Hebrews, who escaped slavery across the Red Sea and sang a song of praise on the safe side.

Rabbi Jack said the Jewish community was part of the civil rights movement: In 1964, three Jewish young adults were murdered in Mississippi when they were registering black voters; rabbis joined the march to Selma, and members of Temple Beth Shalom worked on civil rights in the 1960s.

“King was an ally in the fight against anti-Semitism and for a peaceful, secure Israel,” he added.

Speaker promotes families

Speaking on the theme, “The Silence Is Deafening: Stand Up and Speak Out!” the keynote speaker, Constance Rice, called for Spokane to stand up and speak out for youth. She shared her perspective as director of the Casey Family Programs in Seattle, which provides, improves and seeks to prevent the need for foster care. Forty percent of the 500,000 children in foster care are African American, she said.

Beyond empathy generated toward black people by such movies as “The Great Debaters” or celebrities like Oprah Winfrey, Constance said there is need to realize African Americans are consumers, who spend \$400 billion a year.

She expressed her concerns about consumption choices of some African-American youth, stereotypes of African-American women in movies, susceptibility of African Americans to home loan scams, high rates of diabetes

and heart disease because of diet, lack of parental involvement in schools, low reading and writing skills and high drop-out rates for blacks, having TV on all the time, and the high percent of African Americans in prison.

Those are among the many factors behind the need for foster care, said Constance, who both praised foster parents for providing love and safety for children, and called for strengthening African-American families.

With the generation that started the civil rights movement now being seniors, she called for more in younger generations to join in working for rights.

Constance urges early childhood education, developing memorization and vocabulary skills, teaching a love of scriptures, exposing children to good role models, promoting perseverance and prayer, and respecting all religions and people.

She also urges people to be vigilant toward elected officials, to value and use the right to vote won for them, so they can decide who will be in charge of education, health and human services.

Children ask questions

As part of the commemoration, eight children did a choral reading of King’s letter from the Birmingham jail, followed by a chorus reminding of the limited access to employment, education,

health care and justice for minority youth, asking each time: “Who will stand up for us? Who will speak out for us?”

Spokane School Superintendent Nancy Stowell said at both the service and the rally she was humbled and touched by their questions: “The responsibility falls to us. I have tears in my eyes because you should not have to ask, but should know that we will stand up and speak out.”

At the pre-march rally, she

added that the 30,000 children in the school system include African American, Native American, Latino, Asian and white children, plus children living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, speaking 40 languages and bearing hard-to-pronounce names.

“The goal is for all to keep up with their grade levels and graduate,” Nancy said. “We will eliminate the achievement gap only when we overcome systemic racism. We need to value the differences and worth each child brings to the classroom. We educators must be keepers of the children’s dreams, standing up for each child who enters school doors.”

Continued on next page

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Commissioner describes subtleties of racism in her upbringing

Continued from previous page
Indians benefit from King

Opening the pre-march rally, Pat Moses, a member of the Spokane Tribe from Wellpinit and a graduate of Eastern Washington University, said that "through the ages, men like King have brought people a long way, helping them to see that life is precious.

"Because of him, many of us are better off," Pat said. "King led people to a better life, a better living and better living standards. Our people have lived in conditions and circumstances that are not good. We can make this country and town better and can change hearts."

He said the Plateau people in the area before the missionaries came had their own religion and understanding of the spirit being in everything. While some have adapted, many still hold the traditional ways.

In the 1880s, there was war over the land where the Spokane people came each year to fish along the Spokane Falls. One of three warriors caught and hanged as war criminals sang a song of hope and a prayer for the Indian people before he was killed. Pat sang that song, calling for unity.

Mayor calls for unity

Mayor Verner also called for putting differences aside and being a unified community around King's dream to be one society with equality and freedom for all, open to discovering the unique human being each person is.

"We march to embrace our differences, our diverse cultures in a fabric of many colors, rejoicing in the richness of our community from the original people of Spokane Falls to new people with different voices," she said.

She also expressed support for naming a street in King's honor and moving beyond that symbolic gesture to live his dream in "our daily walks."

Commissioner humbled

Spokane County Commissioner Bonnie Mager felt humbled to speak as a white woman who grew up in a white neighborhood and attended a white high school with only two black students. Her first black friends were in college.

"How can I speak about oppression I did not live or understand the effect of the oppression from the culture I lived in?" she wondered, stirred by the theme, "The Silence Is Deafening."

"I can voice what I know of hurtful things swept under the carpet for racism. King gave his life for freedom from hatred and prejudice. He did not limit that to one group. His vision was universal. He also wanted to free whites



West Central churches—St. Joseph's Catholic, Salem Lutheran, Holy Trinity Episcopal, West Central Christian Ministries—marched from West Central to the rally and in the march.

from oppression," Bonnie said.

