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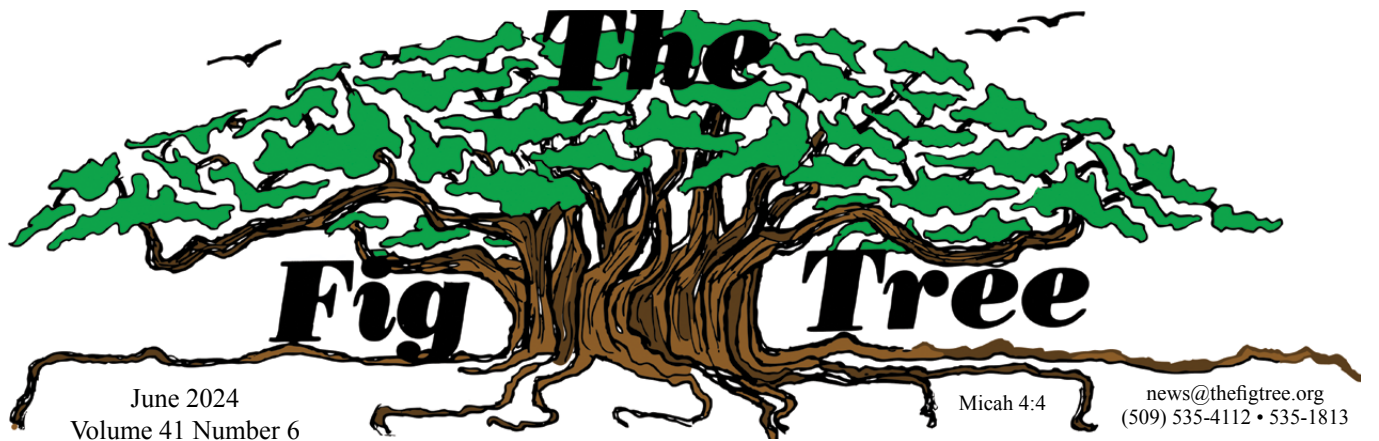
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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest  
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# Staff see beyond teens' scary 'front'

By Mary Stamp

Bridget Cannon believes that every person she has met working with Crosswalk and Volunteers of America of the Inland Northwest has changed her in some way.

"I have met many young people so that means I have made many changes," she said in a recent interview marking her 25 years serving with Crosswalk.

Bridget, who is vice president of shelter services, started her career in restaurant, catering and deli businesses in New Jersey, moving every four years because she was looking for the next challenge.

Soon after moving to Spokane in 1994, she began working at a local restaurant and wanted to meet more than the people at work. She saw an ad that Crosswalk was seeking volunteers, so she signed up for Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

She began to volunteer in 1994, and soon moved into a job there.

"When I first walked into Crosswalk, I saw young people who had not showered in a long time, had wackadoodle hairdos and body piercings in places I would never think of piercing," Bridget described.



Bridget Cannon has spent 25 years at VOA's Crosswalk serving street teens.

She learned their intimidating appearance was to protect them and express their distrust of people because they had experienced so much hurt and trauma.

With Crosswalk, she had opportunities to grow every few years, moving into new roles with new challenges. In 1998, she became shelter supervisor. Then she became program manager, head of independent living programs and foster youth supervisor.

With a grant for rural outreach, she began visiting rural communities in Eastern Washington and North Idaho to find resources to keep young people in hometowns or draw them to return, keeping them off the streets of Spokane.

In 2008, based on her background working with the kids in various aspects of the program, Bridget moved from the first-floor programs with kids to the administrative offices upstairs as director of youth programs and eventually as vice president of shelter services.

"I am as passionate about hanging out with the kids as I was as a volunteer," she said.

Back when Bridget first started volunteering, a tall blonde girl  
*Continued on page 4*

## Church, ecumenical leader values that Fig Tree links local, national and global

As a storyteller, poet, church and ecumenical leader, Karen Georgia Thompson, general minister and president/CEO of the United Church of Christ connects with The Fig Tree as it writes stories that reinforce her work as a national and global leader.

"Stories make community and help us understand each other," she said, speaking at The Fig Tree's 40th anniversary Gala on April 28. "In encounters, we do not remember the details, facts

or data, but remember the stories because they humanize us.

"Even though I live in Cleveland, I have known about The Fig Tree and Mary Stamp," said Karen Georgia, wondering if the founders knew that fig trees are steeped in ancient meaning and symbolize wisdom, success and abundance.

"The founders dared to dream of this fig tree, which is a blessing and continues to flourish," she said. "May wisdom and success continue to be present

as The Fig Tree continues to provide an ecumenical and interfaith space to support the ministries of many in this area and around the world."

In 2009, Karen Georgia joined the staff of the United Church of Christ national ministries in Cleveland, moving from sunny Miami to the snowy, cold shores of Lake Erie. Two years later, she was called into ecumenical and interfaith relations. In that role, she became acquainted with Mary and with The Fig Tree, which regularly arrived at her office.

"I had no idea how or why it came, but I would read it through and find nuggets of information," she said. "It helped me understand how the work I was doing as ecumenical officer was being amplified in the pews and in the world."

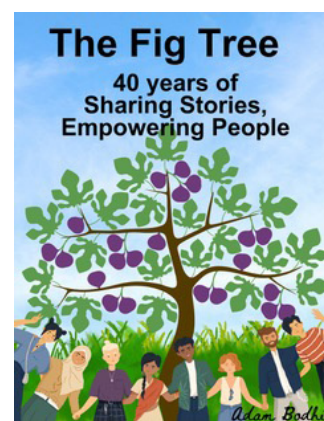
As ecumenical officer, her role was to connect to other faith communities—denominations, church councils, world communions and interfaith partners. "My work was on the national

*Continued on page 5*

## Artist creates graphic for Fig Tree 40th Gala

The Fig Tree partnered with Adam Bodhi, visual artist and Fig Tree advertiser, to design a graphic for its 40th Anniversary Gala. He developed it through a collaborative process with Fig Tree editors.

"It was a different way of working than I normally do.



By collaborating, we created a graphic that represents unity, inclusivity, people coming together and building community—things that matter to me," Adam said.

"It fits where I'm going and what I'm trying to build. It gives a visual of what The Fig Tree is about," he said.

In using Canva as a medium, Adam typed key

words, then tried to find the images that would represent The Fig Tree vision.

"In the process, we depicted where The Fig Tree has been and where it is going, with people from many races, cultures, genders and ages, and with fruit in the leaves of the tree," he said.

The Fig Tree printed it as a banner for the Gala, on the front page of the programs and on mugs for presenters and people honored.

For information, visit [diamondartworkscollective.com](http://diamondartworkscollective.com).

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## Religion News Briefs

### Around the World

World Council of Churches News, PO Box 2100  
 CH - 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland Tel: +41-22 791 6111  
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#### WCC collaborates to make world more livable

The leadership of the WCC and Right Livelihood met on May 22 to deepen collaboration and extend their work on the innovative ways in which people and organizations can take responsibility for making the world a more livable place.

#### European group considers ecology, theology

The WCC participated in the 7th Annual Conference of the European Academy of Religion (EuARE), held in Palermo, Italy from May 20 to 23. This year's conference focused on paradigm shifts in religions, drawing more than 1,100 participants to discuss important ecological and theological issues.

#### WCC donates books to Tanzanian university

The WCC is donating books to theology students at Teofilo Kisanji University of the Moravian Church in Tanzania. Teofilo Kisanji University (TEKU) is situated in Mbeya, and was established in 2006 as a university.

#### Leader challenges misuse of Christ's name

His Beatitude Anastasios, archbishop of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania, shares a message for the WCC global fellowship, between the Orthodox Easter and Pentecost. In today's world, the message notes: "Invoking Christ's name has no place in plans of political expediency and oppression of individuals and peoples." Anastasios, a former WCC president with more than six decades in the ecumenical movement, is known as a herald of peace and wisdom in inter-religious and international circles.

#### Kenya makes strides in ending gender violence

Whether it's weaving gender equality into environmental training for young children or reaching 2,000 high school and university students with the Thursdays in Black campaign, Kevin Maina is making some major strides in Kenya toward a world free from gender-based violence.

#### WCC head says global and local connect

In a visit to London, WCC general secretary Jerry Pillay had deep conversations with specialized ministries partner Christian Aid, focusing on how the global ecumenical movement is rooted in local connections that bring hope, help and healing.

#### Brazilian church leader tells of grave needs

The Rev. Mauro de Souza, second vice president of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil, and a member of the WCC central committee, reflected on the grave needs amid the flood disaster in Brazil—and how churches are offering hope.

#### Access to clean, safe water is a pressing issue

Water sustains ecosystems, supports agriculture and is essential for human health and development, but across the globe, access to clean and safe water remains a pressing issue, with enormous disparities in how water is governed and managed.

#### Declaration rejecting Nazi policy still inspires

On the 90th anniversary of the Barmen Declaration, in which Germany's Confessing Church condemned Nazi incursions in church life, the WCC general secretary praised it as inspiring Christians since then to combat oppression and injustice.

#### WCC expresses commitment to 'health for all'

"The ill health and suffering experienced by the least and the most vulnerable must be felt by and responded to by all in a united, equitable, effective, and mutually accountable manner," wrote WCC general secretary Jerry Pillay in a message to Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organization (WHO) director-general, as the 77th World Health Assembly opened in Geneva.

## REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

### Associated Church Press honors Fig Tree

Out of 821 entries in 76 categories, The Fig Tree received a national 2023 Best of The Associated Church Press (ACP) honorable mention award in the category "Overall Excellence/Best in Class" for newspapers on May 17 at the ACP Convention in Chicago.

Each year, The ACP, which

has served religious communicators since 1916, honors faith communicators' best work with these awards for new and established newspapers, magazines, journals, news services, newsletters, blogs and websites.

"The religious landscape has changed in recent years," noted the awards information. "With

it, the role of faith-based journalism has changed, and the role of communicators has been reinvented and reimagined."

In the same category, the award of merit went to The Alabama Baptist and the award of excellence to The Baptist Paper.

For information, visit theacp.org/awards.

### Fig Tree archiving project seeks funding

The Fig Tree has begun scanning copies of the first 20 years of its issues that are not already in pdf format to make all issues available to Washington Digital Newspaper Archives.

Directory editor Malcolm Haworth is working with service missionaries with the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day

Saints part of this summer and fall to do the scanning.

The Fig Tree is connecting with Shawn Schollmeyer of Washington Digital Newspapers, which invited The Fig Tree to archive its newspaper because of its cultural significance.

There are costs for the project, including costs for Shawn to

prepare the digital documents The Fig Tree provides.

"We welcome those who wish to help us raise \$8,000 to complete the project during the coming year," said editor Mary Stamp. "The files will eventually be available online to share our coverage since 1984."

For information, call 535-4112.

### Unity in the Community marks 30th year

Unity in the Community, the region's largest multicultural event, will celebrate its 30th year from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 17, in Riverfront Park.

The organizers with NW Unity invite vendors and sponsors to join in celebrating diversity.

"It's a special day for children and families to learn about the diverse heritages that make

our community great," said co-organizer April Anderson.

At Unity in the Community's Global Village, children can hear dozens of languages, meet people who have come to the region from all over the world and play games that are part of different cultures.

The festival features diverse entertainment, cultural village

displays, games, arts, food and activities for children and adults, including a job/career fair and health screening, added co-organizer Mareesa Henderson.

Proceeds after costs provide school supplies and children's activities. The event is planned by a volunteer committee.

For information, call 599-6669 or visit nwunity.org.

### WorkSource consolidates one-stop aid

WorkSource Spokane One-Stop Campus is upgrading its campus at 140 S. Arthur St. to enhance access to services for customers.

