

40TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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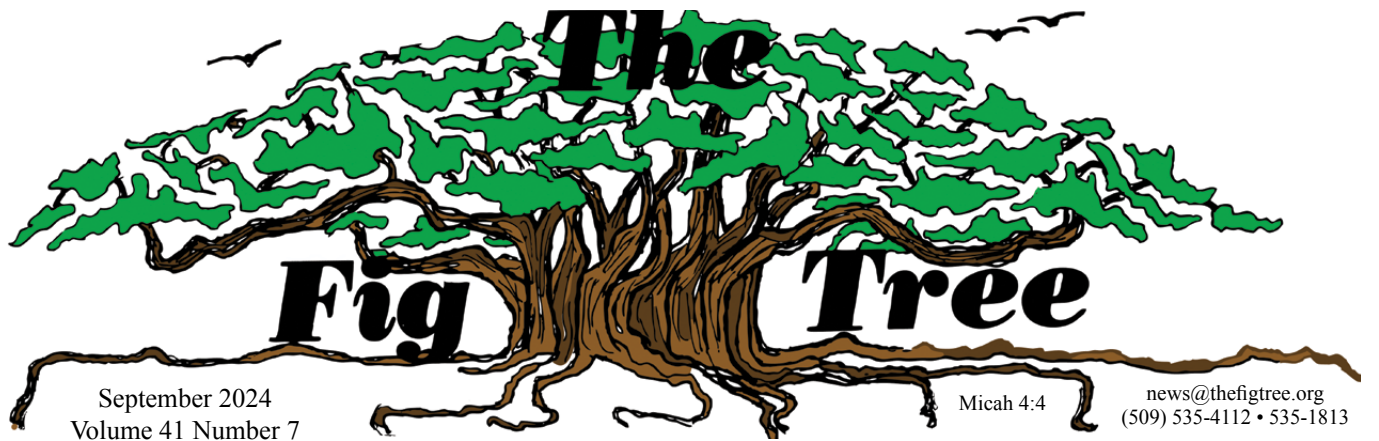
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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest online at www.thefigtree.org • check The Fig Tree Facebook page daily for news and links

Group advises how to be ‘dementia friendly’

By Bruce Dentler and Catherine Ferguson SNJM

Bruce Dentler, who retired after 20 years as a family practice physician followed by a practice focused on geriatrics, works with a Dementia Friendly Spokane team to help faith communities have dementia friendly congregations.

During the last 10 years of specializing in medical care for seniors, what had been his professional concern about providing compassionate care became a personal concern.

He visited his parents, Mary Lou and Howard Dentler, at a retirement home in Florida two or three times a year. On one visit, he noticed a subtle change in his mother.

Having always been a terrific cook, his mother kept her best recipes in her head. That visit, she left out key ingredients, like the flour in cookie dough, or substituted salt for sugar.

Bruce met these initial observations with denial that she was suffering from dementia. As a pastor’s wife, she had always had a gift for socializing, making others feel accepted and participating in church life.

“It was painful to watch as she



Bruce Dentler’s personal experience informs his commitment to help others.

withdrew from conversations and relationships and couldn’t remember people’s names,” said Bruce, who watched her grow anxious when conversations buzzed around her and then slowly stop connecting altogether.

After a 10-year struggle, his mother died at age 89 of end-stage frontotemporal dementia.

As Bruce became aware in his personal life, he saw that experience repeated in other people’s lives. In so many instances, people living with dementia and their caregivers choose not to maintain their connections to their social and spiritual communities.

“Our congregations have, it seems to me, unwittingly, contributed to this situation,” he said.

He sees two reasons.

One, most people lack knowledge and understanding about dementia. They have a negative bias and fear of the disease. They lack the comfort and skills to easily approach and maintain relationships with people living with dementia and their caregivers.

In spite of his professional training, Bruce includes himself among those people.

“It is a different experience
Continued on page 4

Fairfield church receives grant to improve wiring in its kitchen

By Mary Stamp

As community pastor in the 700-member town of Fairfield, 20 minutes south of Spokane Valley, Debbie Cato emphasizes the importance of people knowing how much God loves them unconditionally and that Jesus’ call is for followers to serve and think of their neighbors.

“We are to be the hands and feet of Jesus,” she said. “It’s important not just to go to church but also to be the church and accept people even when they are

different from us.”

In her three years serving Fairfield Community Church, a federated Presbyterian-Lutheran church, she has been the community’s minister. She conducts funerals and weddings for anyone and provides pastoral care, such as counseling the family of someone dying in intensive care, helping a mother hiding from her children’s abusive father, or counseling and referring people struggling with addiction.

Debbie reaches out wherever

she sees a need.

“That means caring for those who would not step through the doors of the church but are part of the community,” she said. “It means attending town council meetings.”

It also means that the church houses a preschool, offers a summer vacation Bible school, hosts a yoga class for women over 50, helps sponsor a town barbeque and movie night, co-sponsors a food co-op, leads worship at the local assisted living center, holds game nights and craft workshops, and on fifth Sundays helps do community service projects in Fairfield.

In October, the church will begin hosting community dinners every few months for about 75 people after upgrading the wiring and kitchen appliances with a \$10,000 national AARP 2024 Community Challenge grant, a \$3,000 grant from Agwest Credit Union and other funding.

Debbie said the church is one of 343 organizations nationally receiving \$3.8 million.

Continued on page 6

Annual Meeting elects new board and officers

At its Annual Meeting in June, The Fig Tree elected board members and officers, and expressed gratitude for the service of board members whose terms ended.

New board members are Amy Cross of Millwood Community Presbyterian Church and Spokane Friends Church and Emily Clark of the Religious Studies Department at Gonzaga University.

Those stepping off the board are Wade Schwartz, who served eight years and has been treasurer; Dale Soden, who served three years and guided the board in strategic planning; Lauri Clark-Strait, who served 12 years and has been secretary, and Anastasia Wendlinder, who has served on the board 11 years, been moderator and assisted with the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.

“We offer them our thanks for their faithful service, helping move The Fig Tree forward, expanding staff, support and outreach,” said editor Mary Stamp.

Those continuing on the board are Gloria Aston Baynes, Nick Beamer, Marijke Fakasiieiki, Catherine Ferguson, David Gortner, Malcolm Haworth, Kaye Hult, Gary Jewell, Betty Krafft, Raymond Reyes and Mary Stamp. Officers are Gary, moderator, and Amy, vice moderator. With the retirement of Wade, who was treasurer, and the death of Tracey Waring who was just elected secretary, there will be an election for those positions at the Board meeting on Thursday, Sept. 5, on Zoom.

In addition, Mary also reported the deaths of Bart Preecs and Jay Ilch, who volunteered to help with deliveries, and Dru Powers, who was a volunteer editor.

The Fig Tree is in the process of recruiting new board members and volunteers. For information, call 535-4112 or email mary@thefigtree.org.

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Religion News Briefs

Around the World

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Document calls for inclusive communication

With the document "Inclusive and Accessible Communication for All," the World Council of Churches (WCC) presents an evolving set of guidelines that shine a light on how inclusive communication is not only possible but also part of a Christian calling. It's "a continuous journey," the text notes—a journey that encompasses everything from social media, print, video, oral communication and more.

"When approaching questions of inclusivity, don't rely on what you think you know, but rather involve and consult persons with disabilities on their communication needs and how they can best be met," suggests the text in the introduction. "Inclusive, accessible communication is a continuous journey, and every step can be significant in scaling up efforts towards inclusion."

WCC head offers perspectives on mission

Speaking during the International Mission Partnership Consultation in Finland on Aug. 27, World Council of Churches general secretary Jerry Pillay reflected on "Church in changing landscapes: God's Mission and Our Own."

"Christianity and the actions of Christians and their churches can be crucial—one might almost say redemptive—in addressing world problems at their deepest root," he said. "Recent developments in thinking about mission and evangelism can be of catalytic importance to contemporary churches, especially in clarifying their essential roles."

Jerry acknowledged that attempts to define Christian mission have resulted in prolonged and relentless debates. "Even more difficult is determining the aims of mission," he said. "The understanding of the church as sacrament, sign and instrument has led to a new perception of the relationship between the church and the world."

"Mission and mission theology have been central in developing the ecumenical movement. It's God's mission, and we must partner with others to transform the world," he said, calling for a holistic view of mission. "The church needs to stand where God stands and not get mixed up with the rich and powerful."

WCC has resources for World Week of Prayer

The WCC offers resources for the 2024 World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel: "Whatever you did... you did for me." The week, Sept. 16 to 22, includes the 25th annual United Nations' International Day of Peace on Sept. 21. During the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel, church organizations, congregations and people of faith are encouraged to bear a common witness by participating in worship services, educational events and acts of support in favor of peace and justice for Palestinians and Israelis.

The theme is based on Matt. 25:40: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

"This year's message conveys dismay at the suffering and devastation in Gaza. It highlights the impact of war, particularly on the vulnerable—women, children, the disabled and prisoners. It expresses sorrow over the loss of lives and livelihoods, displacement and human rights violations. It asks why, despite numerous efforts, peace remains elusive," said Kenneth Mtata, WCC program director for public witness and diakonia.

He hopes the WCC will advocate for peace, justice and human rights as it invites member churches, faith-based communities and civil organizations globally to join the week of prayer for just peace for all in Palestine and Israel.

For information, visit oikoumene.org/events/world-week-for-peace-in-palestine-and-israel.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

26 agencies join community partners

Rotary 21 Spokane recently granted The Fig Tree \$1,500 for the Resource Directory to distribute free copies to vulnerable people throughout the Inland Northwest.

"We are grateful to all 26 partners who help us walk alongside marginalized communities in this region by granting funds to support the 200-page comprehensive annual directory," said Malcolm Haworth, Resource Directory editor.

Community partners featured on the directory cover are Banner Bank, Providence Health

Services, Sisters of the Holy Names, Second Harvest, Gonzaga University, Molina Health, United Health, Washington State Human Rights Commission, Launch Northwest, Innovia Foundation, Empire Health Foundation, Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington, Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington.