One of King's quotes about human salvation being "in the hands of the creatively maladjusted" connected with her experience in the 1970s at the University of Oregon's Newman Center. There she was in a group that studied Scriptures, worked at a soup kitchen, marched for peace and justice, and referred to themselves as the "Order of Malcontents." Considering herself still "malcontent," she told of growing up in a racist society.



Bonnie Mager

When Bonnie was a child, her Italian-immigrant, coal-miner grandfather introduced her to prejudice when he would not let her play with a Mexican girl down the street.

Her parents taught that prejudice was wrong and that God loves everyone the same but her mother fretted in the 1960s that a Negro or Mexican might rent a little rental house they owned.

When two black students enrolled in her high school, Bonnie's classmates befriended them because in 1966 they knew prejudice was wrong, but when she danced with one of the black students at a dance, a friend worried about her reputation and a cousin wondered if she would marry "one."

At 16, she was angry and upset about the hypocrisy and injustice of such messages of racism by her family and friends.

"The 1960s were times of subtle as well as violent struggles, struggles we still face," Bonnie said. "Forty years have passed, and strides have been made, yet our culture still whispers a racist message that people of color are different, untrustworthy and scary, a message of injustice that still creates stereotypes and results in higher rates of imprisonment for people of color, lower rates of upward mobility and a message that imprisons both the oppressor

and oppressed."

A black college student recently told of women grabbing their purses close as he pushes his cart down the supermarket aisle. A black friend told of a young child curious about her dark skin asking her mother why her skin was so dark. The mother replied, "Sh! She can't help it!"

"The work of making King's dream reality is unfinished. We must continually break the silence by having the courage to stand up and speak out against injustice in all its forms," Bonnie said.

For information, call 455-8722.



Lutheran Bishop Martin Wells, left background, catches up with Episcopal Bishop Jim Waggoner, walking with Lynda Maraby, who carried the Holy Trinity banner.



Constance Rice



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Bob Bennett instills awareness that human rights are ‘inalienable’

By Virginia de Leon
When Bob Bennett talks about human rights, he often speaks of the “inalienable rights” Thomas Jefferson emphasized in the Declaration of Independence.
“Rights aren’t something you have to earn. You are born with them,” said Bob, the new executive director of North Idaho’s Human Rights Education Institute.
Treating others with respect and dignity is a lesson he tries to impart to others.

As a high school teacher in the 1960s and later as a principal and superintendent, he reached out to students and their families, so learning would be based on relationships beyond as well as within the classroom. As president of several colleges, including North Idaho College from 1987 to 1997, Bob made a point to listen—especially to those whose voices were never heard.

Now, as leader of the region’s institute that teaches about human rights, he encourages conversation among people to promote equality through education.

He is convinced that the way to make a difference in this world is through education.

As HREI director, Bob is currently reaching out to youth to showcase diversity and human rights in a way that encompasses music, art, sports and other everyday topics.

This winter, the HREI is focusing on racial and gender equity in high school and college athletics.

As part of that program, the institute sponsored an essay contest, asking high school and college students to write about how sports changed or affected their attitudes toward diversity. The HREI asked younger students to participate in a poster contest, creating an image “celebrating participation in activities free of racial, gender and other bias.”

For its Martin Luther King Jr. celebration in January, Bob and several volunteers put together an exhibit called “It’s About Time,” featuring the photographs, medals, jerseys, cleats and other items of a diverse group of athletes from the region and country.

The HREI also organized school assemblies at Coeur d’Alene and Lake City high schools, as well as a student summit with Josh Culbreath, bronze medalist in the 400-meter hurdles during the 1956 Olympics, along with other athletes of color.

In February, the institute will bring together female coaches, athletes and leaders for a summit called, “It’s Taken a Long Time, Baby ... and We’re Not There Yet!” Area students will be



Bob Bennett outside the Human Rights Education Institute
Photo by Virginia de Leon

invited to take part in a contest discussing how gender equity in sports influenced their lives.

Future exhibits and discussions will focus on such topics as art, music and the environment.

Bob plans to have more summits and school assemblies, as well as brown-bag lunches and community forums. He also hopes to involve more volunteers and organizations—including churches, corporations and community groups.

“There are many ways to look at our attempt to live together harmoniously,” Bob said. “I want to create an atmosphere where people will feel comfortable talking about the things they might have been too scared or embarrassed to talk about before. It’s important for us to have these conversations.”

The institute in downtown Coeur d’Alene is the educational arm of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations—a group of community leaders who banded together in 1981 in response to the then-growing presence of the Aryan Nations.

For nearly three decades, neo-Nazis and their leader, the late

Richard Butler, tarnished the region’s image by building a 20-acre compound for racists in Hayden, Idaho. To combat their hate and bigotry, the grassroots task force helped establish anti-harassment legislation in Idaho.

Their efforts were recognized in 1987 when the City of Coeur d’Alene received the Raoul Wallenberg Civic Award. A year later, the task force started the Human Rights Education Institute to promote diversity, justice and human rights in North Idaho and beyond.

