

Stories inside

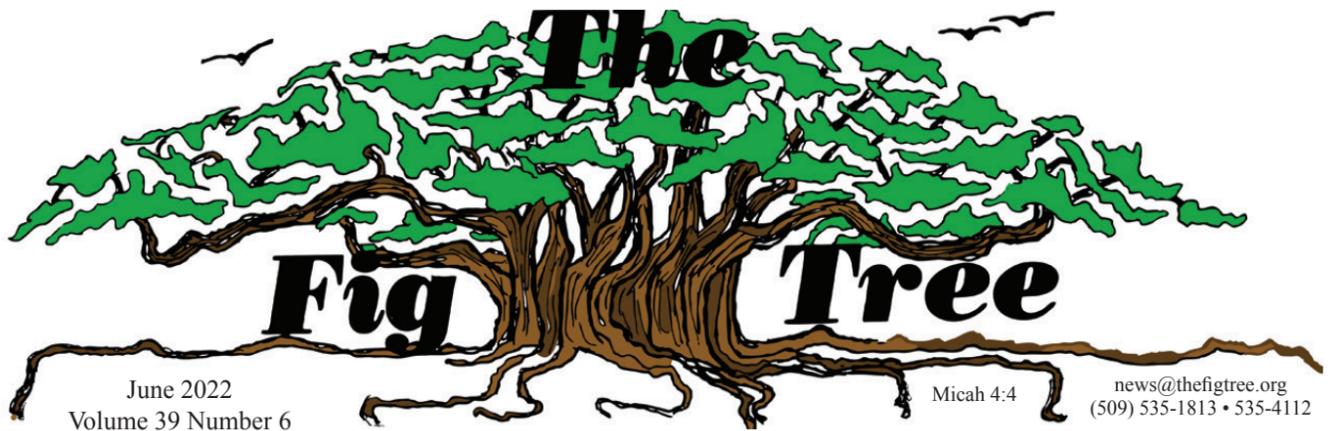
Bishop affirms faith is about love - p. 5

Summer camps will be nearer normal - p. 7-10

New Hope Center serves neighbors - p. 11

Orthodox priest, parish mark 35th year - p. 16

CALENDAR ON PAGE 15
FEATURES 80+ EVENTS



June 2022
Volume 39 Number 6

Micah 4:4

news@thefigtree.org
(509) 535-1813 • 535-4112

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

Churches' ties open opportunities

By Mary Stamp

Simple acts of sharing love between Covenant United Methodist Church (UMC) in North Spokane and Buenas Nuevas Lutheran Church in El Paisnal, El Salvador, opened the opportunity for Flor Chavez to study nursing in Ohio and return to serve her community.

"I hope people appreciate what they have, and if they have enough resources that they find a way to share with others," said Flor who visited Spokane May 13 to 23. "For those who lack resources, don't be discouraged. There are opportunities. God will open doors for us to overcome every circumstance."

Diane Thomas, who with her husband Rick and the Sister Church Ministry Team, hosted Flor for a 10-day visit to their church and community, encourages other congregations to establish partner churches and then find ways to show Christ's love.

As part of the two churches' 30-year sister-church relationship, she visited El Salvador three times, in 2004, 2006 and 2008. Rick has gone twice. On their visits, they met people and learned about their lives.



Flor Chavez and Diane Thomas continue relationship through the years.

Delegations of 10 to 12 people go every two to three years— involving about 60 of the 200 church members since 1992. Along with visiting the El Paisnal church and the church where Monsignor Oscar Romero was assassinated, they learn about challenges of life there.

Some delegations also have a mission project. One sponsored by the United Methodist Committee on Relief built block homes to replace homes destroyed by an earthquake. Another with Living Waters built wells for a school with tainted water. A third worked with a local agronomist organization, Aprodehni, to fund a project for church members to plant and grow fruit trees and medicinal plants for personal use and to sell for a small income.

Diane, who grew up in Spokane, has always been interested in social justice. She was especially impressed by the tree-planting project, seeing that the children dug holes and put in plants, and then kept them watered and cared for.

After a hurricane and severe flooding, the church needed a new building, so Covenant UMC sent money for the 30 families

Continued on page 4

Representatives of six faiths observe common themes of spring holy days

Hindu, Muslim, Baha'i, Jewish, Christian and Buddhist speakers described their spring holy days and their faith's teachings on creation care in an April 22 panel during the Hope for Creation Conference at the Cathedral of St. John.

Malcolm Haworth, ecumenical and interfaith liaison with The Fig Tree, asked panelists to describe their spring holy days, how they celebrate them and how they relate to creation care.

Common themes related to the spring holy days are reflection, renewal, recentering, responsi-

bility, new life, seasonal cycles and a need to care for the earth so the cycles of life continue.

There were six panelists.

- Sreedharani Nandagopol, a Hindu who has lived in Spokane for 45 years, has shared South Indian cultural programs.

- Karen Stromgren, co-chair of Muslims in Community for Action and Support, has been Muslim for 24 years.

- Shahd Khalili, who is Baha'i, attends Whitworth University.

- Rabbi Tamar Malino serves Temple Beth Shalom and Congregation Emanu'El in Spokane.

- Lauri Clark-Strait, a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) pastor, has lived in Spokane 18 years and is pastor at Rockford United Methodist Church.

- Melissa Opel is a minister in the Spokane Buddhist Temple, a Japanese based Jodo Shinshu temple.

Sreedharani said that, while North India celebrates Holi, her area of South India celebrates Ugadi on April 2—the first new moon after the equinox, which is a signal of the arrival of spring.

Started in 3100 BC, Ugadi celebrates the new year as cold winter days turn into warm spring days. People eat a dish, Ugadi pachadi, made of jam, brown sugar, salt, tamarind, neem flower, mango and chili powder. The ingredients symbolize happiness, interesting life, challenges, bitterness, surprises and anger, she said.

"The dish has all the tastes of life—sour, sweet and bitter—representing that life is a mixture of emotions," she said. "It is about having balance in life."

Continued on page 13

The Fig Tree will publish 18,000 copies of Directory

The 2022-23 Resource Directory will print at least 18,000 copies because of demand, said directory editor Malcolm Haworth, as he works to finalize listings and prepare the layouts for publication by the Tribune Publishing Co. in Lewiston.

"We need to know now how many copies people would like to receive and distribute," he said.

"We are also finalizing advertising and community partners, who are the primary sources of support for our much used, comprehensive directory," he added.

This is the 49th year the directory has been published to inform people of congregations, ministries, human services, health care, families/children, seniors, justice, environment, cultures, human rights, arts and culture and civic resources.

Community partners who donate major gifts have their logos featured on the cover.

"We appreciate all who collaborate and contribute to make this directory possible to serve people in crises, people in need, people in transitions, people who are stabilized and seek to give back," Malcolm commented.

The Fig Tree staff continue to request and receive donations toward the Spring Benefit—seeking \$6,500 more from those who have given in previous years and new supporters, said Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp.

Volunteers and staff are already working with an ecumenical and interfaith team to plan the 2023 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, now set for Saturday, Jan. 21. Workshop topics will be decided in upcoming meetings at 1 p.m., Tuesdays, June 21 and Aug. 23. That group and benefit planners invite interested people to join them.

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



The Fig Tree
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Spokane, WA 99202-3571

Religion News Briefs

Around the World

National Council of Churches USA - nccusa.org and
World Council of Churches News, PO Box 2100
CH - 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland Tel: +41-22 791 6111

NCC in U.S. decries shooting by extremist teen

The National Council of Churches USA (NCC) is again outraged by the attack on the black community in Buffalo and by an 18-year-old who learned online to hate to such an extreme that he would commit murder.

The Prophet Habakkuk's cry echoes for today: *O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you, "Violence!" and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble?* Habakkuk 1:2-4 NRSVue

The white supremacist ideology that authorities attribute to the gunman includes far-right rhetoric about people of color replacing white Americans, a once fringe idea now shared by right-wing television commentators and politicians.

"Politicians, citizens and even some faith leaders are working to stop crucial black history teachings, while children learn White supremacy," said African Methodist Episcopal Bishop Vashti McKenzie, who was named by the NCC Governing Board and began April 1 as its interim president and general secretary. She will serve two years and succeeds Jim Winkler, who served since 2013 and left in January.

The NCC, founded in 1950, includes 37 member denominations from Protestant, Anglican, historic African American, evangelical, Orthodox and peace church traditions.

"Our communities have not healed from the onslaught of violence from past white supremacist attacks, and now the scabs are ripped off to bleed again," she said. "This racial violence has to stop. We must increase efforts to end racism. That will not happen with only ceremonial gestures that don't go to the root causes. We have to do deeper work."

At a Governing Board retreat in Montgomery, Ala., in May, NCC leaders visited The Legacy Museum, where they saw the connection between the shooter's terrorism and America's history of lynchings and policies that intimidate and dehumanize the black community.

"The majority of Americans want common sense gun legislation, but politicians refuse to pass the laws," Bishop Vashti said.

Through its 2018 ACT NOW to End Racism (Awaken, Confront, Transform) initiative, the NCC urges:

- Individuals in member communions to commit to be aware of racism in their lives and resolve to dismantle it.
- Local ministers to communicate with members—in preaching and teaching—to confront racism and White supremacy.
- National efforts to transform the hearts, minds and behaviors of people and fight for policies that change structures.

In addition, the NCC urges Congress to pass common sense gun control, and legislation to end systemic racism and repair harm done in the past, including HR 40 and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

"We must continually plant seeds of love that recognize the humanity of all people in order to detoxify the planted seeds of hate and realize "Beloved Community," said Bishop Vashti.

Orthodox meet to prepare for WCC Assembly

An Inter-Orthodox Pre-Assembly in May affirmed "the utmost importance of love" and a "call for unity, reconciliation, justice and peace," said 50 delegates from 20 Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches.

The consultation, hosted by the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, articulates the Orthodox perspective on the theme of the upcoming World Council of Churches (WCC) 11th Assembly, prepare delegates for participation and express expectations of the upcoming assembly and life in the WCC beyond.

"In Orthodox theology, love is of utmost importance," reads the communique. "The One God in Trinity in His divine goodness created the world, and maintains and protects humanity and all His creation with his love."

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Rotary 21 grants Fig Tree matching funds

Rotary 21 has provided matching funds of \$3,750 for The Fig Tree to purchase three iMac computers, a Mac Mini, hard drives and maintenance so they can coordinate the work of staff in its design, word processing, database and other programs.

Within 24 hours of asking, and with a donation of \$1,500 from Viren & Associates, Inc., The Fig Tree at press time on May 27 had raised nearly the full match.

The Fig Tree needs computers of the same era so staff, who work on Mac computers from

2011, 2015 and 2019, can work on the same design and data programs.

"Our database is the heart of our operations with lists for donors, advertisers, deliveries and mailings," said Mary Stamp, editor. "Staff will be able to input data, access the database and collaborate in using the same version of the design software that is integral to our work."

The Mac Mini will be a server to allow staff to access and update data collaboratively.

"We are working with a data-

base consultant so the database will be designed to be easier for staff to use and share," she said.

"We have committed staff who will use the computers for the lifetime of the computers," she added.

"We hope that by the time we have gone to press we will have the matching funds, but if not, we invite donations to make our receipt of those funds possible," Mary said.

For information, call 535-1813 or visit thefigtree.org/donate.html.

Habitat's 2020 Blitz Build is June 6 to 17

Habitat for Humanity-Spokane's 21st annual Blitz Build is June 6 to 17 at their Hope Meadows community in Deer Park. The two-week event helps Habitat build affordable homes, empowering families and individuals in their homeownership program to build and buy a home they can afford.

About 1,000 supporters from the community come together in support of Blitz Build each year. Volunteers, sponsorship groups, businesses and community leaders partner work side-by-side

with current and future Habitat homeowners to build homes.

"By partnering with Habitat, families, communities transform their lives with safe and affordable shelters that improve health, safety, child development, economic opportunity and educational opportunities," said Michelle Girardot, executive director of Habitat-Spokane.

Families in Habitat's Homeownership Program earn 250 hours of "sweat equity" helping build their homes and neighbor's homes. They also take financial

education courses to learn about mortgages, budgeting and improving their credit while saving for their future Habitat home.

Habitat-Spokane volunteers help build homes year-round, but Blitz Build is an accelerated construction effort to raise awareness of the affordable housing crisis and Habitat's solution.

Michelle said shopping and donating goods at the Habitat Store, 1805 E. Trent, also supports the home-building.

