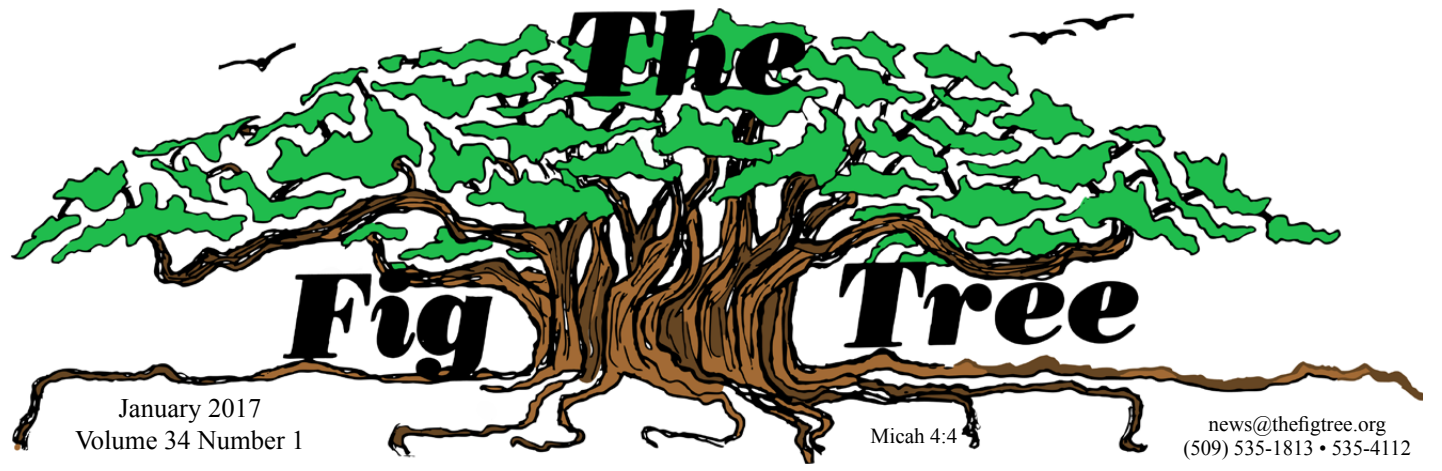


33ND YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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FEATURES 30 EVENTS



Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest
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VOA programs shelter homeless

By Mary Stamp

Fawn Schott believes that people are better able to explore their spirituality when their needs for food, shelter, safety, stability and relationships are met.

As the new executive director of Volunteers of America (VOA) of Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho, she oversees 11 programs to meet people's basic needs.

The VOA, which is an ecumenical, interdenominational Christian church, does not hold worship services or offer study groups. Its mission is to serve vulnerable people, approaching them with love, compassion and caring, as Jesus would do.

Fawn felt compassion and a sense of peace, belonging and home, when she first visited VOA in Spokane as part of her work from 2011 to 2015 with Goodwill to co-launch supportive veterans services for 410 veterans and families in Eastern Washington and North Idaho.

She then worked a year with the Empire Health Foundation before the opening came for her to apply for and be hired to be CEO of VOA in Spokane.

Fawn has stepped into leadership of this agency that serves vulner-



Fawn Schott seeks to expand partnering with churches on Crosswalk.

able people such as street youth, homeless women, homeless vets, teen parents, foster youth, single mothers and medically fragile homeless adults.

VOA walks beside people to help them transition out of homelessness, offering education and opportunities. Its programs express their belief in the power of housing to transform lives. VOA seeks to house people as quickly as possible so they can begin rebuilding their lives to achieve stability and independence.

VOA is committed to human dignity and social justice, and to engaging volunteers in the community.

Its newest program is family visitation for children removed from a family by court order, allowing families to stay connected so they can eventually reunify. That program, launched in December, includes therapeutic parent coaching. It has 30 staff to serve 200 Eastern Washington families.

VOA's housing programs connect people with case management to help them learn life skills and connect them to resources, like mental health and substance abuse counseling.

Continued on page 4

Church explores ways to do ministry without a building, investing in housing

Through efforts of The Grove Community, the Rev. Deb Conklin worked with the neighborhood to move five houses to new locations in West Central Spokane between June and November to provide affordable housing.

The project began when a developer decided to demolish 11 houses to build a car wash on the block bounded by Ash, Walnut, Gardner and Boone. Tenants received eviction notices and were to move before Christmas 2015.

The Grove Community learned that five of the houses were historic Craftsman houses that could

be moved and renovated for use in a co-housing model, a vision of developer Keith Kelley.

Ten years ago as a student, Keith, a Whitworth University graduate who was director of its Center for Service Learning from 2011 to 2013, convinced Whitworth to place students in West Central Spokane for fieldwork.

Eventually, he, his family and others from Whitworth moved there.

Keith formed Kelley Developments, a construction and restoration company, to provide quality affordable housing by buying

older, rundown rentals, renovating them and pioneering a co-housing model for rentals.

In co-housing, adult tenants rent bedrooms in five- to six-bedroom houses. They share bathrooms and use the living room, dining room and kitchen as common space. The owner/manager maintains the shared spaces and controls who lives there.

It is a model that works for stable adults, not chronically homeless people, Deb said.

Tenants learn conflict resolution skills, because they share common spaces. To reduce common sources of conflict, The Grove Community, as the owner and manager, will furnish kitchens with dinnerware, pots, pans and utensils.

Yards will be landscaped with raised-bed gardens and space to socialize. Tenants are encouraged, but not required, to garden and learn cooking skills. Project Hope will garden any beds not tended by tenants.

With Kendall Yards bringing pressure to increase rents, Deb

Continued on page 8

Event will offer insights on policies affecting lives

"Taking Responsibility: Acting Together in Faith" is the theme speakers and workshops will address at the 2017 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 28, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave.

Presenters will consider how their workshop themes intersect with issues of poverty.

The event will feature a panel discussion on poverty, based on the Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) Community Health Needs Assessment and the 2016 Washington State Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Poverty.

The discussion will be led by a representative of the SRHD and Sr. Sharon Park, OP, of the Washington State Catholic Conference, with responses and reflections offered by Neal Schindler of the Spokane Area Jewish Family Services and Julie Honekamp of SNAP (Spokane Neighborhood Action Programs).

There will be six workshops. There are two sessions of four workshops and one session of two workshops.

- Jessie Dye of Earth Ministry and Twa-le Abrahamson of the Spokane Tribe will discuss issues related to the environment, climate change and protection of the earth.

- James Wilburn, supervisor of youth initiatives and community and parent involvement with Spokane Public Schools, and Fawn Schott, the new CEO of Volunteers of America with programs serving and educating street youth and young parents, will address issues of education.

- Gloria Ochoa-Bruck of the Spokane County Bar As-

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WCC encourages Reformation dialogue

Roman Catholics and Lutherans, in committing to forging ahead as pilgrims together, are contributing to the wider ecumenical movement, acknowledged the World Council of Churches (WCC) executive committee at a recent meeting in China.

With celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation under way, the WCC recognizes a commitment signed by Pope Francis and Lutheran World Federation (LWF) president Bishop Munib Younan, a commitment and common way expressed in the publication "From Conflict to Communion."

The commemoration was prepared and pursued in the spirit of being pilgrims together, according to the executive committee in a letter to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the LWF. "Recognizing accountability for divisions of the past, and mutual sharing of the gifts of the Gospel now, were done with a sense of humility and commitment to follow Jesus Christ together."

The churches' openness to one another and how God leads them to new expressions of unity are signs of hope for churches and for the world, said the WCC executive committee, which all churches are invited to join in a pilgrimage of justice and peace.

"We find that the common prayer and commitment to the communion that you already share, is a visible expression of how this pilgrimage finds new forms and meaning."

The WCC also acknowledged that there is still a need for renewing challenges of the Reformation in the present time. "There are so many examples of the imperative to address human sinfulness in an accountable way, and to search for real repentance from greed, violence and actions of injustice," reads the letter. "Inspired and empowered by the justice and peace of God, we continue our ecumenical pilgrimage together."

Reflection on a founder sheds light on today

Meeting a few days after the Dec. 12 attack against Coptic Christians worshipping at St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo, where 25 were killed and many more injured, a conference gathered Dec. 14 to 16 at the Anaphora Institute under the theme of "St. Irenaeus and Enlightened Humanity."

Hosted by Anaphora in collaboration with Lyon Catholic University, the event drew scholars, students and theologians to explore St. Irenaeus' writings, and what early founders of the church can teach Christians in the 21st century.

Anaphora is a retreat center that promotes spiritual reflection, bridges gaps between cultures and denominations, offers education through participation and life experience, reinforces local development, human rights and gender justice, and creates awareness of the need to live in harmony with all of creation.

Father John Behr from St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary stressed the many similarities between the theological context of St. Irenaeus and the present day.

"Irenaeus' writings come from a pre-imperial Christian context, which in many ways is similar to the times today," said Fr. John. "Our understanding of theology has since been fragmented, and it is sometimes difficult to see what holds us together, but I believe our objective in Egypt, in studying the teachings of Irenaeus, is a way to come together to move forward."

The head of the Coptic Church, Pope Tawadros II, who was not at the conference because of the events in Cairo, said in a video message, "As church, we always encourage research and studies of our common roots and our first history as Christians. We know St. Irenaeus as an important figure in ecumenism between the West and the East."

Bishop Thomas reflected, "We have gathered for this conference in a difficult moment. Our focus, thoughts and efforts, are not on fighting people, but in finding hope in moving forward. We will share together in prayer not only directed to the people of Egypt, but also that we may humble ourselves before the Lord, to pray for forgiveness together, for all the peoples. When we hear of such tragedy as happened, it is easy for us to feel hatred, but forgiveness is a sign of God," he said.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Faith community discusses public policy

Continued from page 1
society, Kurtis Robinson of the NAACP Spokane Criminal Justice Committee, and Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich will present issues related to racial and criminal justice.

- Steve Allen, director of Family Promise in Spokane, and Kay Murano, the new director of the Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium, will explore housing issues and programs.