After the Aryan Nations lost a lawsuit that bankrupted Butler and led to the compound’s closure in 2000, the Human Rights Education Institute received a \$1 million grant from the Massachusetts-based Gregory Carr Institute.

Organizers used the money to renovate the former Union Pacific Railroad sub-station near Coeur d’Alene City Park, turning the run-down building into a center dedicated to educating the world about human rights.

Bob is the third executive director since the center opened on International Human Rights Day in December 2005.

After a two-year, nation-wide search that drew more than 200 applicants, the HREI’s 11-member board of directors discovered last summer they didn’t need to look far. Their candidate was already in Coeur d’Alene.

Bob, who retired from his NIC post seven years ago, was surprised when board members asked him to apply.

Although he enjoyed playing racquetball, traveling to Mexico and other perks of retirement, he knew he needed to be of service to the task force.

He also couldn’t resist the challenge of bringing diverse groups together and leading an organization dedicated to ideals of justice and equality he espoused as an educator.

Bob finds the many facets of human rights a challenge—from the historic struggle of women and minorities for equality to the obstacles faced by seniors, people with disabilities, lesbians and gays, and others who are on the fringes of society.

“It’s about showing and teaching people how to treat one another with respect and decency,” he said.

He finds that promoting diversity and human rights may be a more difficult task in the absence of a tangible foe, such as the neo-Nazis, because some people wrongly conclude the problem of racism has been solved, he said.

Bigotry and intolerance continue to plague our community, Bob said, and there are still many who continue to be hurt by people’s ignorance and discrimination.

Once he, too, was naively unaware of the problem. Working as a stock boy during his teens in

Hannibal, Mo., Bob once invited his African-American boss to meet him at the corner café.

The man, who never had a title despite his supervisory position and who was known in town only as “Gravy,” showed up that afternoon but he waited in the kitchen. Even though segregation was a fact of life for most African Americans, Bob had no inkling until then that his black friend wasn’t allowed to sit in the café with him and other whites.

This memory, along with his experience as an educator working with diverse communities, influenced his lifelong goal of bringing people together.

Born in California, Bob grew up in the Midwest, where he graduated from the community college in Burlington, Iowa, before earning a bachelor’s degree in English and history from Western Illinois University.

After working as a high school social studies and English teacher, he earned a master’s degree from Truman College in Kirksville, Mo., and then a doctoral degree from Iowa State University.

He and his wife, Donna Bennett, will celebrate their 50th anniversary this year. The couple has three grown children and four grandchildren.

A few months after celebrating his 70th birthday, Bob was at work—leading the small non-profit that requires him not only to create educational programs, manage volunteers and do community outreach, but also to answer phones, help set up exhibits and occasionally shovel snow and clean windows.

For information, call 208-292-2359 or visit www.hrei.org.

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At 90, Francis Garrett has done most Habitat construction tasks

By Steve Blewett

For many people, "church" is closely associated with a structure somewhere—four walls, a ceiling and all the rest of the regular accoutrements—along with the community that goes with it.

For Francis Garrett, "church" is Habitat for Humanity-Spokane—including the 150 or so homes he has helped build, and the volunteers and others he has in the past and still does work with.

Francis, who turned 90 last September, doesn't have anything against typical churches. He was baptized into and grew up in the Southern Baptist church.

Travel around the United States and the world on his various jobs with Chicago Bridge and Iron Company made it difficult for him to stay connected with regular congregations.

After he retired and settled in Spokane in 1980, he was so busy with other things he never reconnected with his religious roots.

One of the things that kept him busy was rental properties he purchased and renovated. Then, his wife became ill, and he became her primary caregiver until her illness progressed and Hospice stepped in to help.

When she died 13 years ago he gave the rental properties to his daughter Ginger and son Ronald, who encouraged him to volunteer at the COPS substation in Northwest Spokane and to join the Neighborhood Observation Patrol—NOPS.

A neighbor who is a member of Audubon Park Methodist Church recruited him to help sort food every Tuesday at Second Harvest Food Bank, and another friend introduced him to Habitat.

Habitat seems a natural connection for someone with Francis' background.

Over his 48-year career with Chicago Bridge—he began with the company when he was 17—he progressed from filing drawings to becoming manager of sales administration for the company in the Philippines, where he presented a proposal to build the penstocks for a major hydroelectric development in Indonesia—quite leap for him from his childhood in Birmingham, Alabama.

In his 48 years with the company, he worked on construction projects around the world, including refinery projects in Mississippi, Germany and South Africa, and nuclear reactor containment vessels back in the U.S.

Now, he claims he is learning as much working at Habitat as he is able to teach.

"I have done pretty much everything with Habitat," he said,



Francis Garrett works with construction supervisor.

Photo by Steve Blewett

"framing, wiring, sheet rock work, some finish work (including putting the facing on electrical outlets and light switches the day he was interviewed), but they don't let me up on the roofs anymore—I'm a little wobbly right now."