For information, call 534-2552 or visit habitat-spokane.org.

Community-Minded names new director

After a six-month national search, Community-Minded Enterprises (CME) has named John Hindman as its new CEO, overseeing its programs for addiction recovery, child care, early learning, job readiness, TV/digital media and other services.

The organization seeks to match its programs to the needs of people in the region, so some programs are long term and some are short-term efforts.

John comes to CME with more

than 30 years of experience in nonprofit and social services. Most recently, he was a director for Pioneer Health Services, where he established Spokane's Mental Health Crisis Stabilization Facility.

Previously, he was the executive director of Morning Star Boys Ranch and worked as a licensed independent clinical social worker.

John is the fourth CEO to lead Community-Minded Enterprises. He follows Lee Williams,

who retired in late 2021.

He will be based at Community-Minded Enterprise's North Spokane office at 2001 N. Division, Suite 130.

In addition, CME recently selected Gail Goodwin to be the new director of recovery and support services. She previously has supported CME with her expertise in contract and new project coordination.

For information, call 822-8040 or email jillj@community-minded.org.

NATIVE Project plans youth addition

The NATIVE Project celebrated its 33rd anniversary on May 20 with a groundbreaking ceremony to build a youth wellness center across the street from its main building at 1803 W. Maxwell.

A block party followed the ceremony in which children, mostly from the Spokane Salish School, used root diggers to break the ground.

The event included an Indian Market, Native American dancing, games, music, a food bank, and COVID-19 vaccine and booster shots.

The NATIVE Project is a Title V, Indian Health Services Contract Clinic, providing medical, dental, behavioral health,

pharmacy, patient care coordination, wellness, and prevention services for both Natives and Non-Natives in the Spokane community.

Both traditional and Native American therapy and practices for healing will be offered in the new building. The NATIVE Project has two blocks on which to expand their programs

For information, call 325-5502 or email ninfo@native-project.org.

The Fig Tree is published 10 months each year, September through June.
Deadlines:
COPY - 3rd Fridays ADS - 4th Tuesdays
It is published by The Fig Tree, 1323 S. Perry St., Spokane, WA 99202, a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization.
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World Refugee Day will be June 20

The annual World Refugee Day returns to celebrate refugees in the Spokane area from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, June 18, two days before the the United Nations-designated World Refugee Day, on June 20. The event on the theme, "Coming Together in Community Solidarity," will be held at the Nevada Playfield at Garry Middle School, 725 E. Joseph Ave.

Former refugee chefs from Feast World Kitchen will prepare foods for attendees to sample, said Kathryn Garras, director of Refugee Connections. There will also be a cultural marketplace selling crafts and art created by former refugees, traditional song and dance performances, speeches from community leaders, a citizenship ceremony, fashion show, community agency fair to share resources and activities for children.

Refugee Connections Spokane convenes the planning committee of representatives of International Rescue Committee, Manzanita House, the Community Colleges of Spokane, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, World Relief Spokane, ASAP Translations, Eastern Washington University and Feast World Kitchen. For information, email kathryng@refugeeconnectionsspokane.org.

LCSNW raises funds with 8 Lakes Bike Ride

Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW) is sponsoring its annual 8 Lakes Bike Ride on Saturday, July 18, exploring the scenery of Spokane, West Plains, Medical Lake and Cheney. Routes will be marked and include food stops, medical and mechanical support and camaraderie.

"We attract several out-of-town riders from Washington, Oregon and Idaho who help raise funds to support our programs," said Christie McKee, advancement manager at LCSNW.

Riders choose from a 30, 45 or 75-mile route, leaving from Kaiser Permanente's corporate office, 5615 W. Sunset Hwy. Riders can collect pledges to help support LCSNW's mission. The goal is to raise \$70,000 for LCSNW programs.

"For more than 65 years, LCSNW has offered hope, resources and healing to thousands of Spokane-area residents affected by violent crimes and other traumatic, life-altering events," said Christie. "We touch lives of people of all ages, cultures and faiths, walking side-by-side with them on their journey to find health, justice and hope."

For the last two years, LCSNW arranged for people to do rides on their own time and in their own areas, but are anticipating restoring the spirit of the ride as an event in 2022. Check in begins Friday, July 15, at Wheel Sport, 3020 S. Grand Blvd.

For information, call 343-5020 or visit lcsnw.org/8lakesride.

Foley Library hosts Holocaust exhibition

Gonzaga University's Foley Library will host the "Americans and the Holocaust" traveling exhibit from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and American Library Association from Aug. 23 to Oct. 7. Foley is one of 50 U.S. libraries hosting the exhibit that examines motives, pressures and fears that shaped Americans' responses to Nazism, war and genocide in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. The exhibit from the museum in Washington, D.C., will be traveling through November 2023.

Accompanying it will be a series of events presented by the Gonzaga Center for the Study of Hate and the Seattle Holocaust Center for Humanity, and supported by the Gonzaga Jewish Bulldogs and the Spokane County Human Rights Task Force.

A program on "Americans and the Holocaust: Remembering Our Past to Inform Our Future" will be held at 6 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 8, in the Hemmingson Ballroom and live streamed. Speakers include Paul Bracke, associate provost and dean of libraries, Kevin O'Connor, who teaches history, Paul Regelbrugge of the Holocaust Center of Humanity, Holocaust survivor Carla Peperzak interviewed by Julia Thompson and Kristine Hoover of the Gonzaga Center for the Study of Hate.

Based on new research, "Americans and the Holocaust" explores themes in American history and factors, including the Great Depression, isolationism, xenophobia, racism and antisemitism that influenced decisions by the U.S. government, media, organizations and individuals in response to Nazism. It challenges assumptions that Americans knew little and did nothing about the Nazi persecution and murder of Jews as the Holocaust unfolded. It tells stories of U.S. individuals and groups who responded.

For information, visit gonzaga.edu/foley-library/about/news-events/americans-and-the-holocaust/exhibit-events-and-streaming.

WCC Assembly resources available now

The World Council of Churches (WCC) 11th Assembly, Aug. 31 to Sept. 8, occurs just as the September issue of The Fig Tree will come out. Fig Tree staff will inform people in the Inland Northwest of opportunities to participate in worship and speeches online.

The assembly theme for business, worship and engagement is "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity."

The assembly is a gathering of "the fellowship of churches that confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior" that occurs amid global realities of wars, conflicts, COVID-19, climate change, racism, authoritarian politics, digitization and militarization. As the world seeks hope, an assembly offers a multi-faith response.

Each day begins and ends with prayer. There are plenaries for reflecting on theological and contextual issues. Participants will dig into plenary topics

in "home groups" and Bible study. Dialogue will occur in Ecumenical Conversations. There will be regional and confessional gatherings and the "Brunnen," or gathering at the well, for networking and sharing.

The assembly, as the WCC's highest governing body, normally meets every eight years to elect its 150-person central committee and eight presidents, as well as conduct other business and make statements on issues of international concern.

Delegates of WCC member churches speak and participate in decision-making to set direction, make statements, review work and consider the WCC constitution and finances by consensus. Delegates use orange and blue cards to signify whether they feel warm (orange) or cool (blue) about a decision. The idea of consensus is that delegates prayerfully discern God's will and seek a common mind

through dialogue. It requires time to listen, pray and discern.

Local hosts will welcome more than 4,000 people to Karlsruhe, Germany. There are pre-assembly gatherings for specialized ministries, Orthodox, women, youth, indigenous persons and disability advocates.

With a vision for unity to inspire the churches, public statements on world issues and a message capturing the assembly hopes and experience will inspire the next years for the ecumenical movement.

For information, visit oikoumene.org.

Joya opens new building

In May, Joya moved into its new home at 1016 N. Superior in Spokane's University District, leaving space it has leased in Garland School since 1982.

Joya provides early intervention for children ages birth to three to address developmental delays and disabilities to help them catch up with peers through occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, cognitive therapy and special education.

Former executive director Dick Boysen and a team ran the Spokane Guilds School and Neuromuscular Center in a church basement many years before moving to Garland School, where the program grew for 40 years, adapting to the space.

In 2019, Colleen Fuchs became executive director and the program was renamed Joya Child and Family Development.

On May 20, they moved into a new 42,000-square-foot building built specifically for them. It has room to grow and optimize care for Joya's children and families, doubling their capacity, to serve 600 children, rather than 300.

The \$18.5 million facility will transform what they can do for and with children and families they serve with upgraded equipment, new treatment methods and technologies, and new possibilities to support caregivers.

Located in the university district, Joya will provide opportunities for professional education and specialized training for doctors, social workers, therapists, clinicians, researchers, teachers and students involved in early

intervention.

Situated beside the Spokane River, it gives children and families access to outdoor spaces.

For information, call 326-1651 or email colleen.fuchs@joya.org.



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By donating scholarships, church educates 80 to 90 children a year

Continued from page 1
in Iglesia Buenas Nuevas to rebuild. Now it is also a center where people come for health care, education and resources.

Over the years, Covenant UMC has donated \$120 per student each year for scholarships so 80 to 90 children have books, uniforms, shoes and supplies to go to school. In addition to personal donations, Covenant sells fair trade coffee, tea, chocolate, cocoa and olive oil to support the mission.

Flor was one of the children receiving scholarships. She is one of seven siblings her single mother raised after her father left the family. She has been in Iglesia Buenas Nuevas since childhood and met Diane and Rick when they came in 2004.

She finished basic education—first through ninth grade—and high school in El Paisnal. Few go beyond basic education, so she feels lucky Diane, Rick and her sister helped her pursue her dream of college. Flor earned a bachelor's degree in education with a major in English at a Pedagogical College in San Salvador.

Back in El Paisnal, she taught Sunday Bible classes for children and did youth work for her church and the National Youth Committee. In 2015, she joined her sister, Yenix, to teach Saturday English and computer classes the church offers children in the church and community.

Her volunteer work at the Lutheran Synod Sister Church Office led to a full-time job coordinating delegations from U.S., German and Canadian partner churches. The Synod assists partnerships between about 35 churches around the world and 57 churches in El Salvador. Many partner churches help with scholarships.

"Over the years, about 200 students from my congregation have gone to college," Flor said.

In 2017, she first came to the U.S. to Chicago and then to South Dakota as a camp counselor.

In 2021, she came again and

now studies nursing in Wapakoneta, Ohio, assisted by church partners there. She will finish the program to be a RN in five semesters and return to El Salvador to work as a nurse and help other students accomplish their goals.

"I see how God's love grows in us and helps us serve others," Flor said.

"When I was young, my faith was not strong. I would hear about God's love and about martyrs in my country," she said. "That helps keep me going and asking more of myself, so I encourage other children to fight for what they want to accomplish."

"Because we have many disappointments, being part of the church has helped me begin loving myself and loving others for who they are," Flor continued. "I have had opportunities in life encountering people in many countries, opening my mind to see that lack of resources sometimes brings us down but, even if we lack resources, having a good community sharing love and friendship can move us from emptiness and fear about not having food for the next day."

Flor has seen how love has sustained communities and families to trust they will have enough for the day. She values sharing love with people she meets every day.

In the U.S., she is impressed with how involved parents are in their children's education, because they are educated themselves. It's hard for a single mother in El Salvador who does not have education to help her children with studies.

She is also impressed with the weather in the U.S., in contrast El Salvador, where they have had severe flooding followed by long dry summers that often dry up the crops.

Flor said 85 percent of El Salvadorans use public transportation. In small communities, a bus leaves once a day in the morning and returns in the afternoon. For health care, it's

hard to find transportation to the nearest clinic.

"Many children have poor health because they lack good nutrition. They go to school in the morning without eating breakfast or in the afternoon without lunch. It's hard for them to focus and understand when their stomachs are empty," she said.

"While many have access to water, it's not clean. They drink it and get sick," said Flor, who plans to work in the government clinic in El Paisnal.

Because of violence and poverty, many children think there are no opportunities, but Flor hopes she is an example of opportunities that come from support of people in the U.S. and other countries.

"They help us see beyond our struggles," she said.

In her visits, Diane has learned that a few "ultra-rich families" rule the country and there are very limited resources or government support to build people up through education or jobs. She has seen little change on that level over the years.

Gary Proctor, a Vietnam veteran, went with a 1989 Eastern Washington University delegation to Central America as the civil war was ending. He returned troubled by what happened because of U.S. involvement.

"That was the catalyst for starting our relationship with the Buenas Nuevas church in El Paisnal, located 45 minutes from the capital, San Salvador," said Diane, who retired after years as a counselor and administrator at Whitworth University.