Those workshops will be offered twice. Two workshops will be offered once: one on immigration issues led by a representative of the No Discrimination Spokane and PJALS, and one on media literacy and propaganda with Fig

Tree editor Mary Stamp and Admir Rasic, a Bosnian Muslim with the Spokane Interfaith Council.

Sr. Sharon of the WSCC and the Rev. Paul Benz, co-director of the Faith Action Network, will give briefings on issues before the 2017 State Legislature.

The Rev. Gregg Sealey, the Inland District Superintendent of the United Methodist Conference, will give theological reflections on "How Are We Listening?"

The Rev. Walter Kendricks, pastor of Morning Star Baptist Church, will give the invocation. Anastasia Wendlinder, associate professor in Gonzaga University's religious studies department, will give the closing prayer.

Nonprofit agencies and ministries will bring displays to share resources about their programs.

"This educational event invites people of faith to consider how their faith teachings call them to be involved shaping policies on hunger, housing, creation, jobs, education, justice, equality, taxes and more," said Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp.

Organizers include The Fig Tree, Catholic Charities Spokane, the Faith Action Network, NAACP Spokane and the Inland United Methodist District.

For information, call 535-1813 or email mary@thefigtree.org. Fliers are available at thefigtree.org/FigTreeEvent.pdf.

Homeless Connect offers one day of services

For the sixth year, Homeless Connect offers multiple services to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, drawing together volunteers from many agencies working with homeless people for a "one-stop-shop" opportunity to meet most of their needs in one day, rather than weeks or months of going from agency to agency.

It will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 24, at the Salvation Army Community Center, 223 E. Nora.

Organized by a subcommittee of the Spokane Homeless Coalition, it draws about 300 people

who come for hot lunch, family services, veterans services, housing services, Department of Social and Health Services, medical and dental screenings, clothing, food, hair cuts and veterinary care.

This year for the first time, Homeless Connect is facilitating a Warrant Fest, an opportunity for people to work with Spokane's Community Court to "quash" municipal misdemeanor warrants, set court dates and address pending charges that are often barriers to accessing housing and employment.

Representatives of the Spokane

Public Schools HEART (Homeless Education and Resource Team) program will be there.

"There will be food bank items that don't require a kitchen to prep," said Johnnie Beans, a CHAS outreach worker. "There are nurses for foot care and cold weather advice."

Sabrina Bukowski of Catholic Charities Permanent Supportive Housing said it speeds up the process to talk face-to-face rather than just electronically.

For information, call 340-9329 or email spokanehomelessconnect@googlegroups.com.

Gospel Explosion marks its 20th year

Whitworth University presents the 20th annual Gospel Explosion Celebration on "The Heavens Declare the Glory of God" at 7 p.m., Friday, Feb. 10, in Sealy Mudd Chapel.

Stephy Nobles-Beans, coordinator for diversity, equity and

inclusive ministries at the Whitworth Chapel, invites area churches to participate in Whitworth's recognition of African American History Month.

The event features a concert by the Exceptional Praise Gospel Choir Club at Whitworth and

choirs from area congregations.

The Gospel Explosion began in 1997 to bring together Spokane's churches and Whitworth to promote diversity and unity on campus and in the community.

For information, call 777-4568 or email sbeans@whitworth.edu.

Faith community nursing classes planned

Chaplaincy Health Care and Faith Community Nursing/Health Ministries Northwest are sponsoring eight weeks of online classes, "Foundations of Faith Community Nursing: Whole Person Health Care," from Jan. 23 to March 17, with face-to-face sessions, Jan. 20 and 21, and March 25, at 1480 Fowler St., in Richland.

The American Nurses Association recognizes faith community nursing as a sub-specialty in nurs-

ing, said organizer Jan Jacobson. Participants identify the integration of faith and health, share skills needed by nurses, develop a peer support system, and identify

spiritual formation and shalom as part of health concerns.

For information, call 509-628-3724 or email janjacob@umich.edu or visit npnm.org.

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Editorial Team

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Martin Luther King Jr. Day 2017 Events:

Saturday, Jan. 7 - 9 a.m.

Prayer Breakfast

Hemmingson Center - Gonzaga

Sunday, Jan. 15 - 4 p.m.

Remembrance Celebration

Speaker: NAACP Spokane representative
Morning Star Baptist Church, 3909 W. Rowan

Monday, Jan. 16 - starts 10 a.m.

Rally, Unity March & Resource Fair
Convention Center - 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.

455-8722 • mlkspokane.org



Jerry Sittser leads retreat on adversity

By Sr. Mary Eucharista, SMMC

The death of someone close—a parent, a spouse, a child—can be a devastating, life-changing tragedy.

A catastrophic event occurred for Jerry Sittser of Whitworth University on the day a drunk driver stole the lives of his mother, wife and daughter. It seems a person can only endure so much pain in a single lifetime, and Jerry's adversity was multiplied in a single event.

This loss will never be erased from his life, he has said. He was overwhelmed and shocked by this suffering, but he was not destroyed.

"Adversity is a universal human condition, something we share in common, and often in ways we least expect. It is not a question of whether we will experience it, but when, and we can't prepare for it directly," Jerry said in a recent interview.

"That experience used to drive people to God and the Gospel. Now it is used as an argument against the existence of God: God's on trial, in a way," he said.

"We operate under the assumption that we are entitled to a good life. When we don't get it, we hold God responsible. As entitlement grows, our capacity to understand grace diminishes," he said.

Jerry will offer a retreat, "Our Suffering, God's Suffering," from 6 p.m., Friday, Jan. 20, through



Jerry Sittser

lunch, Sunday, Jan. 22, at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd.

He will address the "raw experience of adversity," creating a space for participants to reflect on their own adversity.

Jerry pointed out that it doesn't have to be dramatic to be erosive and painful. Some of the most erosive occasions of adversity are subtle or quiet, something shameful or hidden, he said.

During the retreat, Jerry will explore ways of thinking about adversity, as well as practical ways of responding to it, especially from a Christian perspective.

"Because we all deal with it in some way, our choice concerns how we deal with it in ways that are redemptive," he said. "I will focus on key texts in Scripture, consider the big ideas around a redemptive approach to adversity and allow for ample time for per-

sonal reflection."

For example, he will explore John 11, how Mary and Martha wanted a reversal of fortune, a resuscitation of their brother Lazarus. Jesus promised more than that, a resurrection, a new kind of life that never ends.

Jerry teaches the history of Christianity, Christian spirituality and religion in American public life at Whitworth. He founded the certification for ministry program, the masters of arts in theology and the Academy of Christian discipleship. He is half-time professor of theology and half-time with the Office for Church Engagement.

Jerry grew up in Grand Rapids, Mich., attended Hope College and Fuller Theological Seminary, earning a master's of divinity. He served as an associate pastor at Emmanuel Reformed Church in Paramount, Calif., for four years, then as chaplain at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa for six years, returning to study at the University of Chicago to earn a doctoral degree in the history of Christianity. He has been at Whitworth since 1989.

His eight books include *A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows through Loss*, *When God Doesn't Answer Your Prayer* and his most recent book, *A Grace Revealed: How God Redeems the Story of Your Life*.

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

Conferences will examine effects of Reformation

Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC) will host a 2017 Dinner Series on "Historical Connections: From the Effects of the Reformation and the Catholic Church in America, to the Middle Eastern

Conflict and its Effects Today."

The dinner will be on "Historical Understandings: The Reformation and its Legacy" presented by Fr. Michael Maher, SJ, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 31, at the IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd.

The Reformation continues to influence the church and society. Two conferences will examine relationships between Protestantism and Catholicism from the Reformation to the Industrial Revolution, to today.

Father Michael grew up in Milwaukee, Wis., and entered the Society of Jesus in 1975. He taught junior high science to Native Americans in Pine Ridge, S.D., English at Sogong University in

Korea, religion to boys in Omaha, and courses at Marquette University and Saint Louis University.

Fr. Michael, who has a doctoral degree from University of Minnesota in early modern European history and Chinese history, serves at the Jesuit Historical Institute, as associate professor of history at Gonzaga University and director of Catholic studies there.

IHRC also plans a Silent Day of Prayer from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 11, with Scott Cooper, director of parish social ministries with Catholic Charities Spokane, speaking on "Food for the Journey."

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

One church raises funds for another

New Hope Baptist Church is converting a former pool hall at Argonne and Boone into its new church facility, with plans to move in by May. It seeks \$200,000 to be free and clear after sale of its building, purchase of the new location and renovations.

The Rev. Todd Eklof, pastor of the Unitarian Universalist Church at 4340 W. Ft. Wright Dr., who is preaching on the history and role of black churches in the country and Spokane on Sunday, Jan. 8, has invited the Rev. Happy Watkins, pastor of New Hope, to be present between the 9:15 and 11 a.m. services to meet with people. Members of the Unitarian church will have an opportunity to give weekly and monthly pledges.

For information, call 535-1336.

Region sets MLK events

The Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center and the Spokane Ministers' Fellowship are organizing several events for 2017 Martin Luther King Jr. Day in Spokane.

• **The Second Annual Prayer Breakfast** for the MLK Center will be held from 9 to 10:30 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 7, in the Hemmingson Center Grand Ballroom at Gonzaga University, 730 E. Desmet.

• **A representative of NAACP Spokane**, will be the speaker for the Remembrance Celebration at 4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 15, at Morning Star Baptist Church, 3909 W. Rowan.

• **The annual Rally, Unity March and Resource Fair** will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday, Jan. 16, at the Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd. The Resource Fair is from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., with setup between 8:30 and 9:30 a.m. at the Convention Center. Reservations are being received by Sara Simpson, resource fair coordinator, at ssimpson@mlkspokane.org.

On Jan. 16, Washington State University students in Spokane will join in the march and rally, and they go to the MLK Family Outreach Center to join in a service project. In Pullman, students will join in service projects coordinated by the Center for Civic Engagement with information at 335-7708 or cce@wsu.edu.

