

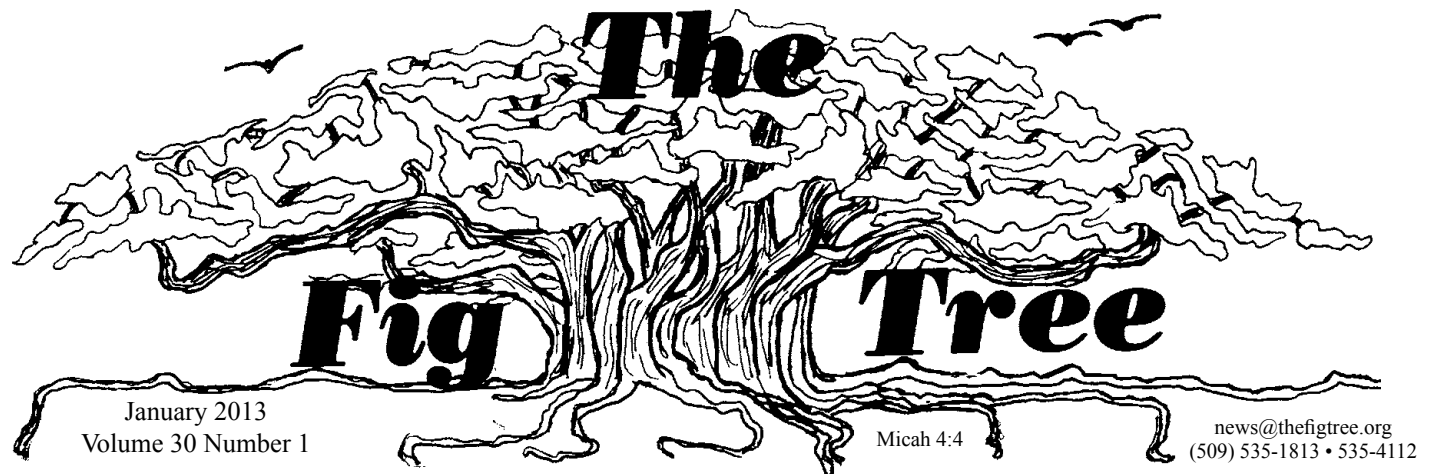
STORIES INSIDE

Gonzaga fosters lay vocations - p. 6

Vigil calls attention to human trafficking - p. 5

Outdoors advocate opposes coal trains - p. 7

Presiding bishop seeks agile church - p. 9



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

International student finds similarities

By Mary Stamp

As Tina Kamkosi, an international student at Whitworth University, has traveled her life's journey in Malawi and for two years in Spokane, she sees that "God is faithful and God provides."

Life's adventures now open her to be a life-long learner.

She hopes the master's in business administration (MBA) degree in international management she earns this year will help her be a change agent when she returns to Africa some day.

She would like to do humanitarian aid and human rights work with the United Nations and other non-governmental organizations that make life better for people in Malawi and other parts of Africa.

Her hope and vision now is quite a contrast to how she felt when her mother died while she was in high school. She thought then that God must not love her or God would not have taken away someone she loved and needed.

After her father died while she was studying at the African Bible College in Lilongwe, Malawi, she became part of a missionary family, Bob and Amy Stauffacher. Now they have raised support from their pockets and other donations to



Tina Kamkosi relishes opportunities to learn about herself and others.

cover her tuition. Amy's parents, the Warricks, house Tina in their home near Whitworth.

"Anyone can be anyone's family," she has concluded. "We are human beings, and all have needs. God places us where we are to support each other and to pour love on each other's lives.

"Every perspective helps me look at life in a different way, not just focusing on myself but giving back to God's world," she said.

One way she has done that is through Whitworth's International Club. As president last year, she developed a team of leaders, promoting "being stewards of what God has given us," Tina said.

"International students are people with much in common. Too often, we focus only on differences," she said. "We need to look at our similarities, too. We all need relationships. We all come here to learn in a different culture and from these relationships we learn about ourselves and others."

Tina finds in relating with U.S. and international students that they develop openness as they become aware that they previously did not see beyond themselves or their cultures.

Continued on page 12

Legislative Conference offers reflection and informs on issues, advocacy tools

Tia Griffin of the Washington Community Action Network (CAN) Spokane leadership team and Spokane attorney Breean Beggs will be featured speakers on the 2013 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference theme, "Money: Grace and Justice."

The event, which will also include issue-information sessions, reflection time, advocacy tools and a legislative briefing, will be held from 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 2, at the Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave.

As part of her involvement with Washington CAN/Spokane

Team, Tia recently presented the racial justice report card on state legislators.

Breean is an attorney devoted to advocacy for the disadvantaged and for community reconciliation. For more than 20 years, he has presented causes and cases to juries, judges, arbitrators, mediators, community groups and media. He advocates for police reform, national reform on oil pipeline safety and jail reform.

He is currently part of the Smart Justice community reform campaign to reduce incarceration and crime rates.

Tia and Breean will reflect on together concerns about revenue and justice related to the Faith Action Network of Washington's legislative priorities: wage theft, criminal justice reform/death penalty abolition, revenue, human services, immigration reform and environment.

Those issues will be the topics of half-hour issue-information sessions, which will be repeated three times from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Paul Benz, director of the Faith Action Network, a co-sponsor of the event with The Fig Tree, will discuss wage theft.

Anne Martin of Smart Justice and Shar Lichty of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane will present criminal justice reform and the movement to abolish the death penalty.

A speaker from the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlán at Eastern Washington University will discuss issues of immigration reform.

Tom Soeldner of the Faith and Environment Network will pres-

Continued on page 3

Catholic Charities builds permanent housing units for chronically homeless

For the first time in its years of building 16 housing units in Eastern Washington for low-income families, seniors, adults with disabilities and farm workers, Catholic Charities of Spokane has built permanent housing for chronically homeless people on Washington's Disability Lifeline Program, formerly the General Assistance-Unemployable (GAU) program.

Also, for the first time, it has named the building for someone who is living, Father Frank Bach, the third director of Catholic Charities Spokane, serving from 1964 to 1978.

The 51-unit Father Bach Haven is a tribute to Fr. Frank's ministry as a parish priest, volunteer at the House of Charity, and member of the Catholic Charities Housing Board and Catholic Charities Foundation.

"He has a heart for homeless people, visiting people at the House of Charity and staying there for the overnight program," said Monique Kolonko, associate director for seniors and housing with Catholic Charities for seven years.

Bishop Blase Cupich will bless and dedicate the building at noon, Wednesday, Jan. 23, at the facility at 108 S. State St., next door to the House of Charity in Spokane.

Deciding to enter the priesthood, Fr. Frank went from his hometown, Johnstown, Pa., to study at Josephinum Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. When he was ordained in 1956, there was an abundance of priests in the East, so he had permission to go to the West, chose Spokane and came here that year.

Continued on page 4

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Nuclear tragedy has a human face

Everyday effects of radiation on survivors of Japan's 2011 Fukushima disaster add up today to an involuntary experiment with public health, community life and environmental affairs.

An ecumenical conference, called to listen to residents, found that last year's earthquake, tsunami and nuclear calamity have generated a human tragedy across a province, with no end in sight.

Geiger counters priests and parishioners pull out of their pockets like cell phones make local anxieties real.

"I cannot tell my children there will be something good if they live," one mother told a Buddhist priest. "A man committed suicide in the temporary housing. Tomorrow it might be me."

The priest, the Rev. Daiki Nakashita, told her story to the Inter-Religious Conference on Nuclear Issues organized by the National Christian Council in Japan in December 2012.

"The figures are surprising when we check radiation around the house," a woman told Daiki. "My husband wants to have children, but I think we cannot raise children in Fukushima anymore."

The struggles are real. Children are forbidden to play outdoors. Young women worry no one will want to marry them. A mother tests her rice harvest to see if she can share it with her children. Families are paying off loans on radioactive homes they will never use. These are stories heard every day at a parish radiation information centre in Aizu Wakamatsu, Japan.

The center is one of many signs that citizens are not receiving full, reliable information on risks to their health. They blame government and power company officials, starting with the haphazard evacuation plans that exposed many to radiation.

Tohoku HELP, an ecumenical project which includes the United Church of Christ in Japan, runs food radiation measurement centers in stricken communities. Besides testing food and produce, the project measures radiation in breast milk and urine, a service available to few residents. Counselors and chaplains assist people who come in for testing.

"We are not given correct information about radiation exposure. If we say anything about it, then we are criticized by others who want to believe Fukushima is safe," one survivor said.

"Related issues are divorce, suicide, domestic violence and violence in general. Radiation damaged not only our bodies, but also relationships in families and communities," said another.

The conference concluded "there is no safe use of nuclear power, no safe level of exposure to radiation, and no compatibility between nuclear power, life and peace."

Speakers said the official fumbling is reminiscent of nuclear disasters, like Chernobyl. Health risks and stigma suffered by survivors are reminders of Hiroshima.

Christian and Buddhist clergy, as well as lay persons, told 87 conferees from Asia, Europe and North America of their struggle to support families and communities, to cope with the disaster and to challenge the official disaster response.

Participants resolved to initiate discussions in faith communities about "civilian and military uses of nuclear energy," and to develop plans of action "including lifestyle changes."

