

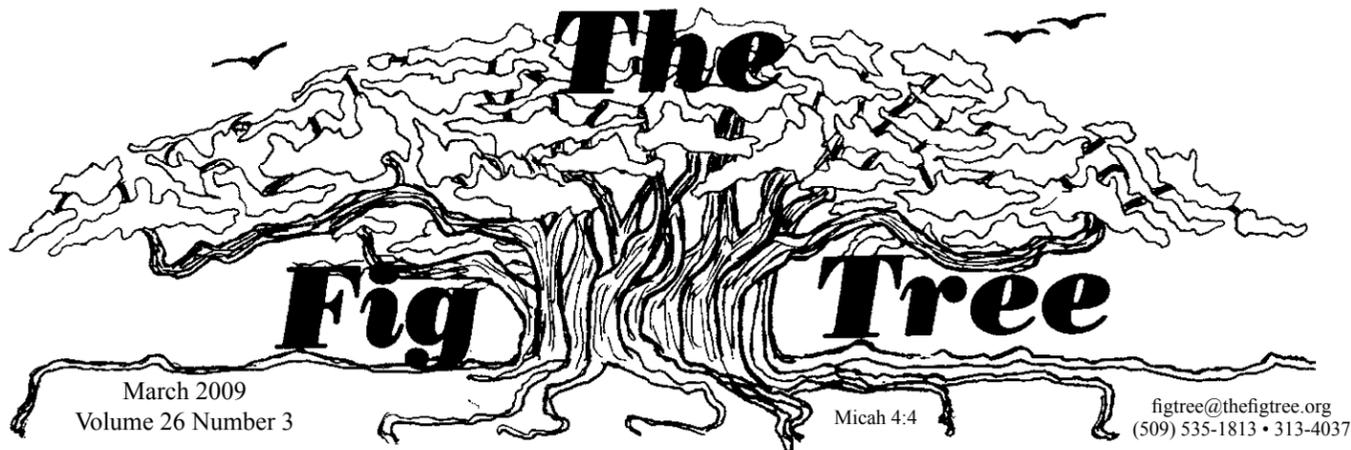
STORIES INSIDE

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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest

online in color at www.thefigtree.org

Learning English opens doors

By Mary Stamp

Many volunteer teachers over Barton School's 40 years were retired teachers like its founder, Amsel Barton, who felt it was too early to put her teaching skills on the shelf.

The pastor of First Presbyterian Church offered Amsel use of a Sunday school room and suggested she find one or two students.

The school began in December 1968 with a divorced Japanese war bride. By January 1969, there were eight students and eight teachers in the Adult Literacy Program, which was renamed Barton School in 1971.

Some teachers volunteer to help students improve their ability to read, write and converse in English out of their desire to relate with people of different cultures. Students have come from 75 countries.

In recent years, several volunteer teachers have been offering their services teaching English because they came to the United States as immigrants or refugees and understand challenges the students face.

Wardé Bayyuk, who grew up in Lebanon, studied chemistry and taught school in Jordan, began



Audrey Wagner of Reardan teaches Yulan Li English as they talk about Yulan's monthly expenses, an example of how practical skills are part of language lessons.

teaching two years ago after retiring from work as secretary at the Cathedral of St. John.

Audrey Wagner, who came to Reardan from Australia to visit her sister who had married a farmer, also married a farmer and settled there in 1954. She has been teaching students at Barton since 1986, when she learned about it from a former pastor's wife.

For Daniela Kosinski, who came to the United States from Poland in 1981 not speaking any English, it's her way to give back.

Teachers also include one from Japan, one from Thailand and two students majoring in English as a Second Language at Eastern Washington University.

Along with the opportunity to teach and build intercultural relations, the teachers and staff—all of whom are volunteers—help their students with their goals to improve their English skills so they can become citizens, engage in everyday conversations, find jobs and pass entrance exams for college.

The lessons are held from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for nearly 40 students.

Most of the thousands of students
Continued on page 5

Religious leaders challenge legislature to set a 'moral' budget, with tax equity

Aware that human services are in peril during the state budget crunch, speakers at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference in February emphasized repeatedly that the state budget needs to be "a moral budget," and that people need to pay more in taxes to help make that possible.

"Who would Jesus bail out?" asked Alice Woldt, transitional director of the Washington Association of Churches (WAC), to start people thinking about the economic stimulus and people who need to be included in the state budget.

She called for the faith community to advocate that the state budget be a "moral document" that sets values and priorities

related to human life.

Recently 18 church leaders expressed dismay to Governor Christine Gregoire that the proposed budget again pushes aside the needs of the poor.

Speakers presented overviews of bills before the Washington State Legislature in Olympia that address the WAC's and ecumenical partner's 2009 priorities of "hunger, housing, health care and heart."

"We need to let our legislators know what is on our hearts, our concern about cuts to vital human services. We can't cut our way out of the deficit. We also need to restructure our tax system so it is more equitable, rather than depending so heavily on sales taxes

which decline in a recession.

"We may need to put new taxes on the ballot to avoid deep cuts in education, survival services and health care," Alice said.

She suggests cutting some tax exemptions and subsidies for private industry, which have strong "cheerleaders."

"Human services traditionally are targets for the big cuts," she said, "and they face 30 percent cuts this session, in contrast to just 4 percent cuts in economic development and public safety."

"We need our voices heard," she said.

The WAC, in addition to the conference, provides tools for people to engage in advocacy through its online Faith Advocacy Network at www.thewac.org, which keeps people current on the status and content of bills pertaining to the priorities.

The ecumenical agency urges people to call the legislative hotline at 800-672-6000, to write letters and to go to Olympia or gather in their local churches for Faith Advocacy Day on Tuesday,

Continued on page 6

Valley Meals on Wheels now cooks meals it serves

Because of funding cuts for Senior Nutrition and Meals on Wheels, Valley Meals on Wheels lost its food preparation vendor and decided to prepare the meals themselves, as Mid-City Concerns Meals on Wheels in Spokane is also doing.

Instead of serving 200 meals to seniors at four nutrition sites and Meals on Wheels, they now prepare 400 meals a day five days a week for 11 senior centers. They are using the building that once housed their food vendor.

They will have an open house for the kitchen at 218 N. Crestline from 3 to 7 p.m., Thursday, March 26.

Pam Almeida, executive director of Valley Meals on Wheels, said that when they asked the community for help, Grant Person of NAI Black Realty offered to help them find a new kitchen location in Spokane Valley.

Because the food vendor pulled out, its kitchen was available. Grant bought the building and asked the vendor to leave the commercial kitchen equipment. He rents it to Valley Meals on Wheels at a low market rate.

The Bargreen Ellingson restaurant supply company negotiated with manufacturers for additional equipment donations.

Valley Meals on Wheels negotiated with the Feed Spokane program and Second Harvest for donated food to lower costs.

Grant also has donated two vans to transport meals from the kitchen to Valley Meals on Wheels. Senior Nutrition of the Regional Health District picks up and delivers meals for seven other sites in the county.

Continued on page 3

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U.S.'s largest churches are now experiencing slight drop

New York – The 77th annual edition of the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, the chronicle of growth and financial trends of religious institutions, records a slight decline in membership of the nation's two largest Christian communions.

Membership in the Roman Catholic Church declined 0.59 percent or 398,000 of their 67,117,016 members, and the Southern Baptist Convention declined 0.24 percent or nearly 40,000 of their 16,266,920 members, according to the 2009 edition, edited by the National Council of Churches and published by Abingdon.

The 2009 Yearbook also includes an essay by the editor, the Rev. Eileen Lindner, on the various ways churches count their members.

The decline is notable because membership in both churches has grown over the years, while other mainline churches have reported declines.

Four of the 25 largest churches in the U.S., are growing: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, up 1.63 percent to 5,873,408; the Assemblies of God, up 0.96 percent to 2,863,265; Jehovah's Witnesses, up 2.12 percent to 1,092,169; and the Church of God of Cleveland, Tenn., up 2.04 percent to 1,053,642.

There are no clear-cut theological or sociological reasons for church growth or decline, said Eileen. Young adults in their 20s and 30s attend and support local congregations but resist joining.

Churches listed in the Yearbook as experiencing the highest rate of membership loss are the United Church of Christ, down 6.01 percent; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, down 3.01 percent; the Presbyterian Church (USA), down 2.79 percent; the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, down 1.44 percent, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, down 1.35 percent.

Membership of the top 25 U.S. churches totals 146,663,972—down 0.49 percent from last year's total of 147,382,460.

The job of counting church members falls to church offices and communion headquarters.

Each year more than 200 American and Canadian Christian communions report their numbers to the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches. The actual figure, said Eileen, depends on who's counting and how.

For some churches, membership includes baptized children. For others, it's youth confirming their baptism, adult affirmation of faith or a born-again experience. Some churches count active and inactive members. Others include all baptized infants.

Many church members relocate, affiliate with other churches, lose interest in church membership or relocate permanently without deleting their membership, she said. College students and military personnel keep their membership active after they have moved, as do adults who retire in other communities.

Some traditions estimate the number of members. Some base estimates on the ethnic or racial population in neighborhoods.

Some national church bodies count members annually, and others collect data at unpredictable intervals.

Groups like megachurches and emergent church fellowships stress participation over membership.

These trends and disparities are reported in the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, which for 92 years has been regarded as the most reliable, accurate source of church statistics in North America.