The center will also offer "Love > Hate: Bystander Intervention Training" to teach skills to intervene and de-escalate situations of harassment, bullying or oppressive behaviors. It will be held from 12:30 to 5 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 14, at the MLK Center.

For information, call 455-8722.

The Latah County Human Rights Task Force is hosting a MLK Breakfast at Moscow Junior High, 1410 E. D St.

The 30th Annual MLK Community Celebration at 6 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 26, at the Washington State University-CUB in Pullman features keynote speaker activist Charlene Carruthers.

Coeur d'Alene fifth graders will have a program on Martin Luther King, Jr., at 9:30 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 12, at Lake City Community Church. A program for Post Falls fifth graders will be there at 11:30 a.m. For information, call 208-765-3932.

See more in the calendar on page 11.



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VOA seeks to extend partnerships for supporting Crosswalk program

Continued from page 1

In 2016, The Marilee, 50 units of "housing first" housing for chronically homeless adults, began to offer permanent housing with support services. It is already fully occupied and has three case managers, a health worker and visiting nurses, Fawn said.

In 1985, VOA recruited congregations to provide meals to draw at-risk teens living on the streets and launched Crosswalk, which is now a shelter, school and multi-service center for homeless teens.

Fawn reported that the Crosswalk youth shelter is losing \$200,000 in funding, so it seeks new avenues to fill the gap, in order to continue to provide homeless teens a place to sleep, eat, do laundry and receive schooling.

"We will seek ways the community can help us fill the gaps," she said, announcing that VOA will be looking to develop new partnerships with faith communities to meet the basic needs of youth who are on the streets.

"The faith community continues to be faithful supporters," she said.

In the region, the VOA offers several other programs.

- Alexandria's House is a transitional group home for pregnant or parenting teens.

- Applewood, Valley Place, Country Heights and Trent Terrace Apartments offer subsidized housing for people with special needs.

- Aston-Bleck Apartments are transitional housing for women ages 19 to 22 and their children.

- Foster Youth Services provide independent living services for teens leaving the foster care system.

- Hope House is an emergency shelter with on-site permanent housing for adult women.

- Hope Housing is permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless, disabled adults.

- Medical Respite Care offers short-term respite care for homeless women coming out of the hospital.

- Veteran's Housing provides transitional housing for chronically homeless single men who served.

- **Volunteers of America**, a national nonprofit helping more than 2 million people a year, was founded in 1896 by Ballington and Maud Booth to "go wherever

we are needed and do whatever comes to hand."

Fawn said VOA helps vulnerable people "in the greatest need" and works to uplift them to live in dignity.

The national website says VOA "is a church without walls that answers God's call to transform our communities through a ministry of service that demonstrates to all people that they are beloved."

Each of its 30 branches is locally run with hundreds of employees, volunteers and partners.

Fawn, who grew up in Carnation, Wash., started studies in education at Washington State University in Pullman. After she and her husband, Stephen, married, she went to Eastern Washington University, graduating in 1998 in English and special education.

She has been in the Spokane area since 1996, living in Spokane three years and now living north of Deer Park.

She taught eighth grade at-risk teens, but quit to raise her own children Madelyn and Gabriel. Stephen, who had worked with a TV station, started a video production company 10 years ago. In 2011, when their son was in sec-

ond grade, she went back to work as youth director at Goodwill and became general manager.

While she was a stay-at-home mother, Fawn completed a master's in project management at WSU in 2004. That program introduced her to board development, business operations, risk assessment, staff management and project implementation.

"I always had a heart for service. As a child, I wanted to give back," said Fawn, who still wants to give to others.

"I use my love for business and my love for relationships as director of this service provider," she said.

Because her parents owned a construction company that renovated rehabs, she met people and learned "their incredible stories as they grew through challenges and trauma to become resilient."

Fawn said that by listening to people's stories "we can come to respect every person, those from different journeys and different walks of life. So our job is to love each other and to help our neighbors through their journeys."

Fawn is now working to be a minister in the VOA. Ministers

go through training and mentoring to be commissioned.

Fawn grew up Methodist and her husband's father was a Baptist minister. They attend a community church in Mead.

As an organized person and strategic thinker, she brings teams together to help the organization identify community challenges and develop solutions to them.

She wants to assure that the needs of vulnerable people are met so that in 10 to 100 years "no one should need us."

"Meantime, how do we assure we are still here to meet the needs of the community, to develop full, compassionate and warm-hearted people who love their work and are committed to meet the needs of people who are challenged and need love?" she asked.

The goal is for people to have the dignity and safety needed for social, emotional and physical stability through gaining life skills for self-sufficiency.

For information, call 624-2378 or email fshott@voaspokane.org.

Jewish Cultural Film Festival presents three films

The 13th Annual Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival Jan. 19, 21 and 22 at the Hemmingson Center at Gonzaga University will offer people a glimpse of the reality of Jewish experience with three diverse films.

The opening night film at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 19, is "Once in a Lifetime." It is based on the story of a history teacher at a French high school, Anne Gueguen. She is determined to give the best education she can to her underprivileged inner-city pupils. Frustrated by their

apathy but undaunted, she tests her multicultural classroom with a unique assignment: a national competition on child victims of Nazi concentration camps. The project is initially met with extreme resistance, until a face-to-face encounter with a Holocaust survivor changes the students' attitudes dramatically.

"Transit" will be shown at 7 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 21. It explores stories of Filipinos in Tel Aviv under the threat of a law deporting children of migrant workers. Janet, a domestic worker on

an expired visa, struggles to hide her half-Israeli daughter, Yael, a rebellious teenager. Most endangered in the situation is Janet's four-year-old nephew, whom they watch because his father works out of town. "Transit" examines what it means to be a family and what it means to be a stranger in one's home and in a foreign land.

"The Kind Words," shown at 2 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 22, is a comedy-drama that follows three Jewish Israeli siblings, Dorona and brothers Netanel and Shai. After their mother's death, they

discover a long-hidden truth about who their parents really were. The revelation sends them on a road trip from Israel across France filled with unpredictable adventures and encounters. Writer-director Shemi Zarhin explores an unraveling family secret and their bittersweet journey of self-discovery.

Since the mid-2000s, the Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival has brought international films to Spokane that share Jewish life and culture with the community.

For information, call 747-7394 or email director@sajfs.org.

Women's March on Spokane coincides with national march in D.C.

In conjunction with the Women's March on Washington, D.C., on Saturday, Jan. 21, there will be a Women's March on Spokane from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. that day at the Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.

Many U.S. cities are participating in this national event, said Angie Beam who has set up a Facebook event locally.

The Women's March on Washington is a national movement for women, men and children who stand for human rights, civil liberties, diversity and compassion for humanity.

In addition to activities in the Convention Center, there will be

a march of a few blocks.

"This is where the region east of the Cascades through North Idaho can organize," she said.

The national event is an opportunity for people "to stand in solidarity for the protection of our rights, our safety, our health and our families, recognizing that our vibrant and diverse communities are the strength of our country," said organizers.

It is for people of all genders, ethnicities, ages, abilities, religions and sexual orientations to gather.

Building on the legacy of the 1963 March on Washington, organizers invite people to hold dis-

cussions on race, because "it has consistently played a huge role in the fight for gender equality.

By promoting interconnections within the movement, organizers hope to elevate understanding for all marginalized groups, as they are most affected by the Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, classism, racism, and sexism that has plagued our country in 2016.

This continues work of marginalized groups over decades with the hope it will be a catalyst for more people to be more involved.

There will be the resources to help people connect with one

another, and work towards equity and social justice.

For information, visit <http://www.womensmarchwastate.org/> and click on the button for information on the Spokane march.

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Scott Cooper empowers people to explore ways to work for justice

By Sue Orlowski, SP

At noon most days, Scott Cooper jogs down the street from Catholic Charities of Spokane (CCS) at 12 E. Fifth where he is the director of social ministries. It's more than a way to exercise. It's a way to center so he can focus his energies outward.

Scott's ministry takes him to many places in the Spokane Catholic Diocese in Eastern Washington, from the Canadian to the Oregon borders.

No two days look alike for him. One day he may visit the Brewster food bank to review its outreach and recovery from last year's wildfire. Then he may help screen people for a tattoo removal program. Finally, he may return to Spokane to coordinate a liturgy at the cathedral for respect for life. He has also traveled with Catholic Relief Services to developing countries to see people who benefit from its programs.

At Gonzaga University, Scott, who grew up in a small town in South Dakota, participated in a study abroad immersion in Paris. There the world took on new meaning for him. He took ownership of his time. That trip was a formative experience.

So were two years in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) after graduating from Gonzaga with a bachelor's in French.

JVC's "unofficial" motto, he said smiling, is, "We will ruin you for life." Its real motto is "Be transformed by the call to peace and justice."

He was transformed. "JVC opened my eyes to social justice issues," Scott said.

For two years, he lived in Nome, Alaska, in the Fairbanks Diocese, where he worked for KNOM, the oldest Catholic radio station in the country. He lived in an intentional community with other JVC volunteers. They prayed together, and shared experiences of faith and hope.

For them, it was counter-cultural to live simply. Out of faith, they were committed to work for social and ecological justice, as well as for structural change. They examined causes of oppression and looked for ways to bring justice into the world.

"Through commitment to Gospel values, we became 'contemplatives in action,' integrating our faith with working for justice," he said.

Jesuit Volunteers Northwest connects people with one or more years of volunteer service that focus on community, spirituality, simple living and social and ecological justice. It provides opportunities for volunteers to reach out to persons living on the margins of society and in vulnerable places as they partner with agencies in



Scott Cooper works with a variety of Catholic Charities programs.

Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.

JVC volunteers empower people by supporting programs to help people help themselves. Scott was exposed to realities of life for Native people in Alaska as they maintain their traditional subsistence lifestyle.

In remote villages where substance abuse and HIV were realities, he heard stories of success. The community reveled when there was a successful whale hunt that helped them maintain their lifestyle, Scott said.

At KNOM, he did inspirational, educational and public health feature reports. He talked with people about their struggles, challenges and successes. He learned from immersion in social service.