The conference was held in Koriyama, 60 miles from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, beyond official disaster exclusion zones. Radiation hotspots—created when a reactor building exploded and contamination was spread by wind—are as dangerous as areas nearest to the plant. Radiation leaking from the damaged power plants has laid bare national policies and economic choices that have long gone unquestioned in Japan.

One man told a priest: "A rural town—where there were no jobs, no money and no industries—received a chunk of money suddenly just by welcoming construction of nuclear power plants." Fukushima's fate puts a human face on risks and consequences of nuclear energy use, the conference showed.

"We committed a sin against our Creator and our children's future," said Terumi Kataoka, director of the Aizu Wakamatsu center. "We are here to help build a nuclear-free world together."

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

NAACP inaugurates new Spokane president

The Spokane Chapter of the NAACP will celebrate with an Inaugural Gala to welcome James Wilburn, Jr., as president, and install other officers. It will be held from 6 to 9 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 5, in the Hixon Union Building at Whitworth University, 300 W. Hawthorne Rd.

James is intervention specialist

at Lewis and Clark High school in Spokane. He connects students with the Leadership Development for Children of the Dream program in Spokane.

He founded the program to develop effective strategies to close the achievement gap for African-American and other students of color to help them succeed in

school so they graduate and go on.

At the gala, NAACP leaders will present their vision for the future of Spokane's National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Those attending will learn how they can participate and make a difference.

For information and to reserve, email spkncpbr@gmail.com.

Martin Luther King, Jr., Day events planned

Under the theme, "Justice + Equality = Achievement," speakers and presentations for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Commemorative Celebration in Spokane will look at the past, present and future of the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center.

The celebration will be from 4 to 6 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 20, at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana.

Speakers for the service are the center's current executive director Freda Gandy and the former center executive director Ivan Bush,

now retired as the Spokane Public Schools equal opportunity officer.

Speakers at the celebration and at the Unity Rally and March at 10 a.m., Monday, Jan. 21, at the old Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., will also include Spokane Police Chief Frank Straub, Spokane Mayor David Condon, Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich, representatives from Spokane City Council and the Spokane County Commissioners, the NAACP's new president James Wilburn, Jr., and a representative of the Spokane Tribe.

The march will leave from the Convention Center and go through downtown to Riverpark Square, where there will be entertainment.

The Community Resource Fair will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., on the first and second floors of Riverpark Square. The Children's Learning Resource Fair will also be from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., on the second and third floors. For information for vendors, call Tara Dowd at 838-6581.

For information, call 455-8722 or visit www.mlkspokane.org.

Environmental advocacy workshop set

The Annual Environmental Priorities Coalition Legislative Workshop is scheduled from 1 to 5 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 5, at the Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. First Ave.

The Environmental Priorities Coalition, which includes Conservation Northwest, Earth Ministry, Faith Action Network, Futurewise, the Sierra Club, The

Lands Council and the Washington Environmental Council, will offer an opportunity to hear from conservation groups, legislators, environmental lobbyists and others on how the state environmental community's 2013 priorities relate to Eastern Washington.

There will be break-out sessions on building a base, on having one's voice heard and on

sharing ways to take action.

The 2013 environmental priorities seek to make Washington a better place by investing in programs that protect quality of life, create Washington-grown jobs and preserve a better future for children by eliminating toxics, said organizer Lisa Remlinger.

For information, call 206-631-2624 or email lisa@wecprotects.org.

Two suicide healing retreats are offered

Immaculate Heart Retreat Center is offering two related programs in January. One will help grieving families face the loss of loved ones from suicide, and the other is for people in ministry and in other helping professions to discover how to assist those with this loss.

"Beauty from Ashes: Transforming Loss," the suicide bereavement retreat, is set for Jan. 18 to 20, at the center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd.

Anne Cronin Tyson, a spiritual director, and Karen Covey Moore, a United Methodist pastor, will use prayer, reflection, journaling

and sharing to help participants remember loved ones, reframe their experience with hope, refocus anguish and integrate pain with joy. The weekend is designed to help people move forward with courage, confidence and faith.

This is the third time Anne and Karen have led this retreat at Immaculate Heart, so they have new material for returning participants.

They will also present a one-day workshop from 9 a.m. to 4

p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 23, on "Suicide Bereavement: Offering Hope / Fostering Healing" for pastors, ministers, counselors, youth leaders, spiritual directors, teachers and others who minister to families during times of loss.

The workshop provides participants with tools to guide those who have experienced the loss of a loved one from suicide.

For information, call 448-1224 or visit www.ihrc.net.

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Palestinian reports on nonviolent resistance

Iyad Burnat, leader of the nonviolent Popular Resistance in Bil'in, Palestine, will speak on 'Land, Freedom, Equality: A Palestinian Village's Nonviolent Struggle' at 7 p.m., Friday, Jan. 11, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, 4340 W. Fort Wright Dr.

Iyad will report on how his town deals with farmland being taken by force in the occupied West Bank using strategies of non-violent resistance to achieve peace and prosperity for all people.

His U.S. tour, talking in 18 states and Washington, D.C., was initiated by the Fellowship of Reconciliation's Interfaith Peace Builders and by Jewish Voices for Peace.

As head of the Bil'in Popular Committee, he organizes weekly demonstrations to protest the Israeli West Bank barrier, a separation wall built on Palestinian land. His commitment to raise awareness was deepened by the death of his childhood friend and fellow Palestinian activist Bassem Abu Rahme, who was shot at close range with a tear gas canister in 2009. Iyad himself was injured by tear gas canisters after that, also in 2009.

Activists videotape every protest.

"The camera is our gun," Iyad said. "Israel uses tear gas, stun grenades, rubber-coated metal bullets, sonic bombs, skunk water and live ammunition."

Iyad's brother, Emad Burnat produced the documentary "Five Broken Cameras" with Israeli Guy Davidi.

For information, call 838-7870.

Transitions receives funds for vocational programs

Transitions, a nonprofit organization working to end poverty and homelessness for women and children in Spokane, has received a \$15,000 grant to develop its vocational programs. The grant from Walmart's 12 Days of Giving Campaign was awarded because of a nomination letter from Crystal, a New Leaf Bakery Café participant, who is now in California pursuing her dreams of work in the culinary field.

In the application, she described Transitions as "life changing."

Transitions was one of 140 recipients chosen from 21,000 nominations for the company's \$1.5 million in grants in December.

"Transitions runs multiple free job training and readiness programs to women in need and live-in programs to help women come back on track after a life crisis such as abuse, homelessness, addiction or anything else keeping women, with or without children, from not only being self-sufficient but thriving and becoming productive members of society," she said.

Jamie Borgan, New Leaf's program director, spoke of Crystal's creativity and growth in the program.

"One of my favorite memories is when she created her own scone variety—peach with white chocolate chips," said Jamie. "We took them to the Perry Street Farmer's market and sold out in about three seconds."

From August to October, Transitions helped 27 women attain employment. The grant will allow more low-income and homeless women to access trained professionals, job-search materials, vocational classes and more.

Since 1995, Transitions has been helping women, children, and families rebuild their lives, which have been affected by abuse, addiction, mental illness, poverty or homelessness.

Transitions operates Women's Hearth, Miryam's House, Transitional Living Center, EduCare and New Leaf Bakery Cafe.

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

Connection of faith and advocacy addressed

Continued from page 1

ent environmental issues coming before the legislature.

Scott Cooper, director of Parish Social Ministry with Catholic Charities of Spokane, will speak on the needs for human services.

Following the issues sessions, there will be a time for participants to process and reflect on what they heard about issues and how that intersects with their passions, faith and values.

Episcopal Bishop Jim Waggoner, Jr., United Methodist District Superintendent Dale Cockrum and political science professor Kathy Lee from Whitworth University will facilitate the discussion about how the issues intersect and how faith and values inform commitment to act on them.

After the discussion and interaction, there will be workshops on various tools for advocacy:

- Liz Moore, director of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, will describe "Social Justice Action Tools" her program uses, such as protest and policy advocacy.

- United Methodist pastor Deb Conklin will discuss "Missional Church/Community Organizing Tools," like those the Spokane Alliance, a coalition of congregations, labor and education, uses.

- Paul, who spoke on wage theft, will review FAN's "Advocacy Action Network Tools."

- James Wilburn, the new local president of the NAACP, will share tools the NAACP uses.

After lunch, the keynote speakers will present insights on issues and actions based on their areas of expertise, followed by a Legislative Briefing session led by Paul and Scott. They will give an overview of issues before the 2013 Washington State Legislature.

Participants may come as individuals, as teams from congregations and as representatives of nonprofits and human service agencies.

The goal is for those who come to use the information and tools for their personal action or to return to their congregations and organizations to share the information for common action.

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

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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Brean Beggs, Spokane attorney

Tia Griffin - Washington CAN Spokane Leadership Team

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

Paul Benz of Faith Action Network

Scott Cooper - Catholic Charities Spokane

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Second & Third Floors - Riverpark Square

11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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or visit www.mlkspokane.org

Building for permanent housing named for third director of Catholic Charities-Spokane

Continued from page 1

He was priest at St. Ann's and then served for two years on the Spokane Reservation.

Interested in working with low-income people and people with disabilities, he completed a master's degree in social work at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., in 1964, before leading Catholic Charities in Spokane.

He served then as pastor at Sacred Heart parish from 1976 to 1980 until the Bishop asked him to be vicar for administration.

After a year of sabbatical, studying at Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass., he served St. Mary's parish in Spokane Valley for nine years before retiring. Recently, he assisted at the parish in Newport and now is serving a year at Sacred Heart in Pullman. As other retired priests do, he conducts Mass at parishes.