The goal of the partnership is "to implement an active and prayerful interchange with Christian sisters and brothers in El Salvador and accompany them in their pursuit of education and social justice."

"Our congregation is diverse. Many are involved in other ministries," Diane said. "It's a way for me to live out my Christian faith. Sometimes it's discouraging because there is little we

can do to make things different because of roadblocks from the Salvadoran leadership. It's hard to see progress."

"I have become more aware of the impact of our government on other parts of the world," Diane said. "I pray more for El Salvador and the people. I pray for change and hope for there to be a better life for them in the future. It's heartbreaking how challenging their lives are, but the program provides support and education they otherwise would not have."

Flor said the partnership with Covenant UMC has helped her and those in her church see that "life is not just bad things that happen in our town, to see beyond our struggles to know there are many people who are ready to help us find opportunities."

For information, call 979-4939 or email dianegithomas@yahoo.com.



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Manzanita House is gathering place for immigrants

Newly started Manzanita House, which is creating a space for immigrants to participate in the community, is hosting two events over the summer.

Manzanita House was created as a place for immigrants to develop community and collaborative solutions—inspired by the resilience of the manzanita plant that withstands wildfires, said Brielle Balazs, of Manzanita House.

The first event is a Community Block Party from 10 a.m. to 2

p.m., Saturday, June 4 at 806 W. Knox Ave.

This is a free event with cultural music, food, immigrant businesses and local organizations. There will be a free food distribution in partnership with Second Harvest Mobile Market from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

The second is a Back-to-School Resource Fair from 10

a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 27, at 806 W. Knox Ave.

There, resources will be shared with families needing backpacks, children's clothing and shoes, school supplies and other resources.

For information, call 309-8404, email bbalazs@mhsokane.org or visit manzanitahouse-spokane.org.



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Presiding bishop reminds Christians their faith is about love

One word sums up Christian faith and evangelism for the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church USA, Michael Curry.

That word is “love.”

He quoted the song, “They will know we are Christians by our love,” and the scripture, “We are to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.”

Bishop Curry spoke at the Friday Evensong, Saturday convocation and Sunday worship service April 29 to May 1 at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Spokane.

His presentations were a walk through the Bible.

“I am a follower of Jesus, a disciple. I believe Jesus of Nazareth shows us God’s way of life, which is God’s way of love,” he said. “Not to know love is not to know God, because God is love. Love is key to life for all Christians.”

In Luke 10, a lawyer, who asks Jesus how to inherit eternal life, knows about loving God and neighbor. Jesus says to do that.

“Eternal life is about life now and to eternity,” the bishop said, about God’s will being done on earth as in heaven.

Part of Michael’s family is Pentecostal and part is Episcopal, but the same family preacher, who spoke at all funeral services, said people have little control over their birth or death dates, but need to consider what they do after they are born and before they die as part of having “a life of integrity, dignity and eternity.”

When the lawyer in Luke asked Jesus to define “neighbor,” Jesus told the story of the good Samaritan—an ethnic, religious enemy—finding a man beaten and taking him to be cared for. That was something unlikely for someone from a different world view, political party, race or religion to do, Bishop Michael said.

The Samaritan knew the man was a fellow human being, a child of God, created in the image of the God of love.

The bishop said Jesus told the lawyer: “Do this and live.”

“Love is not an emotion or sentiment. Love seeks the good, the welfare and wellbeing of others,” the bishop said.

Just as the Episcopal Church helped Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust in 1938, it welcomes refugees today, he said, telling of a poster of Mary riding a donkey holding Jesus. It says, “In the name of these refugees, help all refugees.”

“Do this and you will live,” he said, sharing the prophet Amos’ words, “Let justice roll like a riv-



Presiding Bishop Michael Curry preached in Spokane.

Photo by Richard Chou - River Rock Images

er and righteousness as a mighty stream,” and adding Isaiah’s call to “beat swords into plowshares.”

Doing that, “people would not go to war any more, Russia would not invade Ukraine and the people of Ukraine would be free as God intends them to be,” he said. “Do this: love God, neighbor and self, and you will find life abundant.”

Eight years ago, Bishop Michael was asked to attend the enthronement of the new Archbishop of Burundi, where the CIA warned U.S. citizens not to travel. It was 10 years after the conflict of Tutsis, Hutus and Pygmies spilled over. A quarter of a million people were killed and half a million fled as refugees. He had seen Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina, but had never seen “what the hand of human hatred, bigotry and injustice can do” until he landed in Burundi and was met “by deacons with machetes and machine guns.”

Because the Anglican Church worked for peace and reconciliation in Burundi, the Archbishop of Canterbury wanted an Anglican representative to go. After his enthronement, the archbishop took Bishop Michael to tour the city.

“It was a heap of rubble. Children without parents walked by. People had dazed looks,” Michael said. “He took us up a hill and sat down like Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Pointing to the city, the archbishop said, ‘This is man’s way. Jesus has shown us a better way. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. That is how we will rebuild our country.’”

A few years later in 2008 at the Lambeth Bishops Conference, the archbishop told Michael, “Peace has come to Burundi. We are rebuilding our country. Starbucks has come.”

“I never thought Starbucks would be a sign of God,” Bishop Michael said.

“Love is the way. It flows from God’s love. Don’t be afraid or ashamed of it. It’s not easy, but it’s the path to life abundant that is meant for all,” he said.

He ended the sermon singing from old, familiar hymns.

“So if you cannot preach like Peter or pray like Paul, just tell the love of Jesus, who died to save us all.” The congregation joined him, singing, “There is a Balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.”

In a Saturday lecture, which summarized much of the scriptures, Michael, who was bishop of North Carolina for 15 years before being elected Presiding Bishop, said the Episcopal Church is being reinvented.

Five years ago, he went on sabbatical for rest from his routine. He took violin lessons from a 90-year-old woman in Raleigh. The violin was an extension of her being, but “in a beginner’s hands, it was torture,” he said, noting his wife and cat disappeared when he practiced.

Along with learning to play violin, he decided to study the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5: “Blessed are the poor, the compassionate, the peacemakers.”

“It is a catechism of the church, telling us what it means to be Christian,” he said, soon realizing he also needed to study Matthew 5 to 7, then the wider context in Matthew, the New Testament and Hebrew scriptures.

He studied the Bible for three months, noting that Matthew begins with Jesus’ genealogy and ends with disciples being sent to all nations, all ethnicities and all kinds of people to make a family who would live by Jesus’ teachings.

“The Gospel tells of God coming among us to show us the way to become more than individual collections of self-interest. Jesus came to show us the way to live in right relationship with each other and with God, and to show us the way to be God’s human family, God’s beloved community in the way of life, hope and true liberty,” he said.

His studies extended to Hebrew scriptures and the poetry of Genesis 1 with God saying, “Let

there be light” and then saying it’s “good,” and so on with each element God created. On the sixth day, God created human beings and on the seventh day saw all God made was “very good.”

“Care of creation is to take care of God’s creation,” he continued.

The second story in Genesis is about the Garden of Eden, God realizing Adam is alone and creating another human as a companion.

“God made us as siblings with each other and all creation, to live in harmony in paradise, to be God’s beloved community, to live as God’s family,” said Bishop Michael. “The Bible from beginning to end is about God trying to help us find our way to live as a beloved community with God, each other and all creation.

“God also gave humans freedom and, even after the relationship was broken and humans left paradise, God tried to show us the way by giving us prophets, kings, queens, judges and other leaders to call us back. People wanted to exclude folks, but God’s house is a house of prayer for all people. All means all,” he said.

Bishop Michael said Jesus built on Hebrew Scriptures, Jewish traditions.

“No one is outcast to God,” he said, telling of Jesus recruiting disciples from fishermen and everyday people. They listened to Jesus and saw him healing people who struggled, standing up for what was just, feeding the hungry crowd, then being arrested by the

empire and tortured. All fled but the women. The disciples eventually came back to Jesus, creating the community of the church, God’s family that “stumbled into being a force for good and love.”

Then, Bishop Michael said, they came to decide who to include and exclude—Jews only or Gentiles too. In Acts 15, the Apostle Paul “won the day” realizing “the love God poured into our hearts puts us in right relationship with God, humans and all creation.”

In Matt. 22, a lawyer asks Jesus the greatest commandment.

“It’s to love God, love neighbor as self. It’s the key to healing society and the world, to becoming God’s beloved community, to God’s reign on earth as in heaven,” Bishop Michael said.

Sunday he preached from John 20 and 21 about belief.

“Believe, just believe,” he said. “Understanding does not produce belief, but belief produces understanding of the way Jesus loves us, the way God loves us. The only way I can follow Jesus is by his love for me and my fallible love for him.

“Believe,” in Greek and Hebrew, means to “entrust ourselves to the other, not to a thought or creed, but to give my life to God who means love, to believe is to love,” he said. “To believe is to give my life, to trust so much, to discover life in Jesus’ name, to put my life in the hands of Jesus who loves me and will not let me go.”

For information, call 624-3191 or visit spokanediocese.org/presiding-bishops-visit.html.

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Pastor retires after fulfilling 20 years of ministry at Westminster UCC

In a recent sermon, Andrea (Andy) CastroLang, pastor of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC), likened the congregation she has served for 20 years to “a tree that shares life and hope, spreads its branches in welcome, and is a safe resting place for sharing stories that ground people in love and lead them to challenge injustice.”

As she prepares to retire in August, she is reflecting on her time with the church through grief and struggles, renewal and laughter.

“I’m retiring because I’ll be 65, not as part of the wave of folks retiring or resigning from COVID burnout,” she said. “I’m retiring on a high note with the church. We will have a good good-bye, and Westminster is ready to be challenged by a new leader.”

When Andy came to Westminster in 2002, the interim minister handed her two folders. She was on her own to learn about the people and the ministry.

The church has already chosen her successor, who will overlap two months with her. The goal is to help Westminster maintain its momentum. Usually, UCC churches search for an interim and then for a permanent pastor.

“Westminster has committed, energized lay leaders, who know who they are and what their ministry is, so they do not need an interim for that,” she said.

“We encourage members to go into the community, represent us, speak up and ‘make good trouble.’ We participate in marches and rallies for Martin Luther King Day, Black Lives Matter, climate change, gun violence, and women’s, indigenous, LGBTQ and Asian American rights,” Andy said.

Members join in the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, Catholic Charities, Faith Action Network, Family Promise, Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience, The Fig Tree, the Inland Northwest Development Council, OutSpokane, Shalom Ministries, Skils’kin, Spokane Alliance, Spokane FaVS, Spokane Preservation Advocates, Transitions, Visiting Angels, Volunteers of America/Crosswalk, Washington Nonprofits and more.



Andy CastroLang and the church adapted readily to Zoom.

“We join others to make the planet a better place,” she said. “There is plenty to do to stand for what we believe is Gospel truth, especially acting to end homelessness and racism. We see and hear marginalized people and stand with them.”

Inside the church, the momentum includes many efforts.

- Lay groups are looking at ways to sustainably use its space at 411 S. Washington and at options for ministry beyond there.

- Tuesday Night Talks, which replaced Sunday forums during COVID, looked at activism after studying racism in 2021. Previously, the forum discussed mental illness and justice issues.

- The youth group studies issues, like racism and the Holocaust, and reaches out to the community, collecting items for Afghan refugees and joining the effort to remove Spokane’s statue of John Monaghan.

- Its 22-year involvement with the Spokane Alliance offers members relationship building and community organizing—sharing stories to discern issues and actions on health care, apprentice workers, the university district, the medical school, affordable housing and more.

Financially, giving is strong, and there are opportunities for growth with plans for a six-story apartment building on property the church sold in 2005 for affordable housing. They put some proceeds in a Second Century Fund and use the rest to sustain the church.

Community organizing with the Spokane Alliance taught Andy what she felt intuitively—relationships endure beyond differences of opinion. Building

meaningful relationships is more than coffee hour after worship.

“In 2021 we asked the city how we could help,” she continued. “They needed a warming shelter. We were ready to do that.”

“We open our doors to artists and musicians. During a Spokane Symphony strike, workers held a strike concert. When the symphony sought a venue for chamber music concerts, we offered our sanctuary,” Andy said.

Westminster joined with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane (UUCS) to visit and partner with Felsorakos, a Romanian village with a toxic water supply. The churches raised funds for a well. The Felsorakos pastor has visited Spokane, and

Westminster and UUCS members have visited Felsorakos.