"This ministry helped engage my heart, while academia had engaged my head," he said.

After JVC, Scott earned a master's degree in linguistics at the University of Washington and taught French. In the mid 1990s, he returned to Spokane, teaching two French classes at Gonzaga, while serving as director of social services for St. Vincent de Paul.

"While there, I saw what it meant to work with the poor, and I stumbled upon this ministry. I found I was gifted to work with the poor and I liked being able to help them," he said.

"It was a steep learning curve. I had to learn about government

systems that help meet needs and then try to respond to each person's needs," Scott said. "I saw how those systems did not always do the job."

During this time, the United States enacted welfare reform. He saw what it meant in the lives of low-income people. Two-thirds of the clients were working, but still had to come to the food bank to feed their children.

"The number of clients increased as the government cut funding. Services shifted to the private sector. More people who worked needed services. The market was flooded with unskilled, minimum-wage workers. We still see the effects 20 years later," Scott said.

After four years at St. Vincent de Paul, Scott was a program associate at Second Harvest Food Bank.

In late 2000, Donna Hanson, then director of CCS, recruited him to begin as director of parish social ministries in 2001.

In that role, he consults with and supports diocesan parishes and schools. He is responsible for outreach, advocacy and Catholic social teaching, and coordinates the CCS emergency financial assistance network.

He is diocesan director for national programs, such as Catholic Relief Services and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. He also advocates for the

poor on Capitol Hill so Congress does not balance the budget on the backs of the poor.

As part of his outreach, Scott publishes a quarterly newsletter, Salt and Light, as a resource for parishes.

Scott helps develop programs and events with different Eastern Washington groups, because "working together we can do more than when we work alone." One is the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.

Catholic Charities' mission is to affirm the dignity of every person, partnering with parishes and the community to serve and advocate for vulnerable people, bringing stability and hope to people. Its values of respect, compassion, collaboration and justice guide its decisions. CCS is committed to people, relationships, crisis response, advocacy and innovation.

"I advocate for the poor and help people advocate for themselves," said Scott, who is also cantor at and has attended St. Augustine Parish for 20 years with his wife and family.

Scripture, liturgy and Eucharist strengthen him.

"I do what I can do as well as I can, but I have to pray and trust that God will do for people what I cannot do for them," he said.

The CCS social justice office is rooted in Catholic social teaching, which is rooted in the Jewish prophets, who proclaimed God's special love for the poor and called God's people to a covenant of love and justice, he said.

The teachings are founded on the life and words of Jesus who came to bring glad tidings to the poor, liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind (Luke 4:18-19), and identified with the "least of these," the hungry and

stranger (Matt. 25:45).

For Scott, Catholic social teaching balances concerns for the whole society—especially the weakest and poorest—with respect for human liberty. Its foundations were laid in the late 19th century and have been added to over the years by popes and encyclical letters. The most recent is "Laudato Si," by Pope Francis.

"The church's teachings tell us we are all one, and principles and issues are interrelated and speak to an integral human development. We say this in our words and actions," he said.

Catholic social teachings have expanded in response to challenges of modern society to include life and dignity of persons; a call to family, community and participation; responsibilities and rights; the church's preferential option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and rights of workers; solidarity, and care for God's creation.

Scott has two icons: One is St. Teresa of Calcutta, who said, "Working with the poor is working with Jesus in his most distressing disguise." The other is Dorothy Day who said, "We need the poor more than they need us."

"The poor can transform us if we let them," said Scott. "I do things with them not for them. Some days, all I can do is offer my presence, attention and a non-judgmental ear."

Scott, who sees his job as a ministry, finds that clients minister to him and keep him grounded.

"As Jesus said, 'Much has been given so much is required.' That helps me to focus on needs to be met," he said.

For information, call 358-4273 or visit CatholicCharitiesSpokane.org.



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Feed Spokane rescues food from restaurants, stores to feed the hungry

As executive director of Feed Spokane, Steven Brashears rescues quality food from hotels, restaurants and grocery stores.

Instead of food going to waste, it feeds hungry people through their coalition group that includes food pantries and meal sites.

Feed Spokane shares space, two walk-in refrigerators, a walk-in freezer and storage shelves with Greater Spokane County (GSC) Meals on Wheels at 218 N. Crestline, where GSC Meals on Wheels has a certified commercial kitchen to prepare its meals.

After he had stopped by GSC Meals on Wheels several years ago to set up meals for his father, he started volunteering.

Six years ago, Steven said he prayed, asking God, "What do you want me to do?" The simple answer that came was, "Feed my sheep."

Since then he has been reinventing himself to serve in the nonprofit world of feeding hungry people.

"My main focus is to continue to find quality food sources," he said.

While studying psychology and business at Eastern Washington University, the Spokane native began working full-time in the title insurance business. That job for him morphed into a career in mortgage banking—owning his own mortgage banking company, working for others for 35 years and working up to be vice president of lending at Bank of America. His career in banking took him to Ellensburg, Wenatchee, Seattle and back to Spokane.

After meeting Pam Almeida, executive director of GSC Meals on Wheels, he accepted an opportunity to work through an AmeriCorps grant for a year recruiting volunteer drivers. To recruit people, he talked with different groups, such as the Rotary and churches.

Steven, who grew up in Opportunity Christian Church and studied a year at Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Ore., attended different churches over the years, including Valley Assembly of God, Valley New Life and Burien Bible Church. He and Susie, his wife of 16 years, now attend Valley Assembly.

Valley Assembly of God, he said, has a simple message, "Love first!"

"I always had a servant's heart and empathy to help people," he said.

When he was two years old, Steven's parents died in a car accident when they were in the military in occupied Japan after World War II. He came back to the U.S. and bounced around his father's



Steven Brashears finds food for food pantries and meal sites.

family until he was four. Then a family adopted him through his maternal grandmother's church. She and two aunts were able to stay connected. As a child, he had experienced hunger, giving him empathy for others who are hungry.

"Jesus said 'you will always have the hungry with you.' Our goal is to make sure anyone who wants to eat can have a good quality meal from the food we rescue," he said.

With skills to run a mortgage company that funded \$200-million-dollar mortgage loans, he had skills to find food and was willing to learn what he didn't know.

"The food industry is wild. I needed to learn about and then educate others on food safety related to the federal Good Samaritan Act, which also protects nonprofits and volunteers providing food for hungry people," said Steven.

The Good Samaritan Act was set up to give legal protection to people who voluntarily offer aid in emergencies and other circumstances to help people who are injured or in danger—unless there is willful negligence.

Steven speaks with people in Spokane's restaurants, hotels, motels and grocery stores to convince them to give Feed Spokane

quality, outdated food they would otherwise throw away.

Steven said that Dave McGann, who owns Arby's and is on the Feed Spokane board, has said he cannot understand why all restaurants don't give away food.

"Many fear about the integrity of the food," said Steven, "because they don't want to be sued. The biggest roadblock is convincing restaurants it's safe to donate food because of the Good Samaritan Act."

A member of the Spokane Regional Health District is on the board and keeps them informed about food safety issues.

"We teach restaurants, hotels, motels and grocery stores how to handle and store the food, so they are willing to donate it rather than throw it away," he said.

The Inland Northwest Community Foundation provided a grant for food safety training for each coalition group. They learn how to get permits and how to handle the food properly. The servers wear gloves and hair nets, sanitize the counters and wash their hands.

Feed Spokane supplies restaurants with sealable aluminum containers and lids. They put excess food in them, and place the containers in their walk-in coolers.

Donors also go by the "sell by" and "best used by" dates. Canned goods can go beyond the sell by date, and fresh produce has a shelf life, he explained.

Steven arranges for food to be picked up at the sources, and restaurants can also have food picked up on call.

"Food comes in and out quickly, which is part of keeping the food's integrity," Steven said.

Previously Feed Spokane had a truck, but drivers needed a PCL license and it was expensive to maintain. Now it has a refrigerated van to pick up food.

On Mondays, the food goes to the coalition of nonprofits, churches and meal sites that send representatives to "shop" for food at Feed Spokane. About 16 to 18 groups come then.

"We're God's all-volunteer army," he said. "Volunteers put the food out, prepare it and set it up. When the coalition representatives come in at 11 a.m. Mondays, they pick up produce, frozen food and protein."

Every evening, Tami Kennedy, past president and public relations director, sends out a list of the free meal sites. The meal sites keep Feed Spokane informed if they change their dates.

Indirectly, Feed Spokane helps feed 8,000 people a week through the coalition of 18 faith-based meal sites and food pantries.

Feed Spokane receives no government grants. Its support comes from grants from the Walmart Foundation, the Inland Northwest Community Foundation and other foundations.

It also holds three fundraisers.

- Its Friendraiser Breakfast will be held from 10 to 11:30 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 11, 2017, at the Salvation Army, 222 W. Indiana. The event builds awareness. The cook for GSC Meals on Wheels prepares the food and about 100 people attend.

- Dine Out to Feed Spokane in March involves local restaurants committing a day, week, month or an item to give a percentage of sales. It raises about \$20,000.

- The third fundraiser is a Civic Theater performance on a Wednesday night in September. Feed Spokane's 16 Board members sell tickets and tickets are also sold through Facebook. A major sponsor pays the fee to cover the theater costs, so proceeds all go to Feed Spokane.

"I enjoy visiting the coalition groups' meal sites to meet people and see how the food is actually used," Steven said.

Coalition members tell him that without Feed Spokane, they could not feed all the hungry people who come to their programs.

"I do this work because I know we make a difference," he said.

For information, call 216-7364 or 897-8512, admin@feedspokane.com or visit feedspokane.com

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Chelan church prays for and visits small churches in region

Paul Palumbo came to serve Lake Chelan Lutheran Church 18 years ago because they wanted a pastor who would do community ministry.

In the interview he asked, "Do you really want someone to be involved in community ministry? If you call me, I'll do that."

The community ministry aspect of this role has taken different forms over the years.

After running a food bank, teen center, a veterans program and a weekly prayer vigil, three years ago he started a prayer ministry and outreach to area Lutheran churches, an outreach that parallels his congregation's visits with grieving and dying people.