"It's sad that, even though this country has prospered, so many people still fall through the cracks and become homeless. Particularly veterans and people with psychological problems find it hard to be hired for jobs," Fr. Frank said.

Even in Pullman, a university town, the food bank is almost out of food and child welfare struggles to meet the needs of children, he said.

"No community is spared. As public funds dry up, nonprofits step up to do what they can," Fr. Frank said.

He is pleased that in the Pullman parish of about 400 families, high school youth have a tradition of coming to Spokane to help at the House of Charity.

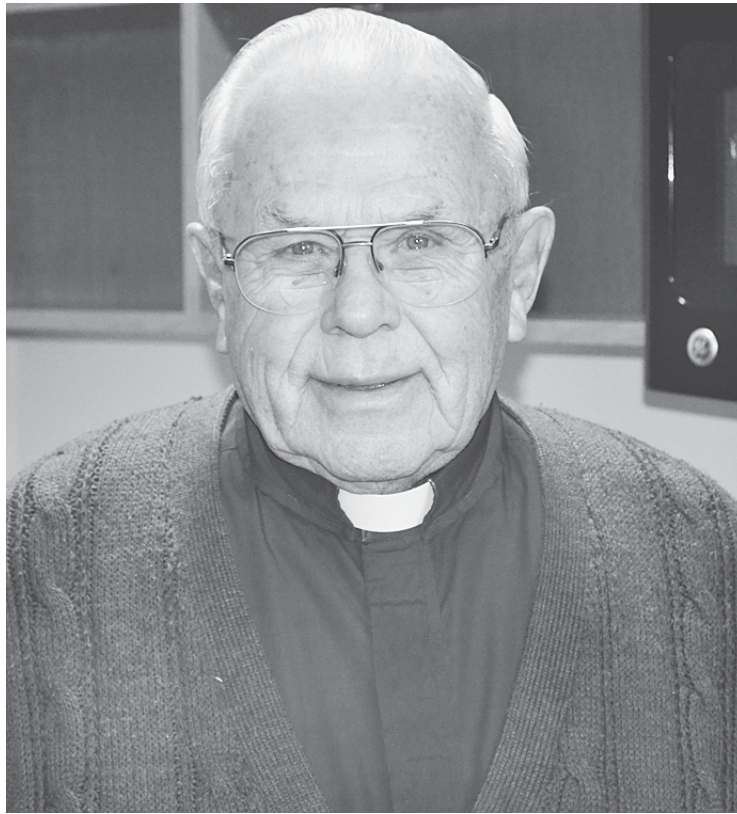
"It's how another generation is instilled with a spirit of serving low-income people," he said.

Monique said that 15 years ago Catholic Charities began talking of developing permanent housing to help stabilize the lives of chronically homeless people. Two years ago, plans were underway for Fr. Bach Haven.

"While funding for GAU services has dried up, we were one of two projects in the state to receive funds for the capital development, along with tax credits," she said. "It has been a long-term dream of Catholic Charities to provide housing for the chronically homeless."

The facility is designed to be low maintenance, because many residents will have limited experience in maintaining a home and because their incomes are \$13,000 a year or less. Their rent will be 30 percent of their incomes.

The floors are painted concrete, easy to clean. The furniture is



Father Frank Bach visits one of the apartment units.

built in. There is central heating and cooling. Windows have safety glass. There are rails in the bathroom. The kitchens have microwaves and cook tops. Residents can take meals next door at the House of Charity.

Residents must pass a background check and must sign an agreement that they will not engage in illegal activity in the building.

A full-time social services coordinator will provide services and counseling on site in collaboration with community partners.

As of mid-December, 87 people had applied for the 31 studio apartments for one person and 20 one-bedroom apartments, which can house two people.

Given its location, Fr. Bach Haven is a visible sign to say that homeless people have options. The goal is to draw people from the House of Charity and programs for homeless women to provide support services so they can stabilize their lives. "Over the years of volunteering at the House of Charity, I have come across people I have not met except at the Christmas Bureau, people down on their luck and unable to handle life on their own," Fr. Frank said. "If more of us met homeless people one-on-one, we would be more sensitive and less judgmental."

His faith helps him "see Christ in people around me, whether they are rich or poor, hurting or comfortable, good or bad."

Fr. Frank believes the bottom line for getting into heaven is, as

Christ said, based on: "I was hungry and you gave me food to eat."

That's his personal motivation, and he seeks to motivate others to share that understanding.

"I'm 82 and blessed with energy and most of my marbles, so I'm able to stay active," he said. "If we have blessings, we need to share them."

Because of the effectiveness of Catholic Charities serving in Spokane and Eastern Washington, Fr. Frank said, the diocese is sensitized to "the needs of our brothers and sisters."

"We serve people not because they are Catholic, but because we are Catholic," Fr. Frank said. "It's extraordinary that in a diocese our size, we will raise more than \$1 million this year for Catholic Charities services."

For information, call 459-6187 or email mkolonko@ccspokane.org.

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Vigil raises awareness of local human trafficking concerns

The community and congregations can help anti-human trafficking efforts through awareness, donations, referrals and joining in efforts and events, said Mabel Elsom, anti-human trafficking coordinator with Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW) in Spokane.

For Human Trafficking Awareness Month in January, LCSNW, as part of the Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network (WARN), is planning a "Candlelight Vigil for Victims of Human Trafficking" at 5:30 p.m., Friday, Jan. 11, at the Women's Hearth, 920 W. Second.

The vigil is an effort to raise awareness of local concerns.

In January, Whitworth University and Mt. Spokane High School students are helping distribute to public locations posters that say in six languages: "No one should force another person into work or prostitution. Victims of human trafficking have rights, regardless of their immigration status." The posters have the national human trafficking hotline, 888-373-7888.

"People do not realize how hard it is for victims to leave their situations. It's hard for them to come forward. When they do, we need to be able to provide services and housing. They have suffered and deserve our help. Victims are entitled to protection and assistance regardless of their immigration status," said Mabel. "We also need to change the laws so there is more funding for services."

As a child in El Salvador, Mabel said her parents warned her when she went out to walk to school or elsewhere that some people in vans steal and sell children.

Now she sees the other end of human trafficking, which has two forms in the region: labor trafficking and sex trafficking.

WARN says that labor trafficking uses force, fraud or coercion to recruit, harbor, transport, provide or obtain a person for labor or services in involuntary servitude, bound to service to repay a debt. In sexual exploitation, people are forced through fraud or coercion into commercial sex before the age of 18.

Lutheran Community Services Northwest, as part of the WARN coalition of non-governmental organizations provides comprehensive services and assistance to victims of trafficking, said Mabel.

Those services include 24-hour emergency response, interpretation services, food and safe housing, immigration and legal advocacy, physical and mental health treatment, education and job readiness training, and outreach and education to the public.



Mabel Elsom knows trafficking from El Salvador and here.

LCSNW also collaborates with the Coalition to Abolish Human Trafficking in the Inland Northwest and other organizations in the community.

In 1983, she left El Salvador and came to the San Francisco Bay area to live with her mother. She completed high school and earned a bachelor's degree in psychology at California State University at Hayward in 1995.

Moving to Spokane that year, she worked at Excelsior Youth Center and then at Volunteers of America of the Inland Northwest, first as an individual and tailored-care coordinator with Breakthrough for Families, and then as manager of that program.

She has been attending Whitworth University and is close to

completing her master's degree in elementary education.

"From working with homeless teens, I realize life is a lesson: don't give up, be resilient, patient and persevere. Life is a long journey. We have to keep the momentum going," Mabel said.

Learning about trafficking here in 2005, she wanted to help.

After visiting El Salvador at the time of her father's death in 2010, she returned to Spokane wanting to do something to make a change.

"I have a passion to help raise awareness of this awful crime. Victims need to know there is help available," she said.

Mabel offers presentations on human trafficking to educate congregations, community groups, schools, colleges, law enforce-

ment and nonprofit organizations.

"Some churches welcome hearing about human trafficking," she said of her work to raise awareness among churches. "It's an unpleasant topic, but we need to talk about it, because it happens."

"Awareness will help open doors so we can serve more people," she said.

When victims of trafficking call the sexual assault and crime hotline in Spokane, they may not immediately recognize that they are victims.

"Their situations may be all they know," Mabel said. "Denial is strong, because they rely on the trafficker for survival—food, shelter and clothing."

Recently, she spoke with a 15-year-old boy in Seattle. He had left Guatemala and come to the United States illegally to help his family. He was kept locked in a small room with others. They eventually broke the door but didn't know where to go.

"It breaks my heart. I know the U.S. is seen as the land of opportunity there," she said.

Sometimes people pay to come to the United States, say \$5,000,

but are then told the cost was \$10,000, so they think they must work to pay the trafficker back. They rarely know their rights nor ask for help.

Victims can call the hotline. Anyone can refer victims to LCSNW if they know the signs that someone is trafficked.

Signs of trafficking include an abusive work situation, an employer controlling an employee's identification or immigration status, people locked in a residence or work place or an employee owing the employer a debt.

"Trafficking victims face challenges in coming forward, because they lack trust and worry about the consequences," Mabel said.

"It is important to develop a trusting relationship with victims and help on their terms to ensure they feel safe and receive the support they need," she explained.

"Sometimes the only thing I can do is pray," Mabel said. "I believe in the power of prayer, so it's one thing I do when someone is not ready."

