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The Fig Tree

November 2025
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Micah 4:4
news@thefigtree.org
(509) 535-4112 • 535-1813

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

Rep listens to learn about needs

By Mary Stamp

As the representative of Washington Governor Bob Ferguson in nine counties in Eastern Washington, Luc Jasmin III said his role is to protect and support the residents of the state.

He found his way to that role by advocating to help preschoolers improve their preparation to go to school. As a long-term fourth-grade substitute teacher, he had found it difficult to create many individual reading plans because some students read at a kindergarten level and others read at a sixth-grade level.

Realizing the disparities in learning, he started what is now Parkview Early Learning Center in 2014. His sister, Katia Jasmin is executive director of Parkview, along with heading Creole Resources.

“It was a crash course in setting it up and trying to make ends meet with not enough resources,” he said. “We began promoting what early learning does for the community as it brings people together.”

The center now serves 100 children, a mixed group from working and middle-class families, financially strained and private



Luc Jasmin III represents Gov. Bob Ferguson in Eastern Washington.

pay families, and both kids of color and dominant-culture kids.

“Our mission is to serve communities that are often neglected and need additional services and support,” he said.

While working in elementary schools, Luc saw that many kids came to K-12 unprepared in basic learning.

“That puts a heavy strain on primary teachers,” he observed. “I decided to focus on early learning so kids would come prepared.”

Then, about 75 percent of children entered kindergarten unprepared. After advocating for resources, services and funding, Luc reported that now about 60 percent of children enter kindergarten unprepared.

“Those figures show the impact of investing in early learning,” he affirmed.

“My advocacy and community organizing started with families who were not able to access early resources. I realized there was need for state subsidies for families and better reimbursements for providers,” he explained.

Luc began to see improvements as he organized people and met with legislators to change policies.

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New tariffs create ‘unfair policy’ that threatens fair trade businesses

In more than 40 years of connecting people in the U.S. with people in Nepal through fair trade, Ganesh Himal Trading Co. has faced struggles from earthquakes, economic downturns and revolutions.

Now new tariffs are creating “unfair policy that threatens their business, producers, staff, store buyers and retail customers,” said Denise Attwood, co-founder of Ganesh Himal. “Enough is enough. The new tariffs are causing damage, not just to

American businesses but also to marginalized producers around the world.”

Similarly, Jillian Joseph, owner of Kizuri, said tariffs are an additional 10 percent on products from Nepal, but an additional 50 percent for certain metals and art materials for products from India, totaling 65 percent on goods when they arrive.

“We are trying to eat as much of that amount before customs, but there are few middlemen in fair trade,” she said. “That’s

good because it means there are fewer people with costs in the middle, but now it means there are fewer to help absorb the cost of tariffs.”

For example, Ganesh Himal buys directly from the artisans and sells directly to Kizuri and other retailers.

“It means fair trade is easier to manage and can have a more direct impact on the artisans,” Jillian continued. “Artisans want us to continue our purchases at the current levels, and we want to continue our commitment to them. Our customers will continue to help us help the artisans.”

A Supreme Court decision in November will have an impact on whether the tariffs will hold, she pointed out.

“Meanwhile, we live with uncertainty,” she said. “It’s destabilizing. There is so much for business owners to think about as we work in international trade. Changes keep dangling over our heads. Is this going to change or not change?”

Canada and Mexico were

Continued on page 5

2025 Fall Fund Drive invites more donations

The Fig Tree 2025 Fall Fund Drive is appealing through letters, Facebook, emails and the website donor page, seeking to raise a goal of at least \$16,000 to support the newspaper and directory. Bulletin inserts and fliers are available to spread the word and invite donations from faith communities and their members. Anyone can make a fundraiser for The Fig Tree on Facebook or at secure.givelively.org/donate/the-fig-tree/fall-fund-drive.

The Fig Tree Board has offered to match the first \$4,125 of donations. As of Oct. 31, The Fig Tree had raised about \$4,650, including some of the matched funds.

“The Fig Tree provides coverage of stories that matter about local faith communities, nonprofits, agencies, individuals and movements,” said Marijke Fakasiieiki, development and editorial associate, who is available to speak to groups. “We seek to challenge people and expand their world awareness.”

Along with financial assistance that supports the mission of building understanding among diverse people and sharing resources to improve lives, volunteers do many of the tasks like writing, editing, mailing, delivering, planning, connecting, researching, archiving and sharing The Fig Tree stories. Their labor of love supplements staff efforts.

Board member David Gortner, priest at St. Luke’s Episcopal in Coeur d’Alene, said: “The Fig Tree has touched lives, empowered people and connected them with life-saving resources.”

Recent columnist Cameron Conner commented: “Beyond the incredible stories of inspiration that The Fig Tree lifts up and informing us of amazing things going on right down the street, it weaves us together into community striving towards a collective vision of the world.”

To donate, visit <https://www.thefigtree.org/donate.html>.

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Religion News Briefs

Around the World

World Council of Churches News, PO Box 2100
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Fig Tree speaker heads Reformed Churches

World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Jerry Pillay congratulated Karen Georgia Thompson on her election as president of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Karen Georgia, who is General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ and a member of the WCC Central Committee, was the featured speaker for The Fig Tree’s 40th anniversary celebration in April 2024.

Faith and Order holds sixth world conference

The Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order in Egypt is a historic moment for the World Council of Churches (WCC) and its Commission on Faith and Order, according to commission moderator Stephanie Dietrich. Organized by the Commission on Faith and Order, the conference met from Oct. 24 to 28 at the Logos Papal Center of the Coptic Orthodox Church at Wadi El Natrun, southwest of Alexandria, Egypt, on the theme, “Where Now for Visible Unity?”

It is the first world conference since 1993, the first of this century and millennium, and the first to be held on the African continent, she said. The meeting offered an opportunity for Faith and Order commissioners to take stock of their work since their last in-person meeting in February 2024, and to begin to set directions for the future.

The conference in Egypt took place 1700 years after the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, the first assembly of representatives from the whole of Christendom. The anniversary, said Stephanie, is “not merely a commemoration but a question addressed to us: How will the faith we confess together shape the way we live together today, towards visible unity, in a time marked by fragmentation, conflict and division?”

WCC general secretary Jerry Pillay told the commission, “the unity of the church is not a distant ideal but a concrete sign of hope and reconciliation.” The work of Faith and Order connects with discipleship, prophetic witness and the transformation of the world, he added.

There have been only five such world conferences since the first in Lausanne in 1927, giving birth to the Faith and Order movement, one of the Christian initiatives that led to the founding of the WCC in 1948.

Book focuses on Decolonizing Diakonia

The World Council of Churches (WCC) launched a program Oct. 16 on the book, “Decolonizing Diakonia: From Servanthood to Companionship,” by two pastors, Hyuk Cho and the late Junghee Park. This theological work challenges traditional understandings of Christian service and proposes a fundamental shift toward mutual partnership in God’s mission.

Published by Peter Lang, the book critiques how servanthood models can perpetuate colonial power dynamics and gender inequality. The authors advocate for “companionship” as a transformative approach to diakonia—the church’s ministry of service and justice.

“Traditional servanthood theology too often perpetuates power over,” Cho explained. “It subtly enshrines the dynamic of the powerful few and risks sliding into power over.”

As faith communities worldwide address the environmental crisis, social inequality and calls for decolonization, the authors argue that diakonia should be understood not as charitable work, but as participation in God’s mission through shared responsibility and mutual transformation.

“As churches worldwide navigate questions of power, partnership and authentic solidarity in mission work, the conversation around decolonizing church practices has gained urgency. Traditional models of servanthood have come under scrutiny for perpetuating hierarchical relationships rather than fostering genuine mutuality,” said Kenneth Mtata, WCC program director for Life, Justice, and Peace.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Conference theme is ‘We Shall Overcome’

The Eastern Washington Legislative Conference Planning Team has been meeting to organize the 2026 conference around the theme, “We Shall Overcome: Building the Beloved Community Today.” The program will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 31, at Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, 115 N. Raymond.

The opening will include several musicians and singers sharing a song and the impact of music on movements.

The keynote plenary will be

faith leaders sharing on “Spiritual Ramifications of Persistence,” followed by a youth/young adult panel and briefings on legislation by Kristin Ang of the Faith Action Network and Jean Welch Hill of the Washington State Catholic Conference.

Workshops after lunch will include faithful education, faithful protest, art expressing advocacy, media literacy, faithful advocacy and community organizing for session one.

In the second session, there will be sessions on issues, in-

cluding human rights, racial equity, food security, affordable housing, environmental issues, Indigenous issues and refugees/immigrants.

The planning team includes representatives of Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington, The Fig Tree, Faith Action Network, NAACP Spokane, Nuestras Raices, 350 Spokane and others.

For information, call 535-4112, email kaye@thefigtree.org or visit secure.givelively.org/donate/the-fig-tree/2026-legislative-conference.

FAN plans dinner in Spokane, Seattle

“A Night of Unbreakable Spirit,” the Annual Dinner of the Faith Action Network (FAN), will begin with receptions at 4:30 p.m., followed by dinners at 5:30 p.m. and a program at 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 16, at Gonzaga University’s Hemmingson Center, 702 E. Desmet Ave., Spokane, and at SeaTac in Seattle.

The program, which will also be livestreamed—to Spokane

and to people who sign up but cannot come in person—from the gathering at SeaTac. The keynote speaker, Rep. Pramila Jayapal, and songs from the Tacoma Refugee Choir will be shared online at both locations.

“The gathering will include inspiring stories, delicious food and music to celebrate achievements of multi-faith advocacy,” said Joyce Del Rosario, execu-

tive director of FAN.

There are individual tickets, table hosts and sponsorships.

“Together, we can ensure that we can continue the increasingly important work of promoting justice, compassion, and sustainability in the halls of power,” said Joyce.

For information, email fan@fanwa.org or visit fanwa.ejoinme.org/spokane-tickets.

IHRC fundraiser features Spokane bishop

Immaculate Heart Retreat Center’s “Hope, Peace and Healing” Fundraising Dinner will be held from 5 to 9 p.m., Monday, Nov. 3, at 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd.

The featured speaker is Bishop Thomas Daly, who was appointed to lead the Diocese of Spokane by Pope Francis.

The bishop has served on

Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations, and Home Missions committees of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. He was chair of the Committee on Catholic Education for three years until November 2024 and continues to serve as a committee member. In addition, he is also the Bishop Advisor to Serra

International in the United States.

Funds raised will support the retreat center as it provides a quiet place for people to pray, ponder and rejuvenate, so they may leave energized to impact the community as God calls them to serve.

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

GU professor shares insights on far right

Eastside Gladiators and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane Social Justice Council are sponsoring “Understanding and Challenging Right-Wing Movements Against Democracy” with Joan Braune, 3 to 5 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 8, at 4340 W. Whistalks Way, in person and on Zoom.

There will be time for questions and interactive small group exercises.

Joan is a Gonzaga University

professor and scholar of far-right movements, including racist hate groups and Christian nationalist movements from a “social movement approach.”

She is author of *Understanding and Countering Fascist Movements: From Void to Hope* and is co-editor of *The Ethics of Researching the Far Right* and forthcoming, *On Christian Nationalism: Critical and Theological Perspectives*, coming out in December.

Joan has studied fascism and the far-right for eight years and presents to activist groups, faith communities, educators, labor unions and others. She views fascism as a social movement seeking power and connected to sources of power. She helps communities understand its dangers and build effective social movements and boundaries to counter it.

For information, email sunbunny737@gmail.com.

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Spoken River will be held on Nov. 13

Spoken River, Spokane Riverkeeper’s primary fundraiser, will take place from 5:30 to 8 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 13, at Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd, in Ballroom 300 BCD.

Spokane Riverkeeper invites attendees to “Be a voice for the river,” as the Spokane River “speaks in current and quiet pools, in the laughter of children wading and the hush of herons lifting into dusk. It holds histories, hopes and chapters still unwritten – stories of connection, resilience and renewal,” said Katie Thompson, Spokane Riverkeeper managing director.

Spoken River is “a night of storytelling, reflection and action to protect the river that connects people in the region, an evening of local food, inspired voices and shared purpose,” she added.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. with silent auction and time to meet and mingle. At 6:30 p.m., the program begins. It includes a year in review report, a paddle raise for the river, voices from the watershed and closing remarks.

For information, visit event.gives/spokenriver25.

NAACP Freedom Fund Gala raises funds

The NAACP Spokane Chapter celebrates its Freedom Fund Gala from 7 to 9 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 15, at the Spokane Convention Center, Jr. Ballroom 300. Doors open at 6 p.m.

The evening of elegance, unity and purpose celebrates progress and raises funds to continue its work for justice and scholarships.

This is a formal event featuring speakers, awards and moments that remind attendees why community matters.

For information, visit naacpspokane.com/freedom-fund-gala-2025.