Three years ago, he asked Bishop Martin Wells of the Eastern Washington Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for a list of congregations that were struggling.

Martin sent a list of 100 synod churches with fewer than 30 in worship on a Sunday.

On Sunday mornings during worship, Paul's congregation prays for some them.

"We uplift 36 congregations and after five or six say a refrain, 'Light the flame of hope in the heart of your church,'" he said. "It takes a minute and a half as part of prayers of the people."

After praying for the churches for a while, Paul suggested that his church visit them.

So several times a year, he takes eight to 10 from his church in a van to another church, taking musicians if the church has no musician. That church's pastor comes to his church to preach and lead worship.

"We get to know them, and they get to know us," Paul said.

Recently they visited Grace Lutheran in Mattawa, where about 20 attend. After worship, members of the two churches shared in coffee hour about their lives and their churches' lives.

"That little church is working with the food bank and collecting food. It is also supporting a bigger Latino ministry with 150 people, letting that ministry use the church building while it builds a church that reaches out to the Latino community," said Paul.

"In Mattawa, the Latino community is now four times the size of the white community," he said.

Lake Chelan Lutheran Church has visited nine churches so far.

"Every church said that means



Paul Palumbo's ministry is serving the community.

Photo courtesy of Paul Palumbo

a lot that many come. They do not feel alone," he said. "Mostly it's small rural churches. The synod is geographically large, and the bishop cannot visit all the churches often enough.

"One congregation we visited voted to close and invited us to come to their last service," he said. "We had just visited once. That speaks to the importance of this ministry."

In addition to visiting congregations, 12 members have been involved since 2007 with the church's ministry of visiting the dying, accompanying people who are terminally ill.

They go to pray, sing and worship with people to let them know they are not alone.

For such visits, Lake Chelan Lutheran has written a liturgy, "Peace at the Last, Visitation with the Dying," published by Augsburg Press.

It started because of a rash of deaths in the congregation. They lost many older charter members and several women who developed cancer at an early age.

The church's visitation program with the dying works with the hospice program in the community.

Lake Chelan Lutheran Church, which years ago had been struggling, has grown and become more stable over the years.

The congregation is rich with talent but divided on political lines, Paul said.

"My job is to be a go-between to nurture a sense of community," he said.

Paul said the church used to have dueling prayers: One would pray for the troops overseas, and

another for victims of violence around the world.

"Eventually that dynamic melted as older people began to see younger people as part of the church, people helping in the altar guild and with other aspects of church life," he said.

"Part of Lutheran theology is to reflect Christ in our work with children, struggling families, poor families and immigrant families," he said.

Paul, who grew up in Maryland, graduated in religion and philosophy in 1980 from Guilford College in Greensboro, N.C., a Quaker school that introduced him to social justice, graduated in 1984 from Duke Divinity School, where his concern about Central America grew.

He and his wife, Virginia, were part of the "overground railroad," helping Guatemalans and Salvadorans flee to Canada to escape the civil wars in the 1980s.

After graduating, he stepped away from the ordination process and hung wallpaper—his father's trade—for three years.

He was drawn back when the pastor of his church was leaving and asked Paul to lead worship and music.

He did an internship in Colorado and in January 1989 was ordained and called to an African American Lutheran Church in Durham, where he served 10 years.

When he was beginning to think about a change, he received, unsolicited, a file on the Chelan church and eventually decided to go there.

Within a year after he came, he

was running the food bank and he did so for 15 years, serving 240 families a week in the winter and 70 in the summer, giving out 40 to 50 pounds of food a week. Knowing Spanish helped him connect with many of the clients.

About 16 years ago, aware of concerns about drugs in the school, he started a teen center in the Methodist Church basement. He served there 10 years.

At first, it was a place for teens to go Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays to hang out, play ping-pong and pool, watch movies, do arts and crafts, and have music. About 30 teens came each evening.

Then they started a tutoring program with volunteer and peer tutors. Teachers mandated students to go. Eventually, the school incorporated it into an after-school program held at the school. Now there are also health education and self-esteem programs.

Seven years ago, he started the Honorable Welcome Home program for veterans suffering with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Twice in the spring and twice in the fall, the program hosts six veterans for three-and-a-half days, housing them together. Volunteers provide helicopter rides over

the area, sightseeing, wine tasting, massages and more to honor them for their service.

Over the years, 75 veterans have come with their spouses.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, Paul and at least two others have held a peace vigil in front of the post office for one hour on Fridays, praying for peace.

"It was great after Sept. 11, but once we went to war, people thought our vigil was a protest. Then they realized the war was terrible and joined us or said they were glad we were there to pray for peace. We are now an institution," he said.

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Methodist pastor pursues call to prophetic ministry related to economy

Continued from page 1

said The Grove Community will keep rents low and will not sell the houses, providing an anchor of affordable rents to put downward pressure on rents.

This project intersects with Deb's ministry as pastor at Liberty Park and St. Paul's United Methodist churches, which developed The Oak Tree as a faith-based community, gathering people to discuss and work for social and economic justice.

After graduating from Vancouver School of Theology in 1997 and serving three years in Rosalia, three years in Ocean Shores and four years in Davenport/Edwall, Deb had a passion to do creative worship and to engage in social justice ministry.

Before she started as pastor at Liberty Park UMC in 2007, she asked her son Chris, then at Evergreen College, if he would go to church again. He said he would if the church was a weekly gathering for a seminar on a subject meaningful to him and occasionally for liturgy.

His words helped motivate her to connect with South Perry District young people who would not go to a traditional church.

"My call is to prophetic ministry, not hospice care for a dying church," said Deb.

"We gather weekly in public spaces, like a pub, to discuss timely issues. For some, it's easier to come to a public space," she said, "but some church people do not feel comfortable in a pub. Sometimes we also meet in private homes."

"Engaging Conversation" now meets in pubs at 7 p.m. Sundays. Sometimes they join a vigil or lecture, and go to a nearby pub afterwards. Participants find out where to meet on social media, like Facebook.

The Oak Tree also has two seminars a year to study social and economic justice. Deb started The Oak Tree after she was also appointed to serve as pastor of St. Paul's United Methodist Church in June 2011.

St. Paul's rents an office in a house beside Salem Lutheran Church at 1414 W. Broadway, and the fireside room for Sunday worship.

Between the two churches there are about 20 people attending on Sunday. Liberty Park and St. Paul's members worship separately but do many activities together and have one church council.

"The name, The Oak Tree, is from Celtic tradition and means 'The Doorway' between the concrete world and the spiritual realm. It's a large tree with deep roots, reflecting that we are deeply



Deb Conklin helps break ground.

rooted in tradition," Deb said.

"The Oak Tree helps people connect concrete events with spiritual values and life," she said.

The Pacific Northwest UMC Conference recognizes it as a ministry of St. Paul's UMC, which sold its building in May 2011.

Its building was more than 100 years old. Because it had not been upgraded to heat portions of the space—for worship or the Women's and Children's Free Restaurant—the whole building was heated for any event. It couldn't sustain \$5,000 a month for heat in the winter, she said.

Liberty Park UMC, which houses the Spokane Alliance and a Montessori pre-school in its basement, used endowment funds to set up four heating zones and in 2008 bought an energy-efficient furnace that cut the energy bill in half.

St. Paul's sold its building for \$700,000. In the UMC system, funds from selling a capital asset cannot go to an operating budget. They invest the funds until there is a new capital project. Often a church sells a building, and then builds or buys a new one, but St. Paul's wanted to explore what its ministry could be without a building, Deb said.

In 2012, The Oak Tree established The Grove Community to put energy into creating a healthy local economy that would support projects such as worker-owned businesses, urban agriculture and affordable housing.

It plans to open a worker-owned cooperative grocery store in West Central Spokane—considered a food desert—to provide jobs.

"We believe in a sharing economy that builds wealth for all, not a few," she said.

When the five houses became available, St. Paul's members decided to invest funds from the sale of the church building locally, in loans to The Grove Community to fund the project at 5 percent interest paid over 15 years, when

the principal is due. The district superintendent and cabinet approved for St. Paul's investing \$600,000 in the affordable housing project.

The Grove acquired the houses at no cost, because the car wash developer would have had to pay to demolish them.

In April, they arranged for a contractor to move the houses to two lots on Sharp, one on Boone, one on Cannon and one on Maxwell. The church bought four lots, and the city transferred the fifth, which was in foreclosure, for a minimum cost.

Once houses are on their foundations, work parties will be organized to help paint them, tear off and replace interior walls, and do rewiring. People can also help by donating living room, dining room and kitchen furnishings, she said.

"We are looking forward to community engagement in this project," Deb said.

Deb's commitment to social justice and social work began with her Methodist roots growing up in a family on a farm in rural Windsor, N.Y.

While studying architecture for two years at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, she helped at a Peoples Emergency Center in 1972 in a Methodist church's social hall. It had a shelter, clothing bank, food, a social worker and referrals.

She worked two years in drafting, before going to Bozeman, Mont., to continue architecture studies. She met and married Greg. They went to Seattle for his studies. Deb earned a philosophy degree at the University of Washington in 1977 and a law degree in 1981.

She wanted to work in legal services, but federal funds for that were cut. With many attorneys competing for few legal services jobs, she worked four years at the Clallam County prosecutor's office in Port Angeles.

When Greg graduated, the family moved to Chico, Calif. Shortly after moving there, they divorced. Deb, who was pregnant with Patricia, moved to Seattle with their son Chris, then three.

They lived there until 1994, when Deb went to Vancouver School of Theology (VTS) in British Columbia, which had an adult learning model based on projects, competencies and field work.

She spent her first summer of seminary in Guatemala doing a social justice project, learning about the intersection of the Roman Catholic Church and Mayan culture, the impact of the civil war and the indigenous people's efforts to reclaim traditional farm-



One house is moved in West Central Spokane. Photos courtesy of Deb Conklin

ing methods, to restore the soil after years of chemical spraying on large coffee and banana plantations.