For information, contact www.electronicchurch.org or call 212-870-2228.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Fig Tree marks 25th at March 11 benefit

"Empowering Hope: Peace Journalism" is the theme for The Fig Tree's 2009 Deepening Our Roots Benefit Breakfast from 7:15 to 8:30 a.m., Wednesday, March 11, in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University. The event marks The Fig Tree's 25th anniversary.

Kim Harmson of Kizuri, journalism professor Steve Blewett, Shahrokh Nikfar of KYRS' Persian Hour and Mary Rathert of Women's Hearth will share about The Fig Tree's impact.

During the program, the Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media will present two awards for media excellence as part of its

mission of promoting responsible media and media literacy.

Funds raised at the event will move The Fig Tree ahead to build its capacity to share more stories in the region, to connect diverse people and communities, to promote volunteerism and action on behalf of the vulnerable, to explore alternatives to violence, and to share about people who live their faith and values.

"The theme, 'Stories Empower: Peace Journalism,' reflects our model of community journalism," said Mary Stamp, editor. "Peace journalism focuses on uplifting the many ideas and faith expres-

sions people hold—not just two opposites—and the solutions that emerge from them to improve life in local communities, the nation and the world."

In addition to the website and newspaper, The Fig Tree also produces the annual Directory of Congregations and Community Resources, expanding its outreach in connecting the faith and non-profit communities in the region.

Guests have an opportunity to donate to support The Fig Tree's outreach as a monthly newspaper and a website.

For information, call 535-1813 or visit www.thefigtree.org.

Catholic Charities center opens mid-March

Programs housed at the downtown Catholic Pastoral Center and 10 other programs renting offices throughout Spokane County will be housed in the Catholic Charities Family Services Center in a remodeled building at Fifth and Division beginning in mid-March.

Not only will the new center bring savings of \$109,000 a year but it will also consolidate operations in one location, said Loreen McFaul, development director.

Spokane's main offices for Catholic Charities have been housed in the Chancery for 40 years.

Programs moving into the new center at Fifth and Division include: Childbirth and Parenting Alone (CAPA) for single pregnant women and single parents; Senior Services for 13 counties of Eastern Washington; Immigration Services for low-income people; Counseling and Case Management for low-income individuals,

couples, families and groups; the Christmas Bureau; Foster Grandparents for seniors mentoring at-risk children and youth; Housing Social Services for 700 seniors and disabled persons; Emergency Assistance Voucher Program for rent assistance, energy assistance and transportation; Senior Nutrition meals and socialization, and the Leadership and Accreditation Team overseeing Catholic Charities' programs.

For information, call 358-4253.

International Women's Day celebration set

The 2009 Spokane International Women's Day Celebration on "Activating Hope" will be held from 3 to 5 p.m., Sunday, March 8, at the Spokane Woman's Club, 1428 W. 9th Ave.

After opening remarks by Spokane Mayor Mary Verner, there will be a reader's theatre presentation of "Womanspeak" by Gloria Goldsmith and arranged by Anne Marie Burk.

The event includes a volunteer fair and presentation of the annual award in honor of the late Bella Abzug, a former Congresswoman and women's movement leader.

Each year, International Women's Day is a time for women to

celebrate their social, economic and political achievements, said organizer Golie Jansen.

It recognizes women who have paved the way for contemporary women, keeping aware that the struggle for equality continues.

The International Women's Day is an occasion for women and men to celebrate women's contributions and achievements while identifying the challenges women continue to face. Women in the churches join in celebrations with other women's groups to mark this day.

In recognition of International Women's Day, the World Council of Churches Central Committee

recently adopted a statement calling on WCC member churches to "invest in the building of stable families as a sure source of positive socialization for gender equity and peace for both boys and girls."

For information, call 456-2382 or visit www.internationalwomensday.com

Temple plans kosher meal

Members of Temple Beth Shalom are preparing to serve about 3,000 at their 68th annual traditional Kosher Dinner of beef brisket, potato knishes, carrot tzimmes, challah, spiced apples

and apricot kuchen from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday, March 15, at Temple Beth Shalom, 30th and S. Perry St.

For information, call 747-3304, ext. 32 or visit www.pgiinc.com.

One Peace, Many Paths Event

**Speak
Peace**



Sunday, March 8
4-6 p.m. at Unity Church
29th & Bernard
with leaders from Spokane's Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian communities discussing their traditions, ideas for interfaith cooperation and their spiritual lives.
Presented by Unity Church, the Interfaith Council & the Center for Spiritual Living

**For information
call 838-6518**

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Editorial Team
Editor/Publisher/Photos - Mary Stamp
Mary Mackay, Nancy Minard, Sara Weaver

Coordinators & Contract
Malcolm Haworth - Directory Editor
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UNA event funds land mine clearing

The "Night of a Thousand Dinners" potluck and fund raiser for the United Nations Association Adopt-a-Minefield Campaign will be held at 5:30 p.m., Monday, March 9, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Fort Wright Dr. The campaign raises funds to clear land mines, help land-mine survivors rebuild their lives and raise awareness that after hostilities cease land mines still kill and maim civilians, damage the environment, make farmland unusable, inhibit the return of refugees, keep children out of school and slow relief. For information, call 456-2382.

Performance benefits Our Place

Valerie Harper-Murdoch is directing the comedy, "Opal's Baby," for Our Place's annual readers' theatre fund raiser at 2 p.m., Sunday, March 22, at Salem Lutheran Church, 1428 W. Broadway. The script, a sequel of "Everybody Loves Opal," presented in 2007, "is corny, funny and clever," she said. "From a comedic point of view, the author makes a social commentary on how the less fortunate are treated in society." For information, call 326-7267 or 323-7487.

Brothers lead 2009 Novena of Grace

Fathers Dick Case, SJ, and Frank Case, SJ, will lead the Novena of Grace's three daily services for nine days of prayer and worship on "Let Jesus Free Us" from Saturday, March 7, through Sunday, March 15, at St. Aloysius Catholic Church, 330 E. Boone.

The brothers attended parochial elementary school and Seattle Prep, where they were introduced to the Jesuit tradition. They entered the novitiate shortly after graduating, Frank in 1956 and Dick in 1963. While preparing to be teachers, both taught at Gonzaga Prep. After ordination, their ministries took on diverse paths.

Father Dick, who studied theology for three years in the Netherlands, spent several years ministering to indigenous peoples of Alaska. He also taught at Bellarmine Prep in Tacoma and served as president of Gonzaga Prep. Last fall, he became pastor at St. Aloysius Parish in Spokane.

Father Frank was an assistant and associate professor of economics at Seattle University in his early ministry. He became provincial superior of the Oregon Province of Jesuits and then served as regional assistant for the U.S. Jesuit Curia in Rome for 15 years. He is on a sabbatical year discerning his next call to service.

Faiths gather for Season of Peace program

Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian leaders will share in "Speak Peace," a One Peace, Many Paths interfaith event at 4 p.m., Sunday, March 8, at Unity Church, 2900 S. Bernard.

Speakers will discuss their faiths and customs, ideas for interfaith cooperation in Spokane and their own spiritual lives.

The event, presented by Unity Church, the Interfaith Council and the Center for Spiritual Living, is part of the 2009 Season for Peace and Nonviolence, which runs between the birthdays of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., in January and Mohandas Gandhi in April.

Unity Church is offering other Season for Peace events.

James Twyman, author, filmmaker and peace troubadour who has held prayer vigils in Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Iraq, will give a concert at 7 p.m., Friday, March 20, and lead a workshop based on his book, "The Moses Code," on Saturday, March 21.

"The season demonstrates that the spiritual concept of nonviolent action is a powerful way to heal, transform and empower our lives and communities," said the Rev. Clare Austin, pastor at Unity.

For information, call 838-6518 or visit www.unityspokane.org.

Disaster response minister engages the poor

Eng Hoe, director of crisis response and community development with Partners International, will speak on "Poverty Worldwide: Disasters, Survivors and How You Can Help the Poor" at 7 p.m., Wednesday, March 11, in Seeley-Mudd Chapel at Whitworth University.

Partners International is a Spokane-based, Christian non-profit that does church planting and community development in the world's least Christian regions.

Based on his ministry to disaster survivors and refugees—after the tsunami in Indonesia, Sichuan's earthquake and persecution in Orissa, India—Eng tells what God is doing in the poor areas. In the mid-1990s, he left a legal practice to enter crisis and relief ministry. In 2005, he joined Partners International. He hopes churches are agents of change, "incarnating Jesus among the poor."

Eng is one of several speakers who will be in Spokane present-

ing world awareness seminars at local churches for Partners International's Missions Fiesta on Sunday, March 8.

Programs are at Life Center North, Mt. Spokane Church, Fourth Memorial, Garland Church, Indian Trail Community Church, Crossover Church, Northview Bible Church and Whitworth Presbyterian Church in Spokane and First Baptist Church in Sandpoint.

For information, call 343-4061.

Forum speaker addresses gang violence

Father Gregory Boyle, SJ., founder and director of Jobs for a Future/Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles will speak at the March Spokane City Forum on "Tattoos on the Heart: Lessons from the Barrio" at 11:45 a.m., Wednesday, March 18, at First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar.

He supports children whose homes are so impoverished or de-

structive that they turn to gangs as surrogate families. To address the root causes of gang violence, his program provides employment, counseling, and other services—including free tattoo removal.

Born in Los Angeles, Father Gregory earned a bachelor's in English from Gonzaga, a master's in English from Loyola Marymount University, a master of

divinity from the Weston School of Theology and a master's of sacred theology from the Jesuit School of Theology.