Cathedral of St. John presents ‘Messiah’

Handel’s Messiah returns at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 20 and Friday, Nov. 21 and 3 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 22, at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, 127 E. 12th Ave. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

Performance is by the Spokane Symphony, conducted by James Lowe, and with Spokane Symphony Chorale and Chamber Singers, directed by Meg Stohlmann, choral director.

The program will include Handel’s most outstanding work with joyous refrains and exultant arias, including the iconic Hallelujah Chorus, in this powerful presentation of the greatest story ever told.

For information, call 624-1200, visit foxtheaterspokane.org/event/handels-messiah-4.

First Presbyterian signs up singers, audience

First Presbyterian Church in Spokane will present its annual Handel’s Messiah Sing-Along with Derrick Parker conducting at 3 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 20, at the church, 318 S. Cedar, and also livestream on the church’s YouTube channel. Reservations for singers and audience listeners opens on Nov. 1.

The church has presented the sing-along Messiah since 1910. For information, visit spokanenpc.org/messiah.

Region gears up to feed more people

In the season of thanks, many know their neighbors—including 41,697,000 or 12 percent of the U.S. population, 888,300 Washington State residents or 11 percent of the population and 130,900 Idaho residents or 7 percent of the state population—may be affected by SNAP benefit cuts.

Washington Governor Bob Ferguson is redirecting \$2.2 million per week to support food banks during this time. Spokane Mayor Lisa Brown has issued an emergency declaratiion, as one in five Spokane County residents receive SNAP benefits.

Grocery prices have increased, but U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funding and donations to food pantries are down.

There is urgent need for people concerned about the welfare of their neighbors to donate to food banks and pantries, including Little Food Pantries.

Second Harvest continues

providing food through 26 counties of Eastern Washington and North Idaho with the assistance of its donors and volunteers.

Because thousands of local families rely on SNAP to buy groceries, Second Harvest expects more people may come to local food banks and its Mobile Market.

The Second Harvest Foundation will match every dollar donated up to \$10,000 to help keep food moving to people.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints donated 40,000 pounds of shelf-stable food—pasta, beans, peanut butter, dry milk, flour, canned goods—on Oct. 28, to the Green-House Food Bank and Resource Center in Deer Park, North County Food Pantry in Elk and Fairchild Air Force Base Food Pantry in Airway Heights.

“Our food pantry is in a low-income area. Some clients live in the outer reaches of the county

and have obstacles to obtaining food for themselves,” said Lora Benzinger, director of the North County Food Pantry. “This food donation helps cover some needed nutrition for our families. It is a godsend.”

The Fig Tree connects people with food resources through its annual Resource Directory, with several easy-to-read charts listing Food and Clothing Banks in the region. The listings are at <https://thefigtree.org/directorybook-lets25-26.html> > Human Services.

In addition, The Fig Tree is working with volunteers from Spokane Helpers Network to create annual Thanksgiving and Christmas Meals. They are available through the Spokane Homeless Coalition, its Facebook page and group, Spokane Helper’s Network and as a pdf on its website at thefigtree.org.

For information, call 534-6678 or visit 2-harvest.org.

Fair Trade Festival features Black Santa

The 40th Festival of Fair Trade will be open from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday, Nov. 28 and 29, at the Community Building, 35 W. Main.

The first one was held 40 years ago in the basement of the parents of Denise Attwood, retired co-owner of Ganesh Himal Trading Co.

“We’ve come a long way,” said Jillian Joseph, owner of Kizuri, the fair-trade shop that is open year-round in the Community Building.

A new feature for the Festival of Fair Trade is that Northwest Mediation Center (NMC) will host a Black Santa with Bob Bartlett dressing up as Santa for photos.

“Black Santas first started appearing in the U.S. during the “Black is Beautiful” and Civil Rights morements of the 1950s and 1960s,” Bob said.

Erin Lipsker, his daughter, serves on the board for NMC and wanted NMC, as one nonprofit in the Community Building, to be supportive of the event.

“We thought having a Santa will make families feel like it is a family event,” said Erin.

Given that Santas and angels in her home growing up were Black, as well as one white one, she suggested having a Black Santa for the Festival of Fair Trade and invited her father, Bob, to be Santa.

“He embodies the joy, laughter, happiness and peace of the season,” she said.

Bob, who was ready to step up to the role, noted that “the original Santa was from Turkey and probably more my color.” Then he added that the Indigenous folks who live near the North Pole region also are.

“We hope to foster deeper community within the building and beyond through this collaboration

with NMC,” said Austin Zimmerman, co-owner of Ganesh Himal. “We feel that now more than ever is the time to nurture that.”

For information, call 464-7677 or visit kizuri.com.

Pilgrim Lutheran Church

Annual Bazaar

Saturday, Nov. 8

9 am-2 pm

2733 W Northwest Blvd

Baked goods & crafts

509-325-5738

Human Rights Champions named

Human Right Spokane’s Annual Human Rights Champions Award banquet will be held 5 to 8 p.m., Nov. 6, at the Spokane Convention Center, Centennial Ballroom, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.

The awards banquet will open with a silent auction and no host bar starting at 5 p.m.

The dinner and awards ceremony will begin at 6 p.m.

This year’s awardees include Ian Sullivan, Inga Laurent, Patricia Castaneda, Pingala Dhital, and Sydney Krebsbach.

At the time of publication, ticket sales are closed.

For information, visit human-rightspokane.org.



Eastern Washington Legislative Conference
‘We Shall Overcome: Building the Beloved Community Today’

Saturday, Jan. 31

8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

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Teacher begins to advocate because of preschoolers unready for school

Continued from page 1
That was his path to becoming Eastern Washington representative for the Governor. He first served under Governor Jay Insee from 2022 until the election, and then Governor Bob Ferguson continued his appointment.
Luc travels to communities in the region, attends events and visits with people on Zoom.
“My role is to listen to people to learn about their needs and then to articulate them to the policymakers and governor,” he said.

This summer, he went to Malden to see the new community center and learn about resources needed because many homes are still not rebuilt since the 2020 fire.

Recently, he went to Colville to converse with residents and leaders about community issues, including fish and wildlife, wildfires and logging. He shared what he learned with the governor.

The week after he was there, he went to the Apple Cup in Pullman, accompanying the governor to present the trophy. While there, they connected with the Economic Development Authority on how the area can stay economically competitive in the midst of the national dynamics.

In Spokane, he meets people at events, helps them navigate resources and works with them to develop ideas for new policies.

Concerns of and on behalf of immigrants arise often—sharing what protections they have in the state and making sure local entities do not use state resources to aid federal ICE raids.

“The main concern is about due process to prevent detentions,” he said. “We want to keep people working.”

Connecting with his counterparts across the state, he learns more of needs and priorities, so the state is better situated to do

something.
“In these times, the state budget is tightening, and resource allocation is needed,” he said, encouraging more people to advocate as coalitions.

“I do what I can to connect people to resources and to communicate the need for people in the community to speak up and say they want due process for immigrants because they are contributing to society,” Luc said. “I want people to reach out more.”

He uplifted the value of The Fig Tree, which helps make it easier for people to connect, share ideas and resources.

Given that he more readily responds to requests from multiple organizations, he advises people to collaborate on presenting an ask. If just one person or organization asks, it’s easier to say no than if 12 individuals or organizations are asking.

Luc hears concerns from organizations such as Creole Resources, Nuestras Raíces, Latinos en Spokane and other immigrant groups that are supporting people, including many waiting to hear back on their asylum appeals and learning of Temporary Protective Status lapses that send some back to unsafe places.

“I’m a first-generation Haitian, born in the U.S. of parents who came to Boston, Mass., to study. They are now U.S. citizens and live in Spokane,” said Luc.

“My parents are hard workers. Like many immigrants, they came because they wanted to work and have better lives for their families,” he said.

Luc was in school in Boston from first to eighth grade and then in Rhode Island through high school. He graduated from Eastern Nazarene College in Quincy, Mass., where he earned a degree in elementary education

in 2008. Going to a church-related college was important because he grew up attending the church where his uncle was pastor.

He married in college and moved to Spokane, the hometown of his former wife, Amber, a CPA who runs Jasmin & Associates for nonprofits and small businesses. He is still involved with it.

“Moving to Spokane was moving to a different culture, but I became connected readily,” Luc said.

Luc’s parents came in 2012, and since then his father, who was taking his faith seriously before moving to Spokane, was mentored to be a pastor by Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and Calvary Baptist Church.

After earning a degree in ministry from Whitworth University, Luc’s father started Église Maranatha, which meets at Emmanuel Family Life Center. Sermons are in Creole and English.

Luc is among about 30 who attend the church, including eight members of his family and two other families.

“Faith is important me,” said Luc. “The most important verse to me is Matthew 25, where Jesus says that feeding the hungry and serving those who are thirsty, poor, in prison, strangers and unhoused brings people into God’s kingdom. That speaks to me. Every day, I ask if I am doing something.”

“I have blessings and ask if I am using what I have to do something,” he added, explaining that he helped start the accounting center to help low-income and poor people, as well as nonprofits and small businesses.

“We are called to look after each other if we have the resources to do so,” Luc said.

“I seek to be frugal with what I have and try to build what I can.

Generating wealth is not bad, but when we generate wealth and resources, what do we do with it? We need to care for those around us,” he said.

Luc struggles with how some who call themselves Christian portray God.

“It’s different than the God I serve. God has done a lot in my life and the lives of those around me,” he said.

“I’m someone who decides what I want to do, figures how to live and uses my knowledge,

position and talents to care for others,” he said.

Now he is responsible when people reach out to him with their needs to elevate their concerns to the governor.

As people reach out, Luc encourages them to collaborate and connect to show the God of love and acceptance, not the god of hate that many media are showing.

For information, call 564-250-1713 or email luc.jasmin@gov.wa.gov.



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CELEBRATING OUR CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Disability Collaborative offers Pop-Ups

The Spokane Disability Collaborative, which offers monthly Disability Pop-Up events at various locations in the county, will hold the November Pop-Up from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 6, at Joya, 1016 N. Superior St.

There, families, caregivers and community professionals gather to share support and resources.

The events are designed to help parents of children with disabilities connect with people who understand their experiences and can offer some practical guidance.

“Whether parents are seeking

help with school services, early intervention, transition planning or connecting with others who understand them, each Pop-Up offers a caring environment where attendees ask questions, explore options and find the next step that fits their family,” said Kristin Lester of the Spokane Regional Health District.

In addition, the Spokane Disability Collaborative and Spokane County Community Services have organized a Family Support Conference from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday, Nov. 14,

at Spokane Community College, The Lair, Building 6, 1810 N. Greene St.

It is for parents and caregivers of children with disabilities, as well as professionals who walk with them.

There will be speakers, breakout sessions and a resource fair with local groups sharing practical tools, strategies and community connections.

For information, call 362-4911, email klester@srhd.org or visit spokanedisabilitycollab.com/family-support-conference.



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Kizuri owner tells of impact of tariffs on the producers and prices

Continued from page 1
the first countries affected. The source for the Kenyan tea Kizuri sells is through Canadian suppliers, as is clothing from Palestine and Jordan. That adds to the tariff charged.

Many of Kizuri’s products are from Mexico.

“We import much of our clothing, jewelry, accessories and textiles from India. Brazil is another source of products,” Jillian explained. “Most of the items we sell will have some impact from tariffs. I will absorb some, as will importers. We already have many of our goods for the holidays, but there will be some tariffs across the board, so while most items have seen price increases, some have stayed the same.”

Jillian pointed out that producers are worried that demand will not be the same if retailers have to raise prices.

“We want to keep products as accessible as possible so we can continue to support producers and isolate them from the effects of tariffs,” Jillian said.

Denise expanded on how Ganesh Himal Trading Co., a wholesaler, has been affected.

A shipment that just arrived Sept. 16 in the U.S. was not only tagged for an “intensive exam at the customs facility” for which it was charged nearly \$6,000, but the duty on it was nearly \$10,500, compared with a duty of \$2,542 for a similar shipment in Sept. 2024.

“Our broker’s fees stayed the same, but the total bill went from \$4,787 last September to \$16,925, an increase of \$12,138,” she reported. “This increase is for one of six shipments in the year, conservatively at \$10,000 per shipment, it means added taxes of \$60,000 for the year that we have to pay.”



Jillian Joseph sells children’s books at Kizuri in the Community Building.

Denise would rather have that amount be invested in a good job for someone, in more products or services for producers to raise their incomes or in positive progress for climate change, not to pay for tax cuts for billionaires.

It’s a miracle that the shipment even arrived, she said.

The September shipment is the largest, most vital one each year, because it’s for holiday sales. It was supposed to leave Nepal by air on Sept 8, but Nepal’s Gen Z rose up in protest on that day.

Thousands demanded accountability from a government that has demonstrated major corruption, she said.