There, Deb said she learned how the U.S. government exploited Central American countries by supporting U.S. corporations as they appropriated the land and work of indigenous people, injuring people and cultures.

Now she sees that multinational corporations have cut ties with the U.S. and operate as independent entities that exploit everyone, including the U.S.—extracting raw materials, undermining manufac-

turing and shipping jobs overseas.

Those observations are the base for her commitment to helping churches work for economic justice and her call to do prophetic ministry.

Deb now feels she is able to do that ministry through The Oak Tree and The Grove Community, in partnership with Liberty Park and St. Paul's United Methodist Churches.

For information, call 251-4332 or 327-9539, email gracewithjustice@yahoo.com or follow The Grove Community in Spokane on Facebook.

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Grandmother is storyteller in schools, dispelling cultural stereotypes

By Kaye Hult

Sarai Mays visits schools in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, as a grandmother storyteller, talking about and dispelling stereotypes of American Indians. She intentionally does not wear her regalia—native dress—and points out that today American Indians don't generally wear buckskins.

When her grandson was younger, he came home from school crying one day after classmates told him he wasn't an Indian because he didn't have a bow and arrow.

For three years, she has worked with the Indian Education Program of School District #271 in Coeur d'Alene, while completing a degree in virtual administrative assistance to help American Indian students navigate the school system successfully. The goal is for them to further their education and build good lives.

About 300 Native American students from about 65 different tribes attend School District 271 in Coeur d'Alene, she said.

These students have a different life experience from most of the rest of the school population. As urban American Indians, they may not have close ties with their tribes. There are similarities among tribes, but also much variation.

Sarai's background is like many of these students.

Born in Coeur d'Alene out of wedlock, she was raised by her Chickasaw grandparents in the Chickasaw tradition. As a child, she moved often—New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma—and experienced family turmoil. Schools she attended had no white students.

Since returning about four years ago to Coeur d'Alene, she found healing in reconnecting with the Coeur d'Alene side of her family. Her father had a farm, where the Goodwill store in Coeur d'Alene now stands. Her mother lived across the street. Sarai has moved back into that neighborhood and feels connected to her parents.

Sarai and her brother, whose roots are in the Coeur d'Alene and Chickasaw tribes, were the first in their family to attend college. Not able to go to college when she was young, she graduated from North Idaho College (NIC) in April 2016, the same year she began receiving Social Security.

"I could not do the Indian Education Program without the NIC training," she said, grateful for scholarships. "I didn't know it, but I went to school more or less for this position. I began working here just before I graduated."

In January 2013, just after her husband died, she was interviewed and she began in April when the program began.

"This position was here to help



Sarai Mays finds niche in teaching culture to school children.

me as much as I was to help it," she said. "This is who I am. I can finally use my education to help many people."

Many Native American students move many times and live in groups of two to three families.

Sarai described the situation of many Native Americans. Many have low reading and math scores, and a low graduation rate. Poverty is 29.2 percent higher than the general population. The school dropout rate is 237 percent higher. They are three times more likely to be homeless.

For Native Americans, one in 10 children this year will experience a violent crime. One in three women will be raped. There is a 54 percent higher rate of diabetes. Among males, the third leading cause of death for 15-to-24-year-olds is suicide.

The 1950 Relocation Act paid Native Americans to work in cities. This broke up many families, leading to a loss of cultural heritage. Many have spent their lives wondering where they fit, not feeling they fit in "regular" society or on the reservation.

Many children who are part Native American don't have cultural ties. The Indian Education Program helps them connect with that culture, Sarai said.

In 2012, the Idaho State Department of Education developed the program to: 1) support academic success of students to give them opportunities to graduate from high school, and go on to work or college; 2) create and support partnerships in the community that address the unique cultural differences of Native American students, and 3) develop culturally specific learning resources to supplement and enrich the regular academic program, and support students and families.

"We started from nothing, no blueprint. This year, we're beginning to see results," Sarai said.

They spent the first year determining who was eligible, doing a survey and forming the Indian Education Parent Committee.

Since then, founders and the parent committee have created partnerships in the community to help students who are homeless or need tutoring.

"We provided school supply backpacks at the beginning of the school year," Sarai said.

"Most of the general population don't understand the differences between themselves and Native American youth," she said.

Her sharing cultural differences leads to good conversations. Even teachers ask questions.

"In November, we discuss Columbus and Thanksgiving. I tell how the American Indians introduced the new settlers to corn and squash," she said.

Sarai shares that most tribes have a creation story, and shares various myths and legends.

"Are they true?" she'll ask, and then, "What do you think?"

She likes her visits to kindergarten to eighth grade classes to be interactive, and she encourages children to ask questions.

Sarai listed some activities.

- The program provided five native flutes to five music teachers. A native flute player came to talk about the flute's significance.

- At one school, Sarai began a Circle of Stories, a series about storytelling and culture.

- Children want to know about contemporary natives, so she has told about ballerina Maria Tallchief, singer Mildred Bailey, author Sherman Alexie, athlete Jim Thorpe, actor Will Rogers, astronaut John Herrington and vice president Charles Curtis. That

awareness opens students' minds.

- As part of learning Idaho history in October, fourth graders from two elementary schools participated in Water Potato Day. On the Coeur d'Alene reservation, they dug, roasted and ate water potatoes, historically a staple of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe diet.

- For Native American Heritage Month in November, students participated in the national "Rock Your Mocs Day," posting photos of their moccasins on Facebook.

- Because the curriculum does not offer Native American history after fourth grade, the program is creating a history elective, with elders sharing their knowledge with high school students.

- In November, they led an assembly at Lake City High School. Quannah Matheson, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's cultural affairs director, talked about tribal history.

- Along with drumming, singing and dancing, Shedaezha Hodge led some students in a Powwow Sweat exercise, which Sarai hopes some physical education teachers will use.

- Lakes Magnet Middle School

holds a March Multicultural Fair.

- In April, they celebrate Indian Heritage Week with the NIC American Indian Student Alliance (ASA). They invite about 100 crafts people to share their skills.

- Twice a year, they give awards to students with perfect attendance and a 3.0 average or above.

- To support academic success and reduce fear of college, NIC's American Indian student adviser connects students with ASA. High school students visit NIC for a Tech Tour to talk with students and instructors in programs that interest them.

While she was attending college, Sarai frequently brought her grandchildren with her.

"Hopefully, my children will see it doesn't matter how old you are, you can still grow," she said.

"This work speaks to my heart. We help each other like family. Everything we do is to build relationships to help students and their families do better," she said.

For information, call 208-664-8241, ext. 1060, email sdmays@cdaschools.org or visit cdaschools.org.

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Despite diversion of many media about what's important, actions happen

Media can inspire and inform. Media can also overwhelm as one TV "news" info-tainment 2016 summary did. The review of the year's events and people stories unfolded were hyped with music background and quick switches. It gave a different view of people—celebrities, politicians (of course), sexy women, entertainers, wealthy, powerful people—from the lives of people I encounter every day.

When news is numbingly overblown, not the everyday reality of people, it can stifle action, blinding and binding people to sit glued to their screens and digital devices that produce so much news it's hard to keep up. The intentionally addictive news approach creates artificial anxiety to compel viewers to come back for more, giving more eyes to be appealed to by slick ads that create other false views of needs and promises of ways to fulfill them.

It can be so overwhelming, it's easy to forget people who are still suffering, for example, from the earthquake, political

corruption and then a hurricane in Haiti.

Even coverage of weather is often so hyped that natural disasters—fires, floods, windstorms, drought and hurricanes lose their impact. I'm thankful that many faith and nonprofit organizations have the ongoing mission of responding to the long-term ramifications of those traumas.

With some sort of "victory" by Assad in Aleppo, will we lose the images of the devastation there to lives lost, people displaced and buildings in rubble?

Just as I'm ready to be discouraged that there's nothing we can do to make a difference, because the onslaught of negative keeps coming, refreshing information came from online advocacy programs making a dent for the good. Many unfortunately continue to make strong appeals related to how bad things are to raise more funds.

Sierra Club, however, reported that even though the world continues to heat up, whether political leaders wish to see it, response is also heating up. Clean energy

sources are out-competing dirty fuels like coal, gas and nuclear power. Cities and states continue to adopt commitments to 100 percent clean energy. Private-sector partners continue to join in supporting clean energy and smart transportation.

More than 2.5 million Sierra Club "champions will continue doing what we've always done best. We will show our children and grandchildren the wild places and creatures that inspire and fill us with awe for the beauty of our planet. We will nurture new generations of leaders to fight for the Earth," Sierra Club said.

Sum of Us, another online advocacy program, cited hope in having a "strong and powerful community" that helped in 2016 to achieve several wins: France became the first country to ban neonicotinoids, bee-killing pesticides. With solidarity from hundreds of thousands of people, the people of El Salvador won a lawsuit blocking an Australian company from mining gold.

People power brought challenge to the

Dakota Access Pipeline and its disregard for sacred Native American sites and clean drinking water, and the Army Corps of Engineers called for rerouting it.

Those are but a few examples of how a now emboldened movement of organizations is intensifying their challenges to environmental degradation for profit, human rights abuses, suppression of voter participation, a new nuclear arms race and religious intolerance.

When people, especially those empowered by faith, join in solidarity they can make a difference.

As 2016 ended, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Barack Obama at Pearl Harbor 75 years after the Japanese attack called for "friendship and lasting peace." Abe offered "sincere and everlasting condolences" and called for tolerance and reconciliation. He recalled how the United States helped rebuild Japan, its former enemy, after the war.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Anxieties rekindle, reigniting proactive quest for equality and equity

Unfortunately, North Idaho has been saddled with the ugly image of being a hideout for white nationalists and supremacists. There are still Confederate flags waving on poles and stuck on trucks in certain areas, displayed with pride.

At a PFLAG event at the Gardenia Center in early December, I went to be an advocate for human beings of differing sexual identities. I felt deeply some of the fear that resides in the hearts of our brothers and sisters. Immigrants are worried. Muslims are terrified. Women see a brand new assault on their bodies and human rights.