For information, call 343-5091 or email melsom@lcsnw.org.

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Priest helps Gonzaga students discern their religious vocations as laity

While fewer Catholics today are making life-long vows to enter vocations of ordained priesthood or religious orders, more lay people are recognizing they have "religious vocations," reports Father Frank Case, SJ, vice president of mission at Gonzaga University.

With Jesuits graying and just 11 novices entering the Society of Jesus in the Oregon and California Provinces last year, he said, it's quite a contrast to when he graduated from Seattle Prep High School in 1956, and 10 of his class of 89 became Jesuit novices, three entered the diocesan seminary and one became a Trappist monk.

There would be a vocations crisis, Fr. Frank said, if there were not a strong sense of mission in line with the Second Vatican Council's call in the 1960s for the renewal of "lay vocations," their understanding of the call and essential role of laity in doing the church's mission.

Fr. Frank sees his role at Gonzaga as keeping the Jesuit spirit and mission integral to life among faculty, staff and students, developing their leadership so they live as a community of love, faith and justice at Gonzaga and in their lives and careers in the world.

He helps members of Gonzaga faculty and staff as they advance understanding of Gonzaga's mission as a Catholic, Jesuit and humanistic institution. Their role is to fulfill the mission by promoting academic excellence, cultural values and openness to the world.

With religious vocations now intentionally including laity, Fr. Frank said faculty and staff plant and tend seeds among students, so they are "formed" as whole people—intellectually, spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially—and are empowered to understand their vocations.

To develop students' commitments to be leaders in society, Gonzaga encourages them to be involved in service-learning experiences that instill caring for the common good, solidarity with the poor, engagement around the world and sustainable use of God's creation, Fr. Frank said.

"We want students to build relationships of respect, love and trust, and to be open to truth wherever it is," he said, explaining the need for critical thinking skills to use throughout their lives, so they continually reflect on their experiences and their vocations.

According to Gonzaga's mission statement, the university believes that "knowledge of traditions and cultures different from our own draws us closer to the human family, of which we are a part, and makes us more aware of both the possibilities and limita-



Father Frank Case, SJ, fosters Gonzaga's mission.

tions of our own heritage."

With half of Gonzaga students being Catholic and others being Protestant, Muslim, Jewish and other faiths, the university's mission for all to have spiritual formation in faith means students learn to develop mature faith relationships with God according to their own traditions.

"We want students to have a mature sense of spirituality and faith," Fr. Frank said.

According to the university's mission, Gonzaga hopes "all graduates will live creative, productive, and moral lives, seeking to fulfill their own aspirations and at the same time actively supporting the aspirations of others by a generous sharing of their gifts."

While Fr. Frank realizes that 18-to-22-year-old undergraduates may need to test their wings, he finds that they, as well as graduate students, are interested in exploring their purposes in life. The core curriculum helps them do that.

Gonzaga's mission also says: "In the light of our own tradition and the variety of human societies, we seek to understand the world we live in. It is a world of great technological progress, scientific complexity and competing ideologies. It offers great possibilities for cooperation and interdependence, but at the same time presents us with the fact of widespread poverty, hunger, injustice and the prospect of degeneration and destruction. We seek to provide for our students some understanding of contem-

porary civilization, and we invite them to reflect with us on the problems and possibilities of a scientific age, the ideological differences that separate the peoples of the world, and the rights and responsibilities that come from commitment to a free society. In this way, we hope to prepare our students for an enlightened dedication to the Christian ideals of justice and peace."

Fr. Frank knows from experience that the path through studies into vocation takes time and many turns. His path of following God's call took him through studies, teaching, service in Rome, travel, back to Seattle and Spokane.

As a novice, he studied classics and history for four years at the Jesuit Novitiate in Sheridan, Ore. At St. Louis University, he earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy in 1962 and a master's in economics and philosophy in 1964.

After teaching for two years at Gonzaga Prep, he earned a master's degree in sacred theology in 1970 at Alma College in Santa Clara University of California and was ordained to the priesthood in 1969. While completing a doctorate in economics in 1980 at Washington University in St. Louis, he taught from 1975 to 1986 at Seattle University.

In 1981, he became rector for the Jesuit community at Seattle University and, in 1986, was named provincial superior for the Oregon Province, covering Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana.

The Jesuit Father General Peter Hans Kohlenbach called him to Rome in 1990 as regional assistant for the United States to serve as liaison to the U.S. Jesuit network. In 2005, he became general secretary of the Jesuit Order, serving three years until the 35th General Congregation in 2008 elected a new Father General.

In Rome, Fr. Frank used correspondence, the tool Ignatius used to build the Society of Jesus. Fr. Frank said the Society's Roman Curia operates with just three tenths of a percent of its global population in central administration, in contrast to one percent—considered the standard for efficiency in business. He believes regular correspondence makes that possible by building awareness and trusting relationships.

"Our international cohesion is strong," said Fr. Frank. "Our mission, role and charisma are what the Spirit calls us to do: take the Gospel message into cultures and historical eras, and put it into images and words people in those cultures can understand and integrate into their lives."

For U.S. Jesuits, that means understanding pluralism to communicate effectively, he said.

His connection in Rome with his counterparts from around the world gave him insight into intercultural values and different approaches needed to make faith relevant in different settings.

"Because of my exposure to many cultures and my experiences of people around the world, I'm at ease with variety and diversity," said Fr. Frank who has traveled in Kenya, Zambia and South Africa.

After 18 years in Rome, he returned to be Jesuit assistant to

the School of Law and the Albers School of Business and Economics at Seattle University.

He found a shift in mindset from lay people collaborating with Jesuits to Jesuits collaborating with lay colleagues. He also finds that spirit at Gonzaga University, where he was a trustee beginning in 2008 before he began working there in June 2011.

He is also the chief advisor to Gonzaga's first lay president, Thane McCulloh, on matters related to Jesuit and Catholic institutional identity, which includes officiating at Masses for major university occasions. His office also includes University Ministry.

Fr. Frank, 74, lives in a Gonzaga residence hall, serving as chaplain and sometimes as grandfather for students, available when they need assistance.

Through prayer and sensing God's love for him, he said he's at ease with who he is and his vocation. He hopes he is an example to the students.

For information, call 313-6112 or email casef@gonzaga.edu.



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Love of outdoors inspires Sierra Club organizer to educate about coal trains

Appreciating being near nature and respecting the need to protect ecosystems, Crystal Gartner has worked for more than 11 years doing environmental education and advocacy in Spokane.

Her focus now is to organize the community to prevent a major increase in mile-long coal trains from spoiling the air quality, quality of life, safety and health of people in the region.

Hiking alone, with friends or taking people to introduce them to “the drama of the wild in all seasons,” she said she is “aware that creation is full of life.”

Crystal feels spiritually tied with creation, respecting that “we are part of everything, not above it.” Along with her comfort in nature, she has a strong sense of seeking justice to protect it.

As associate organizing representative of the Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal Campaign, she is building coalitions to inform people about health, environmental and infrastructure effects on urban and rural areas if coal trains rumble through Spokane from Montana and Wyoming to five proposed ports in Oregon and Washington.

“The Sierra Club opposes coal exports because mining, transporting and burning coal fouls our air, pollutes our water, sickens our children and destroys the environment,” Crystal said.

Recently, of 800 people at Spokane’s public hearing with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the scope of their environmental impact statement, 700 opposed the increased train traffic through the Northwest that would result from exporting coal to Asia.

Residents urged that all impacts and risks to families and the environment in Spokane County and along 1,500 miles from coal mines in the Powder River Basin to proposed ports on the Pacific Coast be considered related to the proposed Gateway Terminal at Cherry Point near Bellingham.

Crystal said Power Past Coalition, which had hoped 300 people would come in Spokane was amazed by the turnout.

“We started the effort here from nothing a year ago. Now many people engaged in the campaign are aware that Spokane is the choke point for all rail traffic in the Northwest,” she said.

Those who have come to hearings to express opposition have worn red to be visible.

“Red symbolizes power. It symbolizes, ‘stop,’” said Crystal. “Proponents wore green.”

She also listened to a live stream of testimony at a Dec. 13 hearing in Seattle, where 95 percent of the 2,500 who came favored expanding the area that would be considered in the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Cherry Point terminal, which would be the largest coal export terminal in North America, she said.

“Wherever the ports may be



Crystal Gartner urges people to comment on impact statement.

located, every train would come through Spokane with coal and go back empty, spewing toxic diesel fumes, spreading coal dust and creating congestion,” Crystal said. “If all five ports are built, 30 trains a day will come through full and 30 will return empty. Cherry Point alone would account for 13.

“We already have about 70 trains carrying all kinds of commodities coming through Spokane—wheat, soybeans, lentils and other crops,” she said.

Crystal believes it’s important to act: “Proponents have money, but we have people. That’s real power. We have only begun to demonstrate this with the overwhelming, unprecedented turnout of thousands at the hearings.”

Diverse people voiced opposition on Dec. 4 in Spokane:

- “People shared concerns based on their religious and faith perspectives. The faith community had a major role,” Crystal said

Jesse Dye of Earth Ministry in Seattle organized Spokane events for faith leaders so they would involve their congregations.

- Young people testified, worried about their lungs and climate change. Several who live beside the tracks do not want to breathe the diesel fumes or coal dust.

- A psychiatrist said noise from coal trains’ engines, whistles and rumbling on tracks would disturb people, especially those with mental illnesses.