“What did those Gen Z kids want? A chance, an opportunity and a future. They no longer wanted their only ‘opportunities’ to be to go to work in The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia,” Denise explained. “They no longer wanted to leave by the thousands every day, searching for meaningful work. They wanted a government who would work for them to help cre-

ate a better Nepal.”

The Gen Z protestors brought down the government in three days. By Sept. 11, the Prime Minister stepped down, and Parliament was dissolved. By Sept. 12 with the influence of more than 10,000 protestors, who organized on social media, Sushila Karki, the former head of the Nepali Supreme Court, was appointed as the first woman interim Prime Minister responsible for overseeing a transitional government.

She “symbolized integrity and resistance against corruption,” according to Yog Raj Lamichhane, an assistant professor in business school at Nepal’s Pokhara University.

With the protests came a lockdown and curfew. The airport, business and government offices closed. The Ganesh Himal shipment was not able to leave on time, but by Saturday, Sept. 12, the curfew had lifted. Nepal Customs and the airport opened.

“Our crew on the ground sent our shipment out that day,” Denise

said. “It was a miracle and shows not only their dedication to Ganesh Himal and the producers we work with, knowing how important it was for them to have the accounting and payment done before their holiday of Dashain.”

Then came the duty and tariff sticker shock.

“We have been paying higher duty since this administration’s tariffs of March 2025,” she said.

“We could learn a lesson from Nepal’s youth and say it’s time to stop the corruption and give people a fair shot,” Denise said, sharing “the story of heroics in Nepal as juxtaposed against a

ridiculous U.S. tariff policy.

“It’s time to challenge this arbitrary man-made obstacle, so we can move together toward a brighter future,” she asserted.

Just as people came together after a devastating earthquake in Nepal, she invites people to unite to confront the man-made system of corruption and inequality the tariffs uphold.

“The fair-trade movement is about creating a just economy where everyone prospers,” she said. “We have worked hard to get where we are. I remember when there wasn’t a fair-trade movement. Now look at the force we have become.”

Knowing the impacts of the tariffs on the businesses, customers and producers Ganesh Himal works with and the countries where they work, Denise urges people to share these stories with their friends and congresspeople to push for a better path.

“We’re calling for awareness and change not for one business or one industry but to build a system that uplifts,” she said, asking those who believe in economic justice to share the story, write their representatives and demand fairness in trade policy.

“Let’s not stay silent,” she asserted.

For information, call 499-3320 or 464-7677, or visit kizuri.com or ganeshhimaltrading.com.

Indigenous voices play key role in COP 30

(WCC News) Faith leaders at a pre-COP30—UN Climate Change Conference—press conference called the summit in Brazil’s Amazon an opportunity to put Indigenous voices and grassroots communities at the heart of global climate negotiations. From Nov. 10 to 21 in Belém, north Brazil, it has been called the “People’s COP” because of its Amazon location and the prominent role expected for Indigenous communities.

Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee moderator, told journalists that the WCC launched the

“Ecumenical Decade for Climate Justice Action” at its central committee meeting in Johannesburg in June. The 356 churches across 120 countries with 600 million members will prioritize climate action over the next 10 years. “We have very deliberately called it the Climate Justice Action Decade because climate change, dealing with climate change, is a question of justice,” he said. “We all know that those who have contributed the least to climate change are the first victims, and that is a justice question.”

Jocabed Solano, an Indigenous leader from the Guandule Nation in Panama and member of the WCC Commission on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development, stressed how vital Indigenous peoples are to climate solutions. “There is no climate justice without justice for Indigenous peoples,” he said. “Indigenous peoples in the Amazon—including those in initial contact, whom many people do not even know about—are fighting with their very lives to maintain the balance of the Earth.”

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Three speakers sum up 50 years of PJALS history for anniversary

At the 50th anniversary lunch of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, three who have been leaders over its history spoke: Ken Isserlis, a founder; Rusty Nelson, a co-director for about 20 years, and Liz Moore, the current executive director. The following are excerpts.

In 1975, Father Frank Costello of Gonzaga University and others decided to start the Spokane Peace and Justice Center as an experiment and an act of faith.

It was an experiment, because no one knew if it was the right time or place. It was an act of faith—not necessarily religious faith—in the founders’ absolute belief it would work.

They gave us the keys to a building and a small budget. Then they supported and encouraged us.

Although we didn’t really know what we were doing, Joe Albert, Kathleen Smith and I, later joined by Mac Hatcher, worked on world hunger, militarism, the death penalty and nonviolence.

Mac wrote a report on the Spokane power structure. We supported Yvonne Wanrow, a local Native American woman, whose appeal in her criminal case resulted in a landmark decision changing the law of self-defense.

This was the right thing at the right time in the right place, because people responded. They came to our events, signed up for our newsletter, joined our steering committee, donated and invited us to speak to schools, churches and community groups.

Local news media was also good to us. The Spokesman Review’s Sunday magazine did a cover story about the Spokane Peace and Justice Center.

The best thing about our time at the center isn’t what we did, but what we started. From that befuddled, clumsy seed has grown today’s now mighty Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, the embodiment of good trouble, with its strong, smart and properly loud voice.

In these awful times, when decency is considered weakness and cruelty is considered strength, that voice is more important than ever.

Fifty years in the making, PJALS has now shown it’s ready to meet this moment. Here’s to the next 50 years.

Ken Isserlis
One of the founders

Then and now, resistance is vital. Resistance to static, violent public attitudes brought forth PJALS 50 years ago. Resilience brings us to a moment to reflect and renew the nonviolent



Ken Isserlis

struggle for peace and justice.

A violent attitude 40 years ago was that the U.S. would dominate the world with the threat of nuclear annihilation. Four PJALS people resisted, blocking the white train bearing nuclear weapons components: Spokane’s first civil resistance action since the Wobblies. It was the beginning of Nancy Nelson’s “criminal” career.

Against the grain, we took on South African Apartheid and Spokane’s role propping up that evil. With the grain, we defended minority rights at home and challenged the space that let so many people fall through the cracks. We protested military operations and spending, exposing our community to the possibilities of peace. We built on the work of the Central America Solidarity Association to oppose deadly U.S. policies in Latin America.

Sometimes resistance is noticed. When our Howard St. office was vandalized over our stand for LGBTQ rights, media reports brought new members, donations and solidarity. After our first execution vigil in Walla Walla, we showed up in print and broadcasts from North Carolina to Alaska.

Sometimes it’s silent. In 1992, Nancy defied the expectations of everyone who’d tried to organize area Indigenous nations and interfaith leaders by producing a colorful, meaningful counter-quincentennial event. The next day, the Spokesman carried one photo of a smaller observance in Denver.

At times, making news carried too much weight with us. It was more important to empower our community and bring joy to street theater, trainings, peace-keeping and truth-telling.

Success could mean meeting with former Rep. Tom Foley, more people coming to our weekly Fairchild vigil or more Gonzaga students in nonviolence classes preparing to protest the School of Americas and Fort Benning. Some folks say we



Rusty Nelson

never won. Others thank us for showing up, or note Spokane was once a hopeless case for LGBTQ liberation or family wages.

Gratuitous resistance, like war, is of no use in the cause of justice. Just and kind resistance requires creative nonviolent action. Talk of the past must list failures and missed opportunities, along with inspiration and lessons learned. The present and future demand our attention and action, like the Oct. 18 No Kings rallies. Keep up the good work.

Rusty Nelson
PJALS staff 1988 to 2009

I found PJALS as a high school student in Deer Park when we were going to war against Iraq in 1990. I felt the question of war deserved critical thinking. In my high school, students treated the war like a football game. I looked up “peace” in the phone book. Rusty Nelson answered and invited me to the youth group. I drove through farmland to cosmopolitan Spokane. The youth group was like an oasis where my questions were respected.

Who planted the seed that led me to look up peace in the phone book? My Spanish teacher, Teresa O’Halloran, a PJALS member. One day she put her hand in chalk dust and put a white handprint on the blackboard. She told us small town kids this was called La Mano Blanca. In El Salvador if it is on your door, it meant a death squad will come in five days. She said the U.S. funded and trained the death squads. She changed my life.

People came together in PJALS then for the same reason we do now, but progressive organizing in Spokane has changed. The reason then and now is the warmth of community, the relief of participation, the urgency of now, the satisfaction of collective action.

When I was an intern in the 1990s, PJALS gave office space to the Hands-Off Washington organizer, a gay man in a com-

munity with little friendly space.

My first union picket line was as a PJALS intern, when we supported Kaiser Aluminum workers.

I gathered signatures when coordinating volunteers on the minimum wage initiative. No one would engage with us, so we dressed as clowns to connect.

I love and admire the people who started and sustained this organization, peacekeepers who show up so we keep each other safe; the people who participated in race-class analysis workshops followed by canvassing.

We are in a time of immense crisis and immense potential as we face this fascist power grab. It’s an important time to learn from movements in our history and around the world, because wannabe dictators behave in

predictable ways:

They stoke fear and chaos to keep us off-balance, make threats to get people to obey in advance and weaponize fear of subgroups to keep us divided.

In 35 countries where democratic structures slid toward authoritarianism from 1991 to 2021, researchers found that with no civil resistance movement, 7.5 percent stopped backsliding, but with civil resistance, 51.7 percent stopped the authoritarian slide.

There are no guarantees, but we are each other’s best bet using a diverse repertoire of nonviolent tactics: protest, building alternatives, creative noncooperation, small and large individual and collective ways.

Liz Moore - executive director for 16 years



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PJALS trains supporters and community about protesters’ rights, risks

In this time of many protests and actions to challenge authoritarianism, the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS) has been training supporters and community members about protesters’ rights and protest methods that mitigate or reduce risk of negative outcomes.

Liz Moore, PJALS executive director, recently described the content and purposes of several trainings they have offered.

“We started holding Protest-ing 101 trainings in the summer at the request of Spokane Indi- visible, which is linking in with national No Kings and other protests of authoritarianism,” Liz began.

More than 300 people participated in the first two of those trainings. A third is being offered on Zoom on Tuesday, Nov. 4.

The goal is for people to know their rights when they are in a public space, to learn safety strategies and risk assessment, to plan for participation before a protest, to pay attention during it and to determine what to do after a protest, Liz said, listing the elements of concern.

“It’s important to pay attention and understand what the event is: What is it for? Where is it being held? When is it, including the starting and ending times? Who is putting it on? Why is it being held—objectives?” she listed.

PJALS also encourages those planning a protest to include their logo clearly on posters and promotional materials, so people know if they align with the event and want to support it.

“Making a risk assessment means knowing what one is willing to risk when they go to a protest,” Liz said.

She also advises going with a buddy to “take care of you,” like reminding each other to drink water, to breathe deeply to cool down and to know when to leave.

“We are facing a fascist power grab, so there is no guaranteed safety,” Liz clarified. “The best plan is to have a buddy.”

Other dynamics to promote safety are to follow the organizers’ directions, unless they encourage actions that are not what a protester wants to do. In that case, the protester should leave.

Another piece of advice is not to engage with any opposition because it may create a risk for others nearby.

Liz described some other trainings PJALS has done for many years.

De-escalation training prepares Peacekeeper Teams of volunteers to be at events. More than 200 have gone through the



Liz Moore beside a wall an artist painted with sunsets, lightning and stars at PJALS office.

training and are on PJALS’ list to go in groups of four to 30 to protests and other events. There were 30, the largest number ever, at the October “No Kings” rally.

“As part of their event safety planning, other groups can fill out a form to request a peace-keeper at pjals.org/peacekeepers,” Liz said.

PJALS also offers workshops for Event Safety Planning for protests or other community events, to train planners to keep in mind the wellbeing of participants and safety strategies for protecting those at a community event.

From 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Satur- day, Dec. 6, PJALS will offer training on “Non-Violent Direct Action.” Those who register online will be notified of the location.

Many of the rules for Protest- ing 101 come from this training, but this training goes into under- standing the strategic value of a commitment to non-violence and includes role playing.

Liz announced a new training PJALS is offering from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 22. It is on “People Power: Creative Resis- tance against Authoritarianism.” Registration is also online with the location given at the time or registration.

This training is based on other successful nonviolence move- ments against authoritarianism

around the world.

“We are looking at patterns in the authoritarian playbook, so we are in a place of choice and plan in advance to avoid being caught in constant reaction,” Liz explained.

“We are also looking at ways all of us can use our existing relationships and networks to enact and encourage a wide range of non-cooperation—small things individuals can do in collective acts of non-cooperation,” she said, beginning with not comply- ing in advance—like journalists walking out of the Pentagon and airports not playing a De- partment of Homeland Security video blaming Democrats for the shutdown.

“There is an entry point for everyone. There are many ways to act. Some assume if they act against authoritarianism, they will risk arrest. Some may, but there is a vast range of possibili- ties for individual or collective actions,” she commented.