Effective May 31, services previously offered at Resource Center of Spokane County will

merge its resources with WorkSource Spokane, said Kevin Williams, division executive for system advancement.

By integrating human services into WorkSource Spokane in one place, the program centralizes resources for the community

from career development to tailored assistance for re-entry, health care, working parents, job seekers and businesses, explained Mark Matke, Spokane Workforce Council, CEO.

For information, email klwilliams@spokaneworkforce.org.

### Sravasti nuns talk on 'Choosing Harmony'

Four nuns from Sravasti Abbey will give a series of talks on "Choosing Harmony" at CREATE Arts Center in Newport, from 6:30 to 8 p.m., Mondays June 3 to 24. The presenters, Venerables Thubten Kunga, Dekyi, Rinchen and Monlam, have lived and trained with the Abbey's founder—Buddhist teacher and author, Venerable Thubten Cho-

dron—for many years.

"In these divisive times, harmony seems elusive, and kindness and compassion are in short supply," said Thubten Kunga. "Thankfully, there are practices anyone can learn to increase connections to others, no matter how different we may be."

Abbey monastics will share meditation and thought-training

practices that keep the heart open and calm in difficult situations.

Sessions include a short, guided meditation to relax, a talk, questions and group discussion.

Sravasti Abbey, founded in 2003 near Newport, is a Buddhist monastery practicing the Tibetan tradition.

For information, visit sravastiabbey.org/events.

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**YMCA plans Healthy Kids Day on June 7**

Healthy Kids Day from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Friday, June 7, is part of a national initiative to improve the health and well-being of kids and families.

For more than 30 years, the YMCA has hosted this free community event to inspire children and families to keep minds and bodies active through the summer and beyond.

The evening includes healthy, fun activities that celebrate kids being kids with organization booths—including Spokane Valley Library, Boy Scouts of America, East Valley Community Coalition, Manzanita House, Providence Sacred Heart Children’s Hospital, Washington Poison Control, S.C.O.P.E with Operation ID and Kids Helmets, Spokane Valley Parks & Recreation, Spokane Valley Fire Department and Second Harvest.

There will be games, prizes, face painting, a bouncy house, petting zoo, kite flying and a climbing wall.

The first 250 kids will receive a free T-shirt.

For information, call 777-9622 x 4290 or [jwhite@ymcainw.org](mailto:jwhite@ymcainw.org).

**SNAP’s Dad’s Day Dash is June 16**

The 12th Annual Dad’s Day Dash, with the choice of a 5K or a one-mile Father’s Day fun run, will start at 9 a.m., Sunday, June 16, at the North Bank Shelter in Riverfront Park in Spokane.

The registration fee helps support SNAP’s more than 30 programs that served 53,329 people in the community in 2023. SNAP helps people seeking a way out of poverty with energy assistance, small business loans, housing, home repairs and more.

In 2023, nearly 400 crossed the finish line in the Dad’s Day Dash. People may participate as individuals or teams.

Participants will receive a race T-shirt. Later they may join in Expo events at Riverfront Park.

For information, call 456-SNAP or visit [snapwa.org/ddd5k](http://snapwa.org/ddd5k).

**Synod asks for funds for flood aid in Tanzania**

Northwest Intermountain Synod (NWIM) Bishop Meggan Manlove is appealing for \$34,000 to assist the companion synod, Ulanga Kilombero Diocese (UKD) in Tanzania, in recovery from a flood affecting much of East Africa.

Successive heavy rainstorms from March to early May led to loss of lives and livelihoods, displacements, evacuations and disease because of destruction of homes, crops, roads, schools, power structures and water contamination, according to UKD Bishop Renard Mtenji.

Meggan asked the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations in the synod to take a special offering on June 9 for UKD Flood Relief.

“The funds will help pastors replant crops in the next growing season, help schools retain students whose parents have no resources, and help the Lugala Lutheran Hospital resupply, fix inaccessible roads to the hospital and provide water treatment in nearby communities,” she said.

The Kilombero River Valley is a major agricultural region. Towns, homes, schools and churches that usually don’t flood in a rainy season became inundated. Fields at the Tumaini Seminary were destroyed. The school’s new wall reduced damage to buildings, but the road to the hospital is impassable, Megan said.

For information, visit [nwimsynod.org/tanzania-companion-synod-ukd](http://nwimsynod.org/tanzania-companion-synod-ukd).

**Salvation Army collects funds for backpacks**

The Salvation Army’s 15th Annual Backpacks for Kids event teams up with NomNom Convenience Stores to collect funds through June 30 to provide 4,000 K-12 students with free backpacks and school supplies.

Customers may donate when they make purchases or by adding their name to a flier at stores in Spokane, Spokane Valley, Airway Heights, Mead, Deer Park, Liberty Lake and Coeur d’Alene.

Over the past 14 years, NomNom has raised \$600,000 for Backpacks for Kids. Captain David Cain, corps officer of The Salvation Army Spokane, is impressed by the response.

Since the inception of Backpacks for Kids in 2010, The Salvation Army Spokane has distributed 57,000 backpacks to local young people. Backpacks will be distributed Aug. 14 at The Salvation Army, 222 E. Indiana Ave. in Spokane. For information, call 325-6810 or visit [making Spokane better.org](http://making Spokane better.org).

**Habitat Blitz Build is demonstration project**

For 23 years, Habitat for Humanity Spokane’s Blitz Build has drawn hundreds of volunteers for a two-week accelerated build that is also an opportunity to raise funds and awareness.

An event unique to Spokane, Blitz Build offers camaraderie as professional builders, sponsor groups and volunteers work with Habitat families to build safe, healthy and affordable homes.

Volunteer individuals and groups will join Blitz Build June 3 to 14 in the city of Spokane Valley.

“Blitz Build is an exciting time at Habitat for Humanity,” said Michelle Girardot, CEO of Habitat for Humanity-Spokane. “Nearly one in three households in Spokane are considered ‘cost-burdened’ and spend more than

30 percent of their income on housing costs. Habitat is a beacon of hope for those seeking to buy a home they can afford in Spokane.

“The Spokane Valley Blitz Build site is a demonstration project using Insulated Concrete Forms, a sustainable, non-combustible concrete building system that reduces upfront expenses and on-site construction time, while maximizing a structure’s durability and energy performance—reducing its carbon footprint,” Michelle said.

Habitat-Spokane’s annual fundraising build event is a hands-on opportunity to dig into the home-building process and partner with those working hard in its Homeownership Program.

“The only skill needed is a desire to help families on their

homeownership journey — no experience necessary,” she said.

Currently, 70 families are working toward home ownership.

Habitat for Humanity-Spokane raised \$135,776 with more than 500 guests at its 2024 Hope Builders Luncheon in April to help families achieve their dreams of affordable homeownership.

Habitat-Spokane will host its first-ever Pride Build Day at Blitz Build on June 10.

“We invite local members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community and allies to help build inclusivity while we highlight the need for affordable homeownership for all,” Michelle said.

For information, call 534-2552 or email [volunteer@habitat-spokane.org](mailto:volunteer@habitat-spokane.org).

**Second Harvest partners with food processors**

Second Harvest is committed to leveraging the region’s agricultural abundance to end hunger, said Carrie Perry, senior leader at Second Harvest, in the recent newsletter.

“Our partnerships with local food processors enable us to transform perishable produce into shelf-stable foods, which are desirable for their ease of handling and shelf life,” she said. “These collaborations are vital. Fresh produce is abundant but perishable and can be challenging to distribute before it spoils.”

By working with processors, Second Harvest ensures more food reaches people in need.

A partnership with Tree Top provides 120 tons of apples and converts apples into four

semi-truck loads of applesauce that is shelf-stable, so it can be distributed over a longer period.

Another collaborative project was with potato farmers who donated 375,000 pounds of bulk potatoes. Basic American Foods processed them into two truckloads of dehydrated, shelf-stable potatoes, which are easy to store and use, she said.

Second Harvest seeks to increase production with Tree Top in the coming year and has a second round of processing planned with Basic American Foods in the next few months.

“We hope both ventures will continue to thrive for years to come,” Carrie said. “These partnerships exemplify our strategy to harness the abundance of lo-

cal agriculture while addressing the shortage of shelf-stable food producers in our service territory. We are continually seeking to forge more collaborations to provide healthy, long-lasting food to those who need it most.”

For information, call 524-6678 or visit [2-harvest.org](http://2-harvest.org).

**Family Promise seeks monthly donations**

Family Promise of Spokane is starting a monthly donation program, Homer’s Helpers, to help assure predictable finances for the program to provide the families it serves with a stable future.

Homer is also the name of the Family Promise truck that moves families into their new homes.

In 2023, 46.5 percent of homeless persons who were rehoused in Spokane County came through Family Promise of Spokane. That’s 193 kids and 102 families who now have a place to call home.

Needing community support and a commitment to ending family homelessness, Family Promise of Spokane created Homer’s Helpers, as a team of monthly donors.

Families come from diverse backgrounds, but these face

hidden homeless in Spokane County.

For information, visit [family-promiseofspokane.org](http://family-promiseofspokane.org).

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# Crosswalk move near SCC was choice of the kids in the program

*Continued from page 1*  
came into Crosswalk before Christmas.

"I could tell she was petrified. I was at the front desk and asked how we could help her," Bridget said.

The girl was from California. She had been kicked off the basketball team and her mother had sent her to Spokane to live with her father, but she did not tell the father their daughter was coming. When she showed up at his doorstep, he drove her to Crosswalk.

"The holiday season is supposed to be a loving family time, but she was dropped off at our shelter," Bridget said. "She did not leave the front desk because she was scared by the other teens' appearances.

"I learned that those appearances were a cover-up, a defense to keep people away so they wouldn't be hurt," she said. "That was a turning point for me to realize that these teens were like all teens. We needed to help tear down the boundaries they set up and keep them safe.

"That changed how I talked with them, to hear their stories and help them find opportunities," she said.

After mediating with the girl's mother, Crosswalk helped her get on a bus to go home.

"She changed my life. After that, I became protective of the teens who came here, especially when people blamed them and called them juvenile delinquents," Bridget said. "People would change their opinions if they spent a week with them. They just want to be loved."

Bridget experienced many turnaround stories. In fact, many who once came seeking shelter are now employees.

Recently, she had a phone call from one of the first people she worked with as a case manager in 1998. He had been at Crosswalk from the age of 13 until he was 18.

"He was 40 and helping take care of his mother. He and his wife chose to give a donation to Crosswalk," she said.

Often people call or return to tell how Crosswalk made a dif-

ference in their lives.

"I tell staff they may never see the difference they make in someone's life. It may take a while, but one day the lightbulb may go on," she said, telling of listening to one "alum" as an adult using the words she had said years ago.

"I realized he had listened to me. It's amazing how resilient the teens are," said Bridget, who carries that belief into her work overseeing Crosswalk, the Young Adult Shelter, two outreach teams, Alexandria's House, the Aston-Bleck Program and Hope House.

At Alexandria's House, she said, is a program for babies having babies. About 16 come through in a year to stay in the five rooms. "They do not know how to parent or live on their own," she said.

So the Aston-Bleck Program receives the young mothers in five transitional two-bedroom apartments, where they can continue with the same case manager. There they learn how to be parents. Ninety percent move to permanent housing and stay housed.

Crosswalk last year served 800 in the drop-in center with case management and in the school where they can earn a GED. In 2023, about 130 stayed in the night shelter's 18 beds.

The Young Adult Shelter housed 200 last year.

Crosswalk broke ground for Crosswalk 2.0 on May 28 to serve youth at a location across from Spokane Community College on East Mission, rather than downtown.