In 2007, Westminster voted to be open and affirming of LGBTQ members. That November, the church ordained Marj Johnston, a lesbian. In 2012, members advocated for marriage equality when a bill was before the state legislature.

A book she read early in her ministry challenged pastors to commit to a place through good times and bad. That in part inspired Andy to stay at the church.

It also resonated because she was influenced by Benedictine spirituality from regularly visiting a monastery with her parents.

“Benedictine vows are not just poverty, chastity and obedience, but also a vow of stability—to not leave when things get tough, but to work through issues,” she said. “There can be dismay, distrust and toxic relationships in churches and society. We are not to give up on people.”

Andy started as a Catholic and was a campus minister at Fort Collins, Colo., in 1981, when she met Jim, a priest. They fell in love. In 1983, Jim came to Washington, and she followed. In 1985, they married.

In 1990, they joined the United

Churches of Olympia, and in 1995, Andy went to San Francisco Theological School. After her ordination in 1998, she served two churches in small towns in Nebraska before coming to Westminster.

Andy was drawn to the UCC because she found it “liberating Christianity, non-doctrinal, non-hierarchical, reformed and always reforming, growing and always changing,” she said. “The UCC covenant holds us together based on love and commitment. We continually challenge ourselves to be better in following Jesus.”

“In my 20 years, there have been ups and downs,” she said.

Her philosophy is to “have a long memory for love and a short memory for things that divide.”

Because of denominational rules, she will avoid contact with church members for 18 months after retiring. Andy plans to attend worship at First Congregational UCC in Colville, where Jim is pastor. She also will attend online worship with churches in the Pacific Northwest UCC Conference, where she has been involved and will continue in leadership roles.

For information, call 624-1366 or visit westminsterucc.org.

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Summer Camps of Faith Communities

Camp Gifford celebrates 100th year of offering camps for children

The Salvation Army Spokane is welcoming the public for the 100th anniversary of Camp Gifford from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, June 11, at Camp Gifford, 3846 N. Deer Lake Rd. in Loon Lake.

The event includes inflatable rides, games, music and animals, plus food at a nominal cost.

The Salvation Army Corps, which owns Camp Gifford, is recruiting 100 volunteers to help with parking, food, trash, games and more. One bus will transport volunteers at 6 a.m. and another at noon from the front of the Salvation Army on Nora St. in Spokane for those who sign up at makingspokanebetter.org.

The Salvation Army Corps purchased property that is now Camp Gifford in the early 1920s when there was only access by logging roads to a few cabins. First called Camp Cougar, it had tents and meals were cooked on an open fire. It was renamed Camp Gifford after Major Edward Gifford, a commander, died in a car crash.

“It was a fresh-air camp for children from inner city Spokane and from Montana and Idaho, where mining smelters polluted the air,” said Major Ken Perrine. “Then, about 60 came each week in the summer. Now, with a staff of 60, up to 120 children ages seven to 17 come—many on scholarships—to the main camp, 20 to wilderness camp and 20 to sailing camp each week from June 27 to Aug. 5.”

The rest of the year, other churches and groups rent the camp. The rent and fundraising cover the cost for children from Spokane’s church, after-school program, community center, foster care, shelter and community children from other communities in Eastern Washington, North Idaho and Western Montana.

“At camp, children encounter God and creation, explore their personal boundaries to overcome fears and make lasting friendships,” Ken said. “They learn about nature and themselves. It’s a Christian camp, so they learn about Jesus and how to live a holy and righteous life personally and in the community.”



A-frame cabins replaced canvas roofed shelters in 1970s.

Over 40 years, the camp grew, adding first canvas-roof, wood clapboard cabins, a dining hall and a boathouse. In the 1970s, A-frame cabins and a central bath facility were built.

More A-frames and bathrooms were built, making space for 120 children for 10 weeks. By the mid-1990s, the cost of running 10 weeks of programs was more than the Salvation Army Corps in Spokane could afford, so it opened to retreat groups. There is now a year-round camp administrator, as well as a caretaker.

In 1995 and 1996, improvements were made so the camp could operate all winter. Letters invited local churches, nonprofits and businesses to rent. There were five groups in 1995 and in recent years, 40 to 50 groups.

In 1997, with help from AmeriCorps with Educational Services District 101, Major David Bowler, then Spokane’s city coordinator, and Ray Anton, AmeriCorps director, had a group of young men and women do construction. They added bathrooms on the A-frames and two homes for permanent camp staff.

In 1998, the Spokane Salvation Army Corps purchased nearly 120 acres adjacent to Camp Gifford’s 20 acres, adding hills, a small lake and land for a wilderness camp for teens.

The Salvation Army Women’s Auxiliary helped fund many

and platform tents, to provide camperships, furnishings and other recreational equipment.

In 2005, the old shop became two semi-private housing units. Funds from The Salvation Army Northwest Divisional Headquarters were used to build a new infirmary and office. In 2010, a family provided funds to upgrade furniture and provide diagnostic equipment for the infirmary.

In 2012, Camp Gifford added a camper cabin with handicap-accessible bathrooms and showers.

Ken said COVID was hard on the camp, which relies on rentals, but it operated at half capacity for the children’s and teen camps last year. The camp, which will be fully open with protocols this year, is still recruiting staff.

For information, call 329-2721 or visit campgifford.org.

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Camps are following COVID precautions but guidelines are more lenient

This year is Camp Sanders' 87th year of operation in southern Benewah County, Idaho.

It draws visitors from Montana, Washington, Idaho and Oregon to the family and youth camps, retreats and annual events it hosts.

Groups can rent the facility any time year-round to host their own camps, seminars and retreats, or they can participate in annual camps or retreats that are sponsored by Camp Sanders.

If needed, "we provide a full meal package, meals and lodging, while groups provide their own programming," said Daniel Willms, executive director since 2016. "We are happy to accommodate them and make Camp Sanders enjoyable for all."



Campfires are a time for singing and community building.

Daniel said the beauty of nature surrounding Camp Sanders with Indian Creek and Little Gem Lake nurture the communities who gather.

This summer, there is a family camp from June 30 to July 3 and a kid's camp in late August for children from first to sixth grade.

After being closed in 2020

because of COVID, Camp Sanders opened again in 2021 and followed COVID precautions closely according to the Center for Disease Control and the health district's guidelines.

This year, COVID precautions and restrictions have become more lenient at Camp Sanders.

"We go by the health district,

so there aren't really precautions since they've been revised," said Daniel, who is pastor of the Sanders Community Church at the campground.

Basic precautions are still encouraged, such as washing hands, disinfecting surfaces and covering coughs and sneezes to keep the community safe.

"We are in a rural, underpopulated area," Daniel said. "Annual events are important to the local community and encourage community involvement."

Those events include a senior retreat in September, a men's retreat in March, a women's retreat in April and the Sanders Community Apple Fest in October, sponsored by Sanders Community Church at the campground.

This one-day event brings the community together by pressing cider, incorporating live music, food, vendors and more."

The camp is busiest from May to October. There is no off season, but December and January are less busy due to cold weather and some unheated buildings.

This year, Daniel and staff look forward to remodeling the RV park by updating and adding utilities and gravel parking. They hope to have renovations partially completed by June, he said.

The renovations will make Camp Sanders more accessible for families, youth, seniors and other groups that use the facility.

For information, call 208-892-4842, email campsanders@gmail.com or visit campsanders.net.

More of the usual groups return to use N-Sid-Sen throughout the year

Dance camps, quilting, church, youth and yoga groups that use the facility are again using N-Sid-Sen, the Camp and Retreat Center for the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC) north of Harrison, Idaho, on Lake Coeur d'Alene.

"Making connections with people from different walks of life at this sacred site is my favorite aspect of camp," said Mark Boyd, managing director.

"It's an incredible place to be to see transitions that happen with folks at N-Sid-Sen," he said.

In 2021, COVID restrictions were closely followed. This year, those precautions have

become more relaxed, but are still followed.

"We still require vaccinations and boosters for those who can get them," said Mark. "We've relaxed mask wearing in most settings. When gathering in the dining hall in a large group, folks are still required to wear masks."

Basic precautions like regularly washing hands and sanitizing are still in place. It is important to "be respectful of the places and spaces we are in," he said.

Before arriving at camp, campers must fill out a health survey and health history.

Camp numbers are not quite back to normal from 2019. Numbers for youth and family camps



Work campers stack firewood under main lodge.

are more like 2021, with about 50 percent capacity.

Mark finds positives in hosting smaller groups.

"Last year with smaller numbers, there were more intimate, personal connections that don't happen with larger groups," he said. "Folks are still cautious about gathering in big groups. I think we will see more intimate connections this year because people are thirsty for connections and communication."

Mark expects that the same groups who came in 2021 will use N-Sid-Sen again this year.

He does not expect new organizations to use it.

He is concerned about low staffing numbers, with just four employees hired by May. Normally, there are six to eight staff. This year, there is one international staff member from Turkey.

"It was a challenge to find international staff this year," he said.

"Camps across the country are experiencing the challenge because of a limited number of J1 visas and embassies also have fewer staff," said Mark adding he's still looking for lifeguards.

The busy season starts in mid-May for the facility.

"At this point, almost every weekend is booked until the end of November," Mark said.

There are youth and family camps in July and August, plus a young adult retreat for college students. N-Sid-Sen serves campers of all ages in family camps, and kid's camp accepts second graders.

The theme for the 2022 curriculum is "What's in a Name?" The curriculum, used by several mainline denominations, is based "on exploring how God knows us all for who we are. God tells Moses 'I am who I am,' and in that, Moses can know who God is—and so can we. The Holy Spirit calls us as children of God and assures us that God knows each of us by name," Mark explained. "God knows us inside and out."

For information, call 208-689-3489 or visit n-sid-sen.org.

Ross Point has more family camps



Swimmer enjoys Spokane River at Ross Point.

Ross Point Camp and Conference Center on the Spokane River in Post Falls draws people primarily from the Spokane and Coeur d'Alene area, but some travel up to 400 miles to come.

Ross Point has camps and retreats for both youth and adults. There are more youth programs in the summer and more adult programs throughout the year, said John Batchelder, director of Ross Point.

"We anticipate that numbers will be equal to or larger than last summer," he said, hoping the number will eventually reach the level they had before COVID.

Restrictions related to COVID have become more lenient at camp, but basic precautions are still followed, including regular hand and surface sanitization. Masks are not required.

Since COVID, "we have had more groups willing to come back and gather as a community," John said. "People recognize just how much they need a community environment. We are thankful that we have gone through the steps needed to com-

ply with the health department and make our center available."

Ross Point, a year-round facility, is busiest from May to October with nonprofits, school, church and university groups.

There is no official off season, but "December is when we have the fewest people," said John, who has been at Ross Point for more than 22 years.

He and staff look forward to the break in December for planning and making improvements.

Until mid-October, meals are served every day to groups using the facility. This year, there are about 40 seasonal or part-time summer employees and eight full-time employees.

Like 2021, the 2022 camp theme for the Baptist camps is "We Receive Grace upon Grace" from John 1:16.

"Watching transformation take place in individuals and groups" are John's favorite experiences. "Ross Point is a special place that allows God to work with love in peoples' hearts," he said.

For information, call 208-773-1655 or visit rosspoint.org.



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Summer Camps of Faith Communities by Emma Maple

Camps took time with fewer campers to make improvements to sites

This year's Northwest United Methodist Church (UMC) camps are enthusiastic about a gradual return to the camp environments they had been used to pre-pandemic, said Alan Rogstad, executive director for camp and retreat ministries for the Pacific Northwest UMC Conference.

Four Methodist camps are in Alan's jurisdiction in Washington and Idaho: Twinlow Camp and Retreat Center near Coeur d'Alene; the Lazy F Methodist Camp in Ellensburg, Camp Indianola in Indianola, and Ocean Park Retreat Center and Methodist Camp in Ocean Park.

In 2020, the camps were shut down because of COVID. They used that year to improve the grounds. In 2021, they re-opened at a reduced capacity and with strict COVID regulations.

These two years, while tough



United Methodist campers go on a hike.

with the loss of operating income, had what Alan called "unintended benefits."

"The break allowed us to do maintenance and projects we wouldn't otherwise have been able to when we were running summer programs. There have been quite a few improvements these past two years. All our camps have had significant facil-

ity improvements."

For 2022, camps are moving towards pre-pandemic status but still following COVID rules.