“Not all will be like former PJALS co-director Nancy Nel- son, who was arrested 13 times,” Liz said. “There are many ac- tions people can do. They can just use creativity to figure what it is.”

To keep attuned to opportuni- ties, Liz invites people to join the PJALS email list or follow PJALS on social media.

PJALS collaborates with

many partners, including In- divisible and 60 groups who recently called for community solutions that included emer- gency aid for immigrant families and transparency by police and the sheriff. They sent out the list of solutions on July 24 and held a press conference on Sept. 10.

They also worked with part- ner organizations to advance their solutions and encourage elected leaders to use creativity to protect immigrant neighbors, to speak up boldly to protect first amendment rights and to support inclusive, multiracial democracy.

The PJALS staff team col- laborates to make the programs, trainings and actions happen, the staff team includes develop- ment director Shar Lichty, community organizer Shantell Jackson, digi- tal organizer Trévis Ray, opera- tions coordinator James Hiers,

and youth organizers Foster Transue, Nico Jaggar, Wyktoria Taschler and Fenrir Close. Gian Mitchell is the new regional organizer.

She shared that PJALS is inter- generational. When it launched the fall Young Activist Leaders Program (YALP), 30 young peo- ple showed up with a passion to make change happen. Four part- time youth organizers on staff are coordinating the youth program to engage in voter contact to support Together Spokane, which connects improvements in parks and schools, and then to learn the nuts and bolts of organizing.

“Folks sharpen their skills through workshops, webinars and our annual Action Conference and take what they learn into ac- tion in the world,” she said.

At its recent 50th anniversary lunch, PJALS raised \$34,000 of its goal of \$37,000 and added new friends.

For information, call 838- 7870 or visit pjals.org.

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Organists are set to perform at St. Mark’s Lutheran

American Guild of Organists (AGO), Spokane Chapter offers a “King of Instruments” concert of meditative, festive organ music, presented by AGO members on a W. Zimmer and Sons Organ at 3 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 9, at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, 316 E 24th Ave.

Henry Bauer, director of music at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes, will perform Marcel and Bach works. He is artistic director of the Sacred Music Series. His doctorate in sacred music and choral conducting and master’s in liturgical music and organ are from The Catholic University of America.

Floyd Czoski, who will play

Lefébure-Wély and Dale Wood, has bachelor’s and master’s degrees of music in organ from Roosevelt University Chicago, where he was church musician for 24 years. He has served as church musician in several Spokane congregations—Messiah Lutheran, Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes, Saint Francis Xavier and Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church. He is currently organist at Central Lutheran.

Mark Haberman, who shares a John Hughes set by Paul Manz and a Henry Lyte set by David Dahl, has been a church musician for nearly 50 years. A resident of Kootenai county, he holds a bachelor of music education from

Morningside University in Sioux City, Iowa, and a master of music degree in organ performance with Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, Texas. An ordained United Methodist deacon, he was on the music and program staff of Community United Methodist Church in Coeur d’Alene for 20 years.

Phineas Pope, who offers a John Rosamond Johnson set and a William Croft set, is the Weekend Edition host at Northwest Public Broadcasting in Pullman. A producer and reporter, he covers nonprofits in the region. He graduated from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, where he studied piano, organ and law.

Joseph Schubert offers Jeanne Demessieux, Gaston Litaize and Jean-Jacques Grünenwald. He retired in 2020 from teaching after 36 years teaching choral music in public schools from junior high to university levels. He taught music theory, choral literature and academic research and writing from 2009 to 2023 in the “Three-Summer Master of Music in Choral Conducting” program at California State University in Los Angeles. He has been a church organist since he was 18 and is organist at St. Augustine Catholic Church in Spokane.

For information, visit spokaneago.org/king-of-instruments.

MOW sets 5-K race

The Annual Race to Feed Our Veterans 5K, sponsored by Meals on Wheels (MOW) with Fairmount Memorial Association will take place 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 9, at Fairmount Memorial Association, 508 N. Government Way.

Vets who fought for freedom should not have to battle hunger, said Gail Golden of MOW.

For information, call 232-0864, email gail.golden@MOWSpokane.org or register at mowspokane.org/event/veterans-5k.

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Melissa Mace plans to build NAACP Spokane as staffed operation

By Catherine Ferguson, SNJM

As the first paid executive director of the NAACP Spokane Branch, Melissa Mace plans for the sustainable transformation from all-volunteer to a staffed organization, including hiring a program coordinator and establishing full-time internships in collaboration with local colleges and universities.

She is particularly drawn by the opportunity to support the recently established Youth Council that includes 25 or more youth and young adults who are 25 years old and younger.

“The branch has that many youth now,” she explained, “and they are committed to change and forwarding the movement. They are out there doing things. I am excited to have the opportunity to participate in this.”

In July, the NAACP Spokane Branch announced that it chose Melissa, whose Air Force veteran father settled in Spokane. She is also the granddaughter of a community organizing leader who worked with the NAACP in Indiana.

An alum of Eastern Washington University, she has a doctorate in social work from Walla Walla University.

In 2009, she founded the Discovery Counseling Group as a sole proprietorship. It became a state licensed behavioral health agency in 2013.

Discovery Counseling is now solidly established with several clinicians and interns. Melissa will work part-time with NAACP Spokane and also continue to counsel clients.

“I love it. It’s what I also am supposed to be doing,” she said.

Melissa explained what drew her to the NAACP position.

“Once I had established my business and had my doctorate, I was looking for a new challenge that would meet my desire to be more involved in the community. I saw the ad for the executive director for the NAACP. I liked the pivot I saw. It would mean engaging in more community events and social justice movements to change my narrative to focus more on community.”

Melissa was also drawn to the position when she realized that NAACP Spokane was not just doing general meetings but was out here trying to reach the community.

“I want to be part of that!” she decided.

The NAACP Spokane Branch has been protecting and expanding rights of marginalized people since its foundation in 1919 as an all-volunteer organization.

Now, with racial tensions



Melissa Mace begins work with Spokane NAACP.

higher than they have been in several decades, the organization seeks to build capacity and transition from an all-volunteer model to a sustainable, staffed operation to carry out the vision of creating and maintaining equality in the world, free from racial hate and discrimination.

The Inatai Foundation provided a capacity grant to specifically fund the first paid executive director position for three years to make that desire a reality.

In taking the role, Melissa combines the legacy of her grandparents and great aunts who resisted segregation in Indiana, her skills as a counselor in relating with people and her entrepreneurial skills as the founder of Discovery Counseling.

As quoted in the Black Lens, Spokane branch NAACP president, Lisa Gardner, shared her excitement about the decision.

“I am thrilled about this major milestone for our organization as we welcome our first executive director. This important addition to the NAACP will enable us to expand our efforts and increase our impact in the community.

“Under Melissa’s leadership, we are confident that we will enhance our programs, broaden our outreach and rally our community to address the urgent issues that impact us all,” Lisa said.

Melissa sees her position as being in the background and providing administrative support for Lisa as president, the committee chairs and the volunteer board of 19 directors.

“Because of what I do, they will have the ability to focus on the meat of causes that are taken up

through the committees: environmental justice, education—especially related to anti-racism, civic engagement, criminal justice, healthcare and the youth council,” she pointed out.

Her responsibilities extend to three key areas.

1) She will collaborate with the executive committee in maintaining strong governance, overseeing budgeting and finance, organizing meetings and supporting major events. Most importantly, she will develop the internal systems and policies to ensure a sustainable transition from an all-volunteer organization.

2) She will also do the administrative tasks related to membership and fundraising, including assisting in grant writing.

3) She is tasked with managing civil rights responses to complaints and engaging with

the community to strengthen relationships with funders and partner organizations and representing NAACP Spokane in coalitions, media and public events.

Above all, Melissa hopes to bring the Spokane branch of this national organization into a new era of community transformation, increasing visibility and impact with Spokane’s Black community and strengthening ties across the broader region.

“Because of the name, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, I think some people get hung up on that, but the issues for the people of the global majority are the issues for everyone. The greater the WE of us are, the greater everyone is,” she added. “If there are things happening to me as a Black person, and you sure don’t want them to happen to you, they shouldn’t be happening. I want people to see the NAACP as a place of service that shows up for them.”

Melissa sees herself diving deeply into the sometimes-traumatic history of the Spokane chapter to develop a sense of community that goes beyond narratives of hurt and exclusion which, she said, “occurred when

someone didn’t show up in the way they wanted or as the community expected.”

Meanwhile in the near term, she asserts that the most significant way to help the Spokane NAACP is to become a member, come to the membership meetings and follow them on social media.

“Reach out and hang out with us,” she invited.

Melissa encourages everyone to come to the Freedom Fund Gala on Saturday, Nov. 15.

Proceeds raise funds for scholarships that provide financial assistance to local high school students pursuing higher education and support the mission to fight against discrimination and secure political, educational, social and economic equity for all.

The banquet is an opportunity to recognize and celebrate individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to the fight for civil and human rights. It is also a way to foster community and unity in the cause of justice and equity, and to celebrate Black excellence.

For information, email ed@spokanenaacp.org or visit naacp-spokane.com or discovery-counseling.org.



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Nurse Practitioner event celebrates memoir of first nurse practitioner

In recognition of Nov. 9 to 15 being the annual National Nurse Practitioner Week, Gonzaga University Nursing is hosting a presentation on “Moving Mountains: Creating the Nurse Practitioner and Rural EMS,” featuring John Osborn, MD, Mike Nowling and John Roskelley.

The event on creating the nurse practitioner program and its importance in rural healthcare begins at 4:30 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 11, in Hemmingson Ballroom.

It is celebrating rural healthcare, looking at the current crisis and reviewing the legacy of Marie Osborn, ARNP, the first licensed nurse practitioner.

John, who is Marie’s son and co-author of her memoir, *Moving Mountains: Creating the Nurse Practitioner and Rural EMS*, said her journey started with a pool-side conversation his then 40-year-old mother had with John Hutchison, head of the Idaho Hospital Association, during a conference in Sun Valley.

Four teens had just been badly hurt in a car accident at Galena Summit. It took nearly three hours for an ambulance to arrive. Then the ambulance drove them 60 miles to a hospital in Sun Valley.

“Someone has got to do something about the inequities of rural healthcare,” Marie said.

John Hutchison arranged funds from the Kellogg Foundation for a local clinic to be developed in Stanley in 1971, had three bars and was home to 33 people in the winter. In the summer, however, millions came to visit the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness. When someone was hurt, there was then no healthcare or emergency services other than the Forest Service.

After Marie asked a Vietnam Vet medic who lived in Stanley if he would train to be a physician’s assistant and he said no, Marie, a registered nurse, realized that the someone who had to do it was her. Funds were raised so she could be trained at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, and then she did hundreds of hours more training in Southern Idaho.

A year later, she became the first state-licensed nurse practitioner in the U.S. and sole healthcare provider, opening the Salmon River Emergency Clinic to serve 6,000 square miles. Her story is in The Fig Tree at thefigtree.org/dec22/120122osbornruralclinic.html.

Marie provided healthcare in Stanley for 30 years, but she was not alone. It was a team effort of volunteer EMTs and ambulance drivers, local community supporters, physicians and nurses,

pharmacists and elected officials.

The clinic became a teaching site for nurse practitioner students from Gonzaga and other universities, and medical students from the University of Washington.

The Stanley Clinic’s most enduring teaching program in rural medicine has been the College of Idaho pre-med internship. It celebrated its 50th year in 2025, training more than 60 women and men who became doctors. Some of Marie’s pre-meds are now retired from being doctors.

“We don’t turn away someone who is sick or dying. That’s not who we are,” said Marie.

Today, there are 400,000 licensed nurse practitioners—in rural and urban areas.

“If we don’t advocate for rural healthcare, it will be grim,” said John. “We are losing rural hospitals and clinics, creating healthcare deserts as Congress cuts funds. Rural ambulance services, many depending on volunteer EMTs, are at risk. We see major retrenchments about caring for people.

“My mother set out to address rural healthcare inequities, saying

someone needs to do something and that someone ended up being her,” he said. “Today, that someone is all of us. Nurse practitioners and physician’s assistants are in an incredible position to help.

“Those entering the profession need to make a commitment to serve the underserved as my parents did,” said John, who has cared for veterans for 40 years—as chief of medicine at the Spokane Veterans Administration and now at the Seattle VA ER.

John was one of four in 1975 in the first class starting pre-med training with his mother at the Stanley clinic. Eventually, she also worked with the Gonzaga School of Nursing to help train nurse practitioner students drawn to healthcare in rural communities as she was.

Mike, who is also speaking at the Nov. 11 presentation, was another of those pre-med interns with the College of Idaho. He is former president of The Heart Institute of Spokane and Family Home Care and Hospice.

The third speaker, John Roskelley, is a former Spokane County Commissioner and renowned mountain climber, who

worked with miners in the Salmon River country the summer of 1972 when Marie opened the Salmon River Emergency Clinic. His chapter describes the challenge of caring for a co-worker suffering a massive heart attack in the high country.