He taught high school, worked with Christian base communities in Bolivia, was a prison chaplain in Mexico and at Folsom Prison in California, and was pastor of a mission in Los Angeles.

For information, call 777-1555.

New kitchen serves more nutrition centers

Continued from page 1

County senior nutrition sites had anticipated cutting from five to four days a week, but Pam said the community formed the Senior Nutrition Coalition to provide food for the extra day, trusting that the community will step up.

Four staff prepare meals in the 500-square-foot kitchen, and she said they seek more volunteer help in the kitchen, serving and delivering the meals. She is appealing particularly to the faith community to help provide volunteers.

"The quality of the food is better in terms of taste and variety," she said. "We are using less processed food."

While there have been costs in making the transitions, she expects costs will be reduced for providing the meals. To help pay for additional meals, they plan to ask the community for donations. Donors will have their names placed on tiles that will be part of a mural at the kitchen.

"We seek to build the involvement of the faith community

because the need is so great," she said. "It's important to feed the elderly so they can remain in their homes and the community."

For information, call 924-6976.

Hillyard organizes a community garden

Hillyard community members plan to start a community garden on Spokane Water Department land at Hoffman and Crestline and are holding an organizational meeting at 6 p.m., Thursday, March 5, at the Northeast Community Center.

Community gardens allow

people to meet neighbors while growing their own food, said Pat Munts, Community Garden coordinator who helps provide classes.

For information, call 998-9769.

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This year's theme: 'Let Jesus Free Us'

Presenters



Rev. Dick Case, SJ



Rev. Frank Case, SJ

Daily Novena Services: 12:15 p.m. Prayer Service (12:30 p.m. Sundays)
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Thursday, March 12 Anointing of the Sick offered at all services

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St. Aloysius Church

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Teaching English engages church members

By Janae Cepeda

As refugees arrived in Spokane after the Vietnam War, Country Homes Christian Church decided to found an English as a Second Language school in 1979.

The one-on-one, volunteer-tutor-based program seeks to meet the full needs of people, by giving its students a sense of respect and dignity, said the new director Calli Foxworth.

"Kindness and compassion help students cope with the loneliness and estrangement that can be part of living in a new country," she said. "When a once-prominent Muslim family from Iran was looked down on, we tried to give them back their pride through our program. That is what we hope to do for our students."

The first students, who were Vietnamese, Hmong and Laotian, knew little or no English and had few resources for the job market.

Because the school provides tutors, as well as nursery care, to help prepare new immigrants and refugees for life in the United States, it equips students not only for employment but also for college and citizenship.

Aware that some students—especially the elderly—were not prepared socially or emotionally for the transition, Faith and Larry Leaf stepped in.

This octogenarian husband-wife duo has been tutoring three times a week, every week for nearly 14 years despite health problems. Faith said teaching has helped them to manage their health and has given them "the utmost gift" of helping others.

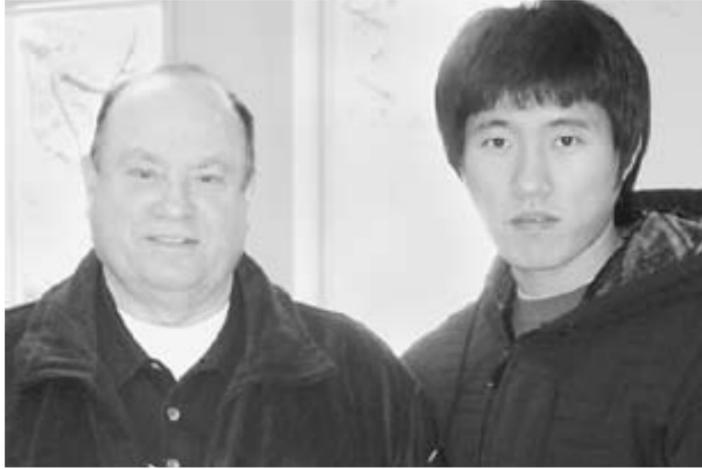
They came to Spokane 14 years ago after having traveled the world. They were debating where God would need their church home to be when Faith saw the banner outside Country Homes Church about the need for tutors.

After having taught in countries such as Japan, Korea, Italy, Denmark and Russia, and being sympathetic to the aggravation that comes from not being able to adjust to a new language or culture, Faith sensed her calling.

"Each day I look for something that makes us laugh in what we are doing," she said. "We can pick up the most from children, as they pick up words from us."

"For example, a Korean woman studying with us has a two-year-old child. He is not enrolled in school but he goes around saying a phrase he picked up from his mother's teacher: 'Oh, my goodness!'"

Faith and Larry adopted two Korean children, Grace and Anne. Adopted in 1976, Anne, the youngest, still was unable to



Rick Caverly and his student Dong Jin

speak at five years old.

"I was at the freezer one morning and it was jammed. When I pried it open, the contents toppled out onto the floor, hitting my foot. In frustration, I muttered a curse word," Faith said. "I'll never forget seeing her in the doorway. Her first word in English was that word. I learned to watch what I said because children are vacuums."

Faith considers her day incomplete without a challenge.

She is now tutoring a 55-year-old man who recently emigrated from China. He is a skilled electrician and certified plumber, but cannot find employment because of his lack of proficiency in English. So he works as a cook.

Her goal is to help him find a job and provide him with hope that he can use his talents. In session after session, she uses plumbing manuals and technical vocabulary to translate them using Japanese ideograms, similar to Chinese characters, so he can be prepared to take his apprenticeship exam.

According to Doni Walker, a former director who served 25 years, many tutors have experienced this type of bond and have come away having been taught incalculable lessons in life.

She told of an elderly man whose wife had terminal cancer. Because his wife was his world, he became utterly lost without her. He became a tutor, but rarely socialized outside of class. After a year, she began to see a change in him.

"The ESL center gave him a

safe place to go back into the world and learn to love again," she said.

The bond between tutor and student tends to continue after the students "graduate."

Many keep in touch with their tutors even if they return to their home country.

"It is inspirational that someone can have an impact such as this in so little time," said Doni.

Students who apply are put on a waiting list until matched with teachers. Instruction is free, because those who teach one-to-one or in small groups are volunteers.

Students stay for as little or as much time as they need in order to feel comfortable and proficient in English.

About 20 students participate from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The Rev. John Temple Bristow, pastor of Country Homes Christian Church, said the church is committed to sponsoring the program because of the personal growth it affords both tutors and students.

"It is beneficial to all involved and helps the students progress in their lives in the community," he said.

Half of the volunteers are church members, John said, and the congregation is enthusiastic about the school, which is one of the church's main ministries. Tutors have also helped some students with paperwork to gain appropriate legal status, working with the immigration office.

For information, call 466-3414.

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This lecture is free and open to the public

Having immigrated, teacher understands students' needs

Understanding what it's like to immigrate to the United States, Wardé Bayyuk decided to help others learn English so they could adjust more readily.

When she retired as secretary at the Cathedral of St. John two years ago, she began to volunteer with Barton School.

She grew up in Lebanon, where she earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry at the American University in Beirut. There she met her husband, Shibli Bayyuk, who grew up in Jerusalem.

Wardé taught in a private Christian school before they married. Then they lived two years during his studies in Birmingham, England, before moving to Amman, Jordan, where he taught at the university and she taught fourth to seventh grades.

In 1989, she joined Shibli when he went on sabbatical at the University of Florida. Deciding to stay in the United States, he taught a year in Kentucky before coming to teach chemistry at Gonzaga in 1991.

After they began attending the

cathedral, her volunteer office work became a job.

"My faith keeps me going and makes me want to help," said Wardé, teaching immigrants or cooking for housebound or sick parishioners she visits for as part of the cathedral's pastoral care team.

"I feel compassion for people and I find simple ways to help," she said. "At Barton, we share stories and common experiences of struggle and uncertainty. That builds strength."

Volunteering at Barton School twice a week, Wardé carpools with another teacher who lives near her home in Northwood.

Wardé is pleased that her students improve during the two hours of reading, writing and conversing on common interests—from the economy to children.

"I like learning about people and how they feel about leaving their countries and coming here as I did. Most have experienced hardship and some have left behind families," she said.



Wardé Bayyuk

Students learn to navigate everyday activities, business, conversations

Continued from page 1
complete the three years of tutoring Barton School offers. Some have gone on to own their own businesses.

Each is better able to navigate in daily living by learning how to use a telephone, understand a bank statement, participate in a political party caucus or prepare for their child's parent-teacher conference.

Now there are about 70 teachers, because not all teach every day.

In the 1970s and 1980s, many students were Vietnamese.

Barton School's current students are from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, South Korea, Taiwan, China and Cambodia.

About 20 students are on the waiting list, waiting for more volunteer teachers. The church's space for the school is also nearly full.

Mildred Scheel, who started as a volunteer teacher in 1977 and is now volunteer director, said her pay is the appreciation and hugs of students.

"I want to improve world conditions," she said. "I read the newspaper and feel there is little I can do, but if I help one person from one country, it's helping

work for peace."

Mildred, who taught home economics for 25 years at North Central, Shadle Park and Lewis and Clark High Schools, describes the school as a mini United Nations in more ways than cultural diversity.

Mildred said her second student was from China. The student had three daughters and a husband in China. She learned English to be educated and after five years brought her family here. Her daughters, who were in their teens and 20s when they came, also attended Barton School.