"We're in the mode of restarting our standard camp programs," Alan reported. "The camps are in line with what we've done in the past, but with alterations to be mindful that COVID is still with us."

For example, campers will eat meals outside and have outdoor activities whenever possible.

"We seek to do that anyway, but this time, it's now even more important," said Alan.

They're also tweaking capacities of some camps to ensure social distancing to make it a little safer for campers when they're in their cabins, he said, predicting attendance will be about three fourths what it was in 2019.

The four camps are following the Center for Disease Control and American Camp Association guidelines for camps and overnight programs.

Recruiting staff for the year has been a challenge. Most camp organizations and especially Christian camps are reporting challenges finding staff as they did last year, he reported, noting that small businesses are also

struggling to find people for hospitality and service-oriented roles.

"That said, we have the staff we need. It's just taken a lot of work this year," he said.

Alan also expects camps may experience some culture shift in coming years. Shutdowns of the past few summers led many families to fill their time with other activities, rather than sending their kids to camp.

"Now family camps are bigger," he said. "Families want to come as a unit, not just send their kids. We're taking advantage of it and offering those types of camps."

"For now, the focus is that camps are back open, operating and doing what they do well," Alan said. "Our theme this summer is 'What's in a Name?'"

For information, email arogstad@pnwumc.org.

Camp Spalding expects to have a more 'normal' season in 2022

Camp Spalding, founded by area Presbyterian churches in 1957, has recovered from the sting of COVID, and enters this year stronger than ever, said executive director Andy Sonneland. It will have to a more normal season with eased COVID restrictions.

"Since the beginning, we have followed all state mandates as they pertain to summer camps," Andy said. "At this time there are no required COVID restrictions."

Some improvements that



Camper swings out over lake at Camp Spalding.

have been made include a new screened dining deck.

The camp in the Selkirk Mountains is also planning to build about \$650,000 of waterfront projects. These plans have already been cleared by five different government agencies.

Camp Spalding is also working on a complete rebuild of their high-ropes course.

Even though registration has not closed, Camp Spalding has filled five summer camps.

"We have more campers registered at this point in the spring than at any time in our 65-year history," Andy said. "It's hard to know where things will end up, but we're off to a great start."

To accommodate the campers, Camp Spalding has hired a total of 38 summer staffers, including some from Ohio, Arizona, Colorado and California.

For information, call 447-4388, email andy@clearwaterlodge.org or visit campspalding.org.

Camp Cross sessions invite campers to join in a 'Sacred Journey'

Camp Cross, a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane, is focusing on inclusion and identity through its 2022 theme of "Sacred Journey."

It's a theme the diocese has been exploring since November 2021, said Sara Gunter, director of Camp Cross.

"At camp, we will explore: 'What makes something sacred? How do we know when we've experienced the sacred? What importance does community have in our experience and understanding of the sacred?'" she said.

"The world is changing rapidly," Sara said. "So how do we navigate that together in community? How do we make decisions about colleges, relationships, or family, personal or community identity?"

Camp Cross will also offer a creation care camp. Along with installing labyrinths and a pollinator support garden, camps will discuss how to care for the earth by recycling, eating less meat and discovering local flora and fauna.

"This is the first time it's been incorporated into our youth season," said Sara. "I hope that attention to and care for our environment become a regular part of life at Camp Cross."

This year represents a different approach to COVID than previously. In 2020, they hired a full crew of staff before deciding

not to have campers because of COVID. The question then was, what to do with the young adults they hired, Sara said.

Camp administrators decided to bring the staff to the camp and have them live there in community. While there, they offered virtual programs and worked on the facilities—repainting buildings, repairing decks and doing other updates.

"In some ways, COVID was totally transformational and profoundly important for the facilities," Sara said.

In 2021, the camp reopened to campers with restrictions. They had a team dedicated to preparing protocols like keeping windows open 24/7, practicing social distancing, wearing masks, spending time outside and using hand sanitizer.

This year, the camp requires everyone to have vaccinations and booster shots as appropriate.

"It's a hard decision," Sara said. "It feels exclusive, but because vaccines are available to all our campers, and many in our community are at high risk, our model for inclusion is to prioritize the most vulnerable."

They will also have rapid tests available for campers with symptoms, but other than that, "this year will look a bit more like our camps in 2019," she said.

This year she has had challenges finding enough staff, but

she feels Camp Cross has had an easier time hiring staff than other camps, because their model is to have a small staff—about 16 full-time individuals—and rely on volunteers for the rest of the work.

"Week in and week out, volunteers are the backbone of Camp Cross," she said.

Sara predicts they will have about the same number of campers as last year, but fewer than in the

past. She knows, however, there is much unpredictability, and said, "We are embracing that."

This will be Sara's first year as director, but she's been involved with other camps previously.

"This camp is transformational for those who come," she said. "That's true of any place where people live in community in nature. What is particular to Camp Cross is our mission to

create compelling and creative witnesses to Jesus in the Inland Northwest."

"That is hard work, but good work. This is a place to explore through the lens of the Episcopal Church, which takes Jesus, the gospel and Scripture seriously but is open to new and contemporary expressions," she said.

For information, call 624-3191 or visit campcross.org.

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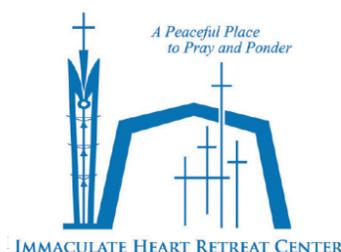
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Holden Village celebrates 60th year

The 2022 season is the 60th annual summer program for Holden Village, located in the Cascades up the mountain from Lake Chelan.

Classes and worship will be oriented around the theme, "Jubilee," because a 60th anniversary is a diamond jubilee.

"We will focus on the biblical concepts of jubilee and what abundant life for people and the land means in contemporary life," said Callie Mabry, communications and development lead.

Guest faculty will explore different aspects of it, looking at subtopics of "Release, Renew and Re-turn."

"These concepts related to jubilee offer powerful connections on how we think about our relationships with God, the earth and each other," said Callie.

"Release is about letting go and letting be—fasting, unlocking, exhaling—addressing how many consider busyness and exhaustion as measures of their worth," she began. "How do we trust, forgive and live in grace?"

"We need to Renew and repair what systems do, unlearn or dismantle our social and economic systems that separate us from each other and right relationships with the land," she continued.

"We view Re-turn, not as going back to the way things are, but turning again, finding home, engaging in reparation, seeing a different perspective," she said. "In the second year since the pandemic began, what are the ways we will go forward in a new direction? How do we come down from the mountain, leave the wilderness and re-enter our communities with hands readied for the work of sustainable living?"

Callie said there is a relationship between the Sabbath cycle of seven days, the Sabbatical or Shmita cycle every seven years and Jubilee the year after seven cycles of seven years.

She said Shmita connects to Holden's mission of renewing relationships with God, the earth and each other.

Staff hope that those who visit for a short while will go back to their communities with renewed perspectives and practices that fuel new programs.

While educational faculty offer classes to adults, there will be programs for children and youth, ages four to 17. There will be hikes with a naturalist, art and pottery classes, and daily worship and meals.

"We will still operate with reduced numbers, but more than



Musicians greet guests when they arrive at Holden Village.

the 50 percent limit we had last year," Callie said.

Holden Village will continue the revised model of arrival and departure in groups to improve contact tracing. This year, they will add flexibility with everyone arriving on Mondays, departing three, five or seven days later.

They will continue to encourage good health practices.

Holden Village will celebrate its anniversary during its opening week, the second week of June. The board of directors will come for a gathering to celebrate.

Holden is open year-round, with college groups coming for a January term that focuses on environmental ethics, religious studies and more. Callie, who grew up in Colorado, first came to Holden for that in 2014. Five years later, during a time of transition, she joined the Holden staff. Her term ends after the summer, when she will return to Colorado.

"Holden is a good place to come for self-reflection," said Callie. "I will return with a deepened understanding of myself, my strengths and areas for growth."

Since September 2020, she has worked with Holden's executive directors, Kathie and Mark Bach, and Stacy Kitahata.

Beginning in the pandemic, they engaged the community in new patterns of wellness and reflection.

Kathie and Mark previously worked at international schools in Taiwan, Japan, India and the Seattle area, where they taught and served in leadership positions. Stacy's career has been in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, faith-based community organizations, and college and seminary education. They have a five-year term.

For information, visit holden-village.org.

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Generosity of church, community helps New Hope serve neighbors

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

In her 16 years of volunteering and two years as part-time director of New Hope Resource Center in Colbert, Jeanna Swanson has been impressed with the generosity of church and community members who share their funds and resources, and who volunteer their time.

“Without them New Hope wouldn’t exist,” she said.

The New Hope Resource Center is a faith-based ecumenical social service organization supported by 14 local churches and the community. It helps meet the basic human needs of people living in North Spokane County, which includes the communities of Riverside, Elk, Chattaroy, Colbert and Mead.

“Prior to becoming the director,” Jeanna commented, “I had done everything else at the center at least once.”

Despite that, she acknowledged that she had many new things to learn when she became director. It was more challenging because the first and only director had moved on after training someone else as an interim. It has taken Jeanna two years to feel confident in her role as director in an organization where everyone else works as a volunteer.

“I have now done all of the seasonal events, some grant writing and various reports, and I am beginning to feel like I know what needs to be done.”

Jeanna grew up in the Colbert area and went to Washington State University where she became a registered dietician. She also met her husband, Ben, there, and the two went to the West Side of the state for her husband’s job and her internship.

After a few years her mother was diagnosed with a spinal tumor. A surgery left her partially paralyzed and in need of more support than she could provide from across the state. After consulting with her husband, they decided to move back to the Spokane area.

“I was thrilled to come back to Spokane,” Jeanna admitted.

Once she arrived, she began to look for a volunteer opportunity that would have a mission she could believe in and would allow the flexibility she needed to support for her mother and care for her then one-year-old son Daniel.

New Hope Resource Center, at the time one year old, met those needs for her. Through the years she took on many different volunteer roles: client services coordinator, distribution of school supplies and donations for seasonal events and ongoing needs of the center. Immediately prior to her appointment as director, she served on the joint Board of Directors for the New Hope Resource Center and the North



Jeanna Swanson oversees outreach at New Hope Resource Center.

County Food Pantry in Elk.

Both the New Hope Resource Center and the North County Food Pantry each operate with one part-time paid employee and the rest of their services are provided by volunteers.

The center is open from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

As director, she meets each new client who comes, gets to know them, explains how the program works and tries to see if the center can help them meet their basic needs like rental and utilities assistance, gas money every six months, clothing, toiletries and household supplies. In some cases, they assist with prescription medication. The center also provides chore and transportation assistance for seniors and people who are disabled.

Jeanna also takes evening appointments for people unable to come during the day-time hours.

“I feel like I have succeeded in making people feel welcome if they are willing to come back for what they need,” she said.

The center’s fiscal year ends on June 30 and by the end of April it has served 566 different people. They represent about 280 households.

Seventy percent of households New Hope serves are extremely low income and have an annual income of less than \$23,150 for a family of four.

Since COVID and the rise of inflation, most struggle to pay rent, utilities and still get the food, toiletries and other supplies they need to survive.

Some have become homeless because of the increase in lot rents in the mobile home parks

where they previously lived.

“Medical issues and disabilities are some of the reasons that bring our clients to us as the only service provider in North Spokane County,” Jeanna explained.

Others come while they are looking for work. Many young mothers in the area want to work and are both frustrated and discouraged when they have filled out 50 or 60 job applications but have only one or two requests for interviews—and then rarely any call backs or job offers.

Some have made ends meet by becoming shoppers with the Instacart app that pays people to shop for others in their area.

She tells a success story that exemplifies for her how important New Hope Resource Center is in the lives of those it serves.

Last winter, New Hope received a grant from Empire Health Foundation to enhance its services to the homeless.

With this money they were able to offer an extended hotel stay to a couple in a difficult situation.

They had become homeless, evicted because the person who was collecting their rent did so illegally. They had also been traumatized because the husband, who was present when his father committed suicide, was taken to jail. The trauma led to his beginning to self-medicate and becoming addicted to drugs. The center took a chance on this couple and used part of the grant to provide them a temporary home through an extended hotel stay.

The chance paid off and because of their effort, the couple were treated for addiction, found

employment and eventually built their own cement business, which is now successful and gives them the stability they needed to turn their lives around. They have also begun to attend church again and give back to the community through service there.

Next year New Hope will celebrate its 20th anniversary of providing services to North Spokane County.