He may be, but that doesn't diminish the admiration he evinces from his coworkers.

"I'd like to be half as good as Francis when I'm 90," said Mark Correll, construction supervisor at the Habitat project at 1216 E. North Street. "He is willing to do any kind of work."

Francis is modest about his contributions.

"At one dedication a little girl took my hand and led me into the house and up the stairs into a bedroom and said, 'This is my room.' Well, you know, it just brought tears to my eyes," Francis said.

"At my age it's not so easy to drag myself out of bed in the morning, especially on days like this (it was 10 degrees outside that day), but working with these

guys on these projects makes it easier."

Francis appreciates helping people build a foundation for themselves and their families.

"There is nothing more important," he said.

Francis said he learned his work ethic from his parents and his brother and three sisters.

"We were poor. So we learned to do for ourselves," he said.

Learning to do for himself also has come to mean doing for others, like the people who benefit from Habitat—especially the family of 12 who will soon move into a house Francis is helping finish.

Habitat for Humanity-Spokane, at 732 N. Napa, continually needs volunteers to help with construction. Volunteers must be 16 years or older of any skill level. Onsite training is provided—from swinging a hammer to running materials, stocking the warehouse and refinishing cabinets.

Construction volunteers help from 8:30 a.m. to noon and from

12:30 to 4 p.m., Wednesdays through Saturdays.

Habitat-Spokane currently needs the following volunteers: a materials coordinator to help with material deliveries; a warehouse manager to do inventory control, shipping and receiving, power tool repairs and vehicle maintenance, and construction site crew leaders, with background in home construction.

In addition, there are non-construction volunteer opportunities, serving on committees and in the

office. Committees plan the annual "Raise the Roof" auction, procure auction items, develop house plans, secure supplies, work with families, build relations with the faith community, select families, choose sites, raise funds and do office work.

Habitat for Humanity-Spokane is an ecumenical, nonprofit Christian ministry whose mission is to bring the community together to build decent, affordable homes for people in need.

For information, call 534-2552.



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In the market economy, the new word for propaganda is ‘spin’

Supposedly, we are in an age of information, but much of what comes our way on television, radio, internet, print media and those thumb-operated gizmos is buzz, spin and rumor. In this election year, it already seems particularly deafening and mind-numbing. Finding real information is becoming a discipline in itself.

Many in history, psychology and sociology classes have learned about the basic techniques of propaganda, such as scapegoating, the misuse of statistics and the use of generalities of both the dire and the glittering varieties.

The term “spin” replaces “propaganda” in popular usage of today’s market society. Spin sounds relatively harmless—the game played by opposing candidates and media—but it’s the same old stuff, facilitated by newer and faster technology.

A misuse of statistics popped up in the State of the Union address, when the Presi-

dent stated what the “average” tax rebate would be under the economic stimulus package he has agreed to. For many people, “average” is synonymous with usual or typical. It isn’t, and we’ve heard this before regarding tax cuts.

When there is a wide spread in numbers being averaged, the average is meaningless: A doctor, a lawyer and a bad statistician went deer hunting with bows and arrows. A deer appeared. The doctor’s arrow went two feet to the right. The lawyer’s arrow went two feet to the left. The statistician shouted, “We got him!”

For those who realize that truth in advertising is not mandatory, there is help in the book, *unSpun: Finding Facts in a World of Disinformation* by Brooks Jackson and Kathleen Hall Jamieson.

Brooks, whose background is in investigative reporting, runs FactCheck.org, a project of the Annenberg Public Policy

Center, which they describe as “a consumer advocate for voters.” Kathleen is a professor of communication at the University of Pennsylvania and director of its Annenberg Public Policy Center.

Their 195-page paperback is a handbook for the factually deprived, meant to give readers tools for recognizing and avoiding spin and for finding solid facts. In these days of “truthiness,” finding facts that stand up to scrutiny can be a challenge.

Information in *unSpun* is based on FactCheck.org. They look for misleading techniques in political ads and speech. Their examples are real. The information sources they provide are some they use in checking accuracy of political claims.

Because political ads and speeches cover a gamut of people’s concerns, so do the information sources listed, such as Quackwatch (www.quackwatch.org), a guide to “Quackery, Health Fraud, and Intelligent

Decisions” about medicine.

Their overall guide to reliable information sources is the Librarians’ Internet Index (www.lii.org). Websites listed have been screened by professional librarians and are linked to the index. This retired reference librarian likes what she has found there and reminds those without internet connections to ask their librarian to teach them to use internet at the library.

FactCheck.org offers a sign up to have information sent to an email or can be read onsite as summaries or complete accounts. If they make a mistake, they correct it.

Brooks and Kathleen have five suggestions for staying unSpun: 1) keep an open mind, 2) ask questions, 3) cross-check sources, 4) look for the best evidence and 5) weigh the evidence.