John (Osborn), who also held a book discussion on Oct. 30 in Ketchum, commented that affordable healthcare as an issue in the federal government’s shutdown draws attention healthcare and rural healthcare.

The book, *Moving Mountains*, is a primer for creating and sustaining a rural healthcare system, from setting up an ambulance service to raising money to keep

the clinic doors open.

The book is also a memoir centered on Marie and her commitment to care for others. “She set out to provide healthcare to a place that had none, not to change the world, but to save lives in the wilds of Idaho. To do that, the world had to change,” John said.

“I just wanted someone to do something about the inequities of rural healthcare in America,” Marie wrote in the book. “Fate, or perhaps some higher power, intervened. Once I started, I could not and would not turn back.”

For information, call 939-1290, email john@waterplanet.ws or register at forms.office.com/r/dzYB0VRKBC.



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Volunteers are key to Second Harvest’s Zilch—zero waste—program

As Second Harvest realized it could operate in some different ways and serve more people while reducing the amount of waste food, Zilch was started on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving 2023.

Its mission is “no hunger, no waste, nothing, none,” and so it’s called “Zilch.”

“Much of the 37.5 million pounds of food we distribute each year is perishable. About 2 percent was going to waste,” said Tony Cook, coordinator of Second Harvest’s Zilch program. “We knew that by making changes, we could free up more food to serve the community better.”

None of this could happen without volunteers who are expressing their faith and values in tangible ways, he said.

“Through many ups and downs since Second Harvest was founded in 1971, we have met the challenges. We are a resilient organization and able to serve the community because of volunteers, donors and food producers. So we can navigate times like this,” said Tony. “I see it every day.

“We are wealthy in the spiritual and emotional investment of our volunteers,” he continued, telling of one riding a bike and another walking from Crestline above the bluff every day to volunteer. “They quietly make it happen. We are able to rise to the occasion of the needs and challenges our community faces.”

Fed by faith values growing up attending St. Patrick’s Catholic Parish in Hillyard and by the model of his father volunteering at a food bank, “I decided to change my career from 20 years in information technology (IT) to investing in people,” said Tony, who now attends River City Church.

“Our church’s mission is, ‘Gathered to grow. Equipped to go,’ based on II Cor. 5:17-20 and John 3:16, 14-26,” he added. “We build our connection to God so we can actively step out to engage the world every day.”

Tony started studies at Whitworth University in 1987 but joined the Navy. He returned to find his tech skills marketable and finished bachelor’s and master’s studies in 2016 at Whitworth. Five years ago, he started at Second Harvest.

“Now I work with a team of volunteers who are passionate about feeding people and caring for neighbors,” said Tony, who helped start Zilch to find a home for food that was at risk of going to waste.

On the first delivery to the Cathedral Tower, Tony put a box of mangos on the table. One man felt a mango and said, “It’s a mango,” appreciative that it was ripe, not mealy.

Tony described how Zilch works.

Volunteer teams of two or three drive Second Harvest vans on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays to take perishable food to subsidized senior apartments like the Delaney Apartments, Cathedral Gardens, Coventry Court, Hope House, Fahy Gardens and St. Andrews Apartments.

There, volunteer residents set up tables where other residents pick up the food—mostly fruits, vegetables and dairy—to supplement their meals.



Tony Cook keeps volunteers busy with Zilch distribution and market.

On Friday afternoons, they deliver to the Spokane Islamic Center after its prayer service, Thrive International, River City Youth Ops, Hope House and downtown Catholic Charities’ “Havens.”

Friday’s 15 morning stops each serve 50 to 100 households. With afternoon stops, they reach more than 1,350 households. The Thursday route has 12 stops, and Wednesday’s has seven. Tony estimates Zilch Distribution serves 2,000 households a week.

“All I do is run a forklift. I set up what goes in the vans for each stop. I place it so the volunteers can take it out easily,” he said.

Each month volunteers deliver 60,000 to 80,000 pounds of food.

Wednesdays and Thursdays, one van goes out. Four van loads go on Fridays. The vans are not being used for other deliveries—increasing efficiency in use of Second Harvest’s resources.

“For two to four hours, volunteers are moving 40- to 50-pound boxes,” Tony said. “Going to the same locations each week, volunteers build relationships with the people and groups they serve. They also share recipes.”

Zilch deliveries use about eight volunteers a week, with some doing multiple runs.

“We make a difference for seniors. Each site has a committee of residents who are also helping their community. We deliver food in boxes. Then five or six volunteers at the residence portion it out for each household,” he explained.

Zilch Distribution is just part of the program.

“Produce is perishable,” Tony said. “People take it home to make a salad, cook a squash or

eat an apple or pear right away.”

Second Harvest food is donated by farms like Gebbers Farms, stores like Safeway or Peirone’s Produce, wholesalers like URM, the Yakama Tribe, farmers and distribution houses, Tony said.

To help cut waste, Zilch developed a grading scale for the food.

“A team grades the food to prioritize when it should go out. If it’s one day, we can’t hang onto it but send it out immediately. Some can be stored in the cool room or freezer,” he said.

In addition to Zilch Distribution, there is Zilch Market at 1234 E. Front in the Second Harvest warehouse. A section is set up like a grocery store with produce, protein, dairy and dry goods.

Thirty to 40 agencies—food banks, addiction recovery homes, convents, Transitions and safe homes—come to build orders for their pantries and meal programs.

“As they shop, we learn what they will use,” Tony said.

The market runs most Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. There are six shifts with four volunteers—24 volunteers—plus six volunteers three days a week to stock it, plus the many volunteers at the agencies.

Some food leftover from the market goes to the food distribution.

Agencies that participate in Zilch programs are screened to be sure the food will be handled safely and properly, Tony noted.

Many volunteers are newly retired and active. Some are professionals, such as financial consultants, taking time out of their workday. High school and college students help stock on Sundays.

There is plenty to keep up

with, but Second Harvest staff continually come up with ideas, experiment and develop new ways of operating.

Tony is the only staff member at Zilch, but other Second Harvest staff help as needed.

“Our secret sauce is our committed volunteers, and there’s always room for more,” he said.

Zilch is a new response in the food bank world.

While people coming into Second Harvest may see the shelves are almost bare, Tony said the shelves are for dry or “shelf-stable” foods.

“We have plenty of food coming in and out because it’s perishable and not shelf stable. In our region, we have more fresh food given than canned goods, because we have few canneries nearby,” he explained. “Canneries in Toppenish and on the I-5 corridor closed. Canned goods come from Salt Lake City and further east.

“Zilch makes it possible for people to access food at the right time in the right amount. We do not want to store much food on

the shelves. Food comes in and out of the freezer and cooler. We have little dry or shelf-stable food,” he said.

“Stored food does not feed people,” he added. “We always need to fill, empty and refill shelves. It’s possible to do that with our good base of donors who believe in Second Harvest.

“We have to be flexible, because not everyone can get to a Mobile Market or food bank. Many do not drive, so they cannot go to a food bank, or the food bank is open when they are at work. We try to meet the needs of people where they are,” he said.

Given fuel prices, Tony said that it costs \$1,000 for a semi-truck to leave the warehouse dock with 40,000 pounds of food. Monetary donations help with those costs.

“I’m constantly grateful that at the start of the day the cooler is full and at the end of the day it’s empty because we work together to help feed people,” he said.

“Second Harvest is not specifically faith based, but it’s a rare day I do not see an expression of my faith as food moves in and out to feed people,” Tony observed.

“It’s like a home refrigerator being filled and emptied each day,” he said.

Tony said Second Harvest is blessed that most of its financial and in-kind food donations are from private organizations and individuals. Little comes from government sources.

“Through the years, we have met our community’s needs because volunteers, donors and produce distributors give multiple times,” he said. “We will continue to find creative ways to serve the region’s communities.”

For information, call 534-6678 or visit 2-harvest.org.

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GU Climate Institute offers two events

Gonzaga University’s Institute for Climate, Water and the Environment has announced two upcoming programs.

Kyle Shimabuku, associate professor in civil engineering at GU, will speak at 6 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 4, at Hemmingson Auditorium and on livestream about “Safeguarding Our Drinking Water in the Pacific Northwest in an Era of Megafires.”

An environmental engineer specializing in drinking water treatment, Kyle will discuss risks wildfires pose to health with air pollution and drinking water contamination. Rainstorms after wildfires can wash partially combusted materials into rivers and lakes, releasing pollutants that can challenge downstream facilities.

He will tell how an interdisciplinary team of forestry hydrologists, watershed modelers, analytical chemists and drinking water engineers are tackling the issue and developing science-based recommendations to guide policymakers,

water system managers and individuals to mitigate health risks from wildfire contamination of drinking water to ensure safer water supplies.

For information, visit gonzaga.edu/climate-institute/events#November4

The institute’s December speaker is Shamyra Lavigne-Davey, a third-generation environmental justice activist and executive assistant for RISE from St. James, La., presenting at 4 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 2 on Zoom.

Shamyra will share how her faith-based grassroots nonprofit fights to eradicate petrochemical emissions in parishes along a river in an area known as “Cancer Alley,” the heavy-industry corridor from New Orleans to Baton Rouge with 150 petro chemical plants, oil refineries and fertilizer manufacturers that emit toxic pollutants. The area has the nation’s second-highest cancer rate.

For information, visit gonzaga.edu/climate-institute/events#December2.

League workshop builds cultural awareness

League of Women Voters will offer a Cultural Awareness Workshop with the Eastern Washington University (EWU) School of Social Work, from 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Nov. 15, at The Woman’s Club, 1428 W. 9th Ave.

“In these historic times, how can we work with immigrants as they face increasing adversity?

We seek to build cultural awareness and competency skills for active involvement and support for Spokane’s immigrant communities,” said Susan Hales, event organizer.

Rumyana Kudeva, DSW, will lead community volunteers and social workers through interactive learning activities and share

resources for ongoing learning.

EWU continuing education credits will be awarded on request.

For information, email susanhales2015@gmail.com or Ichadez@gmail.com or register at my.lwv.org/washington/spokane-area by Nov. 12.

Église Maranatha celebrates unity and love

To celebrate the God of love, and the eighth anniversary of Église Maranatha, the church will gather choirs of seven African American churches for a celebration of love, acceptance, music and fellowship from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 9, at

Cowles Auditorium at Whitworth University to sing worship songs, and songs of love and acceptance.

“It is an opportunity for the community to gather for music and fellowship to counter the division the media are portraying about Christianity,” said Luc

Jasmin III, organizer.

“We want to pack the house to show unity and the centrality of love,” he said. “This is a first step for us to come together.”

For information, call 981-9209 or email luc.jasmin@gmail.com.

Two events support work of Manzanita House

Manzanita House is offering two fundraising events in November.

Trackside Studio Ceramic Art Gallery will have its annual Coaster Sale from 5 to 7 p.m., Friday, Nov. 7, at 115 S. Adams. Local artists and community members have crafted individ-

ual, uniquely designed coasters for the sale. They will donate the proceeds to Manzanita House.

For information, visit mhspokane.org and tracksidestudio.net.

From 9 to 11 a.m., Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, Nov. 27, Diane Sherman, a local Spokane artist and yoga instructor,

is hosting a Thanksgiving Day Spirit of Generosity Virtual Yoga Workshop.

Ticket sales will support Manzanita House’s work.

For information, visit manzanitahousespokane.networkforgood.com/events/92933-thanksgiving-day-spirit-of-gen

Fall Folk Festival announces performances

The 30th Annual Fall Folk Festival is from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 8, and from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 9, with doors opening at 10 a.m., at Spokane Community College, The Lair, 1810 N. Greene St.

Saturday programs include Scottish Pipes, Musha Marimba, Taiko, Madrigals, Blues and Folk, Cowboy, Dulcimer, Storytelling, Raging Grannies, Folkabilly, Grant Drummers and Dancers, Bon Odori, Marimba from Southern Africa, and dancers including Highland and Scottish Country, Filipino, Hula, Cloggers, South Indian, Silver Spurs Youth Bulgarian, Swing, Irish, Contra and

Argentine Tango/Milonga.

Sunday’s performers are Haran Irish, Appalachian, Ballet Folklorico – Mexican, Chinese, Indian You, Filipino American and English Country dancers, acapella and barbershop, Chi-

nese zither, Celtic, folk, klezmer, storytellers, PJAMRS, and Arabic and Middle Eastern music.

For information, call 828-3683, email director@spokane-folkfestival.org or visit spokane-folkfestival.org.

Whitworth hosts speakers

The November Weyerhaeuser Speaker Series at Whitworth University highlights Curt Thompson, in a presentation “On Suffering and the Formation of Hope” at 4 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 13, at Weyerhaeuser Hall at Whitworth.