Partners listed on the inside cover are Washington Trust Bank, Goodwill Industries, Eastern Washington University, Greater Spokane County Meals on Wheels, Jasmin & Associates,

Northwest Mediation Center, Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church, Liberty Park St Paul's United Methodist Church, YWCA Spokane, Northwest Intermountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Kiwanis Club of East Spokane and Downtown Kiwanis Club.

"People often tell me how the directory helped them end their addiction, find jobs, access food and settle in affordable housing," said Malcolm.

For information, visit call 535-4112 or visit thefigtree.org.

FAN launches 100% voting campaign

Faith Action Network (FAN), the state-wide multifaith partnership striving for just, compassionate and sustainable communities through advocacy and public action, recently launched a new "100% Voting Faith Communities (VFC)" campaign.

This non-partisan campaign encourages the faith communities to collectively commit to reaching out so there is 100 percent voter turnout of eligible participants in

their congregations.

It also encourages efforts to educate, register and get out the vote in the wider community.

"With so much at stake, it is an important year to ensure that faith communities honor the sacred privilege of voting in a democracy," said Brianna Dilts, Eastern Washington FAN organizer.

FAN is providing tools and resources for 100% Voting Faith Communities to "faithfully en-

gage in the electoral process," she said, adding that "an important part of faithful engagement is remaining non-partisan."

FAN does not endorse political parties or candidates and expects faith committees to abide by the IRS rules for religious organizations.

For information, email fan@fanwa.org or visit fanwa.org/advocacy/voting-civic-engagement.

GU professor gives climate institute lecture

Bi Zhao, assistant professor of political science at Gonzaga University, will share "Who Tells Your Story? Framing of Climate Change by Women and Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations" at 6 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 4, at Gonzaga University Hemmingson Auditorium and by livestream, as part of the Institute for Climate, Water, and the Environment's for Our Common Home Lecture Series.

Bi received her doctoral degree in political science from

Purdue University and has published in the Journal of Human Rights, Environmental Policy and Governance. She will discuss the impact civil society organizations (CSO) have as actors in global climate governance.

In 1992, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change founded the Conference of the Parties (COPs), as venues for CSOs to define the meaning of climate change, leading to many framing it as a social justice issue that intersects

with gender inequality and indigenous peoples' rights.

She will focus on ways civil society groups develop and frame self-representation and crossover-representation. Her research includes non-state actors in global climate change governance and translational human rights advocacy, especially the role and participation of historically marginalized peoples in climate change politics and policy making.

For information, visit gonzaga.edu/climate-institute.

NAACP plans annual Freedom Fund Gala

Spokane NAACP Freedom Fund Gala Ticket sale starts in September. The Gala will be from 7 to 9 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 9 at Double Tree Hotel, 322 N Spokane Falls Blvd.

Its annual local branch fundraiser supports a scholarship fund for local high school students entering higher education.

The dinner enables Spokane NAACP to further its mission

to fight against the assault on civil and human rights. It will recognize achievements of individuals and entities who have contributed to the fight for civil and human rights and have laid

the foundation to ensure justice and equity for future generations.

Pre-sale for tickets is Sept. 1 to Oct. 1.

For information naacpspokane.com.

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Editorial Team

Editor/Publisher/Photos - Mary Stamp
 Directory Editor - Malcolm Haworth
 Website Developer - Lorna Kropp
 Volunteer Coordinator - Kaye Hult
 Development & Editing Assoc - Marijke Fakasiieiki
 Editing - Catherine Ferguson SNJM, Mary Mackay, Jill Redl, Nancy Roth, Pava Young

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Sravasti gives series on transforming troubles

Buddhist nuns from Sravasti Abbey will give a series of talks on “Transform Your Troubles” at CREATE Arts Center in Newport from 6:30 to 8 p.m., Mondays Sept. 9 through 30.

The presenters, Venerables Thubten Lamsel, Thubten Dekyi, and Thubten Monlam, have trained with the Abbey’s founder—teacher and author, Venerable Thubten Chodron.

They will address issues for people who feel stuck or overwhelmed by difficulties in their lives or problems in the world. They will share practices to help people achieve peace of mind and transform problems into opportunities for growth, including some meditation and mind-training practices that change perspective and open hearts in the face of challenges.

Sessions will include a short, guided meditation to settle the mind, followed by a talk, and some time for group discussion.

For information, call 447-5549 or visit sravastiabbey.org/events.

Disciples pastor leads retreat on mysticism

Ruth Fletcher, an ordained minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), is facilitating a retreat called “A Hitchhiker’s Guide to Christian Mysticism” from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 14, at Harmony Woods Retreat Center, 11507 S. Keeney Rd., in Spokane.

For 40 years, Ruth has nurtured transformation in individuals and systems through teaching and spiritual leadership. She addresses: “What is the tradition of mysticism? How does the Spirit communicate? How can we connect with the Spirit within?”

Throughout her life she has trained leaders, facilitated personal growth retreats, accompanied congregations through change, encouraged imagination, keynoted conferences, preached and led worship, coached pastors, and designed processes for systemic revitalization.

Ruth received her doctor of ministry degree from the School of Theology at Claremont and has authored resources regarding peace education, congregational discernment and the role of the eldership in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Her most recent book is entitled *Thrive: Spiritual Habits of Transforming Congregations*.

For information, visit ruthafletcher.com.

SNAP hosts Pajama Party to collect clothing

SNAP is hosting its second annual Pajama Party 3:30 to 8 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 14 at Brick West Brewing Co, 1318 W. First. Attendees are invited to bring new pajamas, hats, gloves, socks and hand warmers to help vulnerable neighbors this winter. Event activities include food, music, photo booth, face painting, cotton candy, games and more. Those who donate will be eligible for numerous prizes.

For information, visit snapwa.org/pajama-party.

Coalition holds Democracy Summit

Asian and Pacific Islander Coalition of Washington holds its Democracy Summit, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Friday, Sept. 27 at the Tacoma Dome Exhibition Hall.

The event will include a gubernatorial candidate forum, keynote speakers and cultural performances to engage Asian and Pacific Islander communities in the political process related to issues that matter to them. Asians for Collective Liberation in Spokane will provide bus and carpool transportation to the event.

For information, visit tinyurl.com/2024apicdemsummit.

Creole Resources holds Back-to-School event

Creole Resources, a nonprofit empowering the Haitian community in Spokane County, provides essential resources, promotes cultural integration and fosters a sense of belonging among Haitians and French speakers.

They are collecting in-kind donations, gift cards and sponsorships to purchase school supplies, backpacks and hygiene products to give to children and families at a Back-to-School event Saturday, Sept. 28, to support BIPOC children, said Elaine Sicilia, coordinator.

Donations may be dropped off at 1831 E. Mission Ave. or 19 E. Queen Ave., Suite 300, from 9 to 2 p.m.

For information, text 981-5595 or visit creoleresources.com.

Dances of Universal Peace raises awareness

Spokane’s Dances of Universal Peace (DUP) continues a more than 30-year tradition of sharing contemporary community dance practice to raise personal awareness and peace through singing and dancing. It is held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., on second and fourth Thursdays at Unity Spiritual Center, 2900 S. Bernard.

“The dances come from diverse world cultures and faiths, employing ancient cultures and spiritual traditions. In a typical dance gathering, one or more dance leaders guide the dance

circle accompanied by live musicians,” said Mark Kreilkamp, DUP organizer.

The dance leader tells the story, teaches the melody and movements of the dance, and directs the music and the flow. There are thousands of songs and dances adapted or compiled from around the world in the Dances of Universal Peace dance database.

Mantras, prayers and chants in the repertoire foster joy, harmony, unity and peace, Mike said. The main themes are love, trust and compassion towards nature,

the universe and life.

Samuel Lewis began Universal Dances of Peace in California in the late 1960s, mentored by Ruth St. Denis, modern dance pioneer.

The Dances of Universal Peace network spread to the USA, Latin America and Europe. Currently, dance circles are held in almost 50 countries and more than 1,200 dance leaders from 30 countries worldwide share dances.

For information, call 714-1770 or check the Spokane Dances of Universal Peace Facebook page.

YWCA plans Racial Justice Challenge

YWCA Spokane announces its annual Racial Justice Challenge, a virtual series to inspire collective action, foster dialogue and drive positive change toward racial equity and justice.

The challenge will be Sept 9 to 20, shared through email for

registered participants and then shared online.

The 10-day learning event will offer daily prompts via email and online.

This year’s topics include Bodily Autonomy, Financial Empowerment, Gun Violence

and Transportation.

Daily curated activities, readings and reflection prompts will be sent to participants to deepen their understanding of racial justice issues.

For information, visit ywca-spokane.org/challenge.

People Who Care Luncheon is Oct. 15

Transitions’ 2024 People Who Care Luncheon will be from noon to 1 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 15, at the Davenport Grand Hotel, 333 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.

Transitions’ annual fundraiser will gather people to donate, said Jessica Burke, director of devel-

opment. She is inviting people to host tables and be sponsor.

Transitions offers licensed childcare through EduCare, permanent supportive housing units with Home Yard Cottages, transitional housing for nine women at Miryam’s House, job

training in food services at New Leaf Kitchen and Café, transitional housing at the Transitional Living Center and a safe space for women at Women’s Hearth.

For information, call 328-6702 option 2 or email jburke@help-4women.org.

Church supplies milk from dairy in Utah

With increasing costs hard for families, Second Harvest Inland Northwest welcomes partners to meet the demand for food.

An Aug. 15 delivery of 1,080 cases of 2% milk from the church’s dairy farm in Utah was gifted to Second Harvest by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said Jennifer Hicks, the church’s regional communi-

cation director.

“Milk is a wonderful way to provide protein, calcium and other essential nutrients, especially for kids and seniors,” said Drew Meuer, president of Second Harvest.

“The Church of Jesus Christ is happy to support the work of Second Harvest. A much-needed donation of 24 pallets of milk

was provided from one of our dairy farms,” said Timothy Cobb, president of the Spokane Stake.

For information, call 270-4950.

Entities promote ‘Be Well WA’

On Aug 16, Washington Secretary of Health Umair Shah and partners from Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD), YMCA, Parasport Spokane, MultiCare Inland Northwest, Greater Spokane Incorporated and Spokane Public Schools unveiled “Be Well WA” in Eastern Washington at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

“Be Well WA” is a new initiative that transforms the state’s approach to health for Washingtonians, recognizing that since the pandemic, many struggle with health and wellbeing.