Jeanna is grateful for all that New Hope Resource Center can do because of the support it receives. She said it welcomes donations of toiletries, and men’s

and women’s clothing. It also needs more volunteers to provide chore and transportation services.

For information contact director@newhoperesource.org.



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Thrive is new venture with immigrants

Thrive International, a non-profit empowering multicultural immigrants and citizens to thrive together has launched in Spokane.

“Globally, we are experiencing the largest migration of people in history with many fleeing violence such as in Ukraine and others seeking opportunities and needing help to survive materially, socially and spiritually in new communities,” said Mark Finney, executive director.

“Our mission is to move local refugees and immigrants from surviving to thriving in two ways: empowering local multicultural communities in Spokane and equipping leaders internationally who care for

similar refugee and immigrant communities,” he said.

They will have education programs, work opportunities and events to create mutual transformation for refugees and citizens to learn and thrive together. There will be a focus on youth and adolescents—a significant portion of refugees—through sports camps, a youth choir and weekly meetings, he said.

Another focus is refugee women, who are often overlooked. Thrive will offer a driving class and support for grocery shopping with a translator.

“Our community will never reach its potential unless its multicultural communities are thriving,” said Mark, former di-

rector of World Relief Spokane.

To offer physical, emotional, social, financial and spiritual support, Thrive will collaborate with other organizations to develop program, such as serving local Afghan evacuees who fled Kabul and more than 100 families who have arrived from Ukraine without government support.

In addition to Mark, Thrive’s co-founders include Saw Gary, Jim CastroLang, Daryoosh Kabeer, Sajda Nelson, Marshall McLean, Jackson Lino and Shannon Price.

As a new nonprofit, Thrive International is seeking donations to do its work.

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Renewal, restoration, reconciliation are common creation care themes

continued from page 1



Sreedharani Nandagopol

On care for the earth, Sreedharani told of five princes banished to a forest. One started to chop trees, destroying the forest. Krishna, the divine, asked what he was doing. The prince was expressing his anger. “Why do you take your anger out on innocent trees? Did they take your kingdom from you? Did the animals or birds do anything? You destroyed their homes.” The prince stopped chopping. Krishna said: “Only take from nature what is necessary. If human beings forget this principle and abuse their power over nature, future generations of humanity will pay the price.”

For Muslims, Ramadan—in April this year—is a time to focus on prayer, fasting and giving back to the community and the world, said Karen.



Karen Stromgren

“To celebrate, we gather and pray,” she said. “We fast from eating between sun-up and sun-down.”

“Each of the 2 billion Muslims on the earth has the duty to care for the earth. The Holy Koran and Sunna are a guiding light to promote sustainable development in Islamic countries and the world,” she said. “Allah commands humans to avoid doing mischief or wasting resources, acts that degrade the environment.”

Karen said the Koran mentions care for the environment 155 times. The environment includes all things on the ground and in the atmosphere.

“Islam says people are responsible for damage to the earth. We are to protect the environment and natural resources,” she said. “Maintaining balance of natural resources is the only way to guarantee survival for future generations.”

Shahd said Baha’is celebrate two holy days. Norrud on March 21 is the first day of spring, the spring equinox in the solar calendar. Risman celebrates that Baha’ullah founded the Baha’i faith in 1863 in Risman Garden on the Tigris River in Baghdad, Iraq.

Families and communities

gather to celebrate with prayer and to reflect on advancements during the year.

“It is a time for giving back and a new cycle beginning,” Shahd said.

“The biosphere depends on the unity and relationship of all living and nonliving things on earth. We reflect on ways we are selfish or not selfish so we share with others rather than live as we want to live.”



Shahd Khalili

Baha’is believe in universal education, equality of men and women, and balance of science and religion.

“Balance starts with our behavior and attitude towards our earth—what we are expected to do for the earth and what we can expect the earth to do for us,” Shahd said. “For the earth to be sustainable for future generations, people are to care for the world God created.”

“First, we encourage children and youth to be mindful, to love themselves and serve their community,” Shahd said. “We have them do projects for nature and community building.”

Second, communities should balance science—objective and subjective understanding—and religion—moral understanding—to build the common good, she said, “and find concrete ways to solve environmental problems.”

Third, governments make laws to create trust among people and nations, to help people understand their responsibility as citizens.

Tamar said Passover celebrates the exodus of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt to freedom. It involves storytelling and daily practice.

The seder meal uses symbolic

food to tell of moving from slavery to freedom.

“We don’t eat any leavened food, mindful that the people fleeing Egypt had no time for bread to rise before baking it,” she said. “The foods invite us into the experience, to see ourselves as the ones leaving Egypt. We eat bitter herbs, like horseradish. We dip parsley in salt water as a reminder of the tears. We eat a mixture of fruits and nuts to remind us of bricks the slaves made. We eat matzah, the unleavened bread.”

“We tell the story so children will understand our history,” she said. “As an ethical component, we learn we are to welcome strangers because we were once strangers in the land of Egypt.”



Rabbi Tamar Malino

Passover also celebrates a new year and the arrival of spring.

“Central to the observance is the connection of time, seasons and cycles of the earth,” Tamar said, adding that two months later is the holiday of Shavout, the barley harvest, when the people received the 10 commandments.

“The time is a transition from freedom to responsibility, recognizing that to be free means we are responsible to care for the earth,” she said.

Tamar told a midrash: When God led the first human around the trees in the garden, God said, “Look at how beautiful my works are. I created you to care for the earth. Pay attention that you do not corrupt it, because there will be no one to repair it.”

Lauri said Christians start Lent in winter. Its 40 days are a reminder of Jesus’ 40 days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness before his ministry started. It is a time to fast and give up, leading to Palm Sunday,

Holy Week and Easter. Two months later is Pentecost.

Easter is based on when Passover is, because Jesus went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. He had a triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey, as a servant. The people waved palm branches, calling, “Save us.”



Lauri Clark-Strait

Christians recall the Passover meal on Maundy Thursday, when Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, something a master would not do, she said.

“For Disciples of Christ, communion is the center of every worship,” Lauri said. “It reminds us that Jesus took bread and wine for the Passover meal, and said his body would be broken and his blood shed for his followers. His triumphant entry went sour by Friday when he was betrayed, tried and put on a cross to die. On Easter Sunday, women came to care for his body, but found the tomb open. God brought him back to life.”

Because sunrise services remember that, she has shared videos of the new life she sees on early morning hikes—as winter frost and snow give way to the new life of blooming flowers.

“Easter celebrates that there is new life and death is not the final answer,” she said. “God is always doing something new, but God needs our help in caring for the earth.”

In the Japanese Buddhist tradition, Hanna Matsuri, the flower festival, celebrates Buddha’s birthday. It was on April 8.

Melissa said Queen Maya, who was pregnant and traveling home to her parents, stopped to walk in Lumbini Garden. As she reaches out to touch a flower, the baby Buddha burst from her right side, from the pure place.

“The Buddha took seven steps forward, raised one hand to the heavens above and one hand down to the heavens below, and said, ‘I am the world honored one.’ The skies rained sweet tea, representing the Buddha stepping out of the six realms of suffering and into the seventh realm of nirvana,” she said.

“Buddhists follow Buddhism to step out of suffering, seeking truth that addresses selfishness,” she explained. “For the flower festival, we put fresh flowers on the roof of a little structure, called a Hannamito. Inside is a statue of the baby Buddha with one hand up and one hand down. We pour sweet tea over the baby Buddha’s head.”



Melissa Opel

“To be Buddhist is to be a conservationist. Everything is a gift and interconnected,” she said. “Whether vegetarian or carnivore, we know that boiling water takes the life of microbes.”

“We teach children the golden chain of the Amida Buddha, representing wisdom and compassion. We are links in a Buddhist golden chain of love that stretches around the world,” she said. “I must keep my link bright and strong, be kind and gentle to every living thing and those weaker than me. I will think pure and beautiful thoughts, say pure and beautiful words, and do pure and beautiful deeds, knowing that not only my happiness or unhappiness but also that of others depend on what I do. May every link be bright and strong so all attain perfect peace.”

Buddhists know all sentient beings suffer and they want everyone to find enlightenment and nirvana, she said.

For information, call 535-1813 or email news@thefigtree.

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New research suggests delays in screening mammography during the COVID-19 pandemic may lead to increased deaths.

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SOURCE: U.S. National Cancer Institute's Cancer Intervention and Surveillance Modeling Network as cited in US News & World Report.

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Indigenous knowledges help in fighting climate change today

In fighting climate change, we need to incorporate indigenous knowledges.

As we continue to struggle with the issue of climate change, some scientific research has been working to provide critical information on how climate change affects our world. In addition, scientists have attempted to provide us with knowledge of how to resist and fight this disaster.

In order for us to fight this disaster, we must open up and include the knowledge, practices and wisdom of indigenous people in these discussions at the global level. This knowledge has been suppressed, subjugated and ignored for too long.

For Pacific Islanders, fighting climate change is fighting for our life. That fight cannot be won with scientific knowledge alone. This knowledge helps us prepare

for the future.

Being suppressed and ignored, indigenous *knowledges* have not been well collected or documented. We have to work together to retrieve, preserve and put them to good use before they are washed away and lost.

(Note the use of “knowledges” here is an expression in a multicultural context. Knowledge is not static everywhere but there are many indigenous knowledges or indigenous ways of understanding that people have acquired by long-term observation and experience in one place, necessary for their survival and long-term planning.)

These indigenous knowledges have been passed on from generation to generation. They have already proven effective

not only through scientific experiments but also through real life experiences over many generations.

Indigenous people, through exposure and direct constant contact with a wide range of ever-changing environments, continue to acquire knowledge that helps them minimize the risks in more natural ways that are not harmful to the environment and humanity.

I remember growing up on our small Islands in Tonga, where we rely on the traditional weather cycles for many years. Although it is harder now because of climate change, it has proven effective in our way of living.

One of the traditional Tongan knowledges is that the breadfruit season comes at the beginning of every year. When the

breadfruit produces heavy fruit, it indicates that there will be a cyclone coming that year.

If we allow some time to learn more about such traditional knowledges from different indigenous communities, we may be surprised to discover that there are close connections and relations between indigenous knowledges and some scientific knowledges.

Their co-existence will provide us with more resources to fight the coming natural disasters. This is a good time not only to continue collecting and storing these understandings but also to be sure to teach them to current and future generations, for they are the keepers of this earth now and in the future.

Ikani Fakasiieiki – Guest Editorial

Double task to overcome racism, end mass shootings in stores, schools

Again, we have a mass shooting targeting Blacks. This time it's at a TOPS Supermarket in Buffalo, NY.

Again, most media turn their focus onto the perpetrator to highlight who he is and why he did it, giving undue attention to his racist ideas and fears that people of other cultures, races and religions will “replace” white people as our country becomes more multicultural.

Again, media follow a shooter to court, giving him more attention.

Again, the victims become mostly lost in a number and a brief mention of their names, who they were and the tragedy of the everyday reason they were in the supermarket.

The definitions for “news” again leave journalists stuck in the “normal” modes of coverage that foment conflict and violence, feed extremism and fear, and inspire more acts of hate.

Why should the “normal” choices for “play” of news further stoke white su-

premac? Why should journalists use of “infotainment” rules that purportedly boost profits be what decides this coverage?

We see the pain and grief of the Black community for whom the TOPS Market was an oasis in what was once a food desert. We learn of the structural biases that cut the East Buffalo community with a freeway, and the investments made in outlying communities.

That's important, but how does someone in the Inland Northwest respond to these injustices on the other side of the country—except to see them mimicked right here with our freeway and investments, gun violence and growing fears?

There are responses right here: gatherings, conversations, panels, commissions, elections and actions that can make a difference even in our own communities.

The white supremacy that was evident and “driven out” of North Idaho, still arises, so the watchdog efforts for human rights persevere.

Our responsibility with The Fig Tree is to continue to challenge media biases that promote violence, hate, divisions, inequality, exclusion and fear of the beauty of diversity.

Some people of faith hate and fear the beauty of the diversity God created, be it skin color/tone, gender, culture, religion or opinions.

Media need to see more than black and white in diversity, more than left and right, more than one extreme and the other. The old journalism of the 1960s and 1970s taught journalists to pursue the *two* perspectives to the point they helped create and continue the divisions that lead people to feel helpless and hopeless.