Accurate information is crucial to holding government accountable.

Nancy Minard - Editorial Team

‘Thinking Scrooge’ can keep the Christmas in our lives all year

As winter deepens and the Christmas season wanes, many people seem to struggle with carrying the message of Christmas with them throughout the year. For many, gloom and even depression far too easily replace the genuine spirit of sharing, optimism and joy that epitomize the true meaning of Christmas.

Perhaps economic realities set in at the first of the year. Perhaps it is just the natural letdown we often feel after a feast of family, fellowship and sharing.

I sometimes struggle to internalize the messages so profoundly expressed in Mary’s acceptance of her call to serve, the human struggles Joseph experiences before his life-affirming choice to listen to God’s call and believe in his wife’s destiny, and the other simple and yet profound narratives of the shepherds, wise men and angels heralding God’s wondrous gift to humankind. Often they don’t seem to resonate with me as much after the season as they do during.

That’s why I like to “Think Scrooge.” Scrooge is one of the most wonderful

and real characters in Western literature, and one of the most enigmatic.

It’s amazing just how misrepresented Scrooge is. Ask almost any group of people what they think about Scrooge, and most of those who are familiar with the story will describe him as the perfect example of greed, misery and failure.

Which is opposite what he really is: the perfect human example of the power of the authentic Christmas message—of the power of salvation.

He was miserable, greedy, alone and scorned. He was given great wealth and had no idea how to use it appropriately. His life was almost over. He was that laborer in the vineyard who came last to the call and almost missed the opportunity.

When confronted with the truth about himself, with what his life was about, with the consequences of his choices, and with the opportunity to do something about it, he changes.

Not only does he make the commitment to change himself, but also he acts. He does as much as he can to help those he has

wronged and to hold the spirit of Christmas in his heart not only at Christmas but throughout the year.

The authenticity and power of Scrooge’s story are evident by the amazing number of times the story has been copied and retold over the century and a half since Charles Dickens wrote it. That is the case because Dickens was inspired by the redemption messages of the Christian Gospels, and especially the story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector in Luke who, when recognized by Christ, makes the commitment to become a new man.

I have a tough time relating to Zacchaeus, Joseph, the shepherds or the wise men, but I can relate to Scrooge. Like him, I have allowed myself far too many times to forget how fortunate I am, how much I can do, how many gifts I have been given by God, to let “business” squeeze out the way of spirit. I too often left charity up to others, and allowed myself to replace hope with cynicism or despair.

So, when I struggle to retain that Christmas spirit, I try to “Think Scrooge”:

- By remembering those I have wronged and seeking their forgiveness, at least in my heart.

- By looking for ways I can do some small thing to make someone else’s life a little easier, even if it is only helping them shovel their driveway, buying them a cup of coffee, complimenting them or visiting them.

- By remembering we all are broken or at least a little bent, and that we can be made whole by accepting God’s love, forgiveness and healing.

- By remembering Scrooge’s plaintive cry when conveyed to his own grave by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come:

“I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.”

- By remembering it is never too late to change and Christmas can be in our hearts the whole year, if only we let it.

God bless us, every one.

Steve Blewett - Editorial Team

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

The Western world is cluttered with distractions that compel us to care more about how we look than about the suffering that went into the clothes that make us look good. It is difficult to see this unjust part and parcel of our way of being, yet God calls us to that place.

God calls us to that place where the bad choices of our times have created hunger, war, homelessness or personal misery, but we can only make that stand against “that which is not perfect” from the secure and eternal foundation of that Presence that is perfect. So let us stand against all that is not yet this Love as a part of this great celebration that is Life itself, living in the oneness of God even while living in this two-pronged world.

The Rev. Redhawk Rice-Sauer
Covenant Christian Church

I live in a 100-year-old house and I love it every season except winter. It is cold. The house is drafty. I have on a wool sweater and a down vest. My mother grew up on a poor dirt farm in Minnesota. I can’t imagine how cold that house was in the winter. All my life I heard her say she was so blessed to have a warm bed to sleep in.

How thankful are we for our warm beds this winter? A warm winter bed can be a metaphor for comfort—not just creature comfort but also the mental letting go of bedtime and slipping away to the other-worldliness of sleep.

We can add to these comforts the comfort of God, spirit and hope.

Comfort, a blessed mixture of body, mind and spirit, is what Isaiah prays for people to have when the prophet cries out, “Comfort, comfort my people” and “Cry unto her that her conflict is over, her sin forgiven.”

What greater comfort can there be than to live in body—free from conflicts of war, argument, petty fighting, self-despising and greed; free from the conflicts of doubt, fear and hopelessness, or free from poverty and homelessness or fighting the cold?

The Rev. Dick Finch
St. Mark’s Lutheran Church

I doubt that animals and birds waste much time wondering and worrying about the future, but humans do. Psychics advertise regularly wanting to share their mythical visions into our future for a handsome fee, of course. Astrologers are busy analyzing the alignment of the stars in order to grade our days on a scale of one-to-10. We seem to be “hard wired” for curiosity into our future, but nobody knows what the future holds.