“Be Well WA” promotes movement, emotional wellbe-

ing, nourishment and social connection.

For information, visit be-wellwa.org or srhd.org.

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Resources help congregations learn how to include people with dementia

Continued from page 1
when it is someone you know and love," he said.

Second, is that institutions, specifically communities of faith, arrange their services, practices and facilities in ways that do not consider the difficulties and needs experienced by people living with dementia.

"This is not intentional neglect, but a lack of sensitivity and awareness in designing and providing those services," he observed.

In fall 2018, Aging and Long-Term Care of Eastern Washington (ALTCEW) and the Inland Northwest Alzheimer's Association with support from Providence Health Services organized community forums to ask people about their awareness of dementia and dementia care and services in Spokane.

Through these forums, ALTCEW learned about needs for further services.

They learned about significant dementia care issues such as the stigma associated with the disease, needs for police and emergency responders to know how to respond to and handle people suffering from dementia, and areas of ignorance from not knowing the 10 early warning signs of dementia.

This led to a work group of staff and volunteers at ALTCEW and the local Alzheimer's Association. This group decided to affiliate with Dementia Friendly America and, with support from a grant, to pay salaries for agency staff time.



Bruce Dentler told of his parents, Howard and Mary Lou.

A key staff member is Tara Hill-Matthews, the dementia resource catalyst at Aging and Long-Term Care of Eastern Washington.

In February 2020, the Spokane Regional Dementia Friendly Community (SRDFC) initiative was organized. Their progress, projects, accomplishments and works are chronicled in an online biannual newsletter.

One work group felt called to reach out to faith communities who have members living with dementia. The team's mission, adapted from Saint David by the Sea (Florida) is "The spiritual needs of people living with dementia remain untouched by cognitive decline. Our posture toward people with dementia needs to enhance their dignity, personhood, unique stories and purpose. Their purpose has changed, but it has not ended. It is our job and our privilege to remind them that they are a gift

from the Creator."

The team, on which Bruce serves, has challenged itself to answer the question, "Is there a way we could help congregations serve and continue to include their members living with dementia and their caregivers?"

The team has developed some training in dementia education for lay people, including the Dementia Friends program, which seeks to change the way people think, act and talk about dementia.

While every faith community has its own traditions and culture, the faith-communities team does not claim to know or understand all of those.

The dementia team knows that every faith community has members affected by or living with dementia.

They let people know about information, resources, tools and support that are available in the community.

They also inform congregations about best practices for faith groups, describing what is being done to adapt and be inclusive, answering questions like, "What would a dementia friendly worship service look like?" or "What training and skills would help a home visitation team?"

The team seeks to educate and encourage faith communities in the Spokane region to learn more about this topic.

Bruce said they offer congregations a rack card with information on local dementia resources for faith communities. It invites people to learn about Dementia

Friends Training, the Dementia Resource Guide, Spokane County Library Districts "Stay Sharp" toolkits and Dementia Friendly America organization.

Dementia Friendly Washington has a flier and offers training sessions with suggestions for changing the way people think, act and talk about dementia. The sessions discuss common types of dementia, key messages, communication tips, action ideas, resources and support.

In addition, Lynn Swedberg, a Spokane occupational therapist and disability consultant, serves with the Disability Ministries Committee of the national United Methodist Church—umcdmc.org/resources-specific-disabilities. She has a flier, Dementia-Friendly Worship Ideas and Tools.

The ideas include using familiar songs, prayers and scriptures, letting people remain seated, giving shorter sermons with stories, acting out stories with props and planning shorter services.

To create a supportive environment, she suggests providing one or more rocking chairs, reducing distractions, providing a calming sensory space, and offering worship buddies and hand holding.

Lynn points out that objects may help people focus—prayer beads, a lap altar, an adult picture book or coloring sheet, a weighted lap blanket, a prayer shawl, fidget muffs, aprons, books or lap pads.

Bruce offered some other tips to help people relate with people with dementia so they can be in the community: 1) be patient, 2) speak at a soft volume, 3) sense another person's anxiety, empathy and discomfort; 4) be relaxed and 5) don't correct what the person says.

Bruce said he and his wife, Ann, are on the visitation team for their church, St. Luke Lutheran in North Spokane.

"We love flowers and often take flowers to those we visit, because we can begin conversations with the flowers, such as talking about the colors," he said.

Bruce hopes more people will participate in the Dementia Friends Training so they better understand dementia and can use their skills to help people remain connected to their congregations.

For information, call 777-1629, email tara.hillmatthews@dshs.wa.gov or visit dfamerica.org or see altcew.org/spokane-regional-dementia-friendly-community-newsletter.

Riverkeeper, The Lands Council plan cleanups and other events

Spokane Riverkeeper is planning several fall events for people to give back to the Spokane River.

The Upriver Scrub and Great Spokane River Cleanup is from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, Sept 14, throughout the Spokane Valley.

On the same day, The Lands Council will hold its 21st Annual Spokane River Clean Up at High Bridge in Spokane.

"Volunteers will pick up trash, which will not only boost the natural beauty of the area but also improve the environmental health and safety of our river. This event is a great way for anyone to get outside in the fresh air and make a difference in the Spokane community," said Audrey Wartinger, communications coordinator with The Lands Council.

Spokane Riverkeeper partners with naturalists Bea and Jim Harrison of the Spokane Audubon Society for an early evening walk along the Spokane River to see birds along the way and carry bags to pick up litter as part of River Cleanup Walk and Talk #7, from 5 to 7 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 18.

There will be a Meet and Greet Happy Hour from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., Monday, Sept. 23, at Indigenous Eats.

On Saturday, Oct. 5, Spokane Riverkeeper and 350 Spokane will join in a seven-mile, easy, educational bike ride from 1 to 4 p.m., on the Centennial Trail along the Spokane River, beginning at the No-LiBrewhouse parking lot.

For information, call 464-7614 or visit spokaneriverkeeper.org.

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Human Rights Commission helps people be what they want to be

Andreta Armstrong considers her role as executive director of the Washington State Human Rights Commission in Olympia as a “divine appointment.”

As such, she seeks to take the commission—with offices in Olympia, Spokane, Wenatchee, Yakima and Seattle—to another level so employees, employers, and people in communities can be what they want to be.

“We are in place as partners so people can feel they receive justice,” she said in a recent interview.

If someone believes they have been mistreated in employment, housing or accommodations because they are in a legally protected category—race, national origin, gender, disability or sexual orientation—they may bring a complaint to the Human Rights Commission.

In 1965 when she was seven, her parents moved with their four children from Mobile, Ala., which she described as “the belly of the beast,” to Tacoma, where she grew up.

“In Alabama, my parents were not able to go to college so they could be what they wanted for themselves and their children,” she said.

Her father had been told by white Air Force soldiers to come to Tacoma, which was not only a beautiful place to live but also a place where his family would find opportunity.

After her parents earned college degrees, her father was a school teacher and her mother directed a federal program.

Andreta earned a bachelor’s degree in radio/TV communications at the University of Washington in 1980 on a four-year scholarship. At 17, she had applied for the scholarship saying she planned to become an attorney to “save the world.”

To be true to her word, she went to the University of Puget Sound Law School in Tacoma and graduated in 1983.

“I cut my teeth in civil rights in the 1990s in the Washington State Human Rights Commission and I have been an investigator, a mediator, the director of the civil rights unit in Tacoma for seven years and the executive director, leading the agency for the past two years,” Andreta said.

“I like to think life chose me to be in Washington and to work in civil rights as a way to make this world better and to hold true to what I said I wanted to do when I was 17,” she continued. “I believe I’m in the right place to do the right thing with the right people.”

Andreta works with 27 em-



Andreta Armstrong helps bring justice to people.

ployees in Olympia, three in Seattle, five in Spokane, one in Wenatchee and one in Yakima. They are responsible for investigation, mediation, customer service, administration, IT, policy analysis and operations.

Jim Owens leads fair housing, with an office in Spokane, Andreta added.

Luc Jasmin Jr of Spokane is a member of the Washington State Human Rights Commission, one of the five commissioners from around the state.

Jerry Lee, operations manager in Seattle, Barbara Harris, assistant director in Olympia, and Andreta visited Spokane in the summer to meet with local business leaders, housing owners and public accommodations leaders—possible respondents—as well as with those in agencies assisting people who could be complainants.

“We shared the services we have to offer,” she said.

“We complete about 350 employment, housing and public accommodation cases each year in the whole state, resolving them through negotiated settlement after completing an investigation to determine whether there was discrimination,” Andreta said.

Some cases are administratively closed if a party files a civil lawsuit or is not interested in going forward.

“We are responsible for enforcing the state antidiscrimination laws to have a positive effect on people’s lives through investigation and outreach that informs people what actions violate those laws,” she said. “Our mission is to prevent and eliminate discrimination by enforcing the state antidiscrimination law

RCW 49.60.

“Our work is to prevent misconduct by outreach to communities,” she said.

“People who seek us out are often in crisis. It’s satisfying to know we enforce laws that help people who are at their wits’ end, believing they are discriminated against,” she explained. “We want to help everyone, but only have authority to enforce the anti-discrimination laws. Not all bad behavior in the workplace is covered, but we are glad we can help some.”

Andreta’s desire to help people stems from her own experience and that of her parents coming to the Pacific Northwest to be all they could be. They found an opportunity here to make things better for themselves, unlike what they had experienced in the South.

Her interactions with people who treat her as if she is less

than they are drives her to assist others who feel they are wronged because they are in a protected category.

“As a person of faith, I live by the tenets of loving all and embedding love where I see it needed and to spark love where I do not see it so folks can be all they can be and want to be,” she said.

The commission deals with some complaints against employers when someone in the workplace uses disparaging comments or epithets related to race or gender. Some have felt they had no other recourse, because the employer was aware but did nothing. In some cases, there is evidence to support the complaint, but if there is no evidence to support the case, it is hard.

“We have to be neutral because the complaint has to be supported by documentation,” she said.