The new center is one block from the Young Adult Shelter.

"When we started talking about Crosswalk 2.0, we consulted with the kids. I invited them to join me for coffee. I asked if we build a new Crosswalk, what would they want," Bridget said.

"They all said they did not want to be downtown where they are among people dealing drugs," she said. "They wanted to be near parks and green space. They helped pick the spot, plan the architecture and programs, and design our logo."

On its second floor of the new building, there will be a Supportive Independent Living program for 16-to 20-year-olds who need foster care but cannot find foster homes. Foster parents do not want older teens, and teens do not want to risk another foster family.

"We will serve 18 young people in transitional housing that is like a college dorm, where they have their own bedrooms but share living and kitchen space," she said.

Those in the program, who are studying or employed, can live in a more stable situation than a night-by-night shelter. They can build adult skills in one to two years until they find an apartment and full employment.

For Bridget, the new building is her next challenge. She plans to assist through the construction, while funds are raised, and as the program is established.

"When I eventually retire, I'll likely continue to volunteer with Crosswalk," she said.

Bridget has been the face of Crosswalk with her visits to many area faith communities, especially before COVID.

"The faith communities pro-

vide food and donations. Their volunteers who listen and communicate the teens' inherent self-worth have made a difference," she said. "Without the faith communities, I'm unsure we would have lasted for the 40 years since Crosswalk's founding in 1985."

Faith community volunteers collect underwear at MardiBras events. Some have also built beds and helped women move into Hope House.

"Harriet the Shoe Lady" from the Unitarian Universalist Church for years provided hundreds of pairs of sneakers and other shoes," said Bridget, who is not part of an organized faith community but values how faith communities mobilize response.

"Our staff are passionate to provide compassionate care and

understanding for the young people. They do not work for money. They know they have an impact," Bridget said.

Asked what her dream job would be, she said, "This is it."

For information, call 688-1120 or email bcannon@voaspokane.org.

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# National leader said Fig Tree showed up at her office and she read it

Continued from page 1  
level and through Fig Tree articles, I had a glimpse into what was happening in Spokane. I realized our work in the national settings was making sense in a local community," Karen Georgia said. "I am grateful for that glimpse."

Thirteen years later, The Fig Tree still comes to that office. Someone else is there, but she discovered she can read it online, so she stays connected to how the Inland Northwest "is living and creating the beloved community the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. dreamed about."

**Karen Georgia shared** more about fig trees.

"Some believe the large roots of the fig tree represent the past. Its trunk represents the present, and its branches represent the future," she said. "Forty years is a long time and is to be applauded as we look at the history of The Fig Tree captured in an article on the website."

"I was pleased to see that the World Council of Churches (WCC) wrote a wonderful article about The Fig Tree, too. The WCC is in Geneva, so we are talking about global," she added.

**From serving on** the WCC's Central Committee and Executive Committee, she sees that The Fig Tree amplifies and connects people to that global body.

"Our work ecumenically is only alive and well in the ways it happens in local communities," she said.

**Karen Georgia shared** one of her poems, "painting pictures" to give insights on words and stories. Here is an excerpt:

"Let them fly these words that cannot die, adrift across time and space.

"Let fly these words, a gift of beauty to share.

"Let them go painting pictures on their way."

Karen Georgia believes both written and spoken words have power and "the stories we tell create something as they go out. When I talk about stories, I am talking about the truth we tell rather than the fiction we create or the exaggerated tales we spread as gossip that damages.

**"Stories connect us** and move us closer together, offering us the opportunity to hear and learn from each other differently," she said.

As the UCC ecumenical and interfaith relations minister from 2011 to 2019, there were stories of being present for historic moments and being part of creating something new that would spark



**Karen Georgia Thompson also spoke at Pacific Northwest UCC.**

later in a local community.

Karen Georgia experiences that community is more than local.

**"We are part of a global** community and contribute to the experiences of others in the world," she said.

In 2013, she organized the UCC delegation to the 10th Assembly of the WCC in Busan, South Korea. From Oct. 20 to Nov. 8, 25 from the UCC around the U.S. participated in meetings, worship and plenaries with 4,000 others.

"There I met Mary. We had traded emails ahead of the meeting," she said. "We met for dinner twice and shared as we learned in the broader community. I still have relationships forged at Busan.

**"I appreciate seeing Fig Tree** staff in these global ecumenical spaces. Gen Heywood, pastor of Veradale UCC, was in Karlsruhe, Germany, to cover the 11th Assembly for The Fig Tree," Karen Georgia said.

"Connecting the local to the global is important because often our 24-hour news cycle does not afford us the opportunity to make meaning of the ways in which we are connected. The spaces we create for healing from and sharing with each other are important," she said, noting that technology has changed communication with voicemail, email, Zoom and messages connecting people, along with the old-fashioned way of meeting in person.

Some days she laments the distance that comes with tech-

allenge injustice as advocates, allies and activists?" she asked.

"Our ability to stand against injustice as people of faith is supported by stories," she said. "Movements for justice in this country and globally are captured in stories of coalitions built, relationships forged and communities transcending differences to ensure that all are treated with respect and are able to live lives with full human dignity."

UCC archives are full of stories about the civil rights movement, the Black Lives Matter movement, the women's movement, the poor people's campaign, the March on Washington and more.

**"In these stories, we hear** ways people came together to make a difference—stories of communities of faith answering the call to love faithfully," Karen Georgia said. "In such moments, the hope for a world to come is made manifest. One of the most powerful places for stories is in places we experience as different. If we share our deepest learnings when we sit with others and listen to stories others share about their life experiences, we learn and we are transformed.

**"We give safety and learn** when we are nonjudgmental in the presence of a story and allow ourselves to be in the moment, listening to make meaning of what we hear," she said.

"Stories drive a point home in personal, engaging ways. Stories bring far-away places to our front doors and allow us to ask questions to dig deeper. Listening to the raw truth of people's experiences in the U.S. and around the world through stories has given me the gift of being more prepared to be a stronger advocate and activist for change," she added.

Karen Georgia said she gained insights from hearing stories of comfort women in Japan, hearing how climate change is eroding shores and salinating soil in Bangladesh, and learning of Nigerian families torn apart by religious violence.

**"What stories are we willing** to tell to bring the change we want to see?" she asked.

"Our relationships require mutuality in sharing and hearing stories. We have to create space to create community," she said, closing with her poem, "beautiful gift."

"The gift is love," she said. "What we don't have is time and so in every moment that happens that is given to us, we have the power of our words. We have the power of engagement, and we have the power to create and share stories that make a difference, empower our lives and also have the power to change the world."

For information, email [ucc.org](mailto:ucc.org) or [oikoumene.org](http://oikoumene.org).





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# Elise DeGooyer seeks new avenues to continue commitment to justice

After 10 years as co-director and then executive director of the Faith Action Network (FAN) of Washington, Elise DeGooyer is seeking a new way to continue her commitment to justice.

“Like every position I have held, it will likely be a calling in human services and justice work,” she said.

“As executive director, I worked with the staff and board to gather people of faith and conscience to have impact on politicians and communities,” she said, “helping FAN live into being statewide and multifaith.”

The FAN Board will work with a transition consultant, Rose Waterstone, to survey the FAN network stakeholders and determine future leadership and directions with the goal of having new leadership in place by fall.

In 2014, Elise started working with FAN as co-director with Paul Benz, who focused on public policy. He has formed Partners for Social Change to continue his work.

Her role with FAN has focused on administration, fundraising, development and finance.

Motivating her desire to change policies, she brought passion from being program manager for children’s nutrition at Northwest Harvest statewide, from working with unhoused women at the Church of Mary Magdalene’s Mary’s Place and from research at the University of Washington (UW) School of Social Work on HIV-AIDs prevention for mostly women.

“Feeding programs, food banks, housing programs and homeless shelters all address problems that have policy solutions,” she said. “We will only make the changes needed when we have political solutions to the problems.”

At Northwest Harvest, Mary’s Place and the UW, she saw the need for advocacy.

“While faith communities help people survive and provide care and compassion, they do not have the resources or time to address all the problems,” Elise pointed out. “We need to go to the source of the problems and change policies that harm people.”

Elise, who grew up in Yakima, graduated from Gonzaga University in 1983 with a bachelor’s degree in journalism and religious studies. She spent the next year as a Jesuit Volunteer at Father McKenna Center in Washington, D.C., when mental health care was deinstitutionalized, putting more people on the streets.

“I saw that there were few supports and no housing for people,” said Elise, who observed that at that time there were few women or families who were homeless.

“It escalated from there be-



Elise DeGooyer reflects on her 10 years at Faith Action Network.

cause there was limited time for other social services to address systemic causes. More churches opened doors as food banks and shelters, and joined coalitions to address systemic issues,” she pointed out.

She returned to Seattle to work in human services and run a food bank at the multicultural St. Mary’s Catholic Church, where many came for food and emergency services.

After that, she helped start Sojourner Place, a shelter-to-transitional living program, sponsored by the Sisters of Providence.

Elise completed a master’s degree in liberation theology and cross-cultural ministry at Maryknoll School of Theology in Ossining NY, in 1991.

“I have always sought to combine my faith with social justice and social change,” she said.

At FAN, Elise worked with Paul Benz and Kristin Ang, who built relationships with legislators to drive policy changes based on values and priorities the FAN board and staff established.

To accomplish that, she helped FAN expand staff to 10—six full-time equivalency—to live into its goal of being statewide by hiring part-time regional organizers. They have expanded FAN’s presence in Spokane, Tri-Cities/Yakima and Wenatchee.

The idea to have regional organizers developed when FAN helped with the 2020 census outreach, and identified trusted local people as messengers to promote COVID vaccinations.

Elise is proud of political

changes she worked on with FAN, representing decades of advocacy.

For her, ending the death penalty and removing it from Washington state law was a major effort of the faith community for many decades.

“The governor called for a moratorium. The Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional, but we needed to take it out of the law so another governor could not come and reinstate it,” Elise said.

She was with a group of faith-based lobbyists when that law was signed, noting that one who had worked for that goal for 30 years sobbed at the accomplishment.

“It shows the power of persistence,” she said. “Systemic change takes time and hard work.”

Another long-term effort bore fruit in 2024. The Working Families Tax Credit passed 10 years ago but was not funded until last year and has provided much needed cash to people.

“There have been so many victories over the years, and it has been worth the effort,” she said, referring people to the accomplishments listed at fanwa.org/advocacy/legislative-agenda.

In addition to reviewing action related to priorities of protecting the safety net, advancing immigrant and refugee rights, promoting economic justice, increasing affordable housing, addressing environmental justice, fostering civil rights, expanding access to health care and persevering for criminal justice reform, the page

lists past legislative successes back to 2011.

Those include passing police accountability bills in 2018, supporting missing and murdered indigenous women, and protecting renters from eviction and rate increases.

Every year, FAN requests more money for the Housing Trust Fund, money faith communities can access when they build housing on their property.

FAN addresses many issues, Elise said.

“The agenda develops out of conversation with FAN’s network, which is how we added climate change and environmental justice, youth mental health

issues and gun responsibility,” Elise said. “We are responsive to what faith communities are most interested in.”

“It has been energizing and invigorating working with FAN,” Elise said. “I have met amazing people across the state whose vision and faith inspires us to do incredible things.”

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## Camps and Retreat Centers

## Lutherhaven campers encounter creation and create community

A new climbing tower, a summer full of youth and family camps, 600 youth groups serving in the Silver Valley and new facilities are among the ways Lutherhaven will offer opportunities for campers of all ages to “encounter creation, create community and commune with Christ,” summarized Rebecca Smith, who is in her second year as executive director of Lutherhaven.

The 2024 summer theme is “Together!”