One certainty is that the months ahead will be a blend of the desirable and the undesirable, the good and the bad, pleasant surprises and sad disappointments. That’s just the way life is.

Curiosity is one thing, but worry quite another. Those who avidly seek to know what the future holds often do so thinking that they might ward off some real or imagined

evil. If a car wreck is “in the cards,” then perhaps they should take a train. Rather than try to peer into the future, Jesus tells us “do not be anxious.” (Luke 12:22-31) He points to the realm of nature and asks his followers to consider birds, flowers and all growing things. They simply don’t carry around the “worry baggage” that we do.

Don’t worry about March, July or November. Take a day at a time and savor the joy, drink in the beauty and rely on God’s presence and strength for the rest.

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

God calls us to serve in many spheres—in our homes, among family and friends, on the job, in our community and in our communities of faith.

God gives us each unique gifts for the service God has called us to. Can you say in each of these spheres: “I am doing what God has made me good at doing.”

It’s probably hardest at home. There are fewer of us there, and jobs need to be done whether there’s someone gifted for them. In some things, we just muddle through.

Other areas of life are different. Hopefully, most of us find our way into jobs that match our gifts. When we offer ourselves in service to the community, we likely offer to do what we know we are good at doing.

What about in our congregations? Paul wrote to the Romans, “In Christ, we, though many, form one body, and each member

belongs to all the others.” We should be able to affirm we are doing what God has made us good at doing. God’s word tells us God has provided the gifts we need, when we use them for the good of all.

God stretches us sometimes, giving us abilities we haven’t yet explored. When we are in a place of service that doesn’t match our gifts, we may become frustrated and discouraged.

That may be God’s way of telling us it’s time for a change, time to seek to serve in another way.

The Rev. Ladd Bjorneby
Zion Lutheran - Spokane

Toward the end of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s book, *Life Together*, he lists the ministries of the church. They are not what we would expect, and they are not just to be performed by a professional minister. They are ministries of the whole church.

The ministries are: holding one’s tongue, being meek or thinking little of oneself, listening patiently to understand, helpfulness that is open to interruptions, bearing other’s burdens, proclaiming God’s Word to a brother or sister who needs to hear it, and having authority that comes from being a faithful, trusted servant.

So much of what passes for Christianity in our culture is mindless fluff. It’s helpful to remember that life together requires patience and hard work.

The Rev. Don Hoffman
Creston Christian Church

Catholic schools collect items for charity programs

In this year’s “100 Ways in 100 Days” celebration, sponsored by area Catholic schools in partnership with Catholic Charities Spokane, 2,100 Catholic school students helped collect items in lots of 100 for the first 100 days of school.

They loaded donated items on trucks and delivered them to the 15 Catholic Charities’ programs that serve vulnerable people.

Spokane-area Catholic schools, Holy Family Catholic School in Clarkston and Guardian Angel/St.

Leading from Middle is workshop theme

Bill Robinson, Whitworth University president, will give a presentation on “Leading from the Middle” from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 19, at Fourth Memorial church, 2000 N. Standard. The sessions are based on his book, *Leading People from the Middle: The Universal Mission of Heart and Mind*.

The workshop is sponsored by the Greater Spokane Association of Evangelicals.

For information, call 487-7429.

Essay and peace prize presentations planned

A winning essay on determining truth amid the myriad of voices and a presentation of Spokane Peace Prizes will be features at a ceremony at 6:30 p.m., Friday, March 21, at the Community Building, 35 W. Main.

Essay entries may be emailed to wideas@juno.com by Feb. 11.

Tom Brooks, organizer, is also seeking nominations of individuals, organizations and businesses for the Spokane Peace Prize in categories of peace and environment. Some have already been submitted.

For information, call 455-6284.

Gonzaga president speaks at City Forum

Robert Spitzer, S.J., president of Gonzaga University, will speak on “Business Ethics in Spokane: The Good City” for the Spokane City Forum at 11:45 a.m., Wednesday, Feb. 20, at First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar.

A Jesuit priest, university president, author, speaker, teacher and a participant in community activities and boards, he will discuss the role ethics play in business.

For information, call 777-1555 or email info@spokanecityforum.com.

Boniface in Colton participated in the effort and gathered Jan. 23 at Martin Centre at Gonzaga University to celebrate the project.

For example, St. Anne’s Children and Family Center received crayons, glue sticks, soap and story books; the Childbirth and Parenting Alone program received diapers, teething rings and rattles; tissues, stocking caps and blank greeting cards went to the Foster

Grandparent and Senior Nutrition programs. Several schools gave soap, paper towels, canned soup and toothpaste for elderly, disabled and low-income persons in Catholic Charities apartments.

The project connects Catholic school students with Catholic Charities programs to raise awareness about homelessness, hunger and underserved people.