In investigating a charge, the commission has a process to determine if the proposed disposition is supported by evidence. The managers for housing and employment cases are involved in the review and recommendations. Based on their findings, the commissioners are responsible for deciding to close a case.

Luc is one of five commis-

sioners who meet to decide to close cases.

Andreta is pleased that in the Washington State Human Rights Commission she is able to help people who feel they do not have a voice to be heard, to assist housing providers and employers who feel they have been wrongfully accused, and to support people on both sides of an issue.

Seattle and Spokane deal predominantly with cases of race, national origin and disability, while in Central Washington there are more cases related to farm workers.

“The agency is made up of people who are hopeful. When my staff engages with folks who make inquiries about behavior they have experienced, for the staff to unravel the knots, they have to be hopeful and believe the struggles are getting better and will get better, and they will be able to have an impact,” Andreta said.

To foster that sense of hopefulness is, to her, important for her employees’ health, so she encourages them to participate in support programs and gives them recognition for milestones in their personal and professional lives.

For information, email andreta.armstrong@hum.wa.gov.

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Grounded by our roots...

Fairfield pastor serves the whole community through presence, outreach

Continued from page 1

“AARP Washington is committed to working with local leaders to make our communities more livable, especially for those 50 and older,” said AARP’s state director Marguerite Ro. “Projects like this can make already great communities even better places to live for people of all ages.”

The funds will upgrade the church’s electrical system to prepare for improvements to the kitchen.

The Fairfield church was one of four grant recipients in Washington receiving \$68,000 as part of AARP’s goal to make communities more livable.

Debbie said the frequency of the community meals will depend on recruiting volunteers from the church’s 85 members and the community.

“We will offer a free meal to anyone in the community who wants to come. Our goal is to build community by being a place to gather,” she said. “We see it as a service to people in the community and an opportunity for seniors, who do not often go out and be around people to socialize.

“It will help people in the community know each other better,” Debbie said.

Debbie, who worked 24 years as a certified public accountant (CPA) in Tacoma after graduating in 1982 with a bachelor’s degree in accounting from the University of Washington, became disillusioned with the focus on money and profits. Moved by her church surrounding her and her two daughters as they navigated through tough times, she became director of a nonprofit homeless center in Tacoma.

Those experiences led her to want to make faith part of “all of me,” she said.

So, Debbie went to Fuller Theological Seminary, graduating in 2009, and then served Presbyterian churches in Casper, Wyo., and one in Eugene, Ore., three years each, before deciding to retire and move to Spokane Valley to be near one daughter and her two grandchildren.

“Frustrated by conflict in a previous church, I was not interested in pastoring a church again, but I missed preaching



Debbie Cato appreciates church’s compassion, kindness.

and pastoral care,” she said. “I was invited to do pulpit supply for a month in Fairfield after they lost their pastor.

“I fell in love with the people, the compassion, kindness and generosity of the congregation and community,” said Debbie, who lives in the manse.

When the churches federated, the Presbyterian building sold first, so they are using the former Lutheran building.

“We work to keep both traditions alive. When the churches combined, they agreed what parts of each denomination’s worship to incorporate. The denominations are similar,” she said, adding that Catholics and Baptists are among the average of 35 attending Sunday worship.

Fairfield is the town southeast of Spokane that celebrates Flag Day. In 2010 it was recognized for celebrating Flag Day for 100 years.

The rural town, which has two parks, not only has many farmers but also many people who live there and drive to Spokane to work. The church includes about eight farm families, many of whom were long-term members of the Presbyterian and Lutheran

churches. Other members are teachers and retired nurses.

“We are here for others in the community if something happens. We jump in to help. People really care about one another,” Debbie said, noting the church’s outreach to the community.

Tuesday mornings, Debbie visits Fairfield’s assisted living facility serving 70 residents. The church leads 2 p.m. worship services there on third Sundays every month and holds its regular Sunday worship there four times a year, on the third Sunday of every third month.

Other area churches bring worship services there other Sundays—Fairfield Seventh-day Adventist, Rockford United Methodist, Spangle Community Church and the Church of Latah.

On fifth Sundays, Debbie said the church worships “with our hands and feet.” Instead of going to church, members do projects in the community such as doing yardwork for elderly and disabled people, washing windows and cleaning at the assisted living center, landscaping at the community center, raking leaves and other projects. Volunteers include members of church families who do not attend regularly.

“We do staff appreciation by taking snacks for assisted living staff. We also express our appreciation for first responders, firefighters and school teachers by taking snacks to them,” Debbie said.

Many years ago, Fairfield and other rural communities combined to form Liberty Elementary, Middle and High Schools, serving 400 students in the county between Fairfield, Latah, Spangle and Waverly. The community has an education foundation that gives every senior a scholarship. After high school and college, many stay or return, especially those in farm families, she said.

In addition, some church and town families send children to Freeman High School, 12 miles north. Since the 2021 shooting that killed one student and injured several others, Debbie has provided some pastoral care for people who are still experiencing trauma from that.

In August, the church also collects school supplies to fill 25 backpacks for children of families who go to the food bank. At Christmas, church members fill wishes on gift tags on its Giving Tree for food bank children.

For the fifth Sunday of September, the church plans a food drive and hay ride to help supply the food bank that Second Harvest serves. The food bank is open two days every two weeks.

Church members volunteer and donate to the food bank. The director for many years is Sheila Dyer, a church member.

The food co-op meets in different locations to teach skills in gardening, cooking, canning and preserving.

Members also organize, cook and deliver meals to homes when a family member is ill or had surgery.

The church has a Sunday school for three-year-olds to sixth graders, a Wednesday evening adult soup and study and a preschool.

For 24 years, it has operated the preschool for three- and four-year olds. Four-year-olds come Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings, and three-year-olds come Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Last year, there were 19 children.

Debbie meets with the preschool Thursday mornings to tell a Bible story, visit with them about what’s happening in their lives and lead a prayer.

“They tell me about their families,” she said. “It keeps me in tune with families in the community.”

The church also sponsors a one-week vacation Bible school in the summer at the community center in conjunction with the free summer lunch. This year 18 volunteers from the church and community led sessions for 32 children.

“Fairfield has a strong sense of community, family values, and generosity to help people in need,” she summed up.

For information, call 541-214-7098 or email dcato1237@gmail.com.

Bonhoeffer Weekend planned

On Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 19 to 20, Grace Lutheran Church at 1408 Washington St. in Wenatchee will hold “Bonhoeffer Weekend” on the theme “With Courage and Humility.”

Mark Brocker, a Bonhoeffer scholar and retired Evangelical Lutheran Church in America pastor living in Oregon, is the speaker.

The event includes a workshop on “With Courage and

Humility: Bonhoeffer’s Ethical Approach for Us Today” at 10 a.m., Saturday, and a lecture on “The Political Responsibility of the Church” at 7 p.m., Saturday.

At the 10:30 a.m., Sunday worship, he will preach on “A Miracle of Divine Mercy,” followed by an adult forum discussion at noon on “What Does It Mean to Tell the Truth?”

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HREI involves community in countering prejudice, discrimination

By Kaye Hult

Jeanette Laster believes her commitment to servant leadership has influenced the direction of the Human Rights Education Institute (HREI) in Coeur d'Alene in her nearly six years as executive director.

"When I serve, I am working to achieve not only the most valuable life I want, but that life for all others," she said.

Because her goal is to invite others to share in HREI's work, she shared some of the many ways community people are and can be involved.

Jeanette said the internship program mentoring high school and college students is her greatest accomplishment. She works with 51 students as interns.

Student interns work on projects in marketing, educational outreach, legal research, preparing Human Rights Business Consortium brochures, and offering Human Library presentations.

Under Jeanette, HREI has also done more than 15,000 hours of court appointed juvenile and adult community service supervision a year.

"District attorneys refer people to me for community service supervision because juveniles and adults referred here have a good experience, so much so that they often come back as volunteers," she said. "Students in our diversion program also come back."

She and the institute's bookkeeper are the only two staff people.

While some positions there are funded by grants for particular projects, most of the work is done by the 55 volunteers who provide about 5,000 hours of service per year.

They carry out HREI's mission "to celebrate diversity and human rights by educating, raising awareness and recognizing the value of all humanity."

The organization seeks to promote human rights for every person in the Pacific Northwest—primarily Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho and Western Montana.

Jeanette explained that the HREI addresses diversity issues including race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and job and life circumstances.

She began her involvement with HREI as a volunteer, helping with the nonprofit's golf tournament and grant writing.

"When the program coordinator position came up, I took that," she said.

"I had been volunteering at



Jeanette Laster guides HREI as servant leader.

HREI for about two years when the executive director position opened up, and HREI hired me."

Jeanette has become a community mentor for other nonprofits. She helps them both with grant writing and understanding about the HREI framework.

"Here, we do not ask them to fit into a particular spot with exact expectations," she explained. "We interview prospective interns to learn what they are good at and what their schedule is. We fit our needs around the volunteers."

In about 2018, HREI developed a program called Love Lives Here, a kindness project. By the time Love Lives Here grew enough to go out on its own earlier this year, 350 businesses and community members had signed on to the project to commit to welcoming all people. Its goal is to raise awareness about hate groups spreading discrimination in the local area. The project gives the community tools to report incidents and build a culture of inclusivity to strengthen the area's economy and reputation.

Several HREI programs support the schools in the area, she continued.

They put on a Teen Human Rights Symposium, an Advocacy Camp for middle school students, three elementary school break camps and many annual community, multicultural day celebrations, such as the Lakes Middle School Multicultural Fair.

Many higher education partners, such as North Idaho College, Lewis-Clark State College, University of Idaho, Boise State

University, Eastern Washington University, Gonzaga University and Arizona State University, work with HREI to provide a learning environment for interns, while HREI creates partnerships with the community to match mentors with interns.

For more than five years, HREI has been a liaison to the North Idaho College Diversity Council.

It partners with the council to support its annual Diversity Symposium.

Other diversity activities include the Day of Dialogue and work with the American Indian Advisory Committee.

They have produced several Human Library educational events and shared personal stories through reading books.

HREI offers quarterly Community Conversations. A recent one considered flags, and another one discussed Juneteenth.