- Others argued that more coal trains would kill jobs and discourage investment in Spokane, if they reduce air quality, affect the quality of life, increase health problems and impact safety.

- A city planner expressed concern about an increased risk of train derailments. Coal dust

accumulates between the ballast in the rails, undermining track structures, he said, and coal dust can sometimes cause fires.

- A retired state trooper spoke of increased risk of fatal auto-train accidents with increased train traffic, particularly in rural areas and at road-level crossings.

“If a coal train derails near exposed areas of the aquifer, it could pollute our sole source of drinking water,” Crystal added.

In Sandpoint, the Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeepers are on board. Pasco is concerned that coal dust of trains passing through wine country will taint the grapes.

“Coal is a dirty, outdated, toxic fossil fuel. It makes no sense to mine, transport and export it to Asia,” she said.

Combined, the heavy, one- to two-mile-long trains will affect families, tribes, cities, towns, local economies and the environment along the way.

“It’s unconscionable not to consider the impact on thousands living along the route,” she said. “We know that diesel emissions can cause serious health problems—lung disease, asthma, birth defects, cancer and heart attacks.

“Spokane is the site of Bloomsday and Hoopfest, which are about healthy lifestyles,” she added. “Why would we not put the health of local children and families first.

“Coal is a boom-bust commodity. The market is volatile,” Crystal said. “It would not make sense to invest in such infrastructure when we can develop sustainable, clean energy jobs. We need to keep our community healthy and safe for families and to attract tourism and new business.

“Plans to export 150 million tons of coal each year from our coasts would kill jobs in fisheries,” she said.

Crystal explained that coal cannot be covered because it’s combustible. Some proponents say they would spray it with a surfactant, but the spray is ineffective against shifting coal during transport, and its use is optional.

Along with the Power Past Coal Coalition, the Sierra Club is a major organizer of grassroots opposition to coal exports, working with many people and groups in the community.

“We reached families by going door-to-door in neighborhoods near the tracks and having friendly face-to-face conversations. Canvassing is uplifting, because people appreciate being informed so they can be involved,” she said.

Volunteers canvassed a Spokane Valley neighborhood; plus Chief Garry, East Central, Logan, Browne’s Addition and Peaceful Valley in Spokane, and neighborhoods in Cheney from the summer through November.

The Corps of Engineers will receive comments until Jan. 21, so Crystal urges everyone who lives along the train route to comment at powerpastcoal.org.

Having grown up in Germany where her American parents taught at Department of Defense schools, she attended the University of Maryland in Munich before coming to Spokane in 1993 to join her mother and other family.

She managed a custom picture framing business downtown for several years until seeing an ad for work to pursue her passion for environmental conservation with the Washington Environmental Council in 2001. She went on to work as development director and wilderness campaign associate for other conservation groups, and as outreach associate seven years with Conservation Northwest, where she focused on the Columbia Highlands Wilderness Campaign.

To inspire public support to protect proposed wilderness areas in the Colville National Forest, she led and trained others to lead organized summer and winter hikes in the Kettle Range and other areas.

The wildlife and rugged beauty of Eastern Washington were a new experience for her, in contrast to the urban life she experienced in Europe. Her lifelong appreciation of nature, animals, plants, weather and seasons makes conservation work in the Northwest fulfilling.

It’s important to value and be sympathetic to other living things and the way ecosystems work, she believes: “The earth is our home. It is not right for humans to disrupt the ecological systems.”

When Crystal sees damage to the systems, she wants to protect them. So she organizes people to stop the damage, empowering them to organize others.

For information, call 209-2395, email crystal.gartner@sierraclub.org or visit www.coalfreenorthwest.org.

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Habitat's 'Brush of Kindness' program helps homeowners do small repairs

By Kaye Hult

Catherine Morales-Lash appreciates the new windows in her trailer home. With her disabilities, she was unable to make such repairs.

About a year ago, she saw a TV ad on a new Habitat for Humanity program, "A Brush with Kindness," that helps homeowners do small repairs to their home exteriors. She called, and Habitat came to her aid.

Habitat for Humanity has made a name for itself since the 1970s by building new houses for people who cannot afford to buy one on their own. Recipients put in some of the work—sweat equity—and pay Habitat for the homes through affordable, no-interest payments over a long period.

Eula Hickam, executive director of Habitat for Humanity of North Idaho, said that Habitat nationally now builds about 6,000 homes a year. It is now also building to green standards.

In the past two years, Habitat expanded to assist people who own their homes, but cannot afford to keep them in good repair.

A Brush with Kindness (ABWK) is part of that expansion. It partners with Habitat's core program, allowing Habitat to serve a different population. It follows the same basic tenets for eligibility as for new construction. Clients must have need, be able to pay and be willing to partner.

This program began with volunteers providing exterior repair services, such as painting, minor repairs, landscaping, weatherization and exterior cleanup. It also offers its clients energy audits. In North Idaho, projects occasionally move indoors.

When Catherine contacted Habitat, she applied through Katrina Boyer, who coordinates the ABWK program and volunteer workers.

Katrina learned Catherine, 59, has been disabled since her youth. She prides herself on her independence and raising a family as a single mother. She lives alone in her paid-for home, where she has lived about 10 years. She has been able to do much by herself, but was too weak to put in windows, paint or build a ramp.

Catherine's application went to Greg Kunkel, crew leader for work groups. Before coming to Habitat, Greg had volunteered with Tesh, Inc. in Coeur d'Alene on their House to Home program for people with disabilities.

When that program ended, he came to Habitat as an AmeriCorps volunteer for a year to help with construction leadership. A retired contractor, he knows all phases of construction.

After a year with AmeriCorps, Habitat hired him.

Greg, who is now certified as a green builder, said he may go to do one project and end up doing



Bob Granger and Tom Collier work on a porch repair.

six improvements, because they are needed.

He went to Catherine's home, took photographs, determined what work was required, acquired permits and assessed the cost.

If an assessment is more than \$1,000, the affiliate runs a credit check. The client contracts to pay Habitat back. If the cost is less than \$1,000 and if the client pays half of the amount when Habitat comes to do the job, Habitat will call it even. The client also must put in some labor—sweat equity.

Unable to work with the volunteers, Catherine worked at the Habitat office.

Once she was approved as a candidate for ABWK and knew what work was needed, he turned to Katrina for volunteers. He taught the volunteers how to install the windows.

Catherine opened her home to the volunteers, whom she considers "a God-send." She is grateful because her windows not only keep her house tight against the weather but also muffle the noise from neighbors playing loud music. Other volunteers will repaint her house in the spring.

Habitat breaks even on these projects. Beyond Katrina's and Greg's wages, the projects are funded by grants and clients repaying the loans.

When homes need painting, Valspar provides paint. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans donated \$5,000 to Habitat for Humanity of North Idaho for exterior repairs through its Thrivent Builds Repairs program.

Additional funds for Habitat come from its ReStore, which opened eight years ago. The ReStore receives donated items, sells them "for cheap" and makes money to put into the building and refurbishing projects.

A Brush with Kindness does not work with renters, but some landlords and tenants, seeing the improvements it brings to the community, have cleaned up their places, too.

While Habitat of North Idaho usually builds two new homes a year, Eula said, it can also complete about 20 smaller projects,

touching the lives of many more people.

"We usually have a job every Saturday. Some volunteers also work during the week. Groups call to work for a day either on a house or a rehabilitation project," she said "with eight to 10 people, many projects require only a day.

"For three of the past four years, Habitat-sponsored cross-country bike trips, called Bike and Build, have stopped here. About 35 young people have stayed at St. Luke's Episcopal Church and worked for a day before moving on," Eula said.

"Most are college graduates who put in \$4,500 themselves. We received a grant from the group for \$6,000, put them to work on A Brush with Kindness and other projects, and gave them lunch."

Eula describes Habitat as charity, a skills training program, a construction company and a mortgage company. It recently began offering micro-loans for ABWK projects.

Habitat of North Idaho works in most of Kootenai County, including Spirit Lake, Rathdrum, Hayden, Post Falls, Coeur d'Alene and in some county locations.

The affiliate is one of 12, working with Habitat for Humanity of Idaho. All U.S. affiliates send 10 percent of undesignated funds to Habitat International to build overseas projects in 90 countries.

Eula said the success rate is high. Of the 36 homes they have built, only one has been repossessed and only two clients did not care for their places.

"Through sweat equity, people

learn to commit themselves, save money and put up with many kinds of people," she said. "They will have energy-efficient homes they can afford. They gain equity, which gives them freedom to care for themselves and send their children to school."

Eula understands challenges Habitat clients may face because she grew up poor in the Depression. She became a teacher and eventually bought her own home. "It made such a difference to no longer pay rent," she said.

After retiring from teaching in Washington, she moved to Coeur d'Alene and became a realtor.

"In 1993, I saw a Habitat house in Athol. It impressed me enough that I sent a donation to former President Jimmy Carter, who is active with Habitat. His organization contacted the Habitat affiliate here and said, 'Here's a live one! I've never looked back.'"

Realizing the value of owning property, she sees the value of the opportunity Habitat offers people.

She has been chair of the board of directors three times. When she became chair the first time,

she urged the board to buy land. Former board member Anne Salisbury said, "Habitat took off after that."

Five years ago, Habitat of North Idaho went through several executive directors in a short period, so Eula took the position on half time.