Curt, a psychiatrist in private practice in Falls Church, Va., founded Being Known to develop teaching programs, seminars and resource materials to help people explore the connection between interpersonal neurobiology and Christian spirituality.

He is the author of *Anatomy of the Soul: Surprising Connections Between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices that Can Transform Your Life and*

Relationships, a book that demonstrates how insights from interpersonal neurobiology resonate with biblical truths about God and creation, validating the human need for meaningful relationships as a key to a life of hope and fulfillment.

His video series, “Knowing and Being Known: The Transforming Power of Relationships,” will be shown at 4 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 13, in the Robinson Teaching Theatre.

For information, email adempsen@whitworth.edu or visit whitworth.edu/cms/administration/weyerhaeuser-center-christian-faith-and-learning/upcoming-events.

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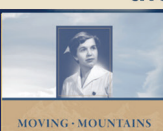
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John Osborn MD, Marie's son and co-author, former Chief of Medicine at the Spokane VA and in his 40th year of providing care for veterans now at the Seattle VA ER.
Mike Nowling, former president of the Spokane Heart Institute and Family Home Care & Hospice who interned under Marie in 1975.
John Roskelley, former Spokane County Commissioner and renowned mountain climber who worked in the Salmon River country the summer of 1972 when Marie opened the Salmon River Emergency Clinic in Stanley, Idaho
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Healing arts collaborative blends culture awareness, massage therapy

By Marijke Fakasiieiki
Rachel Ferguson, founder and director of the nonprofit Sweet Grass Healing Arts and Wellness Collective, brings her Indigenous perspective, trauma-informed care, holistic practices, health care advocacy and passion for healing and equity to her professional and community life and the board of Better Health Together. “I believe the creator and my ancestors are guiding me in this work. Prayer and learning to pray is important for the work we do, and the cultural arts and practices help heal the historical trauma from forced assimilation by the dominant culture and church. A big part of our healing journey is learning and restoring our cultural practices,” said Rachel.

Rachel’s parents both experienced forced assimilation and were forced off the reservation. Her father was in a boarding school, and her mother was sent to live with Catholic families. Her aunts and uncles were separated from each other. They weren’t allowed to speak their language or learn cultural traditions. They were told it was witchcraft. “My parents have passed, but when I share this work with aunts and uncles, I see them healing and remembering, as we do things like root digging, picking berries and connecting with the land and the water in the canoe journeys,” said Rachel, whose tribal ties are to the Colville Confederated Tribe, the Spokane Tribe and the Kalispel Tribe. **“Teaching people** that we can practice our culture without fear or guilt is healing,” she said. Her aunt still struggles and asks, “Why do you need to go to the salmon ceremony?” Rachel responds, “To pray for the salmon.” Her aunt asks, “Why would you pray for salmon?” “Praying for the salmon is a way of connecting with the salmon and decolonizing prayer,” Rachel said. “We should pray for salmon and for the earth, and recognize all life should be respected,” said Rachel. While smudging heals, cleanses negativity and is an important part of prayer, she said her parents’ generation weren’t allowed to do it because Native American religion was illegal until 1978. “When we go to pick berries, we make an offering and say a prayer. Most of the time, we practice smudging before we start our work to get rid of negative



Rachel Ferguson’s office is in the Saranac Building.

energy. Smudging is a positive, healing experience. Our prayers go up in the smudge smoke to the creator,” Rachel said. **She believes it is important** to heal and change the narrative to one that respects and celebrates Indigenous identity, including Indigenous practices. She believes churches must claim their part in restorative justice to heal the relationship between the church and Indigenous people around the world. **“The massage therapy** has been central to my healing journey from surviving domestic violence and healing from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from physical violence I experienced,” she said, pointing out that, for those who have grown up in an urban setting, massage promotes health, wellness, substance abuse prevention, pain management and improved mental health. Rachel had no idea that massage would lead her on a path of healing. As a new single mother of two young girls, she waited on tables at The Davenport and Masselow’s. She had gone to college, but her financial aid was on hold. Seeing an ad for the American Institute for Clinical Massage Therapy in Post Falls, she worked to put herself through the program. “That was key to my healing from PTSD,” said Rachel.

At Sweetgrass Healing Arts and Wellness Collective, she makes her services affordable, understanding that, while massage helps clients manage chronic pain and mental health issues, it is not covered by Medicaid. She raises funds by selling smudge spray at the Festival of Fair Trade market in the Community Building. Made of sweet grass, sage, cedar and rose with a witch hazel base, it is used to clear energy and as a hand sanitizer or cleaner. **Rachel’s work** as a suicide prevention coordinator with the Spokane Tribe Suicide Prevention Program is an avenue to merge her nonprofit work with suicide prevention. The Spokane Tribe has language classes and a bimonthly two-spirit group that focuses on cultural arts. They make things like hand drums and paddles. Classes are open to the com-

munity with one in Spokane and one in Wellpinit, both online and in person. In addition, participating in canoe journeys and powwows gives the tribes a chance to connect, she said. **The salmon ceremony** is an opportunity for tribes to paddle for salmon with people from the Sinixt Tribe paddling from Canada, the Spokane Tribe paddling from Davenport and the Kalispel Tribe paddling from Usk. They meet at Kettle Falls in June for the salmon ceremony. Then, the Kalispel Tribe paddle that ends with their powwow goes to Sandpoint and comes back to the Kalispel lands. “It’s something positive for young people to be involved in because there’s little for them to do on the reservation in the summer. It is a multi-generational event that gives families a chance to travel on the water as our ancestors did,” said Rachel. **As part of her work** to bring healing to area tribes, Rachel has served on the board of directors for Better Health Together for five years. She is part of their tribal partners collaborative, which includes Native organizations focused on health, wellness and mental health in her area. She is also part of the Better Health Community Voices Council, an advocacy group for people who experience discrimination in healthcare. **Rachel sees how funding** cuts are affecting the groups she works with, changing how they raise funds, moving them from focusing on grants to doing fundraising in unique ways. “I’m still trying to be self-sustained because my organizations have teachers who need support,

so sometimes my massage therapy funds go to them,” she said. **Spokane tribal health** and human services programs are forming their own clinic. Funding cuts affect their prevention programs for suicide, domestic violence, drug and alcohol, diabetes and mental health. Those programs will be moved under the tribal jurisdiction, she said. “We hope it will improve services if we depend less on outside funding and administer care for our community,” Rachel said. “With education affected, tribes seek to increase their sovereignty over services.” Elimination of the LGBTQIA+ suicide prevention line affects the two-spirit community, a small percentage of the Native population. Rachel’s nonprofit facilitates a two-spirit culture group led by Will Dennison. It meets twice a month for prevention. “It’s sad we are taking so many steps backwards because of the political climate,” she said. **Rachel added that reclaiming** prayer is entwined with relearning language. Louis Bates, a Spokane Salish teacher and tribal storyteller, works with her. He learned Salish because he wanted to pray in his ancestral language. He teaches Rachel and his students the importance of prayer in his work. “So, we focus on prayer. Just being able to pray in our own language is a blessing,” said Rachel, who works with Louis, Will and Lacey Bacon to do workshops about picking and preserving huckleberries, Spokane Salish, plant medicine, cultural arts and canoeing. For information, call (833) 490-4448 or email cherguson1@gmail.com.



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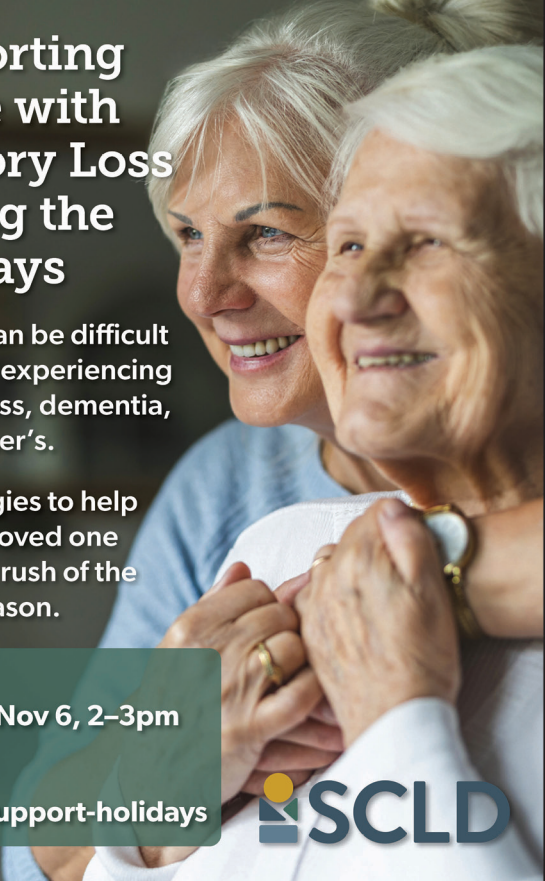
Supporting Those with Memory Loss During the Holidays

Holidays can be difficult for people experiencing memory loss, dementia, or Alzheimer’s.

Get strategies to help support a loved one during the rush of the holiday season.

ONLINE
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The someone who has to do something about many issues is us

Just as when Marie Osborn said someone had to do something to provide healthcare in rural Idaho and she wound up realizing that the someone would have to be her, we are now all called to be the someone to feed the hungry, house the homeless, welcome the stranger and speak out against authoritarianism.

That someone to volunteer, to advocate, to organize is me.

That someone who needs to donate to support the many great causes is me.

That someone who needs to care for a

loved one in our family is me.

That someone who is called and compelled as a person of faith is me.

That someone who needs to keep buying fair trade is me.

That someone who needs to step up to be trained as a peacekeeper is me.

That someone who needs to heal generations of trauma is me.

That someone who needs to prepare preschoolers for school is me.

That someone who needs to lead an organization working for justice is me.

So it is with the calls that have come through articles in this issue and more than 41 years of the newspaper. Each one can be a spark for involvement, investment, support or solidarity with people engaged in making life better for their neighbors.

Several years ago, a woman commented after reading an article, “If she can do that, I can do something to help her.”

The stories The Fig Tree shares become part of the fabric of the world we live in, inspiring us to learn more, connect with others and act to make a difference.

Stories remind us that we are not alone.

On Oct. 18, millions grabbed poster-board and wrote their sentiments with humor and hope to challenge one who would move the nation from democracy to dictatorship: “Silence is the cruelest weapon.” “Make America Kind Again.” “This is our moral moment.” “Power is the people.” “Love.”

These the signs and sentiments were saying what local, regional, national and global faith leaders are calling us to do.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Letters to the Editor

Sounding Board

Commentaries

‘Called and Compelled to Love’ is diocesan theme; some letters

‘Called and Compelled by Love’ has been our diocesan theme this past year and we have focused on how we are called, to what we are called and how love compels us to act. It is important in our age, in every age, to know what it is that is calling us to act.

Are we called to act from envy of what others have? Are we called to act from a desire to get on top? Are we called to act from fear? Are we called to act from a desire to protect what is mine? As followers of Jesus, we are called to hear the voice of Jesus calling us to act in love.

Love is not a sappy emotion. Love is the work of being in relationship with the people who confront your worldview. Love is staying true to the vow to respect the dignity of every human being even when that person does something that you despise. Love recognizes that true community will have conflict and does not pretend otherwise but learns ways to work through them. Love feeds the poor, houses the homeless, visits the sick and those in prison, and not only that but seeks to change unjust structures that keep people poor, homeless, sick and in prison. Love sometimes needs to let people go their own way but does not reject them as a child of God.

Love can and will challenge us, and there will be days we act not from love, but from fear, jealousy, anger or even just from being tired. When that happens, you and I can be really glad that in our baptism we promised that we would be part of a community of faith that supports one another in our life in Christ, and that community, the church, has ways of recognizing when we fall into sin and how to get back out of that.

So we confess our individual and our corporate sin, and we are assured of God’s forgiveness, and we try, with God’s help, to act in love over and over and over again.

The story of scripture is a story of the people of God being called by God to live as God’s people, sometimes getting it right, often getting it wrong, yet God never gives up on us. The story of Scripture is a love story.

Someone asked me once how to read the Bible through in a year and I said whatever you do, don’t start at the beginning! I always suggest starting with a Gospel. Luke is my favorite. Mark is the shortest. Then read that gospel through 10 times. If you do that to start, you will know the story of Jesus, and for us, as followers of Jesus, it helps to read the scripture story if we already know the Jesus story.

Some folks might disagree with this approach, but I think if we are going to actually know and follow Jesus—not just know “of” him—we need to spend a great deal of time embracing the gospels.

This world deeply needs followers of Jesus who know and follow the Jesus of the gospels. This world deeply needs followers of Jesus who resist the call to violence and power, who reject the call of hate, who believe in compassion and mercy and love. This world needs followers of the Jesus of the gospels. As we continue to live in a time when people seek to divide us, let us stay focused on the main thing, living in love and following Jesus together.