A secular homeschool has begun meeting in the HREI building.

Currently HREI is recruiting diverse people for its board. They strive for "representation from many sectors, such as LG-BTQ (as an ally), disability, and broad religious and race and ethnicity representation," she said.

They also have committee openings in marketing, resource development, fundraising and events, building, safety and education.

They have Americorps/Vista positions to fill.

For the upcoming Resisting White Supremacy and Christian Nationalism Conference, to be held Wednesday and Thursday, Sept. 25 and 26, at the Spokane

Public Library, Jeanette will be one of the presenters.

She cited her philosophy as expressed by English-American author and inspirational speaker Simon Sinek: "Don't show up to prove. Show up to improve."

Jeanette credits her upbringing with teaching her about servant leadership.

"My parents were in the Air Force. My dad was also in law enforcement," she recalled. "Through their influence, I have always served. I learned as I was growing up to take care of business and to be accountable.

"It was not uncommon for me to receive a page at school telling me that both my parents were being deployed overseas and leaving in 10 minutes," she continued, "and that I should make sure to take care of my siblings. They were deployed for eight months during Desert Storm.

"I was the first responder when my brother died at a young age," she said.

"I had expected to go into the Navy to become their first female pilot," Jeanette continued. "Instead, I went to California State University Northridge on a swimming and diving scholarship. I came out with a degree in physical therapy."

Soon after graduating from college, she changed to nonprofit work.

Jeanette was recruited to North Idaho in 2008 from a Special District municipality under the State of California to participate in the initial development of the Salvation Army Kroc Center Aquatic Department in Coeur d'Alene.

This was the third aquatic center she opened after guiding the group through the construction phase.

Jeanette then served three

years with United Way as community impact coordinator to align resources and other support for local nonprofits.

After a short stint at the Community Action Partnership's food bank, she began volunteering at HREI.

Her service extends beyond her work at HREI. She has served for more than 35 years as an instructor for disaster management, aquatics, health and safety services for the American Red Cross. Currently, she is registered as a volunteer with the Greater Inland Northwest Chapter.

Since coming to North Idaho, she has taken several leadership training courses.

She serves on several business and education subcommittees in the region and has received recognition from organizations in the region. She is a certified emergency medical technician, Ventura County K9 Search and Rescue team member, and Boy Scouts merit badge instructor in emergency prep and aquatics.

In addition, Jeanette fosters an autistic youth in his last year in high school and a 26-year-old young man.

Recently, she answered an email asking about leadership: "If you are a leader, you know when you make mistakes and it's common to feel the need to prove yourself to others. However, leaders take ownership and hold themselves accountable.


"It's hard to stand in authenticity and uncomfortable to look inside, but the only one I have to prove anything to is myself," said Jeanette. "Then I seek to step out and lead by example, so others will follow."

For more information about HREI, call 208-292-2359 or email jlaster@hrei.org.

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Mission teams discover realities of life for people in other countries

Palisades Christian Academy (PCA), a 60-year-old private Seventh-day Adventist school, has been taking groups on mission trips every other year since 2000, except during COVID, because the experiences are life changing for the students and adults.

Seventh to 10th grade youth aged 13 to 16, plus a few 17-year-olds, have traveled to Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Chile, Panama, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru through Marantha Volunteers International.

"I hope that when students return, they have more compassion for people," said Ruth Lenz, seventh to 10th grade teacher who has led the mission trips.

"I love taking students on mission trips, because they grow, stretch, step out of their comfort zone to see new ways of doing things and take their focus off themselves and onto other people," she explained.

The school arranges the trips through Marantha, whose mission is to do building programs—usually wells, schools and churches—in India, Africa, South America, Central America and the Dominican Republic.

Marantha describes itself as "a responsive organization that fulfills requests for construction assistance. Each project is carefully considered for need, overall impact on the community, and resources for long-term maintenance and support."

Requests for help come through regional Adventist church leaders.

Volunteers come to build and interact with a community.

"The mission team prays about the destination and project. Then Marantha matches the team with an assignment," said Ruth.

Because of time, cost and the ages of students, the group usually goes to a site in South or Central America or the Dominican Republic.

For transportation to be manageable, the groups range from 24 to 32 adults and students.

Students raise funds all year, primarily by the group selling fruit and individuals babysitting, raking yards, pet sitting, and sending letters to ask friends and family to donate for the trip for birthday and Christmas gifts.

The students raise \$10,000 to \$15,000 as a group, paying for the church they are building—\$500 to 600 per student—plus transportation, lodging, food costs and excursions.

"Serving people is fun, but we also do sightseeing. This trip we visited an indigenous community and experienced their culture.



Members of the March 2024 team of students and adults who went to Peru.

We also visited Peru Projects, which flies medical missions through the Seventh-day Adventists and has a bakery," said Ruth.

In March 2024, the group of 13 students and 12 adults went to Pucallpa, Peru, to build a church for the 85-member Villa Jesus congregation of the Iglesia Adventista del Septimo and to lead vacation Bible school for students in the community.

The students helped build a church and lead a vacation Bible school (VBS) for local children. Locals, including a translator, helped the PCA group share with people.

When the group arrived, the community had completed the framing, the slab, the barn beams, the rails and the roof—leaving the students to construct the block walls.

"The building crew finished the church building two days early so they helped with the VBS," she said.

With about 140 children engaged in singing, Bible lessons and activities, the VBS crew needed help from the construction team. Lessons and songs were translated. Some vacation Bible school materials were donated by area churches.

"We purchase some materials in country and take some with us, so students have room in their suitcases to bring souvenirs back," she said.

Taffy Hunter, a parent who was the group's devotional leader, led worship every evening on women in the Bible, the Beatitudes and the fruits of the spirit.

A church service at the end brought together the U.S. team and local church community to celebrate.

A few people ask her why they do these mission trips, spending money on plane tickets rather than sending money the people could use to build two or three buildings.

"Some parents who were concerned that their children might be self-centered and disrespectful were pleased that they learned how to act around other people and to be less critical of themselves and others," said Ruth.

"I've had some parents who thought they would be heroes, save people, give them a building and help the children. When they come back, most say they learned that it was not about themselves, but to help and share the love of Jesus. As a leader, it's neat to see people change their lives and focus," she commented.

"I know that the personal contact and experience of giving up for others is life changing. We are so wealthy in the U.S. It is important for us to see people in other places with next to nothing, who are happy, sharing and giving the little that they have," said Ruth.

"When my students see that, it changes their perspectives. People who have never gone, don't understand. It's as much for the students as for the people we meet," she pointed out.

Once in a poor community in Mexico with one-room huts, the students needed to clean cement off their trowels. They had no more cement bags to rip up to use as rags, so they went to a nearby hut to ask for a rag.

"When the woman opened the door to her hut, a student asked for a rag. The woman paused, then tore a little rag in half that she was using to wipe down her small table after eating. She had no other rags in her home. Touched, the student started to cry, realizing the woman gave from the little she had. We can't teach that in a class. They have to experience that," said Ruth.

When students return, Ruth encourages them to share their experiences with people who

supported them, including churches that help fund the school.

Some students go to small churches. Some years, students give presentations on their experiences, and other years they share a mission trip video that shows what they did.

Each student helps make the video to share with family and friends, too.

"It inspires others to do something similar," said Ruth. "One of the biggest things I see is students becoming more outward focused."

One parent called three weeks after a trip and asked, "What did you do to my daughter? She used to be focused on material things, like shopping." Her parents used to agree that if she did chores, they would take her to the store once a month to buy a new outfit.

A few weeks after the trip when they went shopping, their daughter was not interested in shopping. She said, "Mom, I have so many things, I don't

need more clothes, can we just go home?" The mother said her daughter realized she did not need things to be happy. It was exciting for her and her folks to realize that.

"There are places all over the world and in Spokane where people need help and helping them can raise students' awareness," she said.

For some students, there may be little or no immediate change in their desire to serve others, but Ruth hopes that these trips have an impact at some point in their lives.

For information, email ruthl@pcasda.org or visit pcasda.org.



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Couple nurture community sharing on peace, justice, social activism

Nick and Linda Braune are spending their retirement gathering community around worker justice and peace issues through the Dorothy Day Labor Forum (DDLDF) in Spokane.

Dorothy Day was a journalist and social activist who became a Catholic and in the 1930s started the Catholic Worker Movement, a pacifist movement that combines direct aid to the poor and homeless with nonviolent direct action on their behalf. She started The Catholic Worker newspaper and was editor from 1933 until her death in 1980.

For four years, the Braunes have been continuing the spirit of her movement, editing a monthly newsletter, called "Dorothy Day Labor Forum" and holding monthly Zoom forums.

"We are inspired by Dorothy Day, whose community organizing activity was partially faith-based," said Nick. "In the 1960s, she was involved with dialogue between Catholics and Protestants, along with making efforts to reach out to historic Black churches and radical socialists.

"We are happy when there is solidarity among working people who realize that many people are stuck in the system. Even people who have a union to protect them need a broader vision," said Nick.

"We are pleased when we see labor unions calling for a ceasefire, talking about day care, health care and other issues," he said. "We are open to faith and open to wider philosophical concepts of labor, understanding that there are all types of laborers."

As coordinators of a labor forum, the Braunes invite not only labor union speakers, but also other social activists who want to help unions look beyond bread-and-butter issues.

Nick went through Catholic education from age six to age 23, but during his studies was informed by Methodists and people of other faith perspectives and the peace movement.

"In the 1960s, I was a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War with support from Gonzaga University's president. Anti-war sentiment stirred me as much as the labor sentiment," said Nick, who earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy in 1986 and a masters in philosophy in 1989 from the University of Washington.

He received a master's in theological studies in 1993 from Drew University in Madison, NJ, focusing on the philosophy of religion. Nick was a community college philosophy professor at South Texas College, retiring in 2018.

Nick and Linda met 45 years



Nick and Linda Braune hold up a recent 40-page edition of the newsletter they publish.

ago through their involvement in the antiwar movement.

While Linda attended public schools, also went to an evening weekly Hebrew high school and received a bachelor's degree in English in 2010 from Thomas A. Edison State College in Trenton, NJ, and her master's in English—specializing in American literature and cultural studies—in 2014 at the University of Texas-Pan American.