“In life, one of the best sources of joy, authenticity and faith formation comes from being in healthy community with one another; from being together,” said Rebecca.

The theme is inspired by Colossians 3:12-14: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a



Lutherhaven campers gather by the lake for evening worship. Photo courtesy of Lutherhaven

grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you; and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

Rebecca commented that “some days, our world feels like a place where there can be more division than unity, and camp will always be a place where the mission remains the same. It is a space where all may gather to reconnect and experience abundant life, as together we encounter

creation, create community and commune with Christ.”

“After 25 years, the climbing tower has outlived its lifespan. A new tower is in the works and the exterior is now complete and funded thanks to the camp’s endowment,” she said, noting that campers can use it this summer.

Lutherhaven needs help to fund the next phase to complete the interior of the tower and allow campers to climb in all kinds of weather.

“That’s important for outdoor education students,” said Rebecca, sharing the link for that project: [givebutter.com/hzJCOU](https://givebutter.com/hzJCOU).

Lutherhaven offers a variety of summer camp experiences, including Champ Camp with one-on-one staffing care for children and youth with disabilities.

There are group camps for confirmation and youth groups, families and Idaho Servant Adventures, which is for groups and also individuals.

There are also age-group camps and family camps at Camp Lutherhaven on Lake Coeur d’Alene, at Shoshone Mountain Retreat and Shoshone Creek Ranch. There are offsite adventure camps, Silver Valley day camps, and day camps for congregations.

Details on camps and dates are at [lutherhaven.com/programs/summer-camps](https://lutherhaven.com/programs/summer-camps).

Rebecca expects that students from youth groups across

the United States will come to Shoshone Mountain Retreat, Shoshone Creek Ranch and Camp Lutherhaven programs this summer.

“Last year, 521 participants volunteered more than 8,336 hours of simple, significant service through Idaho Servant Adventures,” she reported, referring people to learn more about Idaho Servant Adventures at [lutherhaven.com/isa](https://lutherhaven.com/isa).

Last fall, Lutherhaven completed the 9,000-square-foot North Garden Lodge, Rebecca said. “It’s luxurious and modern, especially compared to typical camp buildings.”

The new eight-bedroom lodge is a waterfront retreat center for board, pastoral and other weekend retreats, for community and environmental gatherings, and for day events such as family reunions and parties. It accommodates groups with eight to 38 guests.

For information, call 208-667-3459 or visit [lutherhaven.com](https://lutherhaven.com).

## N-Sid-Sen camp worship, discussion will focus on ‘Linked by Love’

N-Sid-Sen Camp and Retreat Center, a ministry of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC), is again planning its aqua and adventure camps as part of the 2024 summer sessions.

For four weeks, the camp is directed by volunteers from conference churches in the setting of woodlands, creeks and meadows with a mile of shoreline along the east side of Lake Coeur d’Alene.

“We will welcome children, youth, families and adults from infancy to senior adults who come to explore, grow and renew in groups of 16 to 150,” said Pam Peterson, designated managing director. “Guests and campers come from a wide variety of backgrounds, faith traditions and community groups.”

Woven in with the year’s theme, “Linked by Love,” each camp will have morning watch, evening vespers and a closing worship. Activities include swimming, boating, kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding, tubing, water skiing, hiking, field games, wacky games, arts and crafts, campfires, sing-a-longs and star gazing.

The first week, July 14 to 21, junior high campers in grades 7 to 9 will do a float trip down the



Youth join game to keep their arms linked while eating a meal. Photo courtesy of N-Sid-Sen

Spokane River—an aqua camp tradition—and the fifth and sixth grade intermediate campers will have a float day in the swim cove.

“Junior high campers come to rekindle old friendships and discover new ones, plus engage in meaningful conversations on the summer’s theme with peers and leaders,” she said.

To introduce camping to young children, N-Sid-Sen offers two camps: You and Me Camp from July 22 to 24 for an adult family member with a child or children in grades 1 to 4. Kids Camp from July 24 to 27 is for children in grades 2 to 4. You and Me campers in grades 2 to 4 can opt to stay the full week.

Both camps share meals and campfire time with Senior High

campers, who are there July 22 to 27 and overlap with both camps to maximize use of the facilities.

Senior High camp also features the “aqua camp” Spokane River float trip, tubing, boating, swimming and campfire time.

“When multiple age groups are in camp at the same times, the sessions operate separately, and kids are in cabins with their age group, but there is mixed interaction during meals and campfires,” said Pam.

“Making a new friend, exploring trails, jumping into the lake may seem like simple fun, but, in reality, the campers are gaining critical social skills, independence and awareness of God and creation.”

The third and fourth weeks—July 28 to Aug. 4 and Aug. 4 to 10—are “Family Camps” for family members of all ages and generations.

In addition to the camps for children, youth and families, N-Sid-Sen has an Emerging Young Adult Camp June 14 to 17 for ages 19 to 35, a long weekend retreat for young adults to play together and explore ways God is moving in the world. It also

includes time to do an optional service project, as well as free time to enjoy the site.

“The Pacific Northwest Conference offers scholarships for those needing financial assistance,” said Pam. “Campers do not need to be associated with a United Church of Christ receive funds to attend the camps.”

For information, call 208-689-3489 or visit website [N-Sid-Sen.org](https://N-Sid-Sen.org).

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Camps and Retreat Centers

# Camp Cross' new canon invites participatory leadership

Alex Flannagan, the new canon for camp, youth and family ministry for the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane, started two months ago and spent his first weeks at Camp Cross for the May 17 to 19 Labor of Love and May 24 to 26 Youth Labor of Love camps.

As he worked with the volunteers to de-winter, clean and spruce up the camp for the summer season, he heard their stories of Camp Cross on the western shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene.

With registration numbers on trend with recent years, he is focusing on the June training of 12 staff members who will be there all summer.

"I enjoy empowering people in participatory leadership," he said, likening top-down leadership to a spider and participatory leadership to a starfish. "If a spider's head is cut off, it dies. If a starfish loses a leg, it grows another."

For summer 2024, Camp Cross' eight weeks of camps include two family camps. They will work with 20 volunteer counselors who will help with one or two sessions.

"Speak Lord, for We Are Listening" is the theme for the camps and the diocese this year.



Labor of Love campers share a meal as they come to open up the camp for the summer season. Photo courtesy of the camp

Campers will enjoy hiking, boating, swimming, singing and campfires while building relationships with new and old friends and learning values of relationships, prayer, discipleship and service.

Previously, Alex worked 10 summers at Camp Huston with the Diocese of Olympia. He came there through the Camp America international exchange as a counselor and guitar player.

Alex, who grew up Methodist near Manchester, England, had studied politics and sociology for a year at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, when he met two young men with Camp

America. After a summer at Camp Huston, he returned to study international hospitality and management at the University of Central Lancashire, graduating in 2013.

He returned summers to Camp Huston for 10 years and moved in 2018 to work as youth ministry coordinator with the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia.

During COVID, he worked as a camping consultant, advising Camp Blue Spruce, an overnight camp for children with food allergies; assisting Episcopal churches in youth ministry; leading two-mile Holy Hikes in Western Washington, and working with

monthly Anti-Racism Collective Circles of Color on Zoom.

Alex said Camp Cross offers a two-night mini-camp session for young campers early in the summer.

July and August include one-week Intermediate Camp, Arts Camp, Outdoor Adventure Camp, Mid-High Camp and Senior High Camp, plus a Labor Day Family Camp and an Adult Weekend in September.

For information, call 624-3151 or visit [campcross.org](http://campcross.org).

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# Camp Sanders will repair its tabernacle

By Sofia Sanchez - intern

This year Camp Sanders is raising money to refurbish and restore the camp's 89-year-old tabernacle, which is used for large gatherings. As of May 24, they had raised \$104,990, two-thirds of the \$150,000 needed.

Christy Gallogly, the executive director and manager of Camp Sanders for more than three years, hopes to have the tabernacle finished by next summer.

The walls are leaning and the building needs a new foundation.

Repairs are important because the camp will celebrate its 90th anniversary in 2025.

"We're trying to have that tabernacle completed for a homecoming event next July," said Christy, whose connection to the camp goes back to when she began attending Camp Sanders as a child.

She moved to Kansas City but, after her children left, she decided to go back to the Pacific Northwest where she grew up.

Her favorite thing about Camp Sanders is meeting and working with people from different backgrounds, and especially sharing in the ministry and encouraging people from all over.

This summer, Camp Sanders



Tabernacle at Camp Sanders needs major renovations. Photo courtesy of the camp

near Tensed, Idaho, plans a variety of camps, including a men's camp and a women's retreat held in April; Kids Camp, July 8 to 11, and Family Camp, July 4 to 7. In the fall, Camp Sanders hosts a 55+ Adult Retreat.

These events highlight the camp's commitment to serving people of all ages and backgrounds, and providing opportu-

nities for people to enjoy the rustic rural setting on 90 acres with a creek and small recreational pond.

The camp accommodates up to 175 people in dorms, cabins and bunkhouses. It also has 10 RV spaces. It rents the facilities from April to October.

For information, call 208-892-4842, email [campsanders@gmail.com](mailto:campsanders@gmail.com) or visit [campsanders.net](http://campsanders.net).

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Camps and Retreat Centers

# Ross Point engages, encourages and equips campers

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A ministry of Mission Northwest, serving the American Baptist Churches USA, the camp welcomes other denominations and nonprofits to the site purchased in 1948 on the Spokane River.

The age-group church camps run from July 14 to Aug. 3, with Middler Camp on site from July 14 to 17 simultaneous with Junior High Camp, which runs to July 19, followed by a weekend "My First Camp." Junior Camp and Senior High Camp are July



Children join in a team building activity at Ross Point.

21 to 26. Family Camp is July 28 to Aug. 3.

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Ross Point also offers fall and spring youth retreats for sixth

to 12th graders plus couples, singles, men, women, family weekends and church retreats, along with renting its facilities to community groups.

Camp Journey, which is for children and families experiencing cancer provides a fun

outdoor camp experience in a setting with trained oncology staff onsite. Camp Journey has a resident camp Aug. 4 to 10, day camps Aug. 5 to 8, and a family camp Sept. 14 to 15.

For information, call 208-773-1655 or visit [rosspoint.org](http://rosspoint.org).

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# Enrollment normalizes at UMC camps

Final preparations are underway to open the doors to summer programs in June at the four United Methodist camps—Twinlow in North Idaho, Lazy F outside Ellensburg, Indianola on the Kitsap Peninsula on Puget Sound, and Ocean Park Camp on the Long Beach Peninsula.

"Enrollment continues to normalize after the effects of COVID closures," said Alan Rogstad, executive director of camping and retreat ministries for the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church (PNW-UMC).

"The 2020 and 2021 seasons, when we canceled programming, created an interruption in the continuity of families sending their kids to camp. We are still seeing effects of that. It is also manifest in hiring the 50 seasonal staff we need for our four camps," he said. "As for many service industries, hiring enough staff is a challenge. Many camps underestimated the impact of the closures, but 2024 has been a return to our pre-2020 numbers."

This year the popular programs include day camps, family camps and specialty programs, which have filled quickly.

"Traditional week-long overnight camps are slower to fill, but doing well, which is a good trend," Alan reported.

"Nationwide, camps report a shift," he said. "Families seem to want more flexibility in programs for their kids. Week-long or longer sleepover programs



Youth enjoy music in a boat on Spirit Lake at Twinlow.

Photo courtesy of Alan Rogstad

seem less popular than day camps, which have the option for parents to have their children opt-out for a day or two, then come back."

In addition, he sees a trend for kids being enrolled in day camps for several weeks or more.