"I decided maybe I'm supposed to do this," she said. "When I see something where I can make a difference, I want to do it," she said. "I like to support things that help people help themselves. Habitat for Humanity does that."

Eula, who describes her enthusiasm about Habitat as "habittitis," also helps the Lutheran Church of the Master in Coeur d'Alene run a Sunday lunch program, Our Daily Bread. She is also on the board of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, which determines where to disperse local funds.

Next year, she expects Habitat's outreach to expand by offering A Brush with Kindness types of projects through a Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative.

For information, call 208-762-4663 or visit northidahohabitat.org.

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Presiding bishop says institutional church seeks agile ways to do mission

The Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church USA, the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, says the institutional church is on the edge of transition from “a focus on r to more agile ways of doing mission” such as networks that pull people together for task forces and then disperse.

Knowing she was coming with that vision to the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane, Bishop Jim Waggoner, Jr., arranged for her to meet with representatives of the diocese’s four areas—a new structure—and to visit Christ Episcopal Church in Zillah and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in West Central Spokane.

Both are small churches, serving as chapels—gathering people for fellowship, prayer and worship—one for an area around Zillah and the other for the West Central neighborhood. Both function in ecumenical ministries that meet people’s needs through services and advocacy for justice.

Bishop Katharine had been to the diocese before, but this visit was long enough for time to learn about “people’s joys, concerns and growing edges.”

Her role as the presiding bishop is to connect people from local churches with the national and global church. She learned about the area to share with others, as well as to bring a message from the wider church.

“I always talk of God’s mission and our partnership with God,” she said in an interview in Spokane. “In The Episcopal Church, we have in recent years shaped our mission efforts around two frameworks.”

The first is the church’s 10-year commitment to promote the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals, which include ecumenical relationships around the world to address poverty, systemic injustice and care of the earth.

The second is the five Anglican marks of mission, which the church’s General Convention said are to be a framework for mission. Those are focused on evangelism, forming people of faith for ministry in the world, corporal acts of mercy, changing unjust systems and care of the earth.

“Our mission is to build justice in the world, because there is no peace without justice,” she said. “Justice is God’s vision of what we are to be.”

She encourages partnerships across boundaries people set to stay within their congregations, towns, states, dioceses and religious traditions.

“People of faith share values, and we need to work with people who share our values even though they may not be Episcopal or religious,” she said.

Bishop Katharine hopes to see people connect, collaborate and cooperate to move from institu-



Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts-Schori visits region.

tions into fluid networks to meet needs of the moment.

“Body” language helps always she said. “Churches have talked about the Body of Christ. Now we are talking about the Body of God and the family of God.

“We are moving from hierarchical systems to more organic relationships, and from images of buildings or architecture framing our understanding of church to images of people living their faith,” she said. “We need ways to work together that adapt and evolve, so we are more agile and flexible about the ways we work together, as people today work together more and more virtually and electronically.”

She anticipates that people will become more comfortable with forming task forces and letting go once the task is done.

“We struggle with a structure of standing committees and canon law. Our General Convention meets and decides what committees will do the next three years, rather than focusing on what we need to do in the next year or the next five years,” she said.

The convention named 24 people to serve on a Structure Task Force to look at how the church might be better organized to respond to what is going on in the world around the church.

That way of operating, said Bishop Katharine, requires and produces a more vulnerable way of relating with others that may be “closer to what it means to be the

church.” That way depends less on formal structures.

“It’s about being on a pilgrimage,” she said.

Bishop Katharine reported that ecumenically the National Council of Churches is doing the same thing—divesting itself of structures that arose from the corporate mindset of the mid-20th century and responding with flexibility to current needs.

Locally, she sees ecumenical congregations as a possibility, forming like many rural churches, in ways that may see beyond denominational rules to facilitate ecumenical Christian communities, with the church as a mission center serving hungry people and addressing needs of poverty, safe drinking water and education.

As an example, St. Michael’s Church in Yakima received a \$30,000 bequest, which they first talked of using to improve their building. Aware of Christ Church’s mission in Zillah, however, they decided to disperse the bequest over three years, \$10,000 a year, to invest in that mission.

As the 26th presiding bishop of The Episcopal Church, Bishop Katharine is the primary pastor, ecumenical officer and primate for the church’s 2 million members in 16 nations, connected with 38 other leaders of Anglican Provinces around the world.

Elected to a nine-year term in 2006, she was previously bishop of Nevada. Before being ordained to the priesthood in 1994, she was

an oceanographer.

After high school, she earned a bachelor’s degree in biology from Stanford University, master’s and doctoral degrees in oceanography from Oregon State University, and a master of divinity from Church Divinity School of the Pacific.

When elected bishop of Nevada in 2001, she was a priest, university lecturer and hospice chaplain in Oregon. Speaking Spanish, when she was assistant rector at the Church of the Good Samaritan in Corvallis, Ore., she was pastor to the Hispanic community and led adult education.

Preaching Sunday, Dec. 9, at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John in Spokane, she told of her trip to Yakima and churches working ecumenically through “Between the Ridges” programs to “build an easier and smoother road for Native Americans, farm workers, children without functioning parents and people who bristle about their neighbors.”

Between the Ridges is an effort to respond to needs people have expressed for nourishing food and healing from generations of trauma, poverty and homelessness.

“We met people sheltered at Noah’s Ark, where residents govern the community. We saw some of the work of Campbell Farm, a sustainable agricultural enterprise that teaches young people about their place in the community and the larger world,” she said.

The presiding bishop met with Yakama tribal spiritual leaders who seek healing for their people, and with partners who stand “in

solidarity with all God’s children struggling to find the road home.”

She found that work a prophetic effort to engineer highways “that are broad enough for many people to travel, moving together into the heart of God.”

“Prophets have to be edgy,” Bishop Katharine said, pointing out that prophets are often on the edge of society, the margins of communities. From there, they speak truth even if it’s unpopular, seeing the heart of the community and beyond.

“Sometimes the truth seems crazy,” she said.

Asking, “Why are prophets so challenging?” she said prophets point to a road for people to follow, a road with bumps and obstacles.

“Prophets challenge us to exchange our paradigms for God’s. Our ideas of what the good life is or what’s most important may not be the best ones,” she said. “Mostly prophets point to a road that can’t be taken alone, that has to be open to all our brothers and sisters, or we’ll never find the way home.

“That’s profoundly challenging for most of us. We want to be special and well-loved, and we tend to think that means others can’t also be. Part of us wants to be the center of attention, and see that as winning the competition, yet this road home is on a map that shows every creature of God equally close to the divine heart,” Bishop Katharine said.

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"There were nine minutes of evil and an infinity of goodness after that," said Dennis Stratford, who was making a delivery Dec. 14 to the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., at the time of the shooting. He later helped sort through warehouses of gifts from around the world.

The same happens during every tragedy and disaster. We weep. We empathize. We care. We send things or ourselves to help people heal and recover from losses.

The people in Newtown will never be the same. Nor is anyone affected by any tragedy ever the same.

Will we go back to being numbed, however, as media rush on to the next big news event?

We ask why because we want solutions and prevention. Sadly, we already see that the flow of why enters a blame game for some of those arming people who never should have weapons, particularly weapons of mass destruction—assault weapons.

Will we let our mourning move us to act, to reinstate an assault weapons ban that could work, one that includes a buy back?

Will we look at how we "carefully teach" our next generation of children, our teens and young adults through sales of toy assault weapons, violent video games,

ever escalating violence in movies and an emphasis on violence in news coverage.

While Christmas shopping in the toy section of a mass retailer, I was thwarted from that goal by encountering a prominent display in one aisle of toy M-16 assault weapons—the military version of the gun that slaughtered 20 innocent children and six adults at the school—plus some multiple-shot dart guns and other rifles.

I wrote the national office asking for them to be removed, but was told "we are a responsible retailer" and not doing anything illegal. "There's a market for them," the woman replied.

As we numb ourselves to the escalating violence we as a society subject ourselves to more and more of it. Yes, I saw the violence of the Vietnam War on my TV and that did not mean I became violent. It motivated me to be a peacemaker.

How much violence do we need to see or know of to act to oppose it? How much violence do others need to see to make them believe the world is full of evil and is so unsafe they need guns for self defense?

In fact, we each can chose to speak out when offended—as I was by the presence of toy assault weapons on shelves to be sold for Christmas. I learned on checking back

and not seeing the weapons on the shelf that they were all purchased, not pulled.

When will we choose to be blind and silent? When will we choose to see and speak up? Will it make a difference? If enough people do speak, it will.

We need to keep speaking to keep the momentum going so the minimum of prohibiting assault weapons, developing buy-back programs, challenging violent video games, improving mental health care access and the myriad of other solutions can be possible.

When we look for solutions, we need to be open to all of the above—the big factors and the small ones, all contribute to the mentality that we must accept massacres in our schools, houses of worship, businesses, homes, streets and even in the midst of emergency responses.

There is no way that more and more security will necessarily prevent such massacres that increasingly affect and limit the rights and freedoms of everyone to assemble, speak, worship, even just to live and move about our communities.

In each of our areas of living and working, we must look at what we are doing and see beyond what some assume will help their profit margins. Do we value money

at the expense of lives? Do we value gun rights at the expense of all other rights?

We in media must explore what we can do and must realize the fantasy created by the ever-exploding unlimited unleashing of violence is no longer newsy. It's numbing, deafening, blinding and heartwrenching.