Bishop Gretchen Rehberg
Episcopal Diocese of Spokane

I loved the articles. I sent a copy to Sirirat Pusurinkham at the Prachakittisuk Orphanage in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Thank you again for your great article.

Claudia Hamilton
Jubilee Fair Trade Marketplace

We are so grateful for the Fig Tree’s support of World Relief Spokane and more importantly, the refugee communi-

ties in Spokane. Thank you! God bless you and all you do to support and care for the vulnerable in Spokane!

Christi Armstrong - World Relief

Thank you for the article on We C.A.R.E. We have shared it in several places.

Virginia Henderson
We C.A.R.E. - Reardan

We have passed around the article you have written about contemplative prayer groups in the Fig Tree. We trust others will see the value in the Fig Tree and support you!

Mike Walters - St. Francis of Assisi

The Fig Tree article is perfect! Thank you for your kindness and professionalism. You balanced just the right invitational and informative tone. We are very appreciative and send blessings your way.

Jean & Gary LeBauve
Cathedral of St. John

We really appreciate the beautiful article and the time and effort that went into writing and publishing it.

Jed Maclaurin - St. Aloysius

Pope Leo XIV and Lutheran bishops in America call for people to speak, welcome, engage

Pope Leo XIV issued a letter to the U.S Catholic bishops:

“You must speak. You must not remain silent.”

He called the bishops to publicly confront the U.S. immigration crackdown, calling it “inhuman” and “morally indefensible.”

“Where the world sees threats,” he said, “the Church sees children. Where walls are built, the Church builds bridges.”

His letter echoes through his new 104-page exhortation *Dilexi te* (“I Have Loved You”), a document about dignity, inequality and the moral cost of indifference.

A society that treats compassion as weakness is already in decay, he said, calling the cruelty toward migrants “a test of our humanity,” adding that a nation that forgets mercy “falls into a cesspool.”

“Someone who says they are against abortion but supports the inhuman treatment of immigrants,” Leo said, “is not really pro-life.”

“Either we regain our moral and spiritual dignity,” he writes, “or we fall into a cesspool.”

To read the full Apostolic Exhortation “*Dilexi Te*” from Pope Leo XIV to all Christians on “Love for the Poor,” visit vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20251004-dilexi-te.html.

Our faith compels us to stand where Jesus stands—with and for those whom society often seeks to exclude, erase, or diminish.

Our shared confession that every person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) grounds us in the conviction that all people possess inherent dignity. The incarnation of Jesus Christ reveals God’s profound solidarity with humanity—especially with those who are marginalized or oppressed. The gospel we proclaim insists that our neighbor’s need is the occasion for our love and that our public life is shaped by justice, mercy, and a commitment to the common good.

Further, we have a shared tradition in our social teachings that grounds us. The ELCA’s Social Message on Immigration reminds us:

“We are to respond to newcomers as we would to Christ—welcoming them, meeting their immediate needs, and advocating for justice in our laws and policies.”

Likewise, our recently adopted Social Statement Faith and Civic Life affirms that Christians are called to be “a public witness, holding leaders accountable when they fail to protect the vulnerable.”

We are living through a time when vulnerable communities are being scapegoated and attacked. Immigrants and refugees are vilified, though Scripture commands us to welcome the stranger. People of color continue to bear the devastating weight of racism woven into the fabric of our society. Transgender people, beloved by God, are being targeted with laws and rhetoric that deny their dignity and even their right to exist. These as-

saults on our siblings are not political abstractions—they are deep wounds in the body of Christ.

In this time of division and fear, we, as people grounded in our faith, insist on love. This commitment flows from our faith in Christ crucified and risen—the One whose love breaks down barriers, confronts hatred, and transforms hearts.

Love insists on the dignity of every human being.

Love insists on justice for the marginalized and oppressed.

Love insists that the church must reflect God’s diverse, life-giving community.

Love insists that we listen, speak, and act with respect, even in disagreement.

Love insists on hope, trusting that God’s kingdom of justice and peace will prevail.

This love also compels us to speak clearly against Christian Nationalism, which our Churchwide Assembly named as a distortion of the Christian faith and an unhealthy form of patriotism. It confuses the Gospel with political power, turns God into a mascot for the state and privileges some people over others based on race, religion or birthplace. This is not the way of Jesus. The kingdom of God is not a nation, not a culture, not a political ideology—it is God’s reign of love, justice, and mercy for all people.

Therefore, as bishops of this church, we declare that the ELCA cannot be silent. Our call is clear:

- **To proclaim** the God-given dignity of every human being.
- **To resist** systems and ideologies,

including Christian nationalism, that oppress, dehumanize or erase.

- **To stand** shoulder to shoulder with those who are targeted or harmed.
- **To bear** public witness that the love of Christ is stronger than fear, stronger than hatred, and stronger than death.

We call on all members of the ELCA to join us in prayer, advocacy and action:

- **Pray for those** who are vulnerable and for all who work for justice.
- **Advocate** in your communities, legislatures, and Congress for laws that protect migrants, advance racial justice, and safeguard LGBTQIA+ people.
- **Engage** in the holy work of hospitality, creating spaces of safety, affirmation, and belonging for all God’s children.
- **Model** respectful dialogue in a polarized world, seeking understanding rooted in love.
- **Hold fast** to hope, trusting that the Spirit is still at work renewing creation and reconciling the world to God.

In baptism, we are marked with the cross of Christ forever. That cross is not only a sign of our hope—it is also a summons to follow Jesus into solidarity with those who suffer.

In the power of the Spirit, let us be bold. Let us be faithful.

Let us insist on love—in our words, our actions, our public witness, and our life together.

Together in Christ,
49 bishops including

Bishop Meggan Manlove
Northwest Intermountain
Synod of the ELCA



Calendar of Events

Area codes are (509) unless otherwise listed
Submit events to development@thefigtree.org by the third Friday
Downloadable Thanksgiving & Vets Meals are at thefigtree.org/ThanksgivingMeals2025.pdf

- Nov 3** • **“Hope, Peace, and Healing,”** Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC) fundraiser, 6910 S. Ben Burr, 5 to 9 p.m., ihrc.net
- Nov 3, 17** • **Native Cultural Craft Nights**, American Indian Community Center, 1025 W. Indiana, 535-0886, aiccinc.org
- Nov 4** • **Executive Director Gathering:** What Every Executive Needs to Understand about Finances, Nonprofit Association of Washington (NAWA), online, 9 to 11 a.m., nonprofitwa.org
- **“Safeguarding our Drinking Water** in the Pacific NW in an Era of Megafires,” Gonzaga Climate Institute, Hemmingson Auditorium and Livestream, 6 p.m., gonzaga.edu/climateevents
- **EWU Composer’s Forum**, 526 Fifth St., 7:30 p.m., 259-2241, ewu.edu
- Nov 4, 5, 6, 7** • **Coats for Kids Distribution**, West Central Community Center, 1603 N. Belt, 9 to 11 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m., kxly.com/features/coats-4-kids/
- Nov 4, 11, 18, 25** • **Heartistry:** Artistic Wellbeing, Spark Central, 1214 W. Summit Pkwy, 3 to 5 p.m., 279-0299
- Nov 4, 18** • **The Invitation:** Home Series, I AM Alliance, Garden Gate Micro Event Space, 2218 N. Monroe, 6 to 8 p.m., 981-5698, support@iamalliance.me
- Nov 5** • **Building Next Level Fundraising Leaders**, NAWA, Walla Walla, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., nonprofitwa.org/event/walla-walla-building-next-level-fundraising-leaders
- **Mend-It Cafe**, The Hive, 2904 E. Sprague Ave., 4:30 to 7 p.m., 444-5300, spokanelibrary.org
- Nov 5, 12, 19, 26** • **Practical Centering Yoga**, Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture (MAC), 2316 W. 1st, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., 456-3931, northwestmuseum.org
- Nov 6** • **The Fig Tree Benefit & Development and Board Meetings**, Benefit 12 p.m., Board 1 p.m., mary@thefigtree.org
- **Virtual Launching Idaho Philanthropy Hub**, The Idaho Nonprofit Center, 12 p.m. MT, zoom.us/meeting/register/j6H8ByikTB-TxkUAFKXm3Q
- **Human Rights Champions Banquet**, Spokane Convention Center, 5 to 8 p.m., humanrightspokane.org
- **Campfire Stories:** Rail Magic, The Lands Council, Wildland Cooperative, 6:30 p.m., landscouncil.org
- Nov 6, 13, 20, 27** • **Taizé Prayer**, 4:15 p.m., Zoom, bartlett@gonzaga.edu
- Nov 7** • **Trackside Studio Ceramic Art Gallery** Coaster Sale, fundraiser for Manzanita House, 5 to 7 p.m., ehughes@mhspokane.org
- **es kwits xwistm Walk with Pride** Fashion Show, Native designers, Northern Quest Resort & Casino, 100 N. Hayford, Airway Heights, 7 p.m., 242-7000, northernquest.com
- Nov 7-9** • **An Attitude of Gratitude**, Yoga Retreat with Kay Totten, St. Gertrude’s Benedictine Monastery, stgertrudes.org
- Nov 8** • **Cathedral of St. John Christmas Faire & Bazaar**, 127 E. 12th, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., stjohns-cathedral.org
- **Pilgrim Lutheran Fall Bazaar**, 2733 W. Northwest Blvd., 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- **Hollyfaire Market**, Redemption Church, 400 E. Grace, Medical Lake, 9 to 4 p.m., 299-3139, mloffe@redemption-church.org
- **Boba Buddies**, Asians for Collective Liberation Spokane celebrates Diwali, The Hive, 2904 E. Sprague, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., fmortel@aclspokane.org
- **“Why Everyone Is Needed,”** James Shepherd, Christian Science practitioner, First Church of Christ, Scientist, Spokane Valley Library, 22 N. Herald, 11 a.m., 624-1637
- **Understanding and Challenging** Right-Wing Movements Against Democracy, Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, 4340 W. Whistalks, 3 to 5 p.m.,
- **Pioneer Day**, German American Society, 25 W. 3rd, 5:30 to 11 p.m., germanamericansociety-spokane.org
- Nov 8, 9** • **Fall Folk Festival**, Spokane Community College Lair Student Center, 1810 N. Greene, Sat 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Sun 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., 828-3683, spokanefallfolkfestival.org
- **Spokane Symphony Masterworks 3**, Martin Woldson Theater at the Fox, 1001 W. Sprague, Sat 7:30 p.m., Sun 3 p.m., 624-1200, martinwoldsontheater.com
- Nov 9** • **Flatstick PU & Nuestras Raices**, Centro Comunitario’s Capital Campaign, 618 W. Main, 2 to 6 p.m., hbpaofspokane.org
- **Église Maranatha 8th Anniversary**, African American church concert, Cowles Auditorium, Whitworth, 2:30 to 6:30 p.m., 981-9209, luc.jasmin@gmail.com
- **King of Instruments**, organ concert, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church 316 E. 24th, 3 to 4:30 p.m., (402) 319-1716, ehurd1742@gmail.com
- Nov 11** • **ED Coffee Hour**, online, 9 to 11 a.m., nonprofitwa.org
- **Eastern Washington Legislative Conference** Planning Team, 1 p.m., Zoom, kaye@thefigtgree.org
- **“Moving Mountains:** Creating the Nurse Practitioner and Rural EMS, Gonzaga University Nursing School, Hemmingson Ballroom, 4:30 p.m., 939-1290, john@waterplanet.ws, forms.office.com/r/dzYB0VRKBC
- Nov 12** • **Selkirk Quintet**, Northwest MAC, 2316 W. 1st, 6:30 p.m., 456-3931, northwestmuseum.org
- Nov 12-15**• **Farm and Food Symposium** + Tilth Conference, CenterPlace Regional Event Center, 2426 N. Discovery Pl, Spokane Valley, tilthalliance.org
- Nov 13** • **Silent Day of Prayer** on Joys of Heaven with Sr. Mary