In McAllen, Texas, she was a college writing tutor at South Texas College, where she nurtured writers and did professional editing on the side.

"What has impacted my work is the concept of spiritual geography, from having lived in South Dakota close to a Native American reservation and worked with people there. I carried that feeling with me when we moved to Texas on the Rio Grande Valley next to Mexico, where there was a sense of spiritual geography, too. We were working beside La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE or United Farm Workers) there and I think of it in a spiritual way," she said.

Linda has recently reflected on her connection with Judaism.

"Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, is my big connection and the three principles within Judaism of 1) prayer, 2) Teshuvah or repentance, and 3) giving of yourself—Tzedakah or the religious obligation to do what is right and just. It's about making ourselves whole and living to our highest self. That, along with prayer, is the sense that I have of where I want to be in Judaism," said Linda, who has recently participated in the new Spokane Jewish Voice for Peace group.

Nick, who started peace activities early, said that in the 1960s at Gonzaga he participated in a

peace group that often met at the Unitarian Church and visited with Spokane radicals.

"During the 1960s, there were many changes internationally, with countries declaring independence, women seeking more rights, Vatican II transforming the Catholic Church and people like Dorothy Day bringing new energy to the church," he said, noting that he left Seattle in 1989 to live on the East Coast.

Now back in Spokane, he has discovered much of what was happening here in the 1970s and 1980s, so the Dorothy Day Labor Forum has interviewed activists from those decades and the 1990s for its monthly newsletter.

Nick found that Whitworth President Edward Lindaman met with Gonzaga activist students. He took his students to China and was nationally known as a futurist who spoke about the importance of NASA and international cooperation.

From connections with Linda and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Nick said Gonzaga helped found the Peace and Justice Action Center by donating a house for offices. It later became the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane.

From the 1980s on, there was a transformation in politics in Central America when the Contras were being funded by the U.S. and priests were assassinated for supporting the poor. Many bishops in Latin America had been conservative, serving the aristocracy and silencing the peasants, he said, but big changes happened as many Catholics protested U.S. policies in Central America and welcomed documented and undocumented refugees.

When Nick left Spokane in 1969, he didn't plan to return, but eight years ago they did because

They edit and publish articles by local peace activists, former Teamsters, Gonzaga activists, members of Veterans for Peace, Pax Christi, Democratic Socialists of America, PJALS and people from other local peace and justice movements.

Some supporters continue to discuss their interest in Central America and Vietnam War protests, they said.

Recent topics in newsletter articles have included restoring humanity, decolonization, Social Security, Medicare, health insurance, labor unions, strikes, farm workers, the election, environment, tiny homes, working class economics, police accountability, Code Pink, a Palestinian/Israeli ceasefire, countering militarism and war, remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Hanford nuclear waste clean-up.

Some articles raise questions: "Who creates our reality?" "Can we confine the 'civil war' to discourse?" "What is our connection to the biosphere?"

The newsletters, which people are free to forward and copy for friends and family, are available by email and in print in an up-to-40-page letter format pdf.

For information, call 956-970-0604 or email braune@att.net.

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St. James Episcopal in Pullman hosts ‘Icons in Transformation’

“Icons in Transformation,” an exhibit by contemporary icon artist Ludmila Pawlowska, is on display from Sept. 15 to Nov. 6 at St. James Episcopal Church, 1410 NE Stadium Way in Pullman.

Ludmila uses three-dimensional sculpture/paintings, different materials and abstract motifs to express religious themes.

Now living in Sweden, she grew up in Kazakhstan and earned a master of fine arts in textiles and painting at Moscow’s Kalinin Art Academy.

“Art connects the concrete world—LIFE—and the illusory one,” she said, adding that her works over 45 years reflect “splashes of emotions of despair,

suffering, delight and recklessness, along with the movement of love, spirituality and time.”

The free 100-piece exhibit presents the mystery and spiritual power of icons through her art and traditional icons on loan from the Vasilevsky Monastery in Suzdal, Russia.

St. James will host five events in conjunction with the exhibit.

- Icon writer and teacher Father Damian Higgins will speak at 7 p.m., Friday, Sept. 27.

- “Art Inspired Writing,” a workshop led by Jeff Jones, will be held from 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Oct. 5.

- Ukrainian stories and songs will be presented by the folk

group Gefilte Trout, Julie Wieck and Friends from 4 to 6 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 6.

- The Palouse Choral Society will give a concert from 2 to 3:30 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 13.

- Mary Flerchinger will speak on “Iconography: A Glimpse into Heaven” from 2 to 4 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 27.

The exhibit is also open for viewing from 1 to 4 p.m., Sundays; 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Wednesdays, and 4 to 7 p.m. Fridays.

“I am honored to bring this international exhibition to Pullman,” said Linda Young, rector at St. James. “Icon writing (painting) is enjoying a resurgence. Attendees—whatever

their spiritual background—will find art that touches the heart, mind and soul.”

The “Icons in Transformation” exhibit was made possible through a gift from the late John Brewer, a retired Washington State University professor, long-

time St. James member and supporter of the arts on the Palouse.

For information, call 332-1742, email office@stjamespullman.org or visit ludmilapawlowska.se.

For a group tour, contact: IconPullman2024@gmail.com.

FāVs launches ‘Spiritual Landscapes’ series exploring Inland NW religions

FāVS News launches a “Spiritual Landscapes: Exploring Inland Northwest Religions” series, starting with Buddhism. It runs from Aug. 29 to Sept. 29

The hybrid program delves into the diverse religions that shape the Inland Northwest. The first course focuses on various Buddhist practices and hearing from local Buddhist communities.

Speakers will discuss Buddhism in online sessions and then attendees will gather together for a field trip to experience a local Buddhist house of worship.

Upcoming sessions are at 6 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 5, online with Sravasti Abbey; Sept. 12 at the Spokane Zen Center, and

Sept. 19 online with Soul Center.

The field trip begins at 10:30 a.m., Sept. 28, at the Spokane Buddhist Temple, 927 S. Perry.

The hybrid event will look at Buddhism traditions and modern-day Buddhist practices. It is an opportunity to broaden understanding of Buddhism in the Inland Northwest.

For information, visit favs.news/favs-news-launches-spiritual-landscapes-series-starting-with-buddhism.

Family Promise centralizes its programs

Family Promise of Spokane, which uses a trauma-informed approach while keeping focus on the families in its programs, has centralized its programs at 2002 E. Mission Ave.

To keep supporting families amid budget cuts from public and private sources, the program move the administrative team out of their office at 2322 E Sprague to its emergency shelter.

“This shift also gives us a

central hub where all our resources are easily accessible to our guests and the community,” said Joe Ader, executive director. “It allows us to be in the same space,” he explained.

“We are grateful for our volunteers who made this move possible, the flexibility of staff during this transition and the strength of our guests,” he said.

Along with grants, the Family Promise monthly donor pro-

gram, Homer’s Helpers, provides ongoing support to guests.

Recently on Facebook it announced that Family Promise has housed more families from January to August 2024 than it did in 2023. Already it has housed 106 families this year, with about three families moving into housing each week.

For information, call 747-5487 or visit familypromiseofspokane.org.

New building expands AHANA’s capacity

The Multi-Ethnic Business Association, (AHANA) has relocated to the University District for its operations and small business services, acquiring a building at 327 E. Pacific through organization funds, private fundraising and grant funds.

Along with offices for staff, there are small business incubator offices and a training room. It can be used for small business workshops, community meetings, meet-and-greet receptions and board meetings.

In April, AHANA stakeholders and board members named a section of the building Peter Stanton Hall to honor the executive chairman of Washington Trust Bank for his support of their mission to educate and develop opportunities for area multi-ethnic and multicultural businesses and nonprofits. Peter, who followed AHANA since it formed, hopes the building will advance its work with small businesses.

AHANA’s vice president, Mike Spencer, said the building

will enhance Spokane’s BIPOC and underrepresented, underserved business communities.

Several presented gifts of appreciation from their cultures—a Kum Kum blessing, a red dot on the forehead from Spokane’s South Asian Indian community, a Quran from the Spokane Islamic Center and a ceremonial staff from the Maasai community.

Jeff McMorris of Spokane County said the ARPA grant will help AHANA with nonprofit capacity-building and allow it to make investments it can apply to purchasing the building.

Juliette Sinisterra, CEO of the University District, said, “AHANA’s mission and support of underserved and underrepresented business start-ups is in alignment with our U Vision 2044 and our values. The University District looks forward to partnership with AHANA.”

AHANA board chair and attorney Francis Adewale stated, “This building is the first step in our plan to infuse the Spokane


U-District with a multicultural and international enterprise hub. We will highlight contributions of diverse communities to the development by building a multi-story international market center that celebrates diversity, unity and inclusion in our region.”

Ben Cabildo, who founded AHANA in 1998 to support multi-ethnic business owners and professionals, is still involved.

For information, call 503-1024 ext. 140 or email office@ahana-meba.org.

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New Community Building mural is an immersive art experience

With the vision of Jim Sheehan and John Waite, owners of several buildings on the block at the east end of W. Main, new murals were unveiled on July 11 during a party at the Community Building Commons with members of the Spokane City Council and the community gathering.



Murals on back walls of the multi-building “Community Building” extend along the alley between Division and Browne.

The mural is “to expand beauty to places where people don’t expect it and give life to areas that are hidden,” in order to uplift the human spirit, said Angela Chapman, manager for the Community/Saranac Buildings. “Beauty is inclusive. If it’s exclusive, it’s not legitimate. Beauty should not be restricted to place.

“Downtown Spokane has had businesses driven out due to problems over the years, but having these murals brings more attention to our beautiful block and businesses,” she continued.

The Main Market has had a mural at that site for 20 years and had only one graffiti incident.

“This indicates that Spokane wants to see beauty,” Angela said. “Most importantly, the perspective of artists is essential. “To understand their idea of

beauty enhances our energy and is for everyone,” she said, expressing thanks to Jim and John for helping keep this block “beautiful, inclusive and energized. They have always been passionate about keeping the buildings both inside and out beautiful and at the forefront.