"We often need to use diplomacy to deal with relationships of students from different countries," she said. "For example, one Muslim man could not go to coffee hour, because he was not to socialize with women. We need to be aware of such taboos."

Having traveled and lived in Europe, Kirsten Harrington started teaching because she wanted to connect with people of different cultures. From living in the Netherlands, she understands how hard it is to live in a country and not know the language.

Kirsten moved here eight years ago from Seattle and began attending First Presbyterian when

she was looking for a place to volunteer to teach English. She learned of Barton School. She started as a teacher five years ago, but saw need to do activities with students, such as role playing to help a Russian student learn how to read a menu and order food.

An bequest from a former teacher and grants provide books, supplies and citizenship materials, said Kirsten, who now helps with administration.

Programs are independently tailored to students. Teachers use materials that interest their students and them, gearing them

to their student's level of reading and understanding.

Students come with varied levels of English. Some had advanced degrees in their home countries but are unable to use those degrees because they lack English skills. Some are doctors and dentists. Some can read and write English, but need help with conversation.

Much of the teachers' training

is on the job, but they also attend an annual English as a Second Language (ESL) conference at Gonzaga University.

"One mother said she had not taught anyone English. I reminded her she had taught her children English," said Kirsten, whose children are in the church's preschool with children of other teachers and the students.

For information, call 747-1058.

Barton School plans events to celebrate 40th anniversary

"Love in Any Language," a weekend of activities Barton School plans to celebrate 40th anniversary March 20 to 22.

At 10 a.m., Friday, there will be a keynote presentation at First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar. The event will include presentations by current and former students, and a potluck lunch.

Hsia Jung Chang will give a return piano concert at 7 p.m., Saturday, and her mother, Ho Lan, a former Barton School student and

Taiwanese singer, will yodel.

Sunday, Barton School will serve birthday cake to First Presbyterian members after worship to thank the church for 40 years of support.

Kirsten Harrington, administrative coordinator, said they are preparing a cookbook with recipes from students and teachers.

For information, call 747-1058.

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Hunger, housing, health care, environment are priorities for churches

Continued from page 1

March 17. Those who meet in churches can discuss issues and contact their legislators by phone.

The Very Rev. Bill Ellis of the Cathedral of St. John offered a prayer that people remember that God's will in the Inland Northwest, the state, the nation and the world is for peace through justice, not dominance or violence.

He challenged participants to know God's love for them, to live in that love and to let the people in power in Olympia and Washington, D.C., know "we, the people, are attentive."

Eastern Washington liaison for the Washington Association of Churches (WAC) Malcolm Hawthorn suggested that the theme, "Sustainable Community," gave an opportunity to explore how the economy, environment and equity can create sustainable life.

Pointing to the value of people who are vulnerable, Bishop William Skylstad of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane mentioned a scene in the film, "Schindler's List," when Oscar Schindler wonders how many Jewish people he might have saved if he had sold his gold Nazi lapel pin.

"He connects a piece of gold with salvation of people," the bishop said. "The Scriptures have many stories of people who make such connections and understand that part of our role is to help people."

Bishop Skylstad said the theme "calls us to run a reality check on ourselves as individuals and communities of faith, looking at our hearts, our relationships and our physical environments."

"Ecology," he pointed out, "is about the totality of relationships between organisms and their environment."

"What is our relationship to God, our Creator, and what does that relationship mean we need to address?" he asked, pointing out that God created people with



Donna Christensen

physical and spiritual hearts.

"Without spiritual hearts we lose footing, orientation, humility, recognition of sinfulness, reliance on God, connection to community and a sense of stewardship connecting life."

Bishop Skylstad said that the spiritual heart is about love, peace, gratitude and joy to help people connect the ecology and economy behind climate change. He reminded of the second commandment's call to love neighbors and Jesus calling people to care for the hungry, naked, sick, imprisoned and "the least." Scriptures warn about oppressing the weak and abusing the needy.

Solidarity with and responsibility for people, he said, "affect the quality of our existence. Multi-million dollar corporate salaries represent a disconnection with brothers and sisters."

"Selfish use of the world's resources causes grievances, conflicts, violence, war and terrorism," he said. "Ecology of the earth is about stewardship of the land, water, energy and climate."

He concluded that the future demands a conversion of the heart so people pollute less and clean up what is polluted, so people envision an alternative future and persist for the long haul.

Donna Christensen, an advocate with the Washington State Catholic Conference (WACC) for 10 years, said the process of making laws and setting the budget is complicated. In her 26 years in Olympia, she said challenges have not changed: There are budget crises over and over, because the state budget receives for 50 percent of its income from sales and use taxes, 18 percent from business and operations taxes, 12 percent from property taxes and 7 percent from real estate taxes.

"There is need for tax equity," she said, reinforcing Alice's call.

"We need to pay attention," she said, challenging cuts to General Assistance to the Unemployable (GAU), Volunteer Chore and health care.

GAU assistance at \$339 a month—set in 1982—for disabled people covers 90 days before they are eligible for unemployment. It may be completely cut.

Volunteer Chore Services, created when state funded Chore Services were cut in a previous budget crisis, operates with volunteers helping people so they can stay in their homes, saving the state money. State funding is at risk.

Funding for the Basic Health Plan has fluctuated from increasing eligibility to 300 percent of the poverty level and to cover all children by 2010, to a 42-percent cut that would eliminate health care for 130,000 people.

Diane urges people to call the legislative hotline, join advocacy networks, write personal letters and envision a community with all people taken care of and no one lives in isolation.

"People will be hurt if we do not prioritize those most in need," Diane challenged.

Kim Shipley of the WACC called for preventing cuts to the Housing Trust Fund, which has provided 32,000 low-income and farm worker housing units since 1988. He also urged support of energy efficiency for buildings to reduce greenhouse gasses.

Sister JoAnn Showalter, Eastern Washington representative of Earth Ministry in Seattle, and Kitty Klitzke of Futurewise in Spokane addressed environmental issues.

Sacred documents of most major faiths call for caring for creation, living simply so that others can simply live, she said, suggesting that people use nonpolluting cleaners instead of chlorine or ammonia, which were developed as weapons of mass destruction in World War I.

She said that "in the past, millions of people, usually poor people, have been forced to move because of environmental degradation during the Dust Bowl, Love Canal and defertilization in Africa, Asia and the Pacific."

Kitty presented priorities

of the Environmental Priorities Coalition, a partnership of 24 organizations in Washington that works together on four priorities each year.

The 2009 priorities, presented in depth at www.environmental-priorities.org, are:

- Cap and Invest (HB 1810/SB 5735) to set limits on global warming pollution;
- Efficiency First (HB 1747/SB 5854) to promote energy efficient homes, businesses and public institutions;
- Transit-Oriented Communities (HB 1490/SB 5687) to establish affordable walkable communities around transit, and
- Invest in Clean Water (HB 1614/SB 5518) to protect clean water as vital resource to Washington's communities.

Each proposal stimulates a green economy, saving money, providing jobs and protecting resources, Kitty said.

For information, contact the WAC at 206-625-9790, the WACC at 206-301-0556 or info@environmentalpriorities.org.

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Faith Advocacy Day is March 17

"Put People First" is the theme for Faith Advocacy Day 2009 beginning at 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 17, at the United Churches of Olympia and including time from 12:30 to 3 p.m. at the State Capitol.

Sponsors include Associated Ministries of Tacoma-Pierce County, the Church Council of Greater Seattle, Church Women United, Compass Center, Earth Ministry, Friends Committee on Public Policy, Interfaith Works, Lutheran Alliance to Create Hous-

ing, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, Lutheran Peace Fellowship, Lutheran Public Policy Office, Religious Coalition for the Common Good, United Methodist Women and the Washington Association of Churches.

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Evening worship: Rev. James D. Miller, pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Communion and Commissioning Service: William P. Robinson, president, Whitworth University

Seminars: Spirituality Track led by Gerald Sittser, Professor of Theology, Whitworth University; Preaching Track led by Ronald Pyle, Professor of Communication Studies, Whitworth University; Music Ministry Track, "Theological and Musical Foundations for Leading the People's Song," led by Harold Best, Professor Emeritus of Music and Dean Emeritus of the Wheaton College Conservatory of Music; and Ben Brody, Assistant Professor of Music, Whitworth University

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Weekly discipline of walking and praying opens eyes to neighborhood

As they walk and pray through West Central Spokane from 9 to 10 a.m. Mondays, members of Salem Lutheran Church, other neighborhood churches and neighbors open their hearts, minds and souls to what is happening around them.

Through the discipline of weekly prayer, "we find God in ordinary activities," said Connie Copeland Malone, outreach minister at Salem. "We encourage members to walk and pray in the neighborhoods where they live.

"That promotes an attitude of opening our eyes, ears and hearts to where God is leading. It helps our 120-year-old congregation find new ways to reach out. We once had a membership of 800. Now we number about 120."

Church membership and attendance numbers, she believes, are no longer the measure of a church. The measure is the spiritual life and everyday outreach.

At an early age, attending grade school in Spokane and high school in Clarkston, Connie sensed a greater purpose for her life than her own goals. Her family was minimally involved in different Protestant churches.

After graduating from Whitworth in 1981 in recreation and physical education, she thought she would do overseas mission work. Over the years, she shifted to a commitment to do urban ministry in the neighborhood where she lives.

"I realize we can serve God wherever we are," she said, "with many different people and groups."

For three years, she has worked out of The Book Parlor in a house at 1414 W. Broadway next to Salem Lutheran. It functions as a neighborhood gathering place.