Another trend is for specialty programs offering a specific experience, as well as family camps where families come to share the camp experience together.

The PNW-UMC 2024 theme is "Building Blocks of Faith."

"The purpose is to give campers some context on why we believe what we believe," Alan said. "Each day has a construction theme starting with the foundation and ending with an open house, because God's love is meant for everyone. Along with a daily theme to do with construction is a Bible story. Campers have practical biblical stories to teach them the foundations of our faith."

"The whole Bible has lessons for us," Alan said. "Teaching campers how to see God's love throughout the Bible is another key to this curriculum."

For information, call 206-870-6807 or visit [pnwumc.org/ministries/camping](http://pnwumc.org/ministries/camping).

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Camps and Retreat Centers

# Camp Spalding fills camps, plans to expand its facilities for more

Andy Sonneland, executive director of Camp Spalding for 34 years, reported that more campers were registered for this summer than ever before. Within the first 24 hours of camp registration opening on March 11, 850 registered.

“We have sold out camps and waiting lists without advertising,” he said.

As a result, Camp Spalding on Davis Lake near Newport is expanding its facilities to accommodate more campers. Last year they covered and screened a dining deck to seat 50 more people, adding to the existing seating of 250 in the dining hall.

“We are working on our waterfront area to expand usable space with 5,000 square feet of tiered patios, restrooms, a snack bar and new boat house,” Andy said.

In addition, Camp Spalding is planning to raise money from donors and camper families to build two more cabins next year.

“The Gospel is still good news, and it’s what we continue



Screened dining deck seats 50 more people. Photo courtesy of the camp

to share,” he said. “We continue to pursue the mission of this camp established long before I came.

“Young people still want to know and follow Jesus,” Andy continued. “Yes, camp is a blast. It’s a super fun week, but kids come back because they experience the presence of Christ and community with others who follow Jesus.

“It’s not the facilities or toys,

but it’s coming to know Jesus more deeply and follow him more closely,” he affirmed.

Brief messages shared at campfires and follow-up cabin discussions look at life’s questions and “how the words and life of Jesus are relevant to the campers’ world.”

Andy said 83 percent of campers last summer came from other than the historical constituency of the camp, the Presbytery of

the Inland Northwest. Twenty years ago, most came from Presbyterian churches in the region.

Most are from communities in the Inland Northwest.

Camp Spalding offers two sessions for every age group. There are half-week sessions for second- to fourth-graders, and full-week sessions for grades five and six, seven and eight, and

nine to 12. Other camps include a leadership camp and a family camp.

“We have nine weeks of program camps for children, youth and families led by summer staff of 40 college and post-college individuals who serve as role models and mentors.

For information, call 731-4244 or visit [campspalding.org](http://campspalding.org).

# Camp Gifford invites low-income kids

Ron Molina, Camp Gifford’s business manager and camp director since June 2023, is an ordained Church of the Nazarene elder who supports the camp’s mission of bringing low-income and struggling children and youth for a week of camp where they can experience God’s love and the Gospel message.

Thirty-four years ago, he moved from Southern California to the Inland Northwest to be manager of Pinelow Park Camp, operated by the Church of the Nazarene. He worked there 18 years, then 11 years as men’s chaplain with Union Gospel Mission and several years in the auto industry.

Brian Pickering, communication specialist at The Salvation Army Spokane, said that William Booth, who founded The Salvation Army in England in 1865, advocated for justice for those who are neglected, abused, poor and oppressed.

“We agree on ministering to children and youth through creating a safe and sacred space at camp, giving them refuge, shelter and respite where they can come to a saving knowledge of Christ,” said Ron.

Brian said The Salvation Army recruits children ages seven to 17 from its programs—Sally’s House and Stepping Stones—and impoverished communities to come to camp with scholarships that cover on a sliding scale much of the \$400 cost for a week.

For the last four years, The Spokesman-Review has helped raise funds through “Send a Kid



Girls await a water adventure. Photo courtesy of the camp

to Camp.” Funds also come to The Salvation Army all year from donors.

The goal is to support 700 to 1,000 kids for six weeks of camp from June 24 to Aug. 2.

Brian said that before COVID, 1,000 kids often came to camps.

“We are rebuilding the numbers, aware parents are slowly sending kids back to camps,” he said, noting that other camps are experiencing the same post-COVID dynamics.

Ron said that Camp Gifford has Discovery Camp sessions each week for children ages seven to 12 to spend time swimming, being in nature, doing arts and having community time.

Each week there is also a Wilderness Camp for 24 youth ages 13 to 17 who stay in a remote area of the camp in rustic shelters with no running water. They learn survival skills, do

team building, hike, swim and worship in an outdoor chapel. Each week, there is space for 12 girls and 12 boys.

Ron, who is responsible for the program development, said there are openings for some of the 50 staff roles as program directors and counselors. Staff orientation is June 17.

Camp Gifford is open year-round for school groups, church retreats, business groups, outdoor education and more. Those groups renting the camp help support it.

Memorial Weekend, 260 of the camp’s 294 beds were filled with members of Pilgrim Slavic Baptist Church coming for a retreat.

Brian noted that at 102 years old, Camp Gifford is the oldest Salvation Army camp in one location in the U.S.

For information, call 223-2511 or visit [campgifford.com](http://campgifford.com).

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# Drummers and Dancers build legacy of cross-cultural understanding

By Marijke Fakasiieiki

Grant Elementary School Drummers and Dancers celebrate their 50th anniversary of commitment to cross-cultural understanding and creativity from 5:30 to 7 p.m., Friday, June 7 at the school, 1300 E. Ninth Ave.

“It’s an important part of the East Central neighborhood, which has been and still is one of the most diverse in Spokane, with more and more recent students coming from around the world as refugees and immigrants,” said Kevin Cope, who has been Grant’s music teacher and leader of the Drummers and Dancers program since 1999.

In a video released in May, the founder, Margot Dries, who started the program in 1974, said she wanted children in Grant Elementary School to gain cultural experience, have a sense of belonging and set lofty goals.

For 25 years, Kevin, who was recruited to teach at Grant Elementary School from Glover Middle School because of his drumming experience, has trained several generations of students to work hard, set goals, practice weekly and perform authentic African dances comfortably in front of audiences.

At first Drummers and Dancers was for fourth to sixth grade students. Now third graders can join.

The program has grown over the years, using more African instruments and importing African fabric for dresses for girls and dashikis for boys.

Performances take the group to the Fall Folk Festival, the Martin Luther King Jr. March, the Junior Lilac Parade and four to five school cultural events a year. They will perform for the 50th anniversary of Expo ’74.

The group, which includes 48 this year, performs a diverse set of dances from cultures throughout Africa. They are accompanied by Kevin and students drumming—not a recording.

At performances, former students join the last dance, “Vanati Go.”

The kids meet after school weekly to learn and practice dances.

“I make rehearsals positive. I have students stretch and work hard, and I tell them, ‘Well done!’ It’s a thrill to see the kids responding to applause and see their faces beam when high schoolers from Lewis & Clark cheer for them,” Kevin said.

While the group once learned from the leaders only, now they also watch videos of African dancers online. They are able to mimic them and use more authentic gestures and movements.

“We’ve added more energetic dances. Videos help with African dance warmups and help the kids understand what they should



Grant Drummers and Dancers gather in Riverfront Park after Junior Lilac Parade.

Photo courtesy of Grant School

look and feel like, so they are now less stiff. They shake their bodies, lift their chests and move as African dancers,” said Kevin.

With Internet, they have also been able to share. Seven years ago, with the help of the Spokane Symphony, they did a live conference call with Kamehameha School in Honolulu, and shared dances with each other.

They’ve also made the dances and program more interactive, inviting audience participation, teaching words of songs, children’s games and stories about African culture, and explaining what the dances mean and what culture they come from.

Kevin believes education is important because there is much ignorance in the community and America in general about African culture. Many learn misinformation from movies.

“It is easier for us to be kind to people if we understand where they are coming from,” said Kevin.

“For Africans, family is important, and children are important. In many African cultures, taking care of children is the responsibility not just of parents, but also the whole community,” he said.

“Drummers and Dancers has taught many kids responsibility. Many, whose home lives were tough, come back and say that Drummers and Dancers provided stability, family and friends. Kids would hang out as a group, helping each other stay out of trouble,” he said.

In his second or third year at Grant, Kevin had a flat tire on

his way to school and missed the 7:30 a.m. practice. He had no way to contact the principal. The custodian had let the kids in. After Kevin arrived at 9:30 a.m., he learned that the sixth graders ran the rehearsal, and the principal had watched them.

As adults, former students have let leaders know the goals instilled have been crucial in their success.

One former student said it inspired her to study at Gonzaga University.

Because it is an important program for Grant Elementary School, Kevin always has to teach new principals about Drummers and Dancers.

He especially has to do that when there are budget cuts, and school administrators are tempted to cancel all afterschool activities.

Several years ago, when it seemed that was going to happen, TEAM Grant, the Parent Teacher group, funded the program so it would keep going. They have bought drums, provided support for participating in parades and volunteer as chaperones.

“It makes a difference to keep the program,” Kevin said.

The pandemic also had an impact. The group was not able to practice together for almost two years, so when they came back together, only two students had performed in public.

“We basically started over from zero by using videos of prior years,” said Kevin.

Joelene Garland, assistant director, and Kevin, taught the

kids, but the kids also taught each other, showing how the dance movements should look.

“I believe in giving everyone

a chance, no matter what their background is or where they come from,” Kevin said, “the kids just need someone to show them we are brothers and sisters.

“With events in recent years, we need to celebrate our differences,” he said.

Kevin now also teaches music in some other schools, but he knows that at Grant Elementary he’s making a difference and having an impact on the kids’ lives, giving them something to work for.

This reporter, her two siblings and her three children were among others who have participated for two generations of Drummers and Dancers from the 1990s to 2019.

For information, call 354-2800, email grantdrummers-dancers@gmail.com or see facebook.com/GrantDrummers-Dancers.



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# Thrive and library collaborate on housing and community services

Thrive International in Spokane launched a housing partnership with the Spokane Public Library in Northeast Spokane to provide 48 affordable one- and two-bedroom apartments for refugees and to respond to the local housing crisis.

On May 15, Thrive and the library announced plans to develop affordable housing and a shared library facility on 1.62 acres at 6980 N. Nevada St. in Northeast Spokane.

The library plans programs to engage the community and provide services for residents.

“The partnership is a unique way to welcome refugees while addressing our affordable housing crisis,” said Lidia Pauline,

director of housing at Thrive. “We seek to broaden our mission of empowering refugees to move from surviving to thriving while also contributing a community asset to enhance the lives of residents in Northeast Spokane.”

Elected officials, project investors, community members and representatives of partner organizations attended an event.

“Innovative collaboration, like that between Thrive and the library, is what will help solve our affordable housing crisis,” said Mayor Lisa Brown.

While other cities have collaborative public-private projects, this is unique because it houses refugees. The project is being developed by Millennium North-

west, with investment support by Courage Housing.

In Spokane, Thrive partners with World Relief, which resettles about 700 refugees, and the International Rescue Committee, which opened a new office in Spokane to resettle an additional 250 refugees, said Mark Finney, executive director of Thrive.

Ukrainians are nearly 90 percent of the residents at the Thrive Center on E. 4th Ave., along with Hispanic, Afghans, Arabic speakers and some from Haiti. Creole Resources started recently to work with Haitians.

Mark reported that five to 10 families move in and out each month as staff help them find jobs and apartments.

Thrive, which was founded in Spokane in 2022, serves several thousand refugees and immigrants annually with housing, education and empowerment programs.

In addition, the center offers women’s and youth programs.