“While working on the structure and bones of the buildings is important, keeping them beautiful makes the neighborhood more inclusive and more inviting for all,” said Angela.

The mural brings beauty to an otherwise drab alley, used every day by pedestrians, visitors and employees of Main Street.

Angela said the Community Building Community envisioned creating a living art alley from end to end to “encourage curiosity, increase foot traffic and be enjoyed all year round. It is a one-of-a-kind space in Spokane, drawing visitors in the city and beyond.”

Five local artists painted on the theme of “Beauty.”

Habitat-Spokane plans Veterans Build

Habitat for Humanity-Spokane is looking for individuals and groups to join its first official Veterans Build, scheduled for Sept. 11 to 14, in Deer Park.

Habitat-Spokane invites everyone, especially those who have a connection to the veteran and military community, to join in building homes, community

and hope, said Michelle Girardot, executive director.

A Habitat International-supported initiative, Veterans Build offers camaraderie as hundreds of community members work alongside Habitat families to build safe, healthy, affordable homes.

Habitat has celebrated with

more than 9,000 vets and their families who partnered with the organization to improve their housing since 2013, said Gloria Penaflor, volunteer and faith community outreach manager.

For information, call gloria at 824-2595 or email gpenaflor@habitat-spokane.org or dana at 530-0660 or dleroy@habitat-

Myrtle Woldson Center announces season

The Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center opened in 2019 as a beacon for the arts in Spokane.

It is partnering with Gonzaga Dance with its theme, “Dance Lives Here,” to premiere a series of dance performances by West Coast dance companies for productions that feature a blend of classical and contemporary-style choreography and storytelling through the art of dance.

Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center kicks off its 2024-25 Season with performances, starting on Sept. 22 with Grammy winners and jazz legends like Dee Dee Bridgewater and Bill Charlap and running through April 5, 2025.

• The October performance is “BodyTraffic.”

• Dec. 14 to 15 will be “Campana Sobre Campana: Christmas in Mexico!”

• Jan. 22 is “Jazz” with Bridgewater and Charlap, New York’s Jazz at Lincoln Center, New Orleans Songbook and ODC Dance: Mixed Repertory.

• Feb. 7 includes “ODC Dance: The Velveteen Rabbit” and international cabaret siren and comedian “MeowMeow.”

• March is National Endowment for the Arts jazz master Delfeayo Marsalis and the Uptown Jazz Orchestra, 123 Andres and Alonzo King “LINES Ballet: Deep River.”

• April draws actors from the London Stage performing “Hamlet.”

For information, call 313-2787 or visit gonzaga.edu/myrtle-woldson-performing-arts-center/presents.

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Every two years, the murals will be painted over by new art with the baton of a paintbrush passed on to the next artist.

“We are excited to be part of this beautification of our neighborhood alley. The Superhero design by Amber Hoit is perfect for us,” said John, owner of Merlyn’s.

The 2024 artists include Amber Hoit, Daniel Lopez, Brittany Trambitas, Danielle Davis and Hazel Miller—each bringing their own perspectives to a

unique canvas.

“I am here to add color to my city,” said Amber.

She described this as a chance to showcase the Black superheroes she looked up to fighting together to overcome hardship. She painted on Merlyn’s back wall.

For information, visit Amber Hoit, @aodpainting; Hazel Miller, @hazelthepainter; Brittany Trambitas, @btrambitas_artisan; Danielle Davis and Daniel Lopez at godffiti.com

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Lili Navarette is keynote for PJALS benefit

The Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS) announces its 9th Annual Benefit Luncheon from 12 to 1, Wednesday, Sept. 25 at Spokane Valley Event Center and 6 to 7 p.m., Wednesday Oct. 9 on Zoom.

Keynote speaker Lili Navarette has been part of PJALS for several years, as a partner, friend, supporter and donor.

In 1988, she and her family left Mexico City and immigrated to Spokane. Here she transferred from Frances Scott Elementary to Stevens Elementary to participate in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

After graduating from Ferris High School, she earned a bachelor's degree in international

affairs from Eastern Washington University, minoring in economics and business administration.

For Lili, who represents District 2 on Spokane City Council, advocacy is central.

As director of public affairs and Raíz at Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho for eight years, she promoted reproductive rights, immigrants and marginalized communities. She was vice president of the Hispanic Business Professional Association and was appointed a commissioner on Hispanic Affairs in 2020.

Lili has been a member of the Spokane Immigrant Rights Coalition and the Washington Immigration Solidarity Network.

She helped pass the Reproductive Health Care Access for All Act and has challenged racial profiling in Spokane. She previously was a commissioner for the Office of Police Ombuds for District 2.

Lili also works as the community health equity organizer for WSU's Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine and is chair of health equity for Nuestras Raíces. She has local owned restaurants.

The benefit helps PJALS increase its friends and funds to sustain its work. Guests can host a table for the in-person luncheon, attend or register for the Zoom event.

For information, contact slichty@pjals.org.

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Urban poor federations have impact on many lives in the Philippines

Cameron Conner's columns for *The Fig Tree* are from blogs he wrote during his Watson Fellowship in Spain, the UK, South Africa and the Philippines. He is now back in the U.S. living in Minnesota, where he will continue writing stories he didn't write while abroad. His blogs are at cameronnorbuconner.com/blog.



Cameron Conner

In the Philippines, the San Pio village social housing project exists to serve the most vulnerable families in the city—the “marginalized squatter and garbage scavenger families of Metro Cebu,” as the plaque dedicating it reads. It is owned and run by the Catholic Order Society of the Divine World.

When Glenda Navidad, a resident of San Pio, received her eviction notice from the village, she thought there had to be some kind of mistake.

Glenda had broken no contract, and she was up to date on her rent. The grievous “offense” for which she and her 160 other neighbors were being thrown out of their homes was their attempt to organize an official neighborhood association to tackle local issues that amounted to little more than littering and road safety. This was, the priest in charge felt, an unsuitable question to his authority.

Glenda and her community reached out to the priest four times for a meeting. He ignored them. Unwilling to give up and subject their families to the streets once again, they did what he had sought to dissuade: they organized.

They reached out to community organizers at Pagtambayayong Foundation for Mutual Aid Inc. (PFI)—the largest community organizing network in the region, who helped them connect with the other Urban Poor Homeowners Associations in the city that were part of their alliance.

Ever since martial law under former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, urban poor communities in the Philippines often organized themselves through Homeowners Associations or Neighborhood Associations of 50 to 150 families to create infor-

mal governance structures when the official government turned a blind eye. Many have their own first-aid trained medical teams, fire-brigades and even disaster-response plans in the event of a typhoon or flood.

As these associations have grown in popularity, they have formed federations that in turn can leverage greater power when needed.

At the end of May, Pagtambayayong worked with community leaders at San Pio to bring together representatives of the five Urban Poor Federations of Talisay which represent 1,000 individual homeowners associations and neighborhood associations. Meeting in Talisay's City Hall with City Councilor Gail Restaruo, who chairs the city's Committee on the Urban Poor, Glenda explained the situation: Their families had no other option. For many, San Pio had been their last resort. All they wanted was for their children and grandchildren to have a home.

This was the first time all five federations had met at the same time. Organizers from Pagtambayayong had moved heaven and earth to make it happen. The gathering was so significant that one attendee missed the graduation of his son to be there.

The conversation proved both decisive and effective. For the first time in their history, the five federations agreed to come together around a single issue and declared their unified support of the San Pio community, determined to take the issue all the way to the courts if they had to.

As the community organizer from Pagtambayayong asked each delegation if they would

commit to supporting San Pio in their fight, and each responded with an unequivocal “yes,” Glenda's eyes grew brighter and brighter.

“This is what we have been praying for and working towards for years,” she told the group before they left the room. “We now know we are not alone.”

The next week San Pio worked with PFI to send a public letter to their priest's Superior General and have it published in the metro Cebu newspaper. Its appeal read simply:

“Our dream is that our right to security of tenure be respected, that harmony in our community is restored and that San Pio village is a model Christian community with Fr. Bag-ao as our good shepherd.”

A columnist and ally of the movement published an article supporting their campaign: “Usually the priest prays for his people. This time a whole community is doing a novena for their priest.”

The response was quick. Fr. Bag-ao, without issuing a public statement, accepted the rental payments of the president and executive committee of the San Pio Homeowners Association—a tacit acknowledgement of their right to remain.

Whether this is the first step in a gradual victory for the coalition or an attempt to “buy off” the leadership remains to be seen. One thing is clear, however: the fight is not over. While the majority of residents remain unsure of their future, the community is united, backed by the federations and city council. Together, they stand ready and seek to teach the priest that if you make a commitment to the people, the people will make sure you keep it.

In this story, there is a profound moral about the importance of distinguishing between charity and justice.

Having worked in Nepal after the 2015 earthquake and in refugee camps during the Syrian Civil War and the spread of ISIS, I can say from personal experience that charity is necessary in many situations, but the story of Pagtambayayong's work with San Pio goes beyond that dimension.

While PFI often engages in charity strictly because of urgent needs its communities face, when approached by the leaders of San Pio for assistance, their response to the case was symbolic of their broader ethos: not “we will take care of you,” but “we will stand with you.”

To me, the story of San Pio bears an iconic resemblance to the parable of “The Grand Inquisitor” from Fyodor Dostoyevski's book, *The Brothers Karamazov*. In the story, Christ returns to earth at the height of the Spanish inquisition, whereupon he is immediately arrested and thrown into prison. Visited the next day by the Grand Inquisitor himself, Christ asks to be set free and is told disdainfully that the church no longer needs him, that the people are happy now because the church offers them the two things people need: bread and truth. The people are happy, he says, because they are fed and have been relieved of the terrible burden of free consciousness.

In the case of both the Grand Inquisitor and the priest of San Pio, we see a charitable act paradoxically turned into a means of subjugation.

Relied on in perpetuity, the provision of charity does not address the underlying reason why it is needed in the first place. It does not fundamentally change the dynamics of power that created that suffering, but maintains positions of “giver” and “recipient.”

The challenge with charity is its tendency to rely on—and cultivate—dependency.

Justice, on the other hand, is the process of enabling others to act for themselves. This is the form of change-making, which community organizing, at its best, embodies.