There are, in reality, a myriad of skin colors, cultural nuances, religious beliefs, political opinions, which if given respect and voice can help shape a vibrant multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-political society, a society with nuances rather than opposites and enemies,

nuances that invite relationships, exploration, sharing and learning. Nuances that may provide avenues for reparations, but even more for reconciliation and relationships that build beloved community, a diverse inclusive equitable society.

To those who maintain power by either-or scenarios, the idea of alternatives to “my way” may be a threat to power. The ultra-rich do not want to give up their luxurious living, their control of politicians, their manipulation of media that keep the status quo of their wealth and power in place.

Faith communities, at least, should be raising challenges to the people and systems that prevent God's beautiful community from coming into being.

Faith communities need to look at their roots as the family of God and be just that. Yes, they may disagree, but they can work toward mutual understanding and respect that bring true new life to blossom everywhere.

Mary Stamp – Editor

Letters to the Editor

Sounding Board

Commentaries

Faith leaders speak out, offer resources in face of recent shootings

I sit here today wondering what words I can offer, yet again, to the tragedy of children killed by another youth using guns at an elementary school. I find in my own heart anger, fear and despair. I find a desire to simply write off those who I believe turn a blind eye to the problem, or who dismiss it with pious words and no action. I find that the feelings in my own heart are similar feelings that lead others to violence. So I must look inward, to see the capacity for sin within and repent.

This recognition cannot, however, stop me from speaking out as a Bishop of the Church against the violence I believe infects the soul of our nation. We are too quick to turn to methods of violence to solve the problems we face, as individuals and as a nation. We are too quick to trust in weapons and force of arms to get what we desire. The followers of Jesus are called to a different way. We are called to walk the way of the cross, the way of love, the way of Jesus.

Jesus said challenging words to us many times. Perhaps the words I find the most challenging are: “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). As I read these words what I know to be true for myself is that I must be willing to listen and learn from those who have different understandings on the issues of gun violence than I do. I no longer believe I can simply present logical arguments and change other people's minds on this, for I do not believe that the positions come from well-reasoned logic. Instead

I believe that they come from places of feelings, hopes and fears.

We will not be able to offer a witness to the world of the Jesus way of life, a way of love, if we engage in the same demonizing of those who think differently that is so common in our country. We will not find a way to solve the violence that infects our nation by using violence, even if “only” the violence of words. We must find ways to bridge the divide, not further it.

As followers of Jesus we are called to love, love in words and love in deeds. Love cannot be only for some people, just those who we like, or those who think or vote like we do. Love must be for all, as challenging as that is. Our faith looks at Jesus on the cross and sees the violence we are capable of, and looks at the wounds of the resurrected Christ and finds forgiveness and healing.

This healing is what we need for ourselves and for our nation. If you are too angry now to love, pray that you may know peace. If you are too frightened now to love, pray that you may come to know hope. If you are too resigned that nothing will ever change, pray that you may be moved to act. Let our prayers lead us to act in love, that we may help heal this hurting country. May God bless us that we may bless others by our witness, our words, our actions of love.

**Gretchen Rehberg - Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Spokane**

The National Council of Churches (NCC) recognizes that everyone is impacted by the attack on the black community in

Buffalo. Some of us are struggling viscerally in deep pain. May God strengthen and comfort all who are in distress.

The black community in Buffalo is in a “state of emergency.” Children are afraid to go to school or to have their parents leave their homes. Schools lack counselors equipped to deal with this level of trauma, so students experiencing trauma may be punished for acting out rather than get the psychological help they need. The only wellness center in the community is heavily guarded in order to keep it safe. For those who view police with suspicion, this stops them from seeking help.

Buffalo clergy are overwhelmed and call for help, for ethnic-specific ministers who can provide pastoral counseling and understand racial trauma.

VOICE Buffalo is sharing information on resources, including rides to other grocery stores because the East Buffalo community again a food desert without their one and only grocery store.

Federal authorities offer several ideas:

- Generally, we are advised to be more observant of our surroundings and contact the appropriate agencies.
- Agencies call for partnerships in communities to focus on preventing violence. Networks of churches, ministers, schools, guidance counselors, coaches, parents, friends and relatives need to educate on mental health indicators so people recognize when someone is heading to violence and report what they observe.
- More information is at <https://www.dhs.gov/CP3>.

This year the NCC gathered on one page

resources from federal agencies—FBI, DOJ and DHS—to keep churches safe: <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/preventing-violence-against-places-of-worship>. We ask member communions to share this information with local churches so every house of worship has a safety plan. Faith leaders can contact their local FBI office for Partner Engagement Training—a two-hour seminar on active shooters: <https://www.fbi.gov/about/partnerships/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-resources>. Another resource for those experiencing desolation and thoughts of suicide is the NCC's “A Christian Approach to Suicide Prevention,” at <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/new-ncc-resource-a-christian-approach-to-suicide-prevention>.

As we serve Christ, let us inspire others to widen their circles of concern so each is more vocal, vigilant and visible locally.

- Let us take responsibility to be vocal in public spaces—home, clubs, community and sacred/worship spaces—to call out irresponsible behavior without jeopardizing personal safety. This calls for speaking up against divisive acts. Let us be vocal about encroachment on civil rights and policies/theories that invite hate.

- Let us look for opportunities to plant seeds of love and conscious community that recognizes the humanity of all people and uproots the seeds of hate.

- Let us visualize what the “Beloved Community” could look like and work together to see the vision become reality.

**Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, NCC
Interim President, General Secretary**

Calendar of Events

Area code is (509) unless otherwise noted

- June 1** • **The Fig Tree Distribution and Mailing**, 10 a.m., 535-4112, development@thefigtree.org
- June 1-30** • **Big Brothers Big Sisters** of the Inland Northwest's Bowl for Kid's Sake, 328-8310
- June 2** • **The Fig Tree Benefit / Board Meeting**, 12 to 3 p.m., 535-4112, mary@thefigtree.org
- June 3-5** • **Justice Impels**, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho, stgertrudes.org
- **ArtFest**, Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture (MAC), Coeur d'Alene Park, Spokane, 456-3931
- June 4** • **Friends of the Moran Prairie Library Book Sale**, Moran Prairie Library, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Community Block Party**, Manzanita House, North Monroe Business District, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 309-8404, info@mhsokane.org
- June 5** • **Central WA Spring Summit**, Faith Action Network, St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 5 S. Naches Ave., Yakima 2 to 4 p.m., fanwa.org
- June 6-18** • **Habitat Spokane Blitz Build**, habitat-spokane.org
- June 8** • **SCC Hagan Center Diversity Speaker**: Jad Abumrad, 1 and 5:30 p.m., scc.spokane.edu/live
- **Sabes Qué? Speaker Series & Membership Meeting**, Hispanic Business Professional Assn (HBPA), hbpaofspokane.org
- June 9** • **Young Adults Explore Buddhism**, Sravasti Abbey, 692 Country Land Rd., Newport, 447-5549
- June 9, 23** • **Showing Up for Racial Justice**, PJALS, 5:30 p.m., slichty@pjals.org
- June 10-19** • **Columbia River Canoe Journey**, The Sinixt Homeland Paddle, 936-1824
- June 11** • **Manito Park Art Festival**, 1800 S. Grand, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. 456-8038
- **Spokane Pride Parade and Festival**, 12 noon to 8 p.m., spokanepride.org
- **Camp Gifford's 100th Anniversary Celebration**, 38466 Deer Lake Rd., Loon Lake, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., 435-9023
- June 11-12** • **Friends of the Deer Park Library Book Sale**, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., SCLD.org
- **Spokane Herbal Faire**, West Central Abbey, 11th - 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 12th - 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., spokaneherbalfaire.org
- June 12** • **Kids' Farm Work Day**, High Country Orchard, 8518 E. Greenbluff Rd., Colbert, 10 a.m.
- **The Significance of Juneteenth**: From Slavery to Emancipation, Roberta and James Wilburn, Liberty Park Library, 402 S Pittsburg, 3 p.m.
- **Eastern Washington Spring Summit**, Faith Action Network, Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave., 2 to 4 p.m., fanwa.org
- June 14** • **Peace and Justice Action Committee**, PJALS, 5:30 p.m., jarcher@pjals.org
- **Climate Action Meeting**, 350 Spokane, 6:30 to 8 p.m., 350spokane.org
- June 16** • **Cultural Futures**, Inspire Washington, Northwest MAC, 2316 W. 1st, 456-3931
- **Water Wise and Spokanescape**, City of Spokane, Liberty Park Library, 402 S. Pittsburg, 6 p.m.
- June 17** • **Taste of Hope Auction**, Isaac Foundation, 17911 N. Day Mt. Spokane, 6 to 10 p.m., 325-1515
- June 17-19** • **12 Step Recovery Retreat**, Fr. Tom Weston, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 6 p.m. to 1 p.m., ihrc.net
- June 18** • **World Refugee Day**, 725 E. Joseph, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., 209-2384
- **Juneteenth**, MLK Center, 500 S. Stone, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., mlkspokane.org
- June 19** • **Dad's Day Dash**, SNAP, Manito Park, 1800 S. Grand Blvd., 9 a.m., 456-8038
- **Spokane Symphony Family Concert**, Martin Woldson Theater at The Fox, 1001 W. Sprague, 3 p.m., 624-1200
- June 20** • **Summertime Spiritual Moment**, "Being a Messenger of the Light," Fr. Max Oliva S.J., IHRC, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., ihrc.net
- **NAACP General Membership Meeting**, zoom, 7 p.m. spokanenaacp@gmail.com
- June 20-24** • **Spirit Writing**, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho, stgertrudes.org
- June 21** • **Spokane Summer Parkways**, Manito Park, 6 p.m., summerparkways.com
- **Summer Solstice Spokane Symphony**, Brick West Brewing Co., 1318 W. 1st, 7:30 p.m., 624-1200
- **Summer Solstice Celebration**, St. David's, 7 p.m.
- June 22** • **Silent Day of Prayer**, Fr. Pat Kerst, IHRC, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. ihrc.net
- June 24-26** • **Quiet Weekend Retreat** for Men and Women, "Anger and Guilt: What they are and How to Let them Go," Sr. Mary Eucharista, SMMC, IHRC, 6 p.m. to 1 p.m., ihrc.net
- June 25** • **El Mercadito**, Latinos En Spokane, AM Cannon Park., 11 a.m., info@LatinosEnSpokane.org
- **Emergency Food Preparedness with Vern Page**, Shadle Park Library, 2 to 4 p.m.
- July 1** • **What I Learned from My #MeToo Journey**, Humanities WA, 1 p.m. humanities.org
- July 8-10** • **Silent Weekend Retreat** for Women and Men, "The Power of Prayer Trust and Power, Conversations with God," Sr. Mary Eucharista, SMMC, IHRC, 6 p.m. to 1 p.m., ihrc.net
- July 8, 22** • **Showing Up for Racial Justice**, PJALS, 5:30 p.m., slichty@pjals.org
- July 9** • **Housing Resource Festival: How to Stay Housed**, City Park, Coeur d'Alene, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- July 12** • **Peace and Justice Action Committee**, PJALS, 5:30 p.m., jarcher@pjals.org
- **Climate Action Meeting**, 350 Spokane 6:30 to 8 p.m., 350spokane.org
- July 13** • **Sabes Qué? Speaker Series & Membership Meeting**, HBPA, hbpaofspokane.org
- July 15-22** • **Come to the Quiet**, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho, stgertrudes.org
- July 16** • **South Perry Street Fair**, streetfair@southperry.org
- **Emergency Food Preparedness with Vern Page**, Liberty Park Library, 2 to 4 p.m.
- July 18** • **8 Lakes Bike Ride**, lcsnw.org/8lakeride
- **NAACP General Membership Meeting**, zoom, 7 p.m. spokanenaacp@gmail.com
- July 21** • **The Art of Rebellion: Social Justice and Chicana/Chicano Visual Arts**, Humanities WA, Franklin County Historical Society, 305 N. 4th, Pasco, 7 p.m.
- July 22-30** • **8-Day Ignatian Silent Retreat**, Becoming More Aware of Jesus' Love and Rejoicing with a Grateful Heart, Fr. Tom Lamanna, S.J., IHRC, ihrc.net
- July 28- Aug 7** • **Festival at Sandpoint**, War Memorial Field, Sandpoint, festivalatsandpoint.com
- July 30** • **El Mercadito**, Latinos En Spokane, AM Cannon Park, 11 a.m., info@LatinosEnSpokane.org
- Aug 5** • **Scramble for Hospice**, 8:30 a.m., Indian Canyon Golf Course, hospiceofspokane.org
- Aug 5-7** • **Art on the Green**, North Idaho College, Coeur d'Alene, 208-667-9346, artonthegreencda.com
- Aug 9** • **Silent Event of Prayer for Women**, Edith Stein on Freedom, Dignity and Giftedness, Sr. Mary Eucharista, SMMC, IHRC, 5 to 8:30 p.m., ihrc.net
- **Peace and Justice Action Committee**, PJALS, 5:30 p.m., jarcher@pjals.org
- **Climate Action Meeting**, 350 Spokane, 6:30 to 8 p.m., 350spokane.org
- Aug 10** • **Sabes Qué? Speaker Series & Membership Meeting**, HBPA, hbpaofspokane.org
- Aug 12, 26** • **Showing Up for Racial Justice**, PJALS, 5:30 p.m., slichty@pjals.org
- Aug 13** • **SERA Community Celebration**, Underhill Park, 2910 E. Hartson Ave., 12 p.m.
- Aug 12-14** • **Compassion Acts**, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho, stgertrudes.org
- Aug 12-21** • **Nonsense**, Coeur d'Alene Summer Theatre, 4951 N. Bldg Center Dr., Coeur d'Alene, 7:30 p.m. and 2 p.m., cdasummertheatre.com
- Aug 15** • **NAACP General Membership Meeting**, zoom, 7 p.m., spokanenaacp@gmail.com
- Aug 17** • **Summertime Spiritual Moment**, "Prayer Habits" John Ruschinsky, IHRC, 8 to 10 a.m., ihrc.net
- Aug 20** • **Unity in the Community**, Riverfront Park, 10 a.m., nwunity.org
- Aug 27** • **El Mercadito**, Latinos En Spokane, AM Cannon Park., 11 a.m., info@LatinosEnSpokane.org
- Aug 31** • **Fig Tree Distribution and Mailing**, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. 535-4112, development@thefigtree.org
- Sept 1** • **Fig Tree Benefit and Board Meeting**, 12 to 3 p.m. 535-4112, mary@thefigtree.org
- Mon** • **Hillyard Farmer's Market**, NE Community Center
- Tues** • **Grief Share**, Support for Those Grieving the Loss of a Loved One, IHRC, 1 p.m., ihrc.net
- **Talk-Oh! Tuesdays**, Kootenai Environmental Alliance and Lake Coeur d'Alene Waterkeeper, www.kealliance.org
- **Drop In & Write**, Spark Central, 1214 W. Summit Pkwy, 5:30 to 7 p.m., 279-0299
- **Garland Summer Market**, 700-798 W. Garland, 4 to 8 p.m., info@garlanddistrict.com
- **Fairwood Farmer's Market**, 319 W. Hastings Rd., 3 to 7 p.m., fairwood.market@gmail.com
- Tues-Sun** • **Awakenings: Traditional Canoes & Calling the Salmon Home**, Northwest MAC, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Weds** • **Kendall Yards Night Market**, 1335 W. Summit Pkwy, 5 to 8 p.m., market@kendallyards.com
- **Kootenai County Farmer's Market**, Coeur d'Alene, 5th Ave., 4 to 7 p.m., 208-620-9888,
- **Spokane Farmer's Market**, 5th & Browne, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., 995-0182
- **Pullman Farmer's Market**, 150 E. Spring St., 3:30 to 6 p.m., pullmanfarmersmarket.com
- **Millwood Farmer's Market**, City Park, 3 to 7 p.m.
- 1st Thurs** • **NAMI Spokane Family to Family Group**, 6:30 to 8 p.m., ed@namispokane.org
- Thurs** • **Celebrate Recovery**, The Salvation Army Spokane, 222 W. Indiana Ave., 5:30 to 7 p.m., 325-6810
- **South Perry Thursday Market**, 1000 S. Perry, 3 to 7 p.m., thursdaymarket.org
- Fri** • **Spokane Valley Farmer's Market**, Spokane Valley CenterPlace, 4 to 8 p.m., 208-619-9916
- **Chewelah Farmer's Market**, Chewelah City Park, 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Sat** • **Spokane Farmer's Market**, 5th & Browne, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., 995-0182
- **Moscow Farmer's Market**, Downtown Moscow, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Bonner's Ferry Farmer's Market**, city parking lot, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- **Liberty Lake Farmer's Market**, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., marketmanager@libertyfarmersmarket.com
- **Kootenai County Farmer's Market**, Hwy 95 and Prairie Ave., 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., 208-620-9888, marketmanager@kootenaifarmersmarkets.org
- Sat, Sun** • **Spokane's BeYOUtiful Local Farmer's Market**, Northtown Mall, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., 315-9608
- **The Wonder Farmer's Market**, 835 N. Post St., 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., wonderspokane.com
- Sun** • **Burritos for the People**, Spokane Community Against Racism, Main Market, 44, W. Main, 9 to 10 a.m., scarspokane.org/burritos-for-the-people