For two years, Pingala Dhital has worked primarily with Afghan refugee women to make jewelry to learn job skills. Sajda Nelson meets with women for tea and offers driving classes.

Mark said the youth program soccer camp the end of June for 200 to 300 youth needs coaches. Youth activities include weekly youth sports with the YMCA and monthly outings to lakes, snowshoeing and hiking to learn about

outdoor recreation opportunities.

There are also music, art and dance programs for youth.

“We seek to build community, because refugee and immigrant children and youth need friends who have experienced what they have experienced,” Mark said.

He is excited that the partnership with the library for housing includes a community center with a 1,500-square-foot room.

Mark said Thrive is the largest provider of supportive housing for refugees and migrants in Washington, with 200 residents in Thrive Center Spokane and 350 at the DoubleTree Hotel SeaTac.

For information, email [nara@thriveinternational.org](mailto:nara@thriveinternational.org) or visit [thriveint.org](http://thriveint.org).

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# Son being shot involves mother in efforts for police accountability

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

Some people have a day in their lives that changes everything—their view of life and what is important, their understanding of their life’s work and their daily activities.

For Debbie Novak, a part-time real estate broker, wife and mother of four and a grandmother of 10, who lives near Nine Mile Falls, that day was Jan. 7, 2019, when her unarmed 35-year-old son, David, was shot by a police officer.

To this day, hanging from the second story of her home is a banner saying, “Justice for David.”

The story of that night is similar to the stories of others who have been shot and killed because of police action. It occurred in a poor neighborhood. There was also alcohol involved. There was the suspected presence of a gun.

It was about 10:30 p.m. David and a neighbor he didn’t know well were drinking and had an argument. David got a baseball bat and was hitting his beat-up truck making loud noises that some reports claimed sounded like gunshots. The neighbor called the police and said David had a gun.

Several officers responded to what they mistakenly thought was “an active shooter” call. At a press conference later, the county prosecutor said the first officer heard what sounded to him like the blast of a loud shotgun.

When the officer arrived, he said he heard what sounded like three gunshots. Debbie said these sounds did not show up on his body cam footage, and neighbors interviewed later said they did not hear gunshots other than the officer’s shot.

He told David to drop the gun. David dropped the bat and turned to go into his house. From 78 feet away, after being there less than eight seconds in the dark, the officer shot him in the back. David fell through the front door of his house and died.

In the investigation weeks later, the police said they thought there might be hostages or more people in the house.

What changed that day for Debbie was the loss of her son, and, perhaps as important as time went on, she had a growing sense that God was calling her to make a difference saving lives of others by researching how such tragedies happen, then working to make a change in police procedures and policies.

“I don’t know how someone without faith and something to



Debbie Novak’s life changed the day police shot her son.

fall back on can face something like this. My family and my church have been so supportive. I feel God has put me here to do this work. The Bible quote ‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith’ inspires me.” Debbie said.

At first, she felt anger and frustration trying to find out what actually happened.

In August, seven months later, the county prosecutor held a press conference to deliver his findings and announce that the officer would not be charged with any crime. The prosecutor did not notify her family of the press conference. Devastated, the Novak family filed a civil lawsuit, which eventually was settled for \$4 million.

At a press conference announcing the lawsuit, Debbie said, “The Spokane Investigative Regional Response Team had not released its findings to the family, nor had the prosecutor returned our phone calls, despite requests to be informed of findings prior to his press conference. One of the most difficult things was the lack of transparency of the Spokane Police Department. We couldn’t see the complete records, the body cam pictures or even the names of the other officers present.”

Through efforts since then, Debbie has hoped to see more changes in statewide policies to reduce police violence and increase police accountability.

Recently, however, she was appalled to read the report from the “Mapping Police Violence” Official Police Violence Database with data from 2013 to 2024. It ranks the Spokane Police Department as number 2 out of the 100 largest cities in the U.S. for average police killings.

This report indicates that the average number of police killings per million in those years was 10.0 in Spokane. Seattle, the only other Washington city

listed, had an average rate of 3.9.

Although David was white, the database indicates that in Washington State, Native Americans and Blacks are each four times more likely to be killed by police than are whites.

Working through the Washington Coalition for Police Accountability (WCPA) for several years, Debbie has advocated for statewide policies to reduce police violence and increase police accountability.

The coalition, formed in June 2020, grew out of advocacy for Initiative 940, approved in November 2018. It changed laws related to police behavior. It changed the standard for justifiable use of force, put training standards for de-escalation into state law, required first aid to be rendered at the scene, required that criminal investigations of police use of force be separate from the involved agency, and mandated that implementing these policies include the impacted community.

The coalition provides Debbie with a place to work with other advocates and with families of others killed by police to make changes needed to save the lives of people at risk of police violence.

Her research into changes in policies related to policing follows the work of the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission.

“Two of the main issues in police accountability are training for de-escalation and leadership,” she explained. “There is no single training class on de-escalation. There are classes on different aspects of de-escalation, like crisis intervention and shoot-don’t shoot situations but no class brings all the elements together.”

Debbie believes that, if the officer involved had been better trained in de-escalation, her son would not have been shot and killed in the few seconds after

the officer arrived.

“If police would use tools they have on hand, which taxpayer money has purchased—tasers, rubber bullets and pepper spray—lives would be saved,” she said.

Debbie highlighted some legislation she believes helps decrease police violence in Washington, legislation the WCPA promoted.

In 2021, Senate Bill 5051 added more civilians to the Criminal Justice Training Commission and gave them more oversight for use-of-force incidents.

In 2021, House Bill 1054 limited police to engaging in a high-speed pursuit only if there is “probable cause” to arrest a person in a vehicle for committing a specific violent crime such as murder, kidnapping, drive-by shooting or rape.

“This restriction helped decrease death and injury caused by chases,” Debbie said. “In 2023, this law was weakened to allow chases if there was ‘reasonable suspicion.’”

In 2024, Governor Jay Inslee signed into law a bill prohibiting hog-tying, a practice that can cause death by suffocation.

Debbie pointed out that for the third year in a row the legislature failed to pass legislation to establish an independent prosecutor

at the state level when police violence occurs.

Now, when a death follows a confrontation with a police officer, it prompts an investigation by the county prosecuting attorney and that prosecutor determines if charges are warranted.

“There is a conflict of interest,” Debbie said. “The local prosecutor usually works closely with and has a relationship with police officers. We want an independent state prosecutor.”

A state prosecutor would share authority with county prosecuting attorneys to charge police officers with misuse of deadly force. If both offices seek jurisdiction in a case, the bill calls for instructing the courts to determine “whose prosecution will best promote the interests of justice.”

“We will bring this bill back next year. It failed by only three votes in 2024,” she said.

Meanwhile, Debbie and other advocates for police accountability continue to raise consciousness in the local community.

They are holding a march from noon to 1:30 p.m., Friday, June 7, at the Spokane County Courthouse to call for police accountability.

For information, email debnovakreel@gmail.com.

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## Columnist discovers South African effort to challenge corruption

In columnist Cameron Conner's final month in South Africa, he worked with Abahlali baseMjondolo—Zulu for shack-dwellers—"one of the most impressive networks I have spent time with so far."

South Africans celebrated Freedom Day and the anniversary of the end of apartheid on April 27, with a ceremony and public holiday, but 30 years after the election of Nelson Mandela as president, millions of black South Africans are still waiting and fighting for freedom.

For families who still live in shack settlements without running water, electricity and access to sanitation, this celebration was bitter.

**Many feel let down** and physically threatened by Mandela's party, the African National Congress (ANC), which has been in power since 1994 yet failed to deliver on commitments for safe, fair housing.

These communities were mobilizing to unseat the ANC at the parliamentary election on May 29. Political analysts expected the party to lose its majority.

On April 21, more than 10,000 shack dwellers poured into a sports ground in Durban, South Africa's third largest city, to launch this campaign with a day-long UnFreedom Day event. The assembly was organized by the social movement Abahlali baseMjondolo—"shack dwellers" in isiZulu.

**Challenging the powerful** in South Africa is dangerous. Twenty-five Abahlali local leaders have been killed fighting since 2013. Now its national leaders are in hiding after death threats allegedly from the ANC.

"Thirty years of freedom, but we still do

not know what freedom is!" S'bu Zikode, the Abahlali president, told the crowd to cheers. "The rich have become richer, and the poor have become poorer. Far more people live in shacks than in 1994. We remain landless and without work. Millions are without even the most basic services, such as water, sanitation and refuse removal. Millions are hungry, and we continue to live in terrible violence."

**The sea of shack-dwellers**, dressed in Abahlali's colors, red, black and gold, were seated in rows inside a vast white tent. Many travelled thousands of kilometers from rural areas and urban shack settlements across South Africa to express solidarity.

Leon Bennett, 35, a construction laborer who came with a delegation from his settlement on the outskirts of Durban, put it bluntly: "We wake up every morning in our shacks thinking about what to put together in order to survive. Survival is not freedom."

**Today such settlements are** home to about 2 million households, according to 2023 data from the National Department of Human Settlements, even though shack-dwellers were granted the right to proper homes in the 1994 ANC constitution. Many are the legacy of apartheid-era townships where non-whites were forced to live under strict racial segregation.

Abahlali baseMjondolo was formed in 2005 in response to the ANC's apathy or hostility to these communities. The spark was ignited when land promised by a local councilor to people in the Kennedy Road shack settlement in North Durban was leased without warning to a private company.

Zikode, now president but then leader

of Kennedy Road's community development committee, realized they needed to organize to hold elected officials to account. Uniting with five settlements, they voted to create Abahlali. Its goal: a unified front of shack dwellers opposing demolitions and forced removals, and negotiating for quality housing for their families.

**Today the movement is one** of the largest, most effective unions of shack dwellers in the world with 87 branches representing more than 120,000 dues-paying members across four of South Africa's nine provinces.

In the crowd on Unfreedom Day, three Zulu words printed in bold black letters adorned almost every red shirt: umhlaba (land), izindlu (housing) and isithunzi (dignity). They are Abahlali's three tenets.

For individuals who feel unseen and powerless, Abahlali is a powerful vehicle for protecting the rights the ANC failed to uphold.

Bennett joined "because we were being evicted. The government tore down people's homes. We were forced to rebuild with whatever we had left. When we joined this union, we saw our rights were taken into consideration. As soon as we joined, the municipality showed us a different mindset." The frequency of demolitions and police raids in Bennett's community dropped significantly.

**Beyond its work with evictions** and displacement, Abahlali has also pressured state officials to bring electricity to settlements, create safe access to clean drinking water and sanitation, and improve access to schools, clinics and housing.

Its victories have come at a heavy cost—25 killings and leaders in hiding.

"We fear for our lives," said the general secretary, Thapelo Mohapi, who fled the region because of ANC death threats. "When you organize outside of the ANC in South Africa, you face brutal attacks and have to pay the highest price—burying our comrades."

Addressing this on Unfreedom Day, Zikode said: "I am aware how serious allegations against the ANC are. They have been tested in courts."

In 2016, two ANC councilors and their hitman were sentenced to life in prison for assassinating an Abahlali leader, Thuli Ndlovu, in 2014.

**The history of violence** and the new threats led Abahlali to declare its most daring political strategy: to vote en masse against the ANC in May. "It is imperative that the ANC be given a strong message that repression will not be tolerated. It is preferable to remove them from power," Zikode said.

After discussion across the country, Abahlali decided to vote for the leftwing Economic Freedom Fighters, South Africa's third largest party.

Zikode said this was a tactical decision. It was no use hoping the ANC would listen. "Voting for the ANC is like digging your own grave."

**With South Africa's election**, 30 years of democracy under ANC rule were being evaluated. With millions no closer to the dream of freedom than they were in April 1994, many are left asking how and when would their rights be recognized?