"We are a local resource disguised as a book store with fair trade items, reading and reflection groups, wireless connection, meeting space and some basic food supplies," she said.

Work in college with Young Life in Spokane extended into several years of work until 1989, when she moved to Eugene with Young Life.

After marrying Pat Malone, who shared her commitment to serve, she went with him to Chicago in 1990 with Lutheran Volunteer Corps, Connie as the volunteer coordinator at the Greater Chicago Food Depository and Pat with the Coalition for the Homeless.

"It was a wake-up call to what was happening in our country," Connie said. "I shifted from my commitment to go elsewhere to look at the urban setting."

When they returned to Spokane in 1994, Connie began volunteer-



Connie Copeland Malone said a neighbor rescues day-old bread from a supermarket and offers it free outside the Book Parlor.

ing at Christ Clinic while rearing their two sons. She served there 11 years.

"In my desire to connect with the place where I live, West Central Spokane, I joined in many efforts, believing God was there long before I was," she said.

They attended Westminster, Knox and First Presbyterian churches, Shalom United Church of Christ and now Salem Lutheran. Connie said her experience with God can be through any church.

After serving Christ Clinic, she decided to broaden her ministry to do more than health care.

"No issue is isolated," she said.

The opportunity to be outreach minister at Salem gives her a way "to be invested where we are, to live, work and do things locally," Connie said.

Salem's mission is to seek and celebrate God's presence, starting by relating with neighbors.

"It's about being together on a journey that honors everyone and recognizes that everyone has gifts to offer," Connie said.

Project HOPE is one volunteer grassroots effort she and Pat helped facilitate as it emerged from school district conversations on intervention to prevent gangs in elementary schools.

Spokane Urban Ministries, a partnership of four local churches including Salem, is close to finishing its first project of affordable housing for singles and families in buildings across from and behind the church.

"Salem does not do outreach just to start programs or bring people in the doors, but to be partner with grassroots efforts like Project HOPE," she said. "Salem offers its experience, resources

and facilities, such as its gym, to encourage and support efforts like Project HOPE. We are committed to offer the gift of our building to our neighbors," she said.

The Book Parlor is open daily to provide hospitality "as a tangible expression of the church's caring," Connie said.

Salem also connects members to volunteer at Our Place Community Ministries two blocks away as one way to share their gifts with the neighborhood.

In that style, Walking and Praying makes sense as a way to put church members on the streets to meet neighbors, understand who they are and how they experience God in their lives, and to learn from them, she explained.

"Walking and Praying does not fix anything for anyone, but opens eyes, ears and hearts of the three to eight who participate. When more come, the group splits into twos and threes.

"Walking and Praying encourages people to begin to look for God's presence in neighbors, taking different routes each week and revisiting some places that seem to need special attention.

"Neighbors expect us. They know we are on the streets," Connie said.

"Recently after we prayed outside a drug house for the people inside caught up in addiction and selling, the house was closed," she said.

When neighbors complained about smell and safety concerns from trash outside one of three neighborhood convenience stores, they went there, prayed and talked with the owner, who is now expected to put up a fence.

"If we offer a little voice, it may be the tipping point to bring some change," she said. "It's call-

ing neighbors to accountability through caring."

If they see a concern, such as trash outside a home, they may contact the resident to ask if the person needs some assistance.

"Life is complicated and messy. Being together, we can look for solutions to improve the lives of everyone," she said. "Amazing things can happen through relationships to help heal humanity.

"Experiences of injustice will not be over in my lifetime," she said. "It takes courage to challenge urban blight, to see that each neighbor has a gift to offer, to uncover the layers, to rub shoulders with different people.

"We do not have the answers. People in the neighborhood have answers. God gives mercies every day if we look at every person as an asset rather than at their limitations," she said. "It's about being connected to act, looking for what someone has to offer. It's about creatively helping people move from isolation into community.

"We walk to be faithful in the ordinary and mundane. In the winter, we walked in the gym, visited members' homes and visited nursing homes to say, 'We are here with you.' We are laying the groundwork for new experiences and adventures."

As part of being in community, those walking and praying often

go at 10 a.m. to Our Place Community Ministries to share in a greater circle of prayer in partnership with those serving there.

"We cannot walk with our eyes closed in prayer," she said. "Our prayer is in our conversation and in seeing through God's eyes, seeking God's answer and comfort. It's about the Creator of all of us," she said. "When we walk, we see more than we do driving or riding in a car."

"Each time we go out we meet people," she said. "In West Central Spokane, people are outside and often walking somewhere," she said.

In addition to walking the streets, Connie said people gather at The Book Parlor to share stories, through which they realize everyone is a resource. Given the location, sometimes people released from jail come there as the first point of contact with a phone, warm place, some food items for sale and a rest room.

"We may direct them to Our Place for food, clothing and other resources in the neighborhood and beyond," said Connie.

That's one of many ways her neighborhood urban ministry brings a little light to people as the church and neighborhood are "faithful to the mundane."

For information, call 328-6527 or visit lutheranbookparlor.com.

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Six of Colfax's 13 churches join together in community ministry, Guatemala mission

By Jeannette Solimine

Instead of attending worship in their separate church buildings one Sunday in October, members of six of Colfax's 13 churches joined in a community worship service.

A common mission brought 550 members of the Community Bible Church, the Assembly of God, the United Methodist Church, the Nazarene Church, First Baptist Church and Onecho Bible Church together in this community of 2,800.

The community worship service was the kick-off for a summer 2009 mission trip to Guatemala.



Communities connect

Todd Kinley, associate pastor of Onecho Bible Church, said the idea for the mission began in 2003, when he and his wife Jamie went on a youth trip to Guatemala. Their guide took them briefly to an orphanage outside Guatemala City. They knew they would have to come back.

Todd, now 33, grew up in Spokane. After attending Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill., and earning a master's in educational ministries, he returned to the Inland Northwest to serve.

In 2007, Todd and Jamie brought youth from Onecho Bible Church for two weeks to help at the orphanage.

In February 2008, David Leafe, one of the men who runs the orphanage, came and spoke with Ken McNaughton, pastor of Community Bible Church, and Rich May, pastor of the Baptist church. They became excited about the possibilities God was opening up before them.

In 2008, Todd and Jamie went back to Guatemala again for several days to help at the orphanage.

Todd had been praying for a community-wide mission for Colfax. When he returned from that trip, he said, God provided the opportunity.

As he went to the post office to collect his held mail, he saw Steve Bretveld, youth pastor at the Baptist church and Bill Reynolds, pastor of the Assembly of God.

They asked about the trip. Todd's excitement rubbed off on them. They told him they, too, were looking for opportunities for mission, ministry, and community building.

Pastors of the churches that decided to be a part of this mission began to meet to discuss how to make this happen. Although a diverse group theologically, Todd

said they have taken a Philippians 2 approach.

That means the pastors and the congregations have set aside their wants and needs as individual churches to show God's love and glory in Jesus Christ by working as one in this mission. By concentrating on what unites them and leaving their differences aside, their interest, willingness, and determination has grown.

The citywide service included a band from Real Life ministry in Pullman and Tim Ruth, a speaker from the orphanage.

The churches took no individual offerings that morning, because this was to be a service to unite the community behind the mission. The offering went to the mission trip.

Todd overheard people as they left the service saying they needed to do this more often.

Over the next months, plans began, people applied, and fund raising began. To date, 103 people, including 30 youth, from the six Colfax churches and the Endicott Bible Church are going.

Businesses and individuals in Colfax, Pullman and Lewiston donated items for a Feb. 8 Desert Auction at the Community Bible Church. The event raised \$15,000. That money, along with money raised by individuals and churches, will go to help transport participants, to assist the orphanage, and to build a parsonage and a three-room Christian education building for a nearby village church.

That church's pastor was one of the orphans cared for by the Casa Para Niños Alleluia orphanage.

Money will be sent ahead so the foundations can be poured and materials can be purchased before the group arrives at the end of June.

The 12-day mission will include opening a medical clinic to help anyone who comes while the team is there.

Some of the group will go to the village to build the buildings, repair the church and run the medical clinic.

Others will do maintenance work, such as painting and repairs for the orphanage, and help with daily chores.

Todd said the stories of the orphanage are both tragic and triumphant.

The 470 children, ranging in age from a few weeks to 23 years old, come from difficult circumstances. Many were abused,

abandoned or sold by those who should have loved them.

Some are disabled and have special needs that are hard for the orphanage to meet.

"Stories of forgiveness abound as well," he said. "One young girl, who was seriously abused by her family, after learning of the love of God through Jesus, forgave her family of abusers, who also came to Christ as a result of her forgiveness. The children do their own church services at the orphanage, and are building a church adjacent to the orphanage for their community."

Todd hopes this mission trip will be the foundation of more interchurch ministry in Colfax.

While not every church was ready to participate in this mission trip, others want to be a part of community ministry.

Many pastors meet monthly as the Colfax Ministerial Association. Most Colfax churches pool financial resources for a traveler's fund, and there is an evening Community Thanksgiving Service every year the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

Several pastors also work together as a part of the volunteer chaplain program at Whitman Hospital. Churches also share responsibility for the high school baccalaureate and Sunday afternoon chapel services at Whitman Health and Rehabilitation Center.

Many of the pastors hope that more lay people will become involved in interchurch mission and activity.

Knowing conflict might arise from disagreements over faith and religion, the pastors pray that everyone will live out their faith, acting on God's call regardless of what might cause differences of opinion.