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an international craft
marketplace, customary song
and dance, a citizenship
ceremony, speakers from our
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Priest and St. Gregorios have served in Spokane for 35 years

By Marijke Fakasiieiki

As Fr. Michael Hatcher marks the 35th year of his ordination, the multi-cultural St. Gregorios Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church celebrates its 35th year of serving in Spokane.

Bishop Zakarias Mar Aprem of the Diocese of Southwest America from Houston will lead Holy Qurbana, the divine liturgy, at 9:30 a.m., Saturday, June 18, at the church at 1725 E. Bridgeport Ave., for the anniversaries.

While an Orthodox community first gathered for prayers in 1984, they were not officially a church until 1987 when Fr. Michael was ordained and could officiate for Holy Qurbana.

Fr. Michael grew up Catholic in Clark Fork, Idaho, and Spokane, and from 1965 to 1973 was on a path to becoming a Catholic priest, with high school studies at Mater Cleri in Colbert and continuing at Bishop White Seminary at Gonzaga University in 1969. In 1973, he graduated with a bachelor's in sociology and a minor in theology from Gonzaga.

He and Gita met in 1976. She had two years of college in Madras (now Chennai), in Tamil Nadu State South India, when she came to study at Fort Wright College, earning a bachelor's in human services in 1978 and a master's in public administration from Eastern Washington University in 1985. Gita introduced him to Oriental Orthodox faith. They married in 1978.

"I liked the Eastern liturgy and its distinct ties to the Fathers and Mothers of the early church," said Fr. Michael, who did a few years of directed study plus seminars at the old seminary in Kottayam Kerala, India.

In 1979, Fr. Michael began 37 years of working in Elder Services with what was Community Mental Health and is now Frontier Behavioral Health. He did master's studies in public administration from 1986 to 1994. The parish was small and poor, so he earned a living from this work until he retired in 2015.

Gita, who helped establish the church and, as the priest's wife is called Kochamma in the parish, worked from 1991 to 2018 in human resources and civil service with the City of Spokane.

Her home state of Kerala is where the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church was founded in 52 A.D. by St. Thomas, who established seven churches there



Gita and Michael Hatcher mark 35 years of service.

before he was martyred.

The Hatchers had a heart for Eritrean and Middle Eastern immigrants in Spokane and drew many into the mission, which started in 1984 with 30 people—most white, plus a few Ethiopians, a Native American and a few Indians, including Gita and their three children, Sulochana, Rajiv (George) and Pradeep, who were 8, 5, and 2 in 1987.

Their first rented space at the Anglican Church of the Resurrection in Hillyard, then moved to Fort Wright College. For 10 years, they rented at St. Andrew's Episcopal, growing to 100 people in 40 families.

When they moved in 2002 to a former Church of God at 2803 N. Lincoln, the congregation was a third Ethiopian, 40 percent Indian and Middle Eastern, and some Russians. Members spoke eight languages—English, Malayalam, Amharic, Aramaic, Arabic, Spanish, Russian and Coptic.

In 2017, the church moved to the former Trinity United Methodist Church at 1725 E. Bridgeport. There are now 70 families, including white Americans, Indians, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Greek, Lebanese, Jordanians, Turks, Egyptians, Mexicans, Pakistanis, Syrians and Guatemalans.

Their common language for the liturgy is English—possible because their son Pradeep translated prayers into English. Parts of the liturgy are in Syriac and Malayalam, and they sing the Lord's Prayer in as many languages as there are in the parish.

Gita's and Michael's sons, George and Pradeep, were or-

dainied in May 2021 as deacons.

Fr. George graduated in June 2021 from St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Seminary in Florida and was then ordained a priest. He is now assistant priest with his father with whom he trained.

Pradeep is director of multimedia and public relations at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y.

"St. Gregorios' liturgy focuses on the holy mysteries," Fr. George said, "but its outreach is down to earth ministry, helping individuals and families survive materially and spiritually, keeping people fed and in their homes.

In 2003, Fr. Michael explained that the Orthodox worship takes people "out of the earthly realm and cares for a short time so they experience in a limited way the glories of heaven. Then they return to daily life with a sense of blessing. Receiving the

body and blood of Christ in holy communion gives me a boost so I feel I can start the next week and hope it is better."

Fr. George said the "holy mysteries" empower St. Gregorios to "create spontaneous ministry as needed" to serve in the surrounding low-income neighborhood.

For him, "keeping the timeless faith of Orthodoxy is inspiring. Aside from good works, we are transmitting an experience of God that is beyond popularity and culture. Worshiping God for us is not tied to entertainment, comfort or materialism."

Fr. George said his father, as a spiritual father, has had to understand the spiritual needs of those in the parish who come from different cultures.

"He understands that every culture has challenges, blessings and subcultures," Fr. George said. "Then there is the culture of the Kingdom of God, which we seek to bring to everyone's culture to help them grow."

"Part of the ministry is to always be open to learning about different cultural traditions," said Fr. Michael. "It's an opportunity to learn and appreciate people's insights and how they do things, as well as commonalities.

"In terms of faith development, we recognize that immigrants may have lived in isolated communities. So we offer adult education classes so they can learn more of the Orthodox faith," he added. "We emphasize teaching adults, as well as children. For Orthodox, the liturgy helps educate us in our faith. Translation of curriculum has been key to doing that."

Fr. Michael connected with Eritrean and Ethiopian parish-

ioners eight years ago, as another wave of immigrants from Ethiopia and Eritrea arrived in the area, experiencing culture shock more deeply than other immigrants, said Fr. George

Recognizing that this wave of immigrants did not speak English or read in their mother tongues, Fr. Michael listened to their needs to understand how to meet them where they were.

As he discovered the blocks to serving them, he invited another priest to meet with them to provide ministry for these people with many needs and a language barrier. It made sense for them to have their own congregation to focus more intensely to help everyone get on their feet, he said.

St. Gregorios gave birth to the St. Mary's Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Many Ethiopians and Eritreans stayed at St. Gregorios and visit St. Mary's liturgies. St. Gregorios stays attuned to challenges, offering liturgy in English, and maintaining African and Coptic Orthodox participation.

Fr. George said much parish work focuses on outreach to parishioners, with an increasing witness of sharing food and necessities with the neighborhood. They put in an alley light to reduce drug deals and make the facility safer.

"We spend time in the neighborhood doing outreach," he said. "We've become a refuge. Now people living on the streets come to us for help."

Parish leaders are developing understanding of servant leadership so they know how to be faithful and pass on the faith through their service, said Fr. George.

For information, call 859-7011.

FAN holds regional summits in June

The Faith Action Network plans its 2022 Spring Summits as a time to reconnect with its regions and to look ahead.

The events will be held from 2 to 4 p.m., Sunday, June 5, at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 5 S. Naches Ave., in Yakima for

Central Washington, and from 2 to 4 p.m., Sunday, June 12, at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave., in Spokane for Eastern Washington.

For information, call 206-625-9790 or visit fanwa.org/regional-spring-summits.

Jewels Helping Hands seeks donations

Jewels Helping Hands serves Camp Hope, a homeless encampment at Second and Ray that is home to 435 people, said Julie Garcia, director.

"We rely on community donations to support the needs of people there, such as men's

clothing, pre-packaged foods and bottled water," she said.

Other needs are tents, bedding, garden tools and funds.

Jewels invites volunteers to help provide one hot meal a day.

For information, email info@jewelshelpinghands.org.

Be a Bigfoot Among Vandals

Start Here, Transfer There

Community Colleges of Spokane spokane.edu/next #BigfootBigFuture



"Even though I moved from Spokane to Moscow, there have been a lot of people in my classes that I've connected with because we share a passion for engineering."