Real news is about everyday heroes, everyday goodness—the everyday "infinity of goodness" that gives us hope, courage to act, power to care and reason to live.

The news is also about that which has been excluded by saturating space with too much conflict, sensation and sex, assuming they are the only things that sell. The everyday infinity of goodness is actually impressive. This is not to say we ignore the evil. We need to know about it, but not hear the same details repeated ad nauseum. Do some need more details of the carnage at Sandy Hook? Perhaps some do, but the constant repetition of the same news about an event helps us tire of it and move on with questions unresolved, fears heightened, actions stalled and solutions thwarted.

Media, mental health, merchandisers, WMD owners, faiths, governments, military—everyone of us—must take responsibility in ways our roles make possible.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Creating the 'common good' requires everyone taking responsibility

Sojourners editor Jim Wallis spent a three-month sabbatical in 2012 working on a book about "the common good," a concept he said has been "lost in our politics and our society."

He believes people long for the common good that includes everyone, recognizing that young people, women, immigrants, and people of color are not special interest groups, but all are "vital members of God's beloved community."

Banded about in the political forum is a demeaning use of the words "special interest" or "entitlement" when some people of higher incomes refer to people of lower income levels. Their goal is to

set lower-income people against each other, undermining the call that we are all to love our neighbors, especially the "least" of our brothers and sisters who are hungry, thirsty, homeless, sick, in prison, down and out.

While shunning the common good as if it were a communist concept—bad in the mindset of wealthy government-perk-dependent folks—many pseudo capitalists feel entitled to the benefits they set in stone in laws to assure their success.

They may mock entitlements others have worked and saved to receive, in order to divert attention from themselves and focus on demeaning those with less to direct more government funds into their coffers.

Meanwhile utility rates, health care costs, food expenses, gasoline prices, clothing prices, housing expenses and more rise at higher than the Social Security cost of living rate of 1.7 percent, ostensibly to cover the cost of doing business.

We wonder why people—even families—wind up on the streets.

We wonder why 30 homeless people died in Spokane last year—five of them under 17 years of age. They died one-by-one—invisible.

Those who see work in the many programs addressing the multiple facets of homelessness—shelters, transitional housing, affordable housing, a tent city, Family

Promise, Habitat for Humanity, energy and utility assistance, and the varied wrap-around social services to give job training, parental skills, drug and alcohol abuse rehabilitation and mental health care. Each seeks to alleviate causes for people losing homes to prevent more dying on the streets.

Each of us can do something to make a difference to restore the mindset to know that "the common good" is more than an elusive idea.

It's about everyone's quality of life. It's about seeing ourselves as part of the family of God and responsible for each other's wellbeing.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Sermon

Sounding Board

Reflections

We will sing a song as a call to action for every child born everywhere

In her song recorded in Luke, Mary "magnifies the Lord" rejoicing that God has looked on her with favor and does great things, showing mercy and strength, scattering the proud, bringing down the powerful from their thrones, lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry with good things, and sending the rich away empty.

The nature of being a mother is that there is a restlessness with the way things are, an impatient energy, a power of emotion that is sometimes quite surprising.

Carrying life in your body, a life you treasure and are protecting with your own life; it makes you look around and wonder:

Is this a world fit for a child to be born in to?

A mother-to-be sees the cruelty and the violence, a mother-to-be sees the inequity, the darkness, the brokenness of our world.

Sometimes, it is bitter and the mom-to-be feels powerless and vulnerable, but sometimes, the power of a mom-to-be is the power to stand up and say: "NO, it isn't supposed to be this way! No, I say, NO!"

Sometimes, the voice that rings out, sings out with the vision of how it should be.

Mary, the young mother-to-be, lifts her voice in prophecy, speaks, shouts, the vision of the world as God wills it.

This is the vision of a pregnant God: where the hungry are fed, the lowly lifted up, the small and the humble elevated to glory.

It is true that the God of the Hebrews

was often envisioned as a King, a Warrior, a Judge, but that is not all: the God of the Hebrews and the God of Mary is pregnant, filled with life, birthing all things, birthing new vision for the world.

Like a dazzling mother-to-be, the God of the Universe wants a world fit for the babies to be born in to. God's vision, we have been told repeatedly, is for a world of peace with justice. It is a place for the least to find they belong, a place where the encompassing compassion of God heals, restores, completes, and where the brokenness of our world, its bitter violence, its destruction of its children, is ended.

When I say this is the "will of God" I know that God's will is bounded by our freedom. God will not be our puppet master. We are not playthings of God. We are children of God.

So, God can only inspire in us, nurture in us and birth in us the hunger for justice and the energy to work for peace, birthing all these world changing visions through us, with us.

Mary stands up and sings with God's song, seeing as the pregnant God of the Universe sees. The power of pregnancy is not for women only. It is the power to give new life which is in all humans, the power to birth hope and peace, and to birth mercy and justice.

That does not happen through coercion or force.

Love comes only in freedom, yet Jesus

told us, as our teacher, that God longs for us to learn peace, mercy, hope and justice in our very bones, build it into our DNA, claim it, like Mary, as our deepest longing and truth.

Like God in God's self, we can only do this in freedom and through patient growth and with intense labor. Just as we, through the long, slow power of pregnancy mold in the generous darkness of a human body, the life of another human child, God molds in God's generous fecundity for the world, and the hope for its fulfillment.

There are signs of God's fulfillment if we look for them.

Mary saw such a sign in being pregnant with her first child.

We can see signs even in our time, and even in our lives, even these days.

- Perhaps at last we are seeing signs that the unrestrained greed of some is not greater than the love of our children.

- Perhaps the outrage of people who have been pregnant with dreams for the children, will outweigh the power of money, the power of fear and paranoia.

- Perhaps the mighty will be moved off their thrones of privilege, corruption and greed, blind greed.

- Perhaps the rich will finally know some emptiness, and at last the hungry will know fullness.

Like Mary, this is our song, and the life we choose, the action we take; since we are pregnant with the hunger for justice

and peace.

Like Mary, powerfully pregnant, passionately alive, we will sing our song as a call to action for every child born—for every child, everywhere.

We vow to work for them.

We vow to restrain evil and greed, selfishness and corruption in every way we can.

We vow to build a world fit for them to live in.

This is the power of people pregnant with life, pregnant with hope and love.

Because, in this our world, the children are still dying.

The Rev. Andrea CastroLang

Christmas sermon

Westminster Congregational

United Church of Christ

We invite pastors to share sermons with us for use as editorials or as Sounding Board to publish along with comments we find and excerpt from newsletters of congregations.

We also invite newsletter editors to send us comments from clergy and lay leaders that they include in their newsletters for us to consider including in Sounding Board. In the past, we have relied on comments in newsletters sent to us by mail, but know that some are going just online.

Of course, we also welcome letters to the editor to include in Sounding Board.

We would like to include more voices.

Calendar of Events

- January** • **National Mentoring Month**, www.nationalmentoringmonth.com
- **Human Trafficking Awareness Month**, warn-trafficking.org
- Jan 5** • **NAACP Inaugural Gala**, Hixon Union Building, Whitworth University, 300 W. Hawthorne Rd., 6 to 9 p.m., spkncpbr@gmail.com
- **Environmental Priorities Coalition Legislative Workshops**, Earth Ministries and The Lands Council, Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. First Ave., 1 to 5 p.m., www.earthministry.org, 206-632-2426
- Jan 5-6** • **Health and Beauty Spa Show**, Spokane Community College Lair, 1810 N. Greene St., Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday, noon to 5 p.m., 218-6519, www.healthbeautyspa.com
- Jan 7** • **Inland Northwest Latino Chamber of Commerce**, Best Western Peppertree, Liberty Lake Inn, 1816 N. Pepper Ln., 7:30 a.m., 244-9737, www.inwcc.com
- Jan 9** • **"Lourdes, Fatima and Other Holy Shrines in France and Spain,"** Deacons Mike and Kathy Miller, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., 448-1224, www.ihrc.net
- **Veterans for Peace**, 35 W. Main, 6:45 p.m., 838-7870
- **Spokane Police Accountability and Reform Committee**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 11** • **Vigil for Victims of Human Trafficking**, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, Women's Hearth, 920 W. Second Ave., 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., 343-5091, melsom@lcsnw.org
- **"Land, Freedom, Equality: A Palestinian Village's Non-Violent Struggle,"** Ilyad Burnat of the Popular Resistance in Bil'in, Palestine, Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, 4340 W. Fort Wright Dr., 7 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 11-13** • **"Awaken, My Heart,"** Women's Healing Retreat, Thea Loughery and Sarah Compton of Transformed Hearts Ministries, IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd. 448-1224, ihrc.net
- Jan 16** • **Coffee and Contemplation** with Jim Shaw, M.D., IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224, ihrc.net
- **Inland Northwest Death Penalty Abolition Group**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 17** • **Peace and Justice Action Committee**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 18** • **Children's Program Honoring Martin Luther King Jr's Works**, Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, North Idaho College, 208-765-3932, www.idahohumanrights.org
- Jan 18-20** • **Suicide Bereavement Retreat**, Tyson and Moore, IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224
- Jan 19** • **KPBX Kids Concert**, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague Ave., 1 p.m., 358-9000, www.bingcrosbytheater.com
- Jan 20** • **"Justice + Equality = Achievement,"** Martin Luther King Jr. Community Celebration, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana, 4 to 6 p.m., 455-8722, www.mlksokane.org
- Jan 21** • **Martin Luther King Jr. Day Unity Rally and March**, Old Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., 10 a.m., Community Resource Fair and Children's Educational Resource Fair, Riverpark Square, 808 W. Main, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., 455-8722
- **Martin Luther King Jr. Gala**, Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, Parkside Tower Center, 601 E. Front St., Coeur d'Alene, 5 to 8 p.m., 208-765-3932, www.idahohumanrights.org
- **NAACP Meeting**, East Central Community Center, 500 S. Stone, 7 p.m., spkncpbr@gmail.com
- **Lobby and Action Day in Olympia**, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, slichty@pjals.org
- Jan 23** • **Blessing and Dedication of Father Bach House**, 108 S. State St., noon, 459-6187
- **Suicide Bereavement Pastoral Ministry Workshop**, IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd, 448-1224, ihrc.net
- Jan 24** • **Palestine-Israel Human Rights Committee**, 35 W. Main, 3 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 25-27** • **"The Year of Faith,"** Men's Retreat, IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224, ihrc.net
- Jan 27** • **Gonzaga University Iron Chef: Cultural Cooking Battle**, Unity Multicultural Education Center and Sodexo, COG Second Floor Dining Room, 502 E. Boone Ave., 3 to 4:30 p.m., 313-5838, www.gonzaga.edu
- Jan 28** • **Lobby Day and Hearing on Death Penalty Repeal**, 838-8780, sjawa.org or slichty@pjals.org
- **2013 Chase Youth Award Nominations**, 625-6440, chaseyouth.org
- Jan 30** • **Fig Tree Distribution**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m.
- Feb 2** • **Eastern Washington Legislative Conference**, Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave., 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m., 535-4112 or malcolm@thefigtree.org
- Feb. 7** • **Fig Tree Benefit Planning**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., noon
- **Fig Tree Board**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 1 p.m.