"We know that God will make it work out for God's glory," says Todd. "At this point, the least of anyone's worries should be individual ideas about religion."

Todd said the theme is "the supremacy and glory of God through Jesus Christ," which is "best shown by helping those most in need."

In a small community like Colfax, he believes that the only way to do something big is to pool resources. He relies on God to open further channels for interchurch ministry.

For information, call 397-0362.

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Church leader matches pastors to congregations for expanding mission

As pastor to the pastors and congregations in the Inland District of the United Methodist Church, the Rev. Dale Cockrum seeks to understand the ministry gifts and goals of each so he can help match appropriate leadership with congregation's "moments of receptivity" for mission.

Leadership and mission are keys to church life and health, he said.

As district superintendent for 50 churches from Bonners Ferry to White Bird, Idaho, and from Ritzville to Wallace, he seeks to help churches be "missional churches."

"Missional" means changing churches from an inward focus of marketing themselves as a place where people come for programs that serve members so they achieve success in terms of numbers, money and buildings.

Missional churches see themselves as places from which people are sent, a "sent community," reaching out to the community and world with Christian messages and values that stir action.

"In the 1950s, we built buildings to draw people to come. Now we help members follow Christ into the world," he said. "The church does not exist just for its own sake, but to go into the community, to enter into life with people. The church gathers for worship to meet and be changed by God in meaningful ways and then goes back out, not just for the mission of giving stuff to others but to give ourselves to others."

He listed five practices of fruitful congregations offered by Bishop Robert Schnase of the Missouri Conference: radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and extravagant generosity.

Dale believes that, when leadership and churches are appropriately matched, each church can thrive and find its mission.

Dale comes into a six-year term in this "peer supervisory" role, stepping out of 30 years as pastor of four different churches.

To create a life-giving mix of leadership and missional life, he needs to know pastors and churches as he works with Pacific Northwest Conference Bishop Grant Hagiya and six other district superintendents to match churches with pastors appropriate to their ministry needs and readiness.

Growing up in First United Methodist Church in Wenatchee, he felt called to ministry in high school. Despite resisting, he grew into the call.

While studying history at Stanford, where he graduated in 1975, he was active in campus Bible studies and youth ministry in



The Rev. Dale Cockrum says leadership and mission are key.

Palo Alto. Dale earned a master of divinity degree in 1978 at San Francisco Theological Seminary.

His ministry unfolded in three six-year pastorates and a 12-year pastorate. His first church in Reardan was his introduction to the Inland Northwest.

Dale found Reardan at a "moment of receptivity" for growth. He was appointed as their first full-time pastor after years of being yoked with Harrington and then Edwall. There he worked with "a vital group of young adults who 24 years later are parents and grandparents."

Next he served as associate pastor at Pioneer United Methodist Church in Walla Walla for six years, pastor at Salmon Creek United Methodist Church in Vancouver for six years and senior pastor of First United Methodist in Olympia for 12 years.

"Each prepared me for this moment of service, because each is like some of the churches in this district," Dale said, ranging from managing a large staff to understanding orchardists, wheat farm communities and the farm economy in Wenatchee, Reardan and Walla Walla.

He knows of challenges facing small rural communities, such as one that recently lost its grocery store, restaurant and business core. He also knows of ingenuity in rural communities. For

example, when Edwall lost its public school, people there started a private K-12 school.

"Sometimes towns can reinvent themselves," he said. "The challenge is to find pastors to help small communities face their challenges in creative ways.

"As communities shrink, it's hard for churches to afford a traditional full-time pastor," Dale said. "Some yoke with other churches, combine local pastors or hire certified lay ministers if they cannot afford a full-time ordained pastor."

Alternate approaches help.

As an intern before seminary at Central United Protestant Church in Richland, he knows the model of a united church in a government-business-established town.

From attending American Baptist and Plymouth Brethren churches, studying at a Presbyterian seminary, and doing an internship at a United Church of Christ in Kensington, Calif., he brings ecumenical insights.

Dale said when churches have moments of receptivity as Reardan did, they need pastoral and lay leadership to work in partnership that empowers lay leaders.

In addition to national United Methodist schools for congregational development for pastors and lay leaders, the region has the Rural Ministries Network, developed by the Rev. King Rockhill and

now led by the Rev. Kathy Kramer at Elmore United Methodist.

"The Rural Ministries Network helped me in Reardan. Coming from a childhood church with 1,500 members and a church of 2,500 in Palo Alto, it helped me understand the dynamics of a familial church."

When he went to Reardan, there were no youth in the church, but there were young families, "so we emphasized worship and children's ministries."

In Vancouver, because a men's prayer and study group included building contractors and trades people, they helped remodel their church and other small churches.

In Walla Walla, a group with a passion for mission worked with an orphanage in Tijuana and sent youth there to work and to play with the children. The church also related with a church in Jamaica, where it helped build a church building in a poor community.

In Olympia, youth went to Mexico and built houses for poor families. Some helped victims of Chehalis River floods and hosted a local Tent City.

"Mission touches lives," Dale said. "When youth or adults go out and visit people, they gain a sense of doing something meaningful and gain a sense of people around the world.

"Mission visits are life transforming," he added. "Youth in Walla Walla, for example, have gone into teaching, health care, mission and ministry. They realize the world is not just 'about me and my problems' as they saw

problems others face," he said.

As he visits the pastors and congregations, he finds that some pastors face isolation, starting in ministry far from their families.

"Some face financial challenges, particularly this year," he said, adding that, for the Annual Conference, 2008 was a strong financial year in terms of the amount churches raised for mission and ministries.

"Churches are not recession-proof, but we can offer strength to help people carry through hard economic times," he said. "People rise to the occasion when there is a need."

Dale listens to pastors' call stories and listens "to the heart" of congregations to understand how they see themselves, so he can find a leader to take them to the next level.

He encourages people to see themselves as "God gifted" people on a grace-filled faith journey.

"Part of achievement is earned, but the church's message is that love and grace are gifts to receive, not prizes to win. Sharing with people that God loves them is central in ministry," Dale said.

Dale believes that when people realize they go to church to feed, not just to be fed, they are less likely to jump from church to church. By church jumping, they miss the opportunity to grow in faith that comes from being part of a community.

"God put us in churches so people will rub off each other's rough edges," he said.

For information, call 838-3085.

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Celebrating 50 Years

Economically challenging times call for churches to be churches

Given this time of economic and spiritual challenge, churches and faith groups are not exempt from impact from multiple directions. There is the obvious concern about giving levels and financial support ministries, mission and leadership on local, regional and national levels.

As the state is considering deep cuts to human services, which always seem to be on the chopping block, churches and faiths have responsibility to model faithful, moral budgets as they call for responsible, moral budgets in the secular realm.

As people in congregations lose jobs, health insurance and homes, or face reduced retirement incomes, churches and faiths are called to care, to reach out, to find new ways to be a community.

As the poor struggle even more, churches and faiths have responsibility to advocate on their behalf, giving voice in the halls of power so programs providing a safety net are not cut at greater rates than other

government services.

As everyone faces uncertainty, the community of faith has an opportunity to be faithful to be who we are at our best, to live out the words that inspire us, to serve as communities so no one is isolated, to see reasons for hope as the poor well know.

"I'm excited," said the Rev. Mike Denton, Pacific Northwest United Church of Christ conference minister, in his recent message to regional and local leaders.

Mike's message offers food for thought that if the faith community chooses, this moment can be an opportunity "to re-focus, re-prioritize and re-member." The church, like most other institutions, has lost bits of itself in the haze of affluence.

"How we thought about ourselves has changed over the last decade as we adopted government, nonprofit and business models that seemed to be working in the wider world," he wrote.

Mike suggests that churches have been

diverted as they have moved:

- from evangelism to advertising;
- from being community to being consumers;
- from engaging in mission to writing mission statements;
- from touch to technology;
- from worship to entertainment;
- from spirituality to psychology.

In the process of adopting market values and methods, he observes, churches sometimes have abandoned values and methods that make church church.

Recognizing similarities between the church's vocation and the work of governments, nonprofits and business, he points out that "ours is not the same," saying:

"We're not called to govern people's behavior but called to share the good news about the gifts of life transformed.

"We're not called to be a vehicle for service management but to serve.

"We're not called to act like a business

or company but to be in relationships of mutual accompaniment as we all try and figure out how to serve God and our sisters and brothers as best we can."

Mike said the churches' role is different because, "we have this faith with stories about manna from heaven; feeding 5,000 people with a couple of fish and a little bread, and the resurrection of a crucified Jesus. We have this faith full of gifts wrapped up in challenges—a faith that makes it clear God's hope is more than a naive attitude. It's a promise."

So he calls churches to remember that hope shines brightest in those places that seem darkest."

Mike's challenge calls us to see our faith beyond its cultural captivity by a society that values affluence over abundance, money over meaning, wealth over wisdom.

**Mary Stamp - Editor and
Mike Denton - United Church of
Christ Conference Minister**

People deserve recognition for looking beyond themselves, restoring trust

Trust is an underlying factor in any long term, smoothly operating system, and we learn to trust—or not to trust—from the people around us and the stories of our culture. As President Barack Obama pointed out in his recent speech before Congress, we are running "a deficit of trust."

There are few character traits that will undermine trust faster than greed. Unfortunately, we have been running a surplus of that commodity. Looking at the Ten Commandments, or the corresponding instructions for having a civil society outlined by most religions, we can see that breaking most of them involves greed.