For information, call 358-4273.

Calendar of Events

- Jan 30-Apr 4 • **Season of Peace** programs at Unity Church, 29th & Bernard, 624-2700
- Feb 6 • **“Servant Leadership,”** Whitworth Heritage Week Lecture, Robert Mitchell, former president of Young Life and former vice president of World Vision, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m. - 777-4250
- Feb 7 • **“The Missional Church in the Public Square:** Challenges for the 21st Century,” Darel Guder, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m. - 777-4250
- Feb 8-24 • **30th Annual Northwest Bach Festival** of Connoisseur Concerts featuring Gunther Schuller - 326-4942 or www.nwbachfest.com
- Feb 8 • **“Gospel Explosion,”** local choirs and Whitworth students, sing, mime, step, Christian rap and poetry, Cowles Auditorium, Whitworth, 7 p.m. - 777-4572
- **Bach Organ Recital** at St. Augustine, 428 W. 19th, 8 p.m.
- Feb 9 • **“Tradition & Change:** Contemporary American Indian Art,” Museum of Arts and Cultures, Northern Quest Casino’s Kalispel Pavilion, noon-3 p.m., MACFest and Friendship Dance
- Feb 11 • **“Legal Liabilities Affecting Religious Organizations,”** Institute for Congregational Leadership, Clare Center, 4624 E. Jamieson Rd., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - 897-9223
- **“United Nations Response to the Northern Uganda Conflict,”** James Ochwa-Echel, United Nations Association, Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 Ft. Wright Dr., 7 p.m. - 456-2382
- Feb 12-Mar 18 • **“Authentic Leadership,”** Sandi Wilson, St. Joseph Family Center, 1016 N. Superior, 5 to 7 p.m. - 483-6495
- Feb 16 • **Eastern Washington Legislative Conference,** Our Lady of Lourdes Cathedral, 1115 W. Riverside, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. - 358-4273
- **“Bach with a Twist,”** Spokane Club library, 1002 W. Riverside, 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. - 838-8511
- Feb 17 • **Our Place Benefit,** Corbin Senior Center, 827 W. Cleveland, 2 to 4 p.m. - 326-7267
- Feb 19 • **“Leading from the Middle,”** Bill Robinson, Fourth Memorial, 2000 N. Standard, 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. - 487-7429
- Feb 20 • **“Business Ethics in Spokane,”** Father Robert Spitzer, S.J., Spokane City Forum, First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar, 11:45 a.m. - 777-1555
- Feb 21 • **“Talking to Our Enemies:** How the U.S. Deals with Terrorism,” Great Decisions Lecture, Jon Isacoff, Gonzaga assistant professor of political science and director environmental studies, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7:30 p.m. - 777-3270
- Feb 23 • **Lenten Song and Silence,** Gonzaga University Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto - 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. - 323-6012
- **Christian Discernment Workshop,** Katherine Hanley, CSJ, COG at Gonzaga University, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. - 483-6495
- Feb 24 • **Inland United Methodist District Choir Festival,** Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, 115 N. Raymond Rd., Karen Brewster directing - 725-5758
- **“St. Matthew’s Passion,”** Bach Festival Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Gunther Schuller, The Fox, 1001 W. Sprague - 3 p.m., pre-concert talk at 2:30 p.m. - 325-SEAT
- Feb 27 • **“The Fight for Black Rights:** The Black Press, the Double V Campaign, and the U.S. Government in World War II,” Patrick Washburn, author and journalism professor at Ohio University, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth - 777-4429
- Mar 1 • **“God’s Presence in Our Life Journey,”** Sister Mary Garvin, Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 323-6012
- **DEADLINE for updates to listings for the 2008-2009 Directory of Congregations and Community Resources - send to The Fig Tree, 1323 S. Perry St., Spokane, WA 99202 or directory@thefigtree.org**
- **Fig Tree distribution,** St. Mark’s Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m.
- **Fig Tree Board,** Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 1 p.m.
- **Habitat-Spokane** work days - call 534-2552
- **PJALS street vigils** against the Iraq War, Riverside and Monroe 4:30 p.m. - 838-7870.
- **Colville Peace Vigil** - 675-4554
- **Ministers’ Fellowship Union and Minister’s Wives/Widows Fellowship,** 806 W. Indiana - 624-0522
- **NAACP** - 467-9793
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In business and education

Computer work has opened doors to culture, travel, people and faith

By working in the computer industry in the private sector and higher education in Scotland, Arizona, Cheney, Spokane, Russia, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Dubai, Morag Stewart gained insights into people, churches and society.

Living in those settings has challenged her to look at herself, her values, faith and culture.

As she travels back and forth between cultures, she shares insights with people in each setting about people, life, faith and culture in other settings.

So she has brought ideas wider than business expertise when she has served as a trustee or in stewardship roles at Cheney United Church of Christ.

Morag values education to move people from narrow dogma that leaves many people judging and alienated from other people.