*Cameron Conner's columns for The Fig Tree are from blogs he is writing during his Watkins Fellowship in Spain, the UK, South Africa and Mongolia. His blogs are at cameronnorbuconner.com/blog.*

Letters to the Editor

## Sounding Board

Commentaries

## Mayor pledges, bishop leads Pride Parade, speakers share value

**On May 2, the Spokane Alliance** gathered more than 200 people from churches, unions and nonprofits to expand affordable housing in Spokane. After five years of listening and research on the need for a path to build more housing, a bill passed the State Legislature, establishing one-tenth of a cent sales tax to build affordable housing, with an option for cities and other locales to adopt it as their own.

Recently the Spokane Alliance had asked the City of Spokane to use this tax, which had accumulated \$11.5 million in two years. Previously the funds were used to fill budget gaps.

On May 2, Mayor Lisa Brown and City Council pledged to the Spokane Alliance Housing Equity Action Research Team (HEART) to use the HB-1590 funds for the original purpose—building housing—and invite proposals during May. She also renamed the fund HEART.

**Cathy Gunderson**  
Spokane Alliance

**On May 16, I received** a phone call about destruction of the Pride crosswalk mural in Spokane and a request that I participate in a press conference the next day. I was happy to do this. At the press conference, I said that, as a follower of Jesus, I know that love wins, and evil will always try to oppose love. So we must stand together in love against acts of hate and violence. I said the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane would match donations to repaint the mural and wrote a check.

When acts of violence and destruction are targeted toward any community, we call it hate. When hate shows up, love must show up over and over and over again. When the Church shows up in concrete acts of love, we offer Jesus to a hurting world.

I was struck by how many people were pleased and surprised by my offering this concrete act of love and matching donations. The Church does not always show up with concrete acts of love. At times, parts of the wider Church participate in discrimination. Our Episcopal Church has not always been a place of inclusion. I am glad we now are and can be a place where every person can find a place to belong and find love.

One surprising, delightful outcome is recognition by Spokane Pride: The Episcopal Diocese of Spokane will be Grand Marshall for the Pride parade on June 8.

I am proud to represent our diocese and invite those who desire to join the parade to do so as part of our diocesan contingent. I am delighted that many congregations participate in local Pride events.

To respect the dignity of every human being is one of our baptismal vows. To seek and serve Christ in all persons is another. When we show up in concrete acts of love, we are living our baptism. Let us all commit to living our baptism in concrete acts of love.

**Bishop Gretchen Rehberg**  
Episcopal Diocese of Spokane

**Upper River United Tribes** connects with Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp because she knows how to spread the word. It's a huge asset. Stories are important to our community, because the river is about us, not us vs. them. It's about anyone who recreates or uses the resources of the river. It's up to us to correct the historic wrongs and provide opportunities that were taken from our generation and future generations.



The Fig Tree tells stories that connect communities and tell of commonalities people share. It invites people to work together in looking for answers.

**DR Michel**  
Upper Columbia United Tribes

**As a student intern**, I have written and edited for The Fig Tree to expand my skills and grow as a writer and journalist. I hope to do religion reporting after I graduate from Whitworth University with a degree in communications and peace studies.

I appreciate The Fig Tree's approach. They don't just point out problems or conflict that is happening in Spokane and the larger community but also focus on the idea of peace or solutions journalism. This journalism offers some solutions. It helps the reader understand a full picture.

**Emma Maple**  
Whitworth editorial intern

**I recently wrote a book** called, What Faith is Not. After reading some recent issues of The Fig Tree, I decided I need to have a chapter on "What Faith Is."

**Mitch Finley-Author**



**In my ministry with couples** and families, it's easy to feel I'm in the woods acting alone. It's good to know many people are doing similar work. The Fig Tree gives me a way to virtually visit many churches and nonprofits to find information I

would otherwise not know.

When there's a story about somebody I know, I learn more than I knew before about who that person is and what they do. It helps me know that what I am doing in faith makes a difference and is part of a larger picture.

**Kathy Finley - Spiritual director,**  
counselor and author

**I can't take care of all** the problems in the world, but I can do something. The Fig Tree shows us that God has many people doing what needs to be done in this world to give people hope. It helps us see how many people are trying to bring shalom to the whole community. I'm not the only one. It gives me hope to know that people are trying to take care of the injustices and things bringing strife to people's lives. We're called to be God's servants. There's plenty of work to do and plenty of ways to get involved.

**Marilynne Mueller - Shalom United**  
Church of Christ/Mennonite

**The Fig Tree does a remarkable job** of communication—being a bridge—with inspirational stories. It has been a gift to the religious communities here in the Inland Northwest as it serves the people and fosters a sense of community that builds humanity. The Fig Tree produces fruit. It has touched many people and religious communities.

**Bishop Emeritus William Skylstad**  
Catholic Diocese of Spokane





# Calendar of Events

Phone area code is (509) unless otherwise stated

**June 2-Aug 25 Suns • Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR) Coffee,** Saranac Commons, 19 W. Main, 9 a.m., scarspokane.org

**June 4-8 • Spokane Pride & Remembrance:** History Exhibit, Pavilion, Riverfront, 574 N. Howard, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sat 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., 625-6000

**June 5 • Chair Yoga** with Steve Peck, South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry St., 12 to 1 p.m., 444-5300

**• Teen Summer Library Volunteer Info,** South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry, 5 p.m., 444-5300

**June 5, 19, July 3, 17, Aug 7, 21 • Spokane Folklore Society Contra Dance,** Woman's Club of Spokane, 1428 W. 9th, 7:15 to 9:30 p.m., 838-2160, mysokanefolklore@gmail.com

**June 5-26 Weds • SCAR Meeting,** Saranac Commons, 19 W. Main, noon, scarspokane.org

**June 6, 25 • Medicare 1:1 Counseling, Aging & Long Term Care,** 316 W. Boone, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., 625-4801; **June 20 - Spokane Valley Library,** 22 N. Herald, 1 to 4 p.m., 625-4801

**• Indian Cliff Nature Trail Tour,** Coeur d'Alene Casino, 37914 S. Nukwalqw, Worley, 9:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., (208) 769-2464

**June 6, Aug 1 • Lawyer in the Library,** Idaho Volunteer Lawyer's Program, Coeur d'Alene Library, 4 to 6 p.m., cdalibrary.org/library-events/lawyer

**June 7 • Police Accountability March,** Spokane County Courthouse, 1:30 p.m., debnovakcreel@gmail.com

**• YMCA Healthy Kids Day,** YMCA Spokane Valley, 2421 N. Discovery, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., 777-9622

**• Spring Market,** NE Youth and Family Services, 19 E. Queen, 3 to 8 p.m., 475-6793, neyfs.org

**June 7, 8 • Church Rummage Sale,** Opportunity Presbyterian, 202 N. Pines, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., 924-9750

**June 7-28 • Spokane Art School Faculty and Student Show,** 503 E. Second, 5 to 8 p.m., and M-F 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 325-1500

**June 8 • Manito Park Art Festival,** 1800 S. Grand, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., 456-8038

**• Spokane Pride Festival,** Riverfront Park, 507 N. Howard, 12 to 7 p.m., 625-6600

**• Five Steps to Courageous Communication,** Indian Trail Library, 4909 W. Barnes, 3 to 4:30 p.m., 444-5300

**• Swing Into Summer,** Spokane Folklore Society Swing Dance, East Spokane Grange, 7 to 10 p.m., 838-2160,

**June 8, 15, 22 • Expo '74: 50th Anniversary Community Stage & Vendor Village,** Riverfront Park, 11 a.m., 625-6600

**June 9 • Family Pride Celebration,** Central Library, 906 E. Main, 1 to 3 p.m., 444-5300

**• Faith Action Network Spring Summit,** Zoom, fanwa.org/spring-summits/

**June 9, 16 • The Empire Strikes Palestine,** Magic Lantern, 25 W. Main, 4 to 6 p.m., 209-2383

**June 9, July 23, Aug 18 • Sharing the Dharma Day,** Sravasti Abbey, Newport, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. sravastiabbey.org

**June 10 • ABLE Account Workshops,** Disability Action Center NW, Department of Labor, Post Falls 10 a.m. to 12, 2 to 4 p.m., Hayden Library 6 to 7:30 p.m., 208-457-3891, vicki@dacnw.org

**June 10-Aug 26 Mons • New Horizons Summer Jazz Orchestra,** Salem Lutheran, 1428 W. Broadway, 6:30 to 8:30 to July 29, then 6 to 8 p.m., 370-5807

**June 11, July 9, Aug 13 • Peace and Justice Action Committee,** Zoom, 5:30 p.m. ucenter@pjals.org

**June 12 • Micro Aggressions Workshop,** with Kurtis Robinson, Revive, Learning Studio, Community Building, 25 W. Main, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.,

**• "The Story of Anne Frank: How Ordinary People Do Extraordinary Things,"** Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, Summer Luncheon, Best Western Plus Coeur d'Alene Inn, 11:30 to 1:30 p.m., kctfhr.org

**• Medicare Workshops with SHIBA,** Coeur d'Alene Library, 3 p.m., cdalibrary.org/library-events/medicare-work

**• Mental Health Awareness Night,** Northeast Community Center, 4001 N. Cook, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., 703-0836, lholokai@esd101.net

**June 13 • Summer Senior Resource Fair,** Fairwood Retirement Village, 312 W. Hastings, 8:30 a.m., 467-2365, or sheila@fairwoodretirement.com

**• Silent Day of Prayer,** St. Anthony of Padua and other Popular Saints with Sr. Mary Eucharista, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., ihrc.net

**• Repair Café Spokane,** South Perry Farmer's Market, 924 S. Perry, 3 to 7 p.m., 990-2924

**• Tribal Fashion Show & Music Festival,** Pavilion, Riverfront, 574 N. Howard, 5 p.m., 625-6000

**• Juneteenth Kickoff,** Martin Luther King Jr., Community Center, 500 S. Stone, 5:30 to 7 p.m., 868-0856

**June 13, July 11, Aug 8 • Reuse Workshop,** Mobius Center, 331 N. Post, 10 a.m., 321-7137

**• Free Immigration Clinic,** Latinos en Spokane, 1502 N. Monroe, 5 to 7 p.m., latinosenspokane.org

**• General Meeting, Spokane NAACP,** Location TBA, 6 p.m., spokanenaacp@gmail.com

**June 13, 27, July 11, 25, Aug 8, 22 • Showing Up for Racial Justice,** PJALS, Zoom, 5:30 p.m., slichty@pjals.org

**June 14-20 • Young Adults Explore Buddhism,** Sravasti Abbey, 3 p.m., 447-5549

**June 15 • CDA4Pride Tie-Dye Party,** Human Rights Education Institute, 414 W. Fort Grounds, CdA, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., (208) 292-2359

**• World Refugee Day,** Garry Middle School, 725 E. Joseph, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., 354-5200

**• Juneteenth Celebration,** MLK Center, 500 S. Stone, 11 to 3 p.m., mlkcenter.org

**• Philippines Independence Day,** Riverfront Park, 1 to 7 p.m., 590-6613

**• Selkirk Conservation Alliance Film Festival,** The Inn at Priest Lake, 5310 Dickensheet, Coolin, 3 to 5 p.m., (208) 448-1110

**• Freedom Fair,** fundraiser for The Jonah Project, Life Center, 1202 N. Government, 3 to 6 p.m., (425) 315-6373

**June 16 • Dad's Day Dash,** SNAP, Riverfront Park, 9 to 11 p.m., 625-6600

**• "Why is the Farm Bill Important to Us?"** With Faith Action Network and ELCA Region 1 Synods, Zoom, 6 p.m., bit.ly/WhyFarmBill