We are both horrified and fascinated by many of the financial stories currently grabbing the headlines. They are the stuff of melodrama and satire, featuring greedy people with overblown self-esteem and miniscule consciences:

Bernie Madoff required references before he agreed to steal from people.

AIG received bailout money because it was "too big to fail," and then executives invited a few hundred of their closest friends to a party in posh surroundings.

Allen Stanford arranged to be knighted by the governor of Antigua while setting up his fictional investment firm and now expects people to address him as Sir Allen.

The stories are fascinating, even if they are about essentially silly people who need constant adult supervision, but they can teach us, as Aesop did.

In the meantime, trust in our financial institutions has taken a beating.

Other stories about people who are committed to the common good and are contributing to finding positive solutions to our worldwide predicament are not so titillating, but can burrow into our being and

help us fill in our own outline for action.

In "Why Stories Matter" in the current Sojourners magazine, Marshall Ganz tells what he learned from the yearly repetition in the Passover Seder, telling children, "You were a slave in Egypt." He finally realized the point was to recognize that the struggle from slavery to freedom always goes on, and we have to choose where we stand on that. That realization was a factor in his decision to go to Mississippi in the 1960s to take part in the civil rights movement.

President Obama is continuing a tradition of honoring people who make a difference by telling their stories as they sit with dignitaries in the visitors' gallery of the House of Representatives. He told two stories.

A schoolgirl, Ty'Sheoma Bethea, wrote Congress of the sorry state of her school and the need for repairs that would allow pupils to succeed in their studies.

When Leonard Abess, Jr., sold a successful bank, he distributed \$60 million to 471 current and retired employees. He said he didn't need the money and appreciated their loyalty.

He knew the meaning of "Enough."

One reward of working on the Fig Tree is learning stories of people who make a difference in this part of the world.

When Valley Meals on Wheels needed a kitchen to prepare meals after their vendor left, realtor Grant Person learned the vendor's kitchen was on the market. He bought it and rents it to the program at a low rate. He also donated vans. Suppliers are donating equipment to update the kitchen.

Everyone helping Meals on Wheels continue deserves a seat in the gallery for looking beyond themselves, making a difference in the lives of people and restoring trust.

Nancy Minard - Editorial Team

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

Archbishop Oscar Romero said on March 14, 1977, "let us not forget, we are a pilgrim church, subject to misunderstanding, to persecution, but a church that walks serene because it bears the force of love."

I lift up Archbishop Romero, who was martyred by an assassin's bullet on March 24, 1980, because he understood that to be the church, we must live Christ's love for God and neighbor. His words remind me we are a pilgrim church that walks and lives in a world marred by injustice, systemic poverty and racism. He knew God's people would be misunderstood, but called people to "bear the force of love," not just any love, but God's love manifested in Jesus Christ, who died and rose again so that we would have forgiveness and life.

Consider how God calls us to love one another. What does God's love for us look like? How have we experienced God's love as individuals and as a church? Having experienced God's love, how can we as God's people, 'bear the force of love' for our little corner of the world?

**The Rev. Ginny Johnson
St. Paul Lutheran - Quincy**

In the 1960s, intense issues such as civil rights, Vietnam, feminism and drug use were shattering a sense of post-war solidarity in our society and churches. Progressive pastors and other church leaders began to speak of "prophetic ministry." By this, they meant focusing attention on the poor, the oppressed and the muted. These forward-thinking leaders were lifting up the concerns of ancient Israelite prophets: righteousness and justice for widows, orphans

and sojourners (read: immigrants).

Many church members were deeply disturbed by sermons that addressed these concerns and deeply suspicious of programs designed to "correct" perceived social ills. Pastors who tried to echo Old Testament prophets from pulpits were denounced by many as meddling in affairs that were neither religious nor spiritual.

About this time, the church growth movement, Campus Crusade for Christ and evangelistic programs were launched, emphasizing personal beliefs and homogeneity in congregations. Salvation was equated solely as going to Heaven, and peace was equated with peace of mind—concepts outside the preaching of Israel's prophets.

"Liberal" churches scorned evangelistic programs as of lesser importance to faithful ministry, and, to no one's surprise, these churches dwindled in size while evangelistic "conservative" congregations grew.

Studying the book of Isaiah brings back stressful memories. Throughout my ministry, I have tried to support efforts in both evangelism and social reform, often managing to irritate both "liberal" and "conservative" folk at the same time.

This spiritual dichotomy is as ancient as the Bible. In the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus often quotes Isaiah and preaches disturbing sermons about justice and mercy, while in the Gospel of John, Jesus teaches about personal beliefs and spiritual unity.

So I bow to the wisdom of those who included both the synoptics and John in the New Testament canon, and to the ancient prophets of Israel who turned the burning issues of their day into appeals to "love

your neighbor as yourself."

**The Rev. John Temple Bristow
Country Homes Christian**

Many of my conversations these days, and probably yours, tend to gravitate to the topic of our ailing economy. With each week that passes, the generic news of the downturn becomes more personal as I debrief with folks from the church who have lost jobs or are in the unenviable position of having to lay off employees. One of the questions I hear arising in these conversations is the difficulty of knowing how to respond. Should we hope for the best and keep it positive? Should we hunker down and expect the worst? We are a little off balance right now.

I have noticed that there is much advice being tossed around in these uncertain times. We are ripe for some good, solid advice, but in our fears we are also susceptible to the worst advice. If we are to go searching for advice right now, let's go for time-tested, Spirit-refined wisdom available to us in Scripture.

There is wisdom in the saying from Ecclesiastes, "There is nothing new under the sun." There is a proper humility in such advice.

Such advice invites us to look back on our history. I wonder what we might learn by looking back. Such advice leads us to look back on God's history of faithfulness and the experience of God's people in challenging times. I wonder what future might open up to us in the midst of such reflections.

**The Rev. Craig Goodwin
Millwood Presbyterian**

Most of the bad things we do in this life are the result of believing we aren't capable of being bad at all.

This tendency within the human spirit is one reason why Lent is so important to our overall spiritual health. We all need time to look seriously at the fullness of what it means to be—not just human in general—but the particular human beings we are.

For the sake of our spirit, for the sake of those around us, we need time to notice clearly who we really are, not just who we want to be or even who we think we are. Twelve steppers call this "a fearless and searching moral inventory" and that is a good description of it. We need to do this not so that we can wallow in how bad we are, because that is also unhealthy, but so that we can see the truth and be changed by it.

Real penitence must never be allowed to become a celebration of our sinfulness—an opportunity to feel bad—but must instead be used to increase genuine self-understanding so that we might know what we are capable of and learn from it how to live in this world with more compassion, more love, more mercy.

If I understand that admitting my potential for evil is not about getting in trouble, but about being transformed, then I am much more able to become completely honest because I will know it is safe to be honest. Lent is meant to be one important place to learn that lesson, that God's judgment is not for condemnation, but for salvation, and that it is safe to face ourselves as we truly are, for that is how God loves us.

**The Very Rev. Bill Ellis
Cathedral of St. John**

Presentations on poverty accompany exhibit

From March 2 to April 10, Gonzaga University's Foley Center Library is hosting "The Faces of Poverty," a photo art exhibit depicting images of poverty globally and locally. Along with it, Gonzaga will offer presentations and panels on the plight of the poor from March 22 to 27 in the library's Teleconference Room.

Images include pictures from Colombia, taken by Jesuit photo-journalist the Rev. Brad Reynolds, S.J., and in Spokane by local photographer Bethany Mahan.

Presentations are from 4 to 6 p.m., Sunday, March 22, and from 7 to 9 p.m., Monday to Friday, March 23 to 27. The exhibit is open before the presentations.

Jerri Shepard, associate professor of education at Gonzaga, said the exhibit invites Gonzaga and

the public to observe, explore and reflect on the images presented of local and global poverty.

"The event seeks to disturb our concepts of poverty while inviting the observer to reflect on the meanings of these images," said Jerri Shepard, associate professor of teachers' education, who is organizing the event with Hector Javier Rocafort, also of Gonzaga's

education department.

"Presentations and panels will help observers personalize their understanding of poverty," she said, providing opportunities for inquiry: Are those really faces of poverty? Does poverty mean unhappiness? Who seems to be really poor in the pictures?"

For information, call 313-3630 or email hrocafor@gonzaga.edu.

Vietnamese scholar is Flannery speaker

Peter Phan, a native of Vietnam, who emigrated as a refugee to the United States in 1975, will speak on "Forming Catholic Identity in an Age of Religious Pluralism" for the 2009 Flannery Lecture at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 26, in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

Now teaching at Georgetown University in Washington, DC., he began teaching philosophy at a college in Hong Kong at the age of 18. He has taught at five other U.S. colleges and seminaries.

For information, call 313-6782.

Renewal retreat begins March 20

"Spring Renewal! Flower of Life, Hope Springs Eternal" is the theme for an annual Spring Spirituality Retreat from Friday to Sunday, March 20 to 22, at N-Sid-Sen, a camp and conference center on Lake Coeur d'Alene.

There will be workshops on Qi Gong meditative exercises by Robert Rohlmeier, flute making by Karolyne Rogers, dances of universal peace by Lynne Williams and Bruce Calkins, meditation writing by Roger Ehlert, juggling and brain balance by Kevin Stroupe and music making by Duane Nightingale, Mark Kreilkamp and Todd Neel.