“Living in different settings, I have seen hatred and judgment from people of faith,” she said. “I appreciate the acceptance and respect I find in my church and found among Muslims in Dubai.

“We need to see people as people, not dehumanize them as enemies,” said Morag, who for 11 years taught informational technology (IT) and business as a professor at Eastern Washington University. “We need to look at ourselves and our history, so we recognize when things are not as they should be.”

Although her career has been based in computer technology, Morag is not enamored with technology for technology’s sake. She cautions against “throwing technology at everything.”

“Personal connectivity is the essence of being human,” she said. “We must be careful that entertainment not substitute form over substance and information not overload us.”

Morag is concerned that people caught in computers, emails, the web, computer games and cell phones sacrifice personal relationships for virtual relationships.

Her father was a junior high teacher and grade school headmaster when Morag grew up in the Stirling area of Scotland. She lived there 25 years through high school, studies for a bachelor’s degree in math and statistics at the University of St. Andrews, and work in computer programming.

Her work included a year at a bank in Toronto and a year with a nuclear physics research organization in Geneva, Switzerland. Through Motorola, Morag was transferred to Tempe, Ariz. Her



Morag Stewart stands by a painting she bought in Dubai, showing women in half-masks they wear over their faces.

husband, Jim, worked with Motorola until he retired in 1986.

In 1984, Morag began doctoral studies in business administration and computer information systems at Arizona State University.

In 1988, Morag moved to Cheney to teach at EWU. While there, she was visiting professor for a semester at EWU’s sister school in Russia and for a semester in the Netherlands. In 1999, she began four years of teaching with Washington State University in Brig, Switzerland.

After she retired in 2003, the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management invited her to teach the use of computers for the hospitality industry at their new college operated by the Jumeirah Group, a luxury hotel company in Dubai. She taught there until August 2007.

Morag’s curiosity about cultures, churches and faiths is both about organizational logistics and how they challenge people to accept each other.

“Churches are some of the largest organizations and businesses in the world,” she said. “Some are autocratic and bureaucratic.

Others are congregational and democratic. In either case, some are wealthy, and some are poor.”

Her roots were in the Church of Scotland in Europe and in the Presbyterian Church (USA) until coming to Cheney. In Scotland, she regularly attended church. In Arizona, she joined University Presbyterian, which was active in the sanctuary movement with El Salvadorans.

Morag said she likes the United Church of Christ because it invites critical thinking and welcomes people of different perspectives.

In Russia, she learned about Orthodox Christianity, contrasting Orthodox icons to austere Church of Scotland churches, and Orthodox bishops’ serving for life to the Reformed lay leadership with moderators elected democratically by an annual assembly.

During her four years in Dubai, Morag reaffirmed her lessons in tolerance, acceptance and humanity. She experienced a stark contrast to “stereotypes of and the war against people of the Muslim faith” in American media and society, Morag said.

She found people responding

with grace and acceptance toward foreigners, including European students in the program. From that experience of welcome, she challenges people in U.S. churches who have lost awareness of the United States as a haven, tolerating and welcoming oppressed people from around the world.

In Dubai, the college gave students a two-week orientation to behavior appropriate in an Islamic country, Morag said.

That began with immersion in Ramadan with six-hour days and an ifkar—breaking the day’s fast—at the back-to-school barbeque. The foreigners, who had not fasted, were invited to go to the table first.

Dubai transformed in 36 years from a nomadic Bedouin society into one of the world’s wealthiest, most technologically advanced societies, Morag said. While the wealth is widely shared, laborers from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka live in relative poverty in labor camps, and most professional and business people have Filipino nannies and maids.

When a newspaper reported on the lack of health care for these low-wage workers, the leader, Sheik Mohammed, decreed the next day that all would have health care. In addition, construction companies must give a three-hour mid-day siesta time in the summer heat, she said.

In the 1950s, Dubai had no secular schools or hospitals. Now they have “world class” higher education, she said.

“Life has been transformed in a short period, changing the culture and family life as the society has gone from rags to riches,” she said. “For example, over dress jeans, women still wear black abaya head scarves, some with elaborate designs and sequins. Some wear a half mask over their faces,” she said.

Morag was impressed by how Islam permeates life in Dubai:

- Everyday life fits around religious life, rather than religion being squeezed out so people can live as they want.
- Most live and work less than a kilometer from a mosque, calling them to pray five times a day.

• People leave their seats at horse races to go to a prayer room, or stop their cars to put their mats down beside the road to pray.

“Faith is everywhere in people’s daily lives. Worship is the same time Fridays throughout the United Arab Emirates,” Morag said. “In contrast, here people can worship Saturday evening, or at 8:30, 9, 10, 10:30, 11 a.m. or in the afternoon on Sundays. Religion is becoming a commodity suited to personal convenience without unwanted ethical challenges.”

For information, email morag.stewart@comcast.net.

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