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Wednesday, Jan. 2

'Prosperity of Humankind - It's More Than Economics'

Wednesday, Feb. 6

'Interracial Marriage - A Love Story to Move the World'

Wednesday, March 6

'New Day (Naw Ruz) - Is Your Heart Stirring in This Day of God?'

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Calvary Soup Kitchen upgrades appliances, serves much more than food

In three years of serving meals, Calvary Baptist Soup Kitchen has gone from feeding five people to feeding up to 150 in the former parsonage beside the church on E. Third.

"It has been a test of faith and perseverance to keep the soup kitchen going," said Peggie Troutt, founder and manager.

It operates entirely with volunteers who donate their time and funds. Volunteers include church members, church auxiliaries, family members, elementary through high school students, college students and the community.

Since opening, she estimates the kitchen has fed 12,000 hot meals to their "honored guests": homeless people and anyone who wants a hot meal.

While the church's kitchen was the base of cooking for the program, the kitchen in the house was in poor condition.

"The stove blew out. The dishwasher wasn't working right. The sinks were too small to function in the overflow kitchen. We needed more storage space because we were growing so fast. We needed ceiling fans, because it's hot in the summer," Peggie said.

So Diane Zakopyko, a volunteer who formerly was a cook at Shadle Park High School, put together a list of what was needed



Peggie Troutt checks on meal cooking on the new stove beside the new refrigerator.

so the community could donate to help upgrade the equipment.

The kitchen needed a new stove, a range hood, a dishwasher, a refrigerator and flooring.

David Troyke, a member of Rotary Club 21, came to visit the soup kitchen one day, saw the need and encouraged the organizers to write a grant.

Diane priced what was needed, and she and Peggie submitted a grant. Peggie gave a presentation to the Rotary 21 Community Civic Action Committee. Rotary 21 provided a grant of \$2,500 to upgrade the kitchen in order to make food preparation, serving and cleaning up easier for volun-

teers. A security screen door will also be replaced.

"Many people in the community have come forth to help as a result of the article in The Fig Tree when we started," said Peggie.

Each Saturday, when it serves from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., the soup kitchen needs five servers and three kitchen workers.

Betty Dumas, assistant manager, said, "We pray, and God sends people."

At a Mission Catalyst Conference at Calvary Chapel, she recently appealed for volunteers, and several offered to help.

Volunteers also include Moody Bible School students and Fair-

child Air Force Base troops.

"Most want to serve, because servers can talk with the people," Peggie said. "Those working in the kitchen need a food handler's permit if they want to cook on a regular basis."

Both she and Betty have permits, and one of them is always there to be sure the food is prepared properly, people cover their heads and hands, the food is the right temperature, and food handlers observe other requirements.

Most who come are homeless people from Third and Division. Some are elderly people in apartments who run low on food and want to be with others. Others just

come for the fellowship.

"The person who serves and listens to them may be the only friendly person with a smile they meet," Peggie said.

Volunteers do more than serve and cook. Some help clean and reorganize the pantry on Fridays.

"It's a blessing for our church," said Peggie. "More members are beginning to give food and volunteer. Members are proud Calvary is stepping out to help homeless people and transients downtown."

The Calvary Baptist Church's Women's Ministry oversees the soup kitchen, running it without tapping into the church budget. Members and the community are generous, said Peggie.

Sometimes when people at share about their lives and problems, a server asks people to pray for that person. Sometimes it's the first step to access more help.

One woman was depressed when she came, but after talking to a volunteer server who is a counselor she left smiling.

One elderly woman has no teeth. When she comes, the cooks blend the food so she can eat it.

Another guest comes regularly, except when he goes to Seattle for chemotherapy. So people pray for him when he goes.

For information, call 624-5433 or email peggietroutt@hotmail.com.

Student believes relationships play key role in a journey of faith

Continued from page 1

Realizing she was "close-minded" before she came, she relishes opportunities to learn about herself and others. Whitworth helps her as it engages and involves students to know others, to listen to each other's stories as a way to add value to their own stories.

Wanting to serve, Tina finds stories about the lives of different people opens her eyes to options.

She participates in Whitworth's annual International Festival to share the campus' cultural diversity not only with other students but also with the community.

"It's a way that people who do not travel can see and learn about other cultures along with being host families," she said.

Tina believes God has provided a support system through friendships she has made here.

Her late parents were teachers, who were transferred to teach in different communities in Malawi every two years. So she attended a girl's boarding school in Lilongwe. When she was not admitted to a university, a friend suggested the African Bible College.

"I prayed that if God wanted me there, I would do what God wanted me to do," Tina said.

With the influence of her mother's strong faith, Tina said she had "received Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior" several times before it stuck. Then she began to lead Bible studies, live her faith and serve the community.

"In Malawi, people receive the Good News, but fall back if no one follows up, so we start by building a relationship with someone, talking about other things. When we have a relationship, we tell about our faith."

In Malawi, 60 percent are Protestant, 15 percent are Catholic and about 20 percent are Muslim. Tina grew up Presbyterian, attended an Assemblies of God church two years and went back

to being Presbyterian.

Having many questions after her mother died, she didn't want to hear or talk about God's love in the high school Bible study group.

A missionary took an interest and prayed for her, letting her know God loves her and wanted her "to come back to party."

"I began to understand that faith is about a journey of trusting God," she said. "We will have pain. There is no promise of a smooth life, but whatever happens, God has promised never to leave or forsake us. I realized God had carried me through."

At the African Bible College she majored in biblical studies and communication/journalism. Her mother's death fund from teaching covered her first year's tuition. It ran out in her second year.

She prayed for a miracle.

She also asked Cheryl, a Hawaiian woman on a missions trip, to pray for her when she returned. Cheryl not only prayed but also collected funds from friends to cover her next semester.

Tina worked at the college's community clinic. An Irish woman she met in a Navigators Bible study promised to send her 20 British pounds a month for living expenses. Her aunt, with whom she lived, provided pocket money.

In 2007 at the college, she met Bob, Amy and their young children. Bob and Amy grew up in Spokane. Bob had taught high school in San Diego, where a missionary from African Bible College inspired them to go and serve as missionaries in Malawi.

They went to Malawi in 2007 for a three-year term, supported by family, friends, their San Diego church and Life Center in Spokane.

She took classes Bob taught, visited their home and played with their children, becoming part of their family. After her father died, Amy offered to be there for her as her parents and family.

"God is calling us to be part of your journey, Tina," they said.

Their term ended in March 2010. She was graduating that June, open to go to graduate school anywhere in the world.

She considered options and applied to Whitworth. The Stauffachers returned to San Diego in early June. She joined them there on June 30. In July, they drove to Amy's parents in Spokane.

In August, she went with them to Life Center, where Bob and Amy told of their ministry in Malawi and introduced Tina.

In September, she started prerequisite courses for a master's

degree in business administration.

In 2011, she switched to a master's in international management, which required another language. With her desire to work in Africa some day, she chose Swahili, which Whitworth just began teaching, because every other year students go to Tanzania.

Visiting Bob and Amy in San Diego for Christmas 2011, they urged her to complete the MBA, too.

Tina has worked on campus not only with the international student affairs office and in the sociology and history department, but also summers doing custodial work.

"It was humbling, helping me

realize how important it is to have someone to clean up after us," Tina said. "We need to respect people who serve us in janitorial work."

She appreciates that beyond business theory, professors challenge students to relate business to life, ethics and faith, understanding that "God puts us in places to help others move closer to God by the way we live," Tina said.

"Our lives need to be living testimonies that open ground for relationships, not just telling someone our beliefs," she said.

For information, call 720-1224 or email ckamkosi12@my.whitworth.edu.

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