For information, call 208-687-5255 or visit www.kohles.com/renewal2009.

Calendar of Events

- Mar 2-Apr 10 • The Faces of Poverty Photo Art Exhibit**, Gonzaga University's Foley Center Library.
- Mar 5 • Hillyard Community Garden**, Northeast Community Center, 6 p.m., 996-9769
- Mar 6 • "From Generation to Generation,"** author Jean Twenge, Women's Leadership Conference of the Inland Northwest, Spokane Community College's Lair, 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., mmpalm@webband.com
- Mar 7 • Yakima Legislative Conference**
- Mar 7-15 • "Let Jesus Free Us," Novena of Grace**, St. Aloysius Catholic Church, 330 E. Boone, 313-5896
- Mar 8 • International Women's Day Celebration**, Spokane Women's Club, 9th and Maple, 2-5 p.m., 456-2382
- "Speak Peace,"** One Peace Many Paths Interfaith Event, Unity Church, 2900 S. Bernard, 4 to 6 p.m., 838-618
- Mar 9 • Night of a Thousand Dinners**, United Nations Association fundraiser for clearing landmines, Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 Fort Wright Dr., 7 p.m., 456-2382
- CROP Hunger Walk Church Representative Meeting**, Mission Community Presbyterian, 2103 E. Mission, 7 p.m., 891-1045
- Mar 11 • "Stories Empower: Peace Journalism," Benefit Breakfast** and 25th Anniversary of The Fig Tree, Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University, 7:15 to 8:30 a.m., 535-1813 or 313-4037
- "Poverty Worldwide: Disasters, Survivors and How You Can Help the Poor,"** Eng Hoe, Seeley-Mudd Chapel, Whitworth University, 7 p.m., 343-4061
- Mar 13 • Spokane Farmers Market** vendor applications, 995-0182
- Mar 15 • Kosher Dinner, Temple Beth Shalom**, 30th and S. Perry, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., 747-3304
- Mar 17 • Faith Advocacy Day**, United Churches of Olympia, 12:30 to 3 p.m., 206-625-9790
- Mar 18 • "Tattoos on the Heart: Lessons from the Barrio,"** Father Gregory Boyle, SJ, Spokane City Forum, First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar, 11:45 a.m., 747-1058
- Mar 19 • Holy Names Scholarship Benefit Concert**, Bing Crosby Memorial Theatre, 901 W. Sprague, 7 p.m., 326-9516
- Mar 20-22 • "Spring Renewal" retreat**, N-Sid-Sen, 208-687-5255
- Mar 21 • "A Taste of Spiritual Exercises"** mini-retreat, Gonzaga Prep Chapel, 9 to 11 a.m., 483-8511, ext. 411
- "A Time to Build Up,"** The Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 313-5765
- Barton School Piano Concert**, "Love in Any Language," First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar, 7 p.m., 747-1058
- Mar 22 • "Opal's Baby,"** Readers Theatre Benefit for Our Place, Salem Lutheran, 1428 W. Broadway, 2 p.m., 326-7287
- Mar 22-27 • "Faces of Poverty"** programs on issues of poverty, Foley Library, Gonzaga University, 4-6 p.m. Sunday, 7-9 p.m. Monday to Friday, 313-3630
- Mar 26 • Spokane Valley Meals on Wheels** kitchen open house, 218 N. Crestline, 3 to 7 p.m., 924-6976
- Cup of Cool Water Open House**, 1106 W. 2nd, 4 to 7 p.m., 747-6686
- Peter C. Phan, Flannery Lecture**, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:30 p.m., 313-6782
- April 1 • Fig Tree Distribution**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m.
- April 2 • Fig Tree Board Meeting**, Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 1 p.m.

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Orthodox youth ministry leader identifies with questioning of youth

By Virginia de Leon

Kevin Scherer seemed like “the golden boy on the fast track” into ministry until his questions about faith led to the loss of nearly everything—his job, his reputation and his friends.

After surviving that traumatic time, the questions he wrestled with during his youth and early 20s now help him understand and serve young people, including college students nationwide who belong to the Orthodox Church.

Kevin, a priest in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, is executive director of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF), the campus ministry arm of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas.

The OCF provides programming in fellowship and spiritual growth for 270 chapters in the United States and Canada.

Many young people Kevin works with are struggling with questions about God, faith and the meaning of life, as he did.

“Their questions are a sign of health. They should be embraced by the church,” he said, “as a sign that the church is an open door to someone’s life. I hope to help students discover a deeper, fuller definition of their faith.”

As part of his work in youth ministry as a Southern Baptist, Kevin took young people to South Central Los Angeles, Mexico, and other places to experience firsthand the plight of the poor and marginalized.

“When students are pushed out of their comfort zones, they face their stereotypes and perspectives,” Kevin said. “Emotional vulnerability, contextualized with responsible pastoral direction, can be a transformative experience for spiritual growth and discipleship. It’s about interaction with one’s neighbor and the gospel.”

While at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Seminary in Crestwood, N.Y., Kevin prayed for an opportunity to combine his passion for youth



Kevin Scherer’s questions led to understanding young people.

with his mission experience.

He wrote his master’s thesis on how short-term missions can be a gateway for church renewal. His research and ideas led him to establish the Orthodox Youth Outreach in 2001. In recent years, hundreds of junior and senior high students have been involved in local community service and short-term mission projects through OYO’s efforts.

Although he travels around the country, Kevin is based in Spokane, where he and his wife are rearing three daughters—ages 12, 9 and 6. When he’s not away, Kevin serves a mission parish in Moscow, Idaho. For more than a year, he has led worship for this parish of about 36 people.

Kevin shared insights from his journey into Orthodox Christianity, a journey that he said was neither straightforward nor easy.

Like many members of the Orthodox Church, he is a convert.

The grandson of a Southern Baptist preacher, he was expected to follow in his grandfather’s footsteps and become a pastor.

As a child in Mountain Home,

Ark., he was well-versed in the Scriptures and excelled in Bible drills. He accompanied his grandfather on long trips in the Ozarks to plant churches and spread the Gospel. Sunday evenings during his teens, Kevin preached to members of the church. His sermons received high praise.

“My grandfather was a huge influence on my life,” he said. “I respected and loved him so much. I just couldn’t disappoint him.”

So Kevin studied theology and graduated with a bachelor’s degree from San Diego Christian College. He was immediately hired as a youth pastor at an influential evangelical megachurch. He and his wife, Robin, whom he met at college, lived three blocks from the beach.

“It was about as perfect as it could be,” Kevin said. “From my friends’ perspectives, my life was playing out as everyone thought it should.”

Deep inside, however, he didn’t feel satisfied. Questions about faith, the Bible and church history nagged him. His best friend at the time, a member of the church

where he worked, encouraged him to seek answers. The two talked to different theologians from various Christian traditions, including Catholic and Episcopal churches. It was the first time he had studied pre-Reformation church history.

He began attending worship at these churches before heading to work and teaching at his own megachurch.

His wife, a musician at the church, first thought he was crazy, said Kevin. Soon, she began asking the same questions about church history and authority, and finding depth in the liturgy of other churches.

“I didn’t have preconceived ideas,” said Kevin. “My questions were sincere. I just wanted to follow those questions. It became a matter of conscience.”

Two years later, when Kevin was 23 and preparing to attend Dallas Theological Seminary, he shared his feelings with the senior pastor of his church. The next month, he was fired and no longer allowed to teach. Some parents of youth forbade their children from speaking to him.

“I was in no man’s land,” Kevin said. “I didn’t know what faith community I belonged to. I didn’t have a way to make a living. I didn’t know what to do.”

So he and Robin moved back to Arkansas and lived in his mother’s basement. He found a minimum-wage job shoveling dirt, then worked at a hardware store and then was a tram driver. For a year, they scraped by. They continued on their faith journey, even as Kevin was asked to serve as interim pastor of his grandfather’s church, with the expectation he would continue after his grandfather retired.

The Scherers discovered a yearning to pursue Orthodoxy, so they did some research. One Saturday, they drove four hours to the nearest Orthodox church in Memphis, Tenn.

They found that parishioners of St. John the Evangelist were

like them—men and women who came from other Christian traditions but desired an ancient way of worship and a spiritual life in which Christ permeated every aspect of their lives. They wanted to be part of a church that integrated both theology and spirituality.

At St. John’s, he felt a sense of homecoming amid the icons, candlelight and incense during a vesper service. On meeting Kevin and his wife for the first time, the priest embraced them.

“Looking at the icon of Christ, I had an overwhelming feeling of wanting to run to it and wrap my arms around it,” said Kevin, describing his first visit to St. John. “Tears were streaming down my face. I had this overwhelming sense that I was home.”

The Scherers spent many weekends driving to Memphis for worship at St. John’s. In November 1993, the couple was received into the Orthodox Church. They lived in Memphis for several years before moving to St. Vladimir’s in Crestwood, where Kevin pursued his call to ministry.

Despite the pain he suffered when he left the megachurch in San Diego, Kevin said he still values his Southern Baptist background.

“All my education led me to this point,” he said, adding that his grandfather, now 91, respects Kevin’s ministry and call to serve as a priest.

In fact, his experience as a youth pastor in the Southern Baptist tradition prepared him to do outreach among youth for Orthodox Christian churches in this country.

The pain and confusion he endured as a young man with many questions, Kevin said, also prepared him for the present.

He wouldn’t be where he is today if he had chosen the easiest and most obvious route. His being fired from his job and disowned by friends led to his journey to his new church home.

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