**June 18 • Summer Parkways,** Manito Park, 1800 S. Grand, 6 to 9 p.m., 456-8038

**June 19 • Juneteenth Read-In with Black Authors,** Coeur d'Alene Public Library, 12 to 2 p.m.

**June 21 • Pediatric Lead Exposure Diagnosis,** Management & Prevention Conference, Silver Valley Community Resource Center, 12 to 1:30 p.m., (208) 784-8891, svcommunityresourcecenter@gmail.com

**June 21-23 • Bonners Ferry Pride,** The Pearl Theater, 7160 Ash, (208) 267-7327

**June 22 • Getting Dirty Silent Auction.** Newby-Ginnings of North Idaho, Cruisers, 6105 W. Seltice, Post Falls, 3 to 7 p.m., (208) 610-3341

**June 23 • Celebration of Our Sister Cities: Building Bridges Around the World,** Riverfront Park, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 625-6600

**June 24 • Hillyard Farmer's Market Kick Off Streetfair**

**June 24-Aug 23 • MLK Teen Leadership Program,** 500 S. Stone, M-Th 8:30 to 3:30, F 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., 868-0856, stonerecep@mlkspokane.org

**June 28-29 • 24-Hour Retreat: Finding God in All Things,** IHRC, 4:30 to 4:30 p.m., ihrc.net

**June 29 • Pride in Perry,** South Perry Business District, 12 to 5 p.m.,

**To June 24 Mons • Choosing Harmony** with Sravasti Abbey, Create Arts Center, 900 Fourth, Newport, 6:30 to 8 p.m., 447-5549

**June 29-30 • Spokane Herbal Faire,** West Central Episcopal Mission, 1832 W. Dean, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 326-6741

**June 29, July 27, Aug 31 • El Mercadito,** A.M. Cannon Park, 1920 W. Maxwell, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., latinosenspokane.org

**To June 30 Wed-Sun • Between Borders:** Folklife thru the Coeur d'Alenes, Art Spirit Gallery, 415 Sherman, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., (208) 765-6006

**To July 4 • Avista Water Power Walking Tour,** Riverfront Park, 625-6600

**• Expo '74 Historic Timeline** Outdoor Exhibit, Pavilion at Riverfront

**July 6 • Rapture, Reality & the Joyful Heart:** Meditation Retreat with Ajahn Nisabho, Harmony Woods Retreat Center, 11507 S. Keeney, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., harmonywoods.org

**To July 7 • Echoes of Expo,** Riverfront Park, 625-6600

**July 13-14 • Sandpoint Pride,** sandpointpride.org

**July 14, Aug 11 • Women's Hearttenders,** Harmony Woods Retreat, 5 to 8 p.m., harmonywoods.org

**July 18 • Day of Prayer with Fr. Patrick Baraza,** IHRC, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., ihrc.net

**July 21 • Manzanita House Garden Party,** Barn and Blossom, 4010 E. Jamieson, 5 to 7 p.m., mhspokane.org

**July 23 • Working with 2SLGBTQIA+ Communities** with Spectrum Center, Community Building, 25 W. Main, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

**Jul 23-30 • 8-Day Ignatian Retreat,** Fr. JK Adams, S.J., IHRC, 4:30 p.m. to 1 p.m., ihrc.net

**Aug 2-4 • Art on the Green,** North Idaho College, CdA, Fri, 11 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Sun, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., (208) 667-9346

**• Coeur d'Alene Street Fair,** Sherman, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. (208) 415-0116

**Aug 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28 • Prevent Falls** with A Matter of Balance, North Spokane Library, 44 E. Hawthorne, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., 777-1571,

**Aug 17 • Unity in the Community,** Riverfront Park, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 625-6600

**Aug 22-25 • Palouse Pride,** Moscow, palouseinlandoasis@gmail.com

**Aug 28-Sept 2 • Pig Out in the Park,** Riverfront Park, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., 625-6600

**Aug 31 • Lud Cramer Memorial Concert,** Spokane Symphony at Pavilion Park, 727 N. Molter, Liberty Lake, 6 p.m., 755-67269

**To Sept 2 • All Fairs Lead to Expo '74,** Spokane Valley Heritage Museum, 12114 E. Sprague, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., 922-4570

**Tues-Sun to Sept 8 • Expo '74: Films from the Vault,** Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture, 2316 W. First, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 456-3931

**To Jan 26 • It Happened Here: Expo '74 Fifty Years Later,** Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture, 2316 W. First, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 456-3931

**Sept 2 • Spokane Symphony, Labor Day Concert,** Comstock Park, 6 p.m., 624-1200

**Sept 5 • The Fig Tree Development (noon) and Board** (1 to 3 p.m.) meetings, Zoom, 535-1813

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# 100-year-old building houses worship and outreach to community

Manito United Methodist Church will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its Italian Renaissance Kirtland Cutter building on the corner of 30th and Grand as part of its 10:45 a.m. service and an open house from 1 to 3 p.m., Sunday, June 9, at the church, 3220 S. Grand.

"It is the only Kirtland Cutter church remaining in Spokane," said Wendy Budge, centennial committee chair.

When it was built in 1924, the goal was to use the building as a church and community center. The basement ceiling is 12 feet tall for a basketball court. Now it's the fellowship hall.

In the 1950s, the church built an education wing that now houses 14 AA groups, three scout groups and three preschools. Over the years, the space was used by Daybreak Teen Drug Treatment Center, Leadership Spokane, Good Samaritan Counseling Center and the office for The Fig Tree.

Sue Plummer, a member since 1978, Sandy Ward, the pastor for nearly two years, and Wendy, who has been a member since the early 1980s, shared the church's history and life today.

In 2016, Wendy, whose home is on the historic registry, put the church on the registry as a Spokane Historic Landmark.

Wendy summarized the church's history.

In 1906, a group of Baptists and Methodists started a Sunday school that met in a small, wooden schoolhouse at 37th and Hatch. In 1908, Methodists outnumbered Baptists and voted to organize a Methodist Episcopal Church, which built a white frame building in 1910 at 502 E. 33rd Ave., across the street from the present building.

By 1921, the church outgrew that building. Members Seymour and Mary Birch, who came to Spokane from Amsterdam, NY, donated \$30,000 and three lots to build the present building at 33rd and Grand. From their travels in Europe, they envisioned a church like the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi and asked Cutter to build it.

"Construction began in 1923 and was completed in 1924, but Seymour and Mary did not live to see it. The large, south-facing rose window is dedicated to Mary," said Wendy.

With the post-war baby boom, Wendy said, the church continued to grow and raised funds to build its mid-century modern style education wing in the late 1950s. It is also on the historic registry.

Plans for a new sanctuary to seat 500 to 700 people ended because the church split. Some members in the John Birch Society (no relation to Seymour) thought the Methodist Church was involved in communism.

Other members said their Book of Discipline called Methodists to support widows and orphans, said Wendy. Many left the church and funds were not raised for the new sanctuary.

"Now we are an older con-



Manito United Methodist modeled on St. Francis Basilica.

gregation and have no Sunday school, but many people use the church and education wing. Renting rooms out helps keep us afloat. The chapel in the education wing is good for small weddings," said Wendy, who moved to Spokane when her father was at the Naval Supply Station.

She returned in 1972, trained as a medical technologist at Deaconess Hospital and served there 38 years until retiring 13 years ago. She has been Methodist since sixth grade in Boise, where she attended Boise State University and earned a bachelor's in art. After that, she earned a bachelor's degree in microbiology at the University of Idaho in Moscow. There she met her husband.

After moving to Spokane, they visited churches and chose Manito Methodist.

Sue and Greg became active while their two children were in the parent-child cooperative preschool. After moving to Spokane from Phoenix, they built a home four blocks from the church.

Sandy, who grew up in Illinois, Michigan, Iowa and Missouri, entered ministry late, studying mostly online at Iliff School of Theology in Denver and graduating in 2014.

She served a church in Girdwood, Alaska, for two years and then a church in Tumwater near Olympia for six years.

Her previous career, after earning a master's degree in business in 1988 at Loyola University in Chicago, was as a business manager for Michigan State University's College of Osteopathic Medicine. She grew up Baptist but became Methodist after marrying her husband, Paul, 33 years ago. He is a retired physician.

Sue repeated that Manito United Methodist Church was founded not just as a church but also as a community center.

"We always have community groups using the building. We have rented to nonprofits and others who pay as they are able, even when our Sunday school rooms were packed on Sundays," Sue said. "We look for ways to connect with the community."

"Now we seek to be ecologically minded, reducing use of paper products and caring for our land by converting a portion to SpokaneScape to reduce grass, use less water and create habitat for birds and insects," she continued.

A city designer is proposing

ways to make the land eco-friendly. Boy Scouts will help redo the landscape with native plants, a dry creek bed with rocks and a drip irrigation system.

"It's part of our ministry to embrace creation care and climate justice," said Sandy.

Five homes on 33rd are in the SpokaneScape program. "It has been a learning experience for members," she said.

Sandy led a class series in December and January on the book, *Wake Up World* by Robert and Anita Gearheart.

For the class, Sue offered a session on SpokaneScape. She and two others reported on a three-day Global Board of Discipleship Earthkeepers class on creation care and climate justice they attended in October.

"We seek to understand about greenhouse gas, to mitigate the damage and do better for the future," she said.

"We want to be better stewards of our natural resources and protect the earth," said Sandy. "We are recycling more trash and no longer use paper plates, cups and napkins, and plastic utensils."

Sue sewed 80 napkins, which members take turns laundering.

"We invite those using the building to follow our example," said Sue.

Sandy said 400 people use the buildings weekdays.



Sue Plummer and Sandy Ward discuss the life of their church.

Manito Coop, an ECEAP program and M & M Tots use space on different floors and share an outdoor playground.

The Spokane Youth Symphony practices there Mondays.

AA groups use the church at different times on different days.

The YMCA has a summer youth program.

"It's a busy place during the week," she said. "Part of our mission is to be a place where people can become whole and holy, a place where we model a culture of abiding and belonging to one another and to Christ. We seek to nourish people's bodies, minds and souls by being a place that reflects Christ's love."

"Like most churches, we seek to be fiscally responsible. We have an endowment but seek to live within our budget, so we do not deplete our reserves," Sandy said.

Sue said many but not all groups using the building pay what it costs to use the rooms as part of Manito's ministry.

Sandy said another part of the church's outreach is its music program, offering concerts.

Gonzaga assistant professor of voice Jadrian Tarver is Manito's music director. He leads the choir of 12 that includes two Gonzaga students.

On Sunday, May 19, the church hosted a concert featuring



Wendy Budge shares history.

Black United Voices of Spokane, which Jadrian started this year; the group For His Glory, accompanied by the church's pianist Ellie Tupper, and the Manitones, three church members who play guitar and sing.

The church also has art shows.

"The pandemic took a bite out of church events and attendance, but we are rebuilding that," said Sandy, who attends the Comstock Neighborhood Council with other church members to be informed on neighborhood needs.

Members attend events and take school supplies and cookies to Sacajawea Middle School next door.

Members range from age 12 to one over 100 who attends online. About 60 attend each week in person and online. Services have a sign language interpreter.

For information, call 747-4755 or visit manitoumc.org.



## Ensure your building meets Washington's Clean Buildings Law.

If you own a 50,000-square-foot or larger building, you must comply with Washington's Clean Buildings Law (HB1257). Let Avista help you achieve higher energy-efficiency standards with our FREE Clean Buildings Accelerator program. Learn more and enroll today at [myavista.com/cleanbuildings](http://myavista.com/cleanbuildings) or call (800) 227-9187.



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