The anxieties that exist in these areas that were finally being resolved somewhat, have now been rekindled and quickly nourished into a worrisome flame.

For the majority, it is impossible to think

that we would relapse in our hearts to a place that would allow bigotry, much less sanctioned bigotry.

Bigotry, fear of the other and the outrageous idea that one's religion is better than another's have no place in the world.

There is a line in the Star Spangled Banner that refers to the U.S. as "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

We are not free unless all are free.

We are not brave if we are afraid of our neighbors because of ethnicity, sexuality or religion.

Many believe that God sanctions their beliefs and that the beliefs held by others are evil. This kind of thinking in the 21st Century would be laughable if it was not what is happening.

As it is, any hope for world peace seems

to be undone by the very religions that are supposed to be bringing peace, as they become the bedfellows of those seeking power and domination. Humanism and atheism, or any other "isms," are not exempt from this accusation either.

Fear is at the root of our anxiety towards others whom we may deem different.

We must ask ourselves honestly, "What is my fear of the other?" If we do not ask ourselves this question and respond honestly, sooner or later we will find ourselves to be the object of suspicion and hate.

Here in the West, a perfect example of this is portrayed in the voices of some who feel Christianity is under attack.

Christianity is not under attack, but it is feeling the effects of Christians who have built walls of exclusion.

The majority of us in North Idaho believe in being at least tolerant of those different from us, if not being completely accepting and affirming.

We are asking ourselves the important questions while holding ourselves responsible for the answers.

In this all too obvious time of "gnashing of teeth," we must pull together to stand in solidarity against hate of any kind, directed against anyone.

We must be, and continue to be, proactive in our quest for equality and equity. We must all be a voice for those who have no voice, or whose voices are under threat of being silenced.

Bob Evans - guest editor
Emerge n' See United Church of Christ - Sandpoint

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

How do we as the body of Christ build bridges instead of walls? How can we lead the way in this world and in our communities with people who are very different from us, and whose values and choices we do not share? I presume God still loves us all. Can we? If so, how do we do that as the church when we will clearly disagree with decisions and leaders. Even within our family, let alone church families, there will be sharp disagreements. In order to love each other, do we go silent on anything political?

I suppose we will have to live with the question. There is no single answer, and it is an ongoing challenge. If God continues to love us all in spite of our differences, then we are to try to love our neighbor just as Jesus said. Our capacity to love will be stretched, as Jesus' arms were stretched out in love for us.

God came down to earth to show us how to live and how to love. He shared his theology, interpreted Scripture, taught, healed, forgave, extended grace and loved. He addressed hard questions and told stories.

It is an important time for us to follow Jesus and live into his ways. The world needs our way of building bridges, listening and valuing differences. As the church, we could be an example for others.

The Rev. Helga Jansons
Director for Evangelical Mission,
Eastern Washington Idaho Synod -
Evangelical Lutheran Church
in America

Ain't it funny how we change or what God does to us when we aren't looking?

In my early teens, the most important thing in the world was hunting and fish-

ing with my Dad. Without consulting the game regulations, I could recite the day when grouse, bear or deer season opened and in which district. I knew how many fish I could take in any given water and, in our back yard, tried to learn to lay down a fly line like a gentle feather. I received my first rifle at age 10 and shooting sports became as necessary as breath. The Boy Scout rifle team, small bore competition in college, followed by large bore and pistol competition when I became of age. These were things I cut my teeth on. God or church, hmmm, not so much.

I'm sure my parents believed in God and the resurrected Christ. We just didn't do much with it or talk about it. I do remember a few Easter sunrise services. Mainly, we had to get up in the pitch black darkness and go stand somewhere where it was freezing cold. Being in teeth-chattering cold waiting for a bump on my fly rod seemed normal, but this?

I was recently confronted with the question, "What is most important in your life today?"

As I thought about this, I was surprised to discover that catching the most fish or bagging the biggest buck or skiing the best line weren't so consuming any longer.

Instead, I found that God was in my life. Yeah, I know, He's been there all along just waiting for me to notice. Well I have noticed and with that I realize that what's important to me now is love for God, for my family and my friends and my neighbors. It's not that I want simply to be good to them or nice to them, though I believe that's important.

My desire is to love them in such a manner that they become comfortable in loving their own family and their own friends and

most importantly, God, who gives us all life today and the promise of life for all the tomorrows forever. May God bless each of you with an overflowing love. My, the changes we experience.

Lee Bratcher, moderator
Open Door United Church of Christ
Deer Park

The ice glistens as the setting sun attempts to cast its warming rays upon the beach.

Winter has its hold on the beach and the sun is too far away.

Sometimes our lives can feel as abandoned as the beach may. Yet the beach knows what we can easily forget in our sadness. The sun has not gone, it has only traveled a bit farther. At the end of each and every day the sun returns to let us know we are cared for. Some days will be cold. Some days will be dark. Some days will be sad. And at the end of every day the sun will check on us. We are forever watched, forever loved.

Mark Boyd
Managing director of N-Sid-Sen
Camp and Retreat Center
on Lake Coeur d'Alene

I love the story of how All Saints' Church got its name. They began praying together in 1944 when the Hanford Project was in full swing. People had moved here from all over the country. Everyone in that first congregation was from somewhere else. So when they began to discuss what to call this new church, the first ideas were names of beloved churches they had left "back home": St. Paul's, St. Peter's, St. Mary's and so forth.

In the end, they decided not to choose

between them. They became "All Saints'," in the hope that everyone who came here might know themselves welcome—that whoever they were, wherever they came from, and whatever gifts they brought with them, they could be embraced and become part of this community of faith as well.

That was more than 70 years ago, and there have been many changes since then. We built a church building, then added onto it, then expanded again. Membership has ebbed and flowed, but now includes more than 500 souls. We have expanded opportunities for worship, learning, fellowship and sharing within our community. We have become over the years an "established" congregation.

That eagerness to welcome and connect has remained part of our identity—who we are and who we want to be. It keeps us striving to be better disciples, better neighbors.

The Rev. Jane Schmoetzer
All Saint's Episcopal - Richland

As I reflect on the many blessings of this past year, one that comes to mind is The Fig Tree's Resource Directory. What would we do without it! I can only imagine the degree of organization required to keep this directory even close to organized and accurate.

Also you publish the monthly The Fig Tree. Again a rich medium to keep many of us in touch with what is happening in our area for the good of others.

The Upper Columbia Conference Adventist Community Services appreciates this stellar work for our community.

Patty Marsh, director
Adventist Community Services/
Disaster Response

Calendar of Events

- Jan 1-21 • **21 Days of Prayer for Our Nation**, My Father's House of Prayer, 3111 E. Marshall, facebook.com/myfathershousespokane/
- Jan 5, 19 • **Peace and Justice Action Committee**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 7 • **Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center** Prayer Breakfast, Hemmingson Center Grand Ballroom, 730 E. Desmet, 9 to 10:30 a.m., 455-8722 or mlkspokane.org
- Jan 10-31 • **Sri Easwaran Meditation Workshop**, Spokane Buddhist Temple, 927 S. Perry, Tuesdays, 6 to 7:30 p.m., 328-3829
- Jan 11 • **Silent Day of Prayer**, "Food for the Journey," Scott Cooper, director of parish social ministries with Catholic Charities Spokane, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., 448-1224, ihrc.org
- **Inland Northwest Death Penalty Abolition**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- **Margaret Sanger** and Birth Control, Advocacy in Urban Spokane, Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. First Ave., 6:30 to 8 p.m., 456-3931, northwestmuseum.org
- **Veterans for Peace**, 35 W. Main, 6:45 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 13-29 • **"Disgraced,"** by Ayad Akhtar, play about identity and religion in contemporary world, and about affect of radical Islam and terrorism in public discourse, Stage Left, 108 W. 3rd Ave, Fridays and Saturdays 7:30 p.m., Sundays 2 p.m., 838-9727
- Jan 15 • **MLK Remembrance Celebration**, Morning Star Baptist, 3909 W. Rowan, 4 p.m., 455-8722
- **I Have a Dream,"** the Rev. Happy Watkins and Police Chief Craig Meidl, South Stake LDS Church, 1620 E. 29th Ave, 7 p.m.
- Jan 16 • **Martin Luther King Jr. Unity March** and Resource Fair, new Convention Center, 10 a.m. March, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Resource Fair, 455-8722, mlkspokane.org
- **MLK Jr. Day of Service** for WSU Spokane, service projects at various locations after Unity March, noon to 4 p.m., CougSync at orgsync.com/login/ Washington-state-university-spokane
- **MLK Lobby Day in Olympia**, contact Shar at slichty@pjals.org
- **NAACP meeting**, 35 W. Main, 7 p.m., spkncbr@gmail.com
- Jan 16-17 • **Black History 101 Mobile Museum:** "Martin, Motown and Michael," traveling tabletop exhibit of black memorabilia from slavery to hip hop, Spokane Convention Center, Monday 11 a.m., Whitworth Hub, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with lecture at 4 p.m., 777-4572, whitworth.edu
- Jan 17 • **"Next Steps in Life's Journey,"** South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry St., 6 p.m., 309-4662, jonlouis137@gmail.com
- Jan 19, 21, 22 • **Annual Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival**, Hemmingson Center, Gonzaga, see article and sajfs.org/our-programs
- Jan 20, 21, 23, 30 • **"Foundations of Community Nursing"** classes online and face-to-face, 1480 Fowler St., Richland, 628-3724, janjacob@umich.edu
- Jan 21 • **People Rise Up. A Community Invitation to Action**, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, 35 W. Main, 2 to 5 p.m., 838-7870, pjals.org
- **Walk for Life Northwest**, Riverfront Park in downtown Spokane, 11 a.m., walkforlifenorthwest.org/
- **Women's March on Spokane**, Spokane Convention Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., womensmarchwastate.org
- Jan 24 • **Homeless Connect**, Spokane Homeless Coalition one-stop services, Salvation Army, 223 E. Nora, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 863-6672, karichapman@uhc.com
- **PJALS Steering Committee**, 35 W. Main, 6 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 25 • **Spokane Police Accountability** and Reform Coalition, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 26 • **30th MLK Community Celebration**, "Revitalizing the Dream," Charlene Carruthers, black, queer feminist community organizer and writer, CUB Senior Ballroom, Washington State University, Pullman, 6:30 p.m., mlk.wsu.edu
- Jan 28 • **Eastern Washington Legislative Conference**, "Taking Responsibility: Acting Together in Faith," St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave, 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Jan 30 • **"Being Religious Interreligiously,"** Jonathan Brown, the Alwaleed bin Talal chair of Islamic civilization in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, Hemmingson Center Ballroom, Gonzaga, 702 E. Desmet, 5 to 6:30 p.m., 313-6784
- Jan 31 • **"Historical Understandings: The Reformation and its Legacy**, Fr. Michael Maher, SJ, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224
- Feb 1 • **Fig Tree Distribution**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th Ave., 535-1813
- Feb 2 • **Fig Tree Benefit and Board Meetings**, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., noon for benefit and 1 p.m. for board, 535-1813

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INTERFAITH ADVOCACY DAY

and Legislative Conferences

Jan. 28 - Spokane
 Feb. 9 - Olympia
 Feb. 11 - Yakima

Join advocates in your legislative district to bring the voice of compassion and justice to our elected officials.