- Eucharista, SMMC, IHRC, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., ihrc.net
- **Hands On:** Workshop for Little Makers, Art Salvage Spokane, 610 E. North Foothills, 10 a.m., 798-9039, arsalvagespokane.com
- **Reuse Workshop**, Mobius Discovery Center, 811 W. Main, 10 a.m., 321-7133, artsalvagespokane.com
- **Weyerhaeuser Speaker Series:** Curt Thompson, Whitworth University, Weyerhaeuser Hall 107, 300 W. Hawthorne, 4 p.m., 777-1000, whitworth.edu
- **Free Immigration Clinic**, Latinos en Spokane, 1502 N. Monroe, 5 to 7 p.m., latinosenspokane.org
- **Spoken River**, Spokane Riverkeeper fundraiser, Spokane Convention Center, Ballroom 300 BCD, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., 5:30 to 8 p.m., spokaneriverkeeper.org
- Nov 13, 27** • **Dances of Universal Peace**, Unity Spiritual Center, 2900 S. Bernard, 6:30 p.m., 818-6733
- Nov 14** • **Family Support Conference**, Spokane Disability Collaborative, Spokane Community College, 1810 N. Greene, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., spokanedisabilitycollab.com
- **Summer of Soul**, Meaningful Movies, Unitarian Universalist Church Spokane, 3449 W. Whistalks, 6:30 to 8:45 p.m., 444-5300, meaningfulmovies.org/events/housing-and-help
- Nov 14-16**• **The Root Experience Festival:** Living Cultures of Art, Music & Soul, Downtown Library, 906 W. Main, Fr 6 to 10:30 p.m., Sat 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Sun 1 to 8:45 p.m., 444-5300, therootexperience.org
- Nov 15** • **Veterans Day Pow Wow**, Antoine Andrews War Dance Hall, Wellpinit Pow Wow grounds, 842-0389, cheryl.covington@spokanetribe.com
- **Cultural Awareness Workshop**, League of Women Voters and EWU School of Social Work, The Woman’s Club, 1428 W. 9th, 9 a.m. to 12 noon, mylww.org>Washington>spokane-area
- **Forum: We Thank America**, exhibition to honor Vietnam Veterans, Vietnamese American Friendship Assn, Shadle Library 2111 W. Wellesley, 1 to 3 p.m., 899-5058, yenvlink@gmail.com
- **Community Mutual Aid**, 820 W. Spokane Falls Blvd, 7 to 8:30 p.m., ianflorino97@gmail.com
- **Freedom Fund Gala**, NAACP Spokane Branch, Spokane Convention Center – Jr. Ballroom 300, 7 to 9 p.m., naacpspokane.com
- Nov 15, 22** • **Saturday Volunteer Service Day**, Women’s Hearth, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 455-4249, afitzgerald@help4women.org
- Nov 16** • **Coming Home:** How the Nez Perce Regained Their Cultural Heritage, virtual, 2:30 p.m., humanities.org
- **“A Night of Unbreakable Spirit,”** Faith Action Network Annual Dinner, Gonzaga Hemmingson Center, fan@fanwa.org, fanwa.org
- Nov 17** • **Have You No Sense of Decency?** Shame in American Politics, Carolyn Long, Virtual, 7 p.m., humanities.org
- Nov 19** • **Beyond the Bake Sale:** Diversifying your Nonprofit Revenue Mix, SIMBA, Saranac Learning Studio, 25 W. Main, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., spokaneindependent.org
- **Fish Wars:** Tribal Rights and Resiliency in the Pacific Northwest, Okanogan PUD Auditorium, 1331 2nd, North Okanogan, 6:30 p.m., humanities.org
- Nov 20** • **Mujeres Lideres** – Conferencia en Espanol, The Leo Center, Pasco, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., womenlead@gonzaga.edu
- **Black Liturgies for Staying Human:** Rest & Gratitude, Liberty Park Library, 402 S. Pittsburg St., 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., social@spokanelibrary.org,
- Nov 20-22** • **Handel’s Messiah**, Spokane Symphony and Spokane Symphony Chorale, The Fox Theater, 1001 W. Sprague, Th-Fri 7:30 p.m., Sat 3 p.m., 624-1200, spokanesymphony.org
- Nov 21** • **Big Day of Giving:** Community Fundraiser & Collaboration, Northtown Mall, 3 p.m. to 8 p.m., theshadesofmotherhoodnetwork.org
- Nov 21-23**• **On Healing Ground** – Communal Grief Retreat, Harmony Woods Retreat Center, harmonywoods.org
- Nov 22** • **Winter Market** – 2SLGBTQ+ Artists and Makers Fair, 35 W. Main, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., cgespokane.org
- **Tamalada, Tamales Festival**, Latinos en Spokane, West Central Community Center, 1603 N. Belt, 4 to 8 p.m.
- Nov 23** • **Mindful Making**, Northwest MAC, 2316 W. First, 1 to 3 p.m., 456-3931, northwestmuseum.org
- **Taizé Prayer Service**, IHRC, 5 to 6 p.m., ihrc.net
- Nov 27** • **Thanksgiving Day Spirit of Generosity**, Virtual Yoga Workshop, fundraiser for Manzanita House, 9 to 11 a.m., ehughes@mhspokane.org
- Nov 28** • **El Mercado**, Latino Cultural Market, A.M. Cannon Park, 1920 W. Maxwell, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., latinosenspokane.org
- Nov 28, 29** • **Festival of Fair Trade**, Global Holiday Market, 35 W. Main, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., shopkizuri.com
- Nov 29-30**• **A Winter Market in the Quarry**, The Scale House Market, 4422 E. 8th, Spokane Valley, Sat 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sun 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., thescalehousemarket.com
- Dec 1-18** • **Silence the Christmas Noise 2025**, Spirit Center at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, stgertrudes.org
- Dec 2** • **Finishing Your Fiscal Year** – and 2025 – Strong! Idaho Nonprofit Center, Virtual, 1 to 1:45 p.m., <https://bit.ly/YFYIncitelNC>
- **“There Is No Justice without Environmental Justice,”** Shamyra Lavigne-Davey, RISE St. James Louisiana, Gonzaga Climate Institute, Zoom, 4 to 6 p.m., 328-4220, gonzaga.edu
- Dec 4** • **The Fig Tree Benefit & Development and Board**, Benefit, 12 p.m., Board 1 p.m., mary@thefigtree.org

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Remembering Those We Have Lost

Dec. 4, 2025
4:30 & 6:00 PM

Hospice of North Idaho
2290 W. Prairie Ave.
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Hospice of North Idaho’s director affirms that ‘hospice is about life’

By Kaye Hult

When Eric Ladwig, certified nurse practitioner, became executive director of Hospice of North Idaho (HONI) after Kim Ransier retired in 2022, he looked to build on the organization to serve the seriously ill and those touched by loss.

HONI’s vision is to create a community where people can live fully and die with dignity.

“As our community grows, people’s needs will grow. So, we must continue to grow,” he said.

“Hospice is about life,” he said, expressing his passion for hospice care. “Our motto is: Live fully.”

He asks clients: “What is important to you? What do you want to accomplish in a month or if you die tomorrow?”

Eric believes hospice care is about each person.

“People come to us battling the complexities that come with the final stages of life—physical pain and symptoms, emotional distress, existential crises or social and relational complications,” he said. “Our job is to help alleviate some of them so they can seek what brings them hope, peace, fulfillment and joy.

“While HONI recognizes business and profit are important, its approach is service. Staff and volunteers are the foundation of what we do,” he said. “We infuse every aspect of HONI with our mission, whether in nursing, bereavement work, administration and our facilities.”

Since 1981, HONI has been committed to hospice care and grief support for people in Kootenai, Shoshone and Benewah counties, regardless of their finances.

Eric first learned of hospice while working as a nurse in Pocatello, where medical professionals wished they had a hospice house. After moving to the Coeur d’Alene area, he learned



Eric Ladwig shows the phone for leaving messages for loved ones. Photo courtesy of Hospice of North Idaho

HONI in Coeur d’Alene has the only hospice house in Idaho, the Schneidmiller House.

HONI’s programs give back to the community—Camp Kaniku for grieving children, community support groups, holiday observances to support grieving people and education programs.

An ongoing educational series, “Embracing Death and Dying,” has leaders of different faith backgrounds share their perceptions of life, death and what comes after. Presenters have included Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Baha’i, Mennonite and Native American, “nones,” atheists and others. In it, people from diverse beliefs can learn from each other.

Spiritual care is a large part of how HONI serves its patients, their families and the community.

“To maintain good relationships with different area faith groups, so we can keep them involved,” he said.

“For example, in the inpatient hospice unit, the Schneidmiller House, there’s a great relationship with faith leaders across the spectrum. HONI chaplains do not focus only on a person’s particular faith, but on how they see themselves. We invite faith

leaders to become a part of patients’ care, such as offering last rites or ceremonial practices like smudging,” Eric explained.

“Religious leaders are acquainted with the care we provide and our processes,” he continued. “They support our ability to meet patients’ spiritual needs and are glad to be part of that.”

Families served by HONI give back, too. Eric told of “Little Gems” that grace the HONI campus.

One husband built and filled a Little Library, which stands near the entrance to the community building. People borrow books related to grief, and others bring in books to add to the shelves.

There is a dog park at the back of the property, allowing people to bring favorite pets to visit.

Visitors wandering through the gardens may find the Telephone of the Wind. They can pick up the receiver of an old rotary phone in a booth connected only to the blowing breeze and have whatever conversation they feel is needed with departed loved ones.

Another HONI program offers adults or children the chance to paint memorial rocks they can add to the Rock Snake that meanders through the grounds.

HONI serves the wider community by offering education and advocacy programs that are well attended.

Those programs include advanced-care planning with presentations on elder law, Medicare, planning documents and palliative care; a veterans resource symposium on end-of-life issues and VA perspectives, and an educational program discussing support for home care and in-home health agencies.

HONI’s annual traditions include free community bereavement support through its Grief in the Holidays workshop and Tree Lighting Memorial service in November and December.

Its thrift store serves the wider community and helps support HONI’s mission of hospice care—bringing in more than \$1 million over nearly 40 years.

In November, the thrift store will lose the lease for its site in Post Falls, so it is looking for a new, affordable location.

Growing up in Pocatello, Eric had no interest in following in the footsteps of his Army OB-GYN physician father.

Being “creative and artsy,” he created custom cabinetry for 11 years but realized he wanted to communicate with people about more substantive matters than design choices. So he studied nursing at Idaho State University in Pocatello, earning a bachelor’s degree in 2014.

Working first in critical care, he found it exciting and challenging, but after learning about hospice, he realized that was the career he wanted.

His aunt, a retired hospice nurse, previously asked him, “When will you work in hospice?” He wonders if she saw he would be a good fit for hospice.

In 2020, he, his wife and three children moved to North Idaho as he finished studies at Gonzaga University to be a nurse practitioner. While earning a master’s degree in nursing, he worked in

home health, learning more about hospice care and case managing.

He heard that HONI needed an additional nurse practitioner to help with their client load. HONI hired him as a palliative care nurse and, after he graduated, as nurse practitioner.

A year later, Kim, who was preparing to retire, invited Eric to apply to be executive director.

“I had a new set of skills to learn but realized I have a passion for the work. I think Kim saw that I get hospice,” Eric said. “By then, I had worked with most of the clinical staff, done bedside care and worked with challenging family members.

“I came into this role with empathy for the teams I work with,” he said. “I ask how my decisions will impact them. I seek to foster an environment where their voice matters, so they feel ownership. In employee orientation, we say every person is important. We’re all serving the same mission,” he said.

Recently HONI implemented regular town halls and employee surveys to give them a voice.

“We want to be a place people want to work, volunteer and stay,” he said.

“The people who serve in hospice are the foundation of what we do. Whatever profits we have at the end of the year, we invest back into the community,” said Eric, who has also served in leadership roles in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

“I bring to my work with HONI the church’s emphasis on the importance of service,” Eric said. “I see something in others that is eternal and connected to divinity, and I want to serve them.

“I seek to bless people around me,” he said. “That’s the power of faith. In this work, we connect with others, doing something for them and giving part of who we are to somebody else.”

For information, call 208-772-7994 or visit hospiceofnorthidaho.org.

The Root Experience uplifts narratives

The Root Experience is a three-day festival of “Living Cultures of Art, Music + Soul,” featuring BIPOC talent from various cultures and disciplines and celebrating international filmmakers, artists, culture bearers, musicians, healers and the stories they weave in their art.

It will be held Friday, Nov. 14 to Sunday, Nov. 16 at Spokane Central Library, 906 W. Main Ave., Magic Lantern Theater, 25 W. Main, and Saranac Art Projects, 25 W. Main.

It’s an opportunity to immerse in a multicultural, multigenerational experience, with artistic energies that keep the audience engaged through the arts with a cultural decolonized lens.

Highlights on Friday from 6 to 10:30 p.m., at the library include: a blanket ceremony, a free com-

munity meal, performances, films and Q&A, vendors and an after-party with Son Dulce Live Salsa.

Youth and guardian workshops are 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, at the library. Performances and vendors from noon to 2:40 p.m. are on the third floor and films at Magic Lantern from 4 to 10 p.m.

Sunday’s lineup is a Community Vendor Fair and Performances from 1 to 3 p.m. at Central Library, films from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the Magic Lantern with Q&A and a Gallery Exhibit from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at Saranac Art Projects.

“The goal is to place Spokane

creatives on the same stages as the rest of the world, to create access points to professional creative industries and uplift narratives of culture, family, beauty and resilience to create a network that empowers living stories while healing elements of the past, present and future,” said Olivia Evans, multidisciplinary visual artist with the Root Experience in Spokane.

For information, call, 761-9775, email therootexperience-festival@gmail.com, or visit therootexperience.org/root-experience-festival-2025.

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