Learn more: fanwa.org/interfaith-advocacy-day

Classes address end-of-life issues

A six-week series on "Next Steps in Life's Journey" will be presented beginning in January at the South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry St.

Starting from 6 to 7:15 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 17, the class will continue for the next five Monday evenings.

The course, designed and presented by Jon Louis and Cynthia Cilyo, addresses end-of-life issues. It covers issues "we need to know, but don't want to talk about." It presents issues ranging from nominating a spokesperson in case a health condition requires assistance, to what happens at the time of an individual's passing.

The need for an advanced directive will be explained, as will challenges for facing the tough decisions dealing with dementia and related illnesses.

For information, call 309-4662 or email jonlouis137@gmail.com.

Scholar in Residence

Feb. 2-5

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FROM NPR'S "WAIT, WAIT... DON'T TELL ME"

PAULA POUNDSTONE

JUNE 22 7:30p
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In defining 'Gracism,' panel considers ways to challenge racism

Speakers in a panel on "Gracism" at the Good Neighbor Conference on Dec. 3 in Spokane defined the term as God intersecting to combat racism.

The three-hour mini-conference, organized in a week, drew 29 presenters and 374 participants for sessions on Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, interfaith relations, listening, social media and engaging with leaders.

The Gonzaga Institute for Hate Studies, the Spokane County Human Rights Task Force, Spokane Faith and Values (FAVS) and Spokane Interfaith Council organized the event.

Skyler Oberst, president of the Spokane Interfaith Council, now operating under Spokane FAVS' nonprofit status, moderated the panel on "Gracism" with the Rev. Andre Dove, pastor of Restoration Church Spokane, Phil Tyler, president of the NAACP Spokane, and the Rev. Walter Kendricks, president of the Spokane Ministers Fellowship and pastor of Morning Star Baptist Church.

"Recently, we have had a spiritual role to heal and call out acts that are not neighborly," said Andre, who grew up in Chicago and worked 18 years in higher education and teaching high school. "What is going on is related to hate, but religion does not cause hate."

Rather, he said, some people who belong to different religions—Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim or others—hate, despite their faiths' teachings of love.

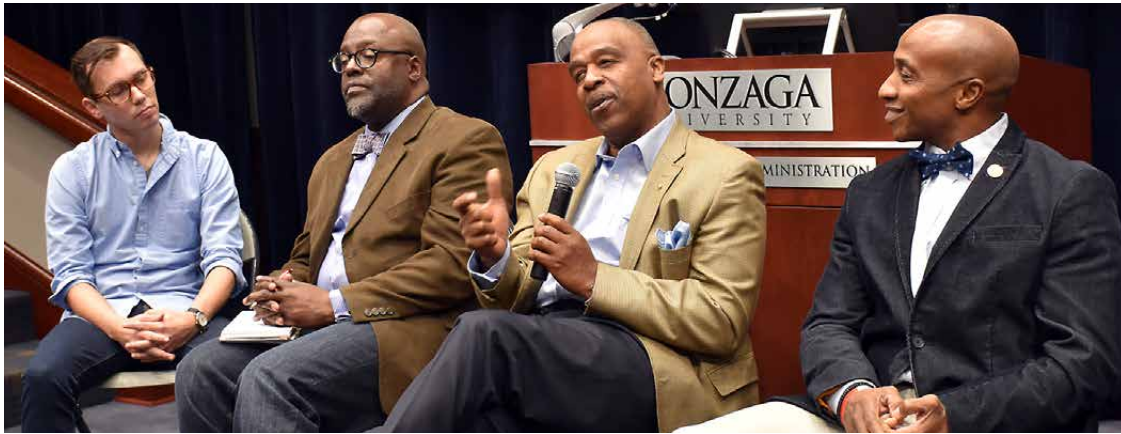
"The fundamental tenet of all religions is to love one another," he said, quoting author John Steinbeck that "people can't hate people they get to know."

So Andre urges people to go beyond the surface level of passing each other on the street. He suggests that people invite people of other races and religions into their homes. For him, white people are part of his family. His oldest son is half white, and his stepfather of 28 years is white.

"By inviting someone into your house and getting to know the person, walls of fear break down, one relationship at a time," he said.

Phil said that the Good Neighbor Conference was an opportunity for people to talk of religion and hate.

Often, he said, people of faith are divided by parishes and religions, to the point some hate those who do not have the same set of beliefs, said Phil, who served eight years in the Air Force and 16 with the Spokane County Sheriff's Department Jail Division.



Panelists were Skyler Oberst, Andre Dove, Walter Kendricks and Phil Tyler.

Recently a speaker at Life Center, which he attends, introduced him to the term "Gracism," which puts "G" for God in front of racism. He said it's about moving toward people, who are of different races and religions.

"It's about lifting people up. It's about covering and protecting the vulnerable. It's about sharing with others and honoring them. It's about standing with people and considering them equal, acknowledging and respecting differences and commonalities," Phil summarized.

Walter, who worked for 35 years with United Airlines before retiring and becoming a full-time minister, reminded that Jesus told his disciples there would be a time they would be put out of the synagogue and killed by people who think they are doing God's service. He pointed out that in God's name there have been countless wars.

"It's not surprising with the tenor of the elections and recent crimes that people think, believe and are convinced they are doing God's service," he said. "They don't know Scripture. They don't know the power of God."

"We are in a scary time and hate has come out. How can people hate a person they do not know? We need to use tools to reason out problems," he said.

Andre, who has been in Spokane four and a half years, said he believes there is a particular need to say that black lives matter because people are killing black men. He is concerned for his three sons and daughter, as well as for other black men and women.

"A post-traumatic slave syndrome permeates the lives of many African Americans," said Andre, who wore a bow tie and jacket "to look professional and credible" to match the fact that he has a master's degree in theology. Someone seeing him as a black man might fear him.

"We need to build relationships

and spend time breaking bread. You can't hate me if you know me. If you know me, then you can advocate for me and love me enough to push past the cognitive dissonance," he said.

"When I'm stopped by police, I'm nervous. I have a visceral response. My hands grip the steering wheel," he said. "I don't know if I'm going to go home."

He called people to speak up to abolish hate and promote life.

Walter said the "great USA has had a problem with race since its inception," and it has never really dealt with racism.

He told of going to visit a parishioner in the hospital and having three nurses draw back when he entered the elevator.

"Can't reasonable people be in a room together? Maybe I'm in a dream world to think reasonable people can come to reasonable conclusions. What are we afraid of?" he asked.

"From one man, God created all nations, a rainbow of people. Why are we afraid of each other? Why have we allowed fear to divide us? Can't we sit at a table and discuss our differences?" Walter challenged.

"We need to leave our comfort zones and reach out to people who do not look like us," Walter said.

In South Carolina a policeman shot Walter Scott in the back and the jury deadlocked.

"All lives matter, really?" Walter questions, seeing that and other instances as demonstrating the need for the "Black Lives Matter" movement.

Phil called for more talk on racism, more opportunities "to build relationships to increase world views."

"Rights are not about just us, but about justice. We cannot hold so tight to our perceptions that we do not assume the good of others. Holding our perceptions tight, we may clench our hands into a fist. If we make a fist, we can't shake hands," he said.

"We need to be educated, to have a PHD (Passion to Have Dialogue)," he said. "We need to use that passion to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. Some conversations can be uncomfortable at first, but we need more dialogue."

In response to a question about churches being segregated, Walter suggested that churches be in fellowship with each other across racial lines, as his church does in the Northwest neighborhood.

Andre said, "We need to be intentional to build relationships between black and white churches, because Sunday is the most segregated hour."

He suggested white churches

with some black members put those members on the leadership team so the church reflects God's kingdom of people of different races.

In response to someone asking if the NAACP is just concerned about blacks, Phil said it was founded by people of many races and has members of many races.

"When we uplift people of color, it helps the whole community, not just African Americans. We are for civil rights and social justice for all," he affirmed

He called for transplanting hearts, prying out the negative and divisive, and filling hearts with kindness, inclusiveness and love.

Asked about LGBT youth being afraid to go to church, because of judgment they have experienced, both Andre and Walter said that a church's role is to love neighbors and not sit in judgment.

"Things we don't understand lead us to fear and that divides us," Walter said.

"God loves us for who we are and how we are," Andre said. "We have to unconditionally love people for who they are."

"We can't love anyone until we love ourselves," Walter added. "When I understand who God is, I can love myself and love others."

For information, call 313-3665 or 209-2425.

People Rise Up!
A Community Invitation to Action
Saturday, Jan. 21, 2-5 p.m.
PJALS Community Building - 35 W. Main

Grassroots power action festival to say from Day 1, we are paying attention, reaching out, mobilizing, turning up the heat for peace, human rights, respect & equality, racial justice, gender justice, economic justice for ALL

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