In contrast to the “arms-length” approach of charity, such a stance requires a great deal of risk. It means giving one's partner some claim on them, not having complete control. We cannot walk away when we choose. So justice requires a great deal of trust.

I was present at the meeting of the five federations and watched the transformation that took place as Glenda went from appealing with desperation to her audience for help, to the conclusion where, after seeing that the others would stand alongside her, she walked out proud at the head of the group, carrying a sense of dignity that no amount of charity could have created.

When PFI organized a mass-mobilization of nearly 1,500 delegates of the Urban Poor Federations several weeks after this meeting, Glenda and the San Pio community showed up in force. They shared their story in front of the crowd and demonstrated that ordinary people can have power to address the issues affecting their families, not merely ask it of others.

This is what community organizing makes possible.



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SEPTEMBER 20-22, 2024

Valleyfest

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The Fig Tree honors four faithful volunteers who died since spring

Over the summer, four of The Fig Tree volunteers—two delivery persons, an editor and a board member—have died.

“Each member of The Fig Tree team brings their unique skills to the various tasks needed to publish and distribute the newspaper,” said Mary Stamp, editor. “We will miss the contributions of these people.”

The Fig Tree honored **Bart Preecs**, who was a business reporter for The Spokesman-Review until it merged newsrooms with The Daily Chronicle. Then he covered higher education and religion when The Fig Tree was starting and he served on the organizing committee, until he moved to Richland. His parents, Bert and Martha Preecs, helped with Fig Tree mailings and deliveries.

Bart, who died May 19, grew up in Spokane, graduated in 1965 from Shadle Park High School and earned a bachelor’s degree at the University of Washington and later a master’s in communication at Eastern Washington University. After Bart retired as an adjunct instructor at Walla Walla Community College and returned to Spokane in 2020, he was pleased that The Fig Tree was still publishing and began helping with deliveries.

“The Fig Tree provides a forum to give voice and visibility for activities in the community, city, valley and beyond. What people do would not be visible

to the community if it weren’t for The Fig Tree,” said Bart, who was a member of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ.

“It changes our mental picture of what our community is like if we know there are churches opening their doors for warming shelters or joining in pride festivals. We start thinking in broader terms. It’s critical for the community’s self-understanding or self-awareness if we know that there are people out there doing things,” Bart said, adding that stories informing people about what is happening gives people courage to do things they might not otherwise do.

“If we think we live in isolation and don’t understand what is going on, we may feel powerless or think that nothing we can do will change the situation,” he said. “We might assume there will always be homeless people downtown and look the other way. If we hear of people doing things, we may ask, ‘What can I do?’ Then we may realize we can donate some clothes, drop a check in the mail and make a difference.

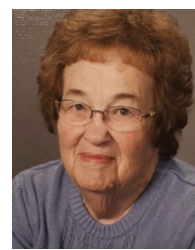
“Being able to make a difference makes people feel powerful,” said Bart.

Dru Powers, who died July 26, was a volunteer editor for The Fig Tree since 2016, joining the editing team at the dining room table at editor Mary Stamp’s house, and adding to editors’ conversations sharing about being a foster parent.

When COVID meant that editing needed to be done another way, she edited articles that were emailed to her and

sent a list of corrections.

She retired from 33 years working as an administrator at SuperValu grocery wholesaler in Spokane and then completed a foster parent certificate at Spokane Falls Community College.



As a foster parent for 32 years, she was “Mom” for more than 25 teens. She helped mentor other foster parents and was a member of the Foster Parent Association of Washington State’s Board of Directors. She received three awards for her service in the foster care community.

Her life will be celebrated at a memorial service at 1 p.m., Sept. 4, at Hennessey Valley Funeral Home in Spokane Valley. Her family invites people to support a scholarship for Eastern Washington Students in the master of social work program at <http://ewu.edu/give/funds/> then typing “Dru Powers” in the search box.

Tracey Waring, who served on The Fig Tree Board of Directors since 2019, died Aug. 18.

She graduated from Eastern Washington University with a masters in social work and public policy, and a bachelors in religious studies from Gonzaga University. She was a lay leader at St. Andrew’s Episcopal church.

While involved in prison ministry, she became acquainted with The Fig Tree in 2009, when she shared her story of

starting the Clothes Closet for women released from Pine Lodge Corrections Center in Medical Lake—thefigtree.org/oct09/100109waring.html.

She also founded the Stone Soup Café at St. Andrew’s and was involved with social justice ministries. Two years ago, when St. Andrew’s celebrated its 95th anniversary of serving the Emerson-Garfield neighborhood, Tracey, as parish administrator, told the church’s history, including its commitment to feed neighbors—thefigtree.org/nov22/110122standrewsepiscopal.html.

Memorial donations may be made to St. Andrew’s.

Jay Ilch, a volunteer delivery person who also helped with displays since summer 2022, just died on Aug. 25. He also assisted as a volunteer at the 40th anniversary dinner April 28.

Born in Eastern Washington, and sickly as a child, he was drawn to the Franciscan brothers and was ordained a Catholic priest, providing an “unconventional parish ministry on the West Coast, until in 1976, when he met Marie Anne Montgomery from Chicago. She was working at Sacred Heart. They married 10 years later, with her four children attending.

Jay worked in geriatrics and after retiring did volunteer work until the end of his life. There will be no service.

Letters to the Editor

Sounding Board

Commentaries

Faith leaders discuss taking time off and new leadership models

Rediscover delight!

The other day I heard about a man who traveled the world who said that life today was at a pace that leaves the soul behind. He specifically talked about flying and how he would get to his destination, but his soul would be in a previous city.

The interesting thing about this was that this man lived and traveled over 80 years ago! He wrote about a plane trip he took that today would take 18 hours, but took him two weeks with single-engine propeller planes. The pace of our life has increased since his time.

I was struck by his comment about his soul being left behind by the rapid pace of life, and thinking about our own times, I was struck again about the need for rest, the need for Sabbath, the need for soul time.

We live in a time when we are constantly available, constantly on, constantly going, and that is not sustainable for our souls. Our souls, our bodies, our minds, all parts of our very being need rest.

I suspect that many reading these words identify with the need for rest, and yet some, perhaps, may also shake their head thinking, “How exactly am I supposed to get rest when my life is so busy?” Life is indeed busy today. I look at parents of children today and know that their expectations for their kids’ activities are way greater than the expectations for me when I was a kid. People are working longer hours, multiple jobs and even when taking vacation are often “on call” for work.

God knows that this is a soul sucking time. So how, when God actually commanded us to rest, commanded us to tend to our souls, can we do that in a fast-paced

world? Perhaps, the first place to start is to recognize that this pace is faster than any time in history and question whether we need to truly accept it as necessary. Perhaps, we need to question the assumption that we have to have our phones on at all times, question the assumption that we can’t take a day, an afternoon, an hour, even a minute, to just be quiet and sit. Perhaps, we need to practice rest until we can get comfortable with rest.

I totally understand that it is easy to get trapped in a pace of life which keeps us moving at all times and exhausts us, and yet we need to break free. We need to embrace soul time, we need to embrace Sabbath time. If you can only start by taking a minute to stop and just be, start there. If you can rest for five minutes, one hour, half a day, even a whole day, do what you can.

Rediscover the delight of rest, the delight of not being defined by how much you can do. Rediscover the delight of spending Sabbath time with God, and let your soul catch up.

Jesus said come to me all who are weary...and you will find rest for your souls. Let us find rest for our souls.

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

While the saying about ostriches burying their heads in the sand is not actually true, the point is obvious to most of us. Some of us think that if we don’t acknowledge things or say them out loud, they won’t happen. Others want to know the facts to figure out what it may mean, so they can know what is coming. Of course, there are also some people who

are realistic about some matters and bury their heads about other things. I tend to want to know the news, good or bad because I don’t like surprises.

In the Church, the good news is that God is alive and well, and the Good News of love and grace is being shared and lived out with our neighbors.

The not-so-good news is that we are living in a different reality than 50 or even five years ago. Churches are smaller and aging. This is not a judgment of church leaders. It is just a fact. There are now more “less than full-time” congregations where staffing is difficult due to geographical location or lack of a parsonage, among other things.

The changes are not only in the local churches. Changes are also taking place in the clerical leadership of the church. Fewer persons are attending seminary, clergy are leaving ministry, and retirees are really retiring. In addition, an increasing number of clergy have become embedded in their communities because they bought a home, have a spouse working there or other such things. All of which make our style of itinerancy more complicated.

We are all better off knowing the reality of our situation. Our churches are becoming smaller, and appointments are increasingly difficult.

This is causing us to think about how ministry will move forward. We discuss this at the cabinet level, but we also need to have discussions in our local churches. We need to face the reality that how we support local churches must change.

We need to face some realities.

We need to figure out how one clergy-person might serve multiple congrega-

tions/appointments. This means pastors will rotate between two or three churches, or two clergy might serve five churches.

For many churches, this is scary because we have come to expect every congregation deserves a full-time pastor. So, a pastor serving multiple charges is not a new idea. Our Wesleyan roots had their genesis in strong local lay leadership and a circuit rider who was available for the sacramental duties and discipleship.

In our present-day churches, this model would require increased laity involvement and strong lay leadership—lay people who can preach and teach. Laity would need to have training through programs, such as Certified Lay Servant, Certified Lay Speaker, Certified Lay Minister or the Local Licensed Pastor Course of Study.

Another reality we need to face is the need for cooperation across denominational lines. We need to fill pulpits and have leaders with sacramental authority from other like-minded denominations. This could mean that our churches would be staffed by Lutheran or Presbyterian clergy, full-time or part-time.

This is our current reality. We can do the proverbial burying our heads in the sand, or we can accept the new realities and approach the challenges with intention, purpose and grace.

I am not forecasting that the church is dying. I actually have hope for its future, but it may require different models of ministry and staffing. How God might be calling us to live into our faith?

**District Superintendent Daniel Miranda
Inland District & Seven Rivers District
Pacific Northwest Conference of the
United Methodist Church**

Calendar of Events

- Sept** • **Coeur d'Alene Public Library Food Drive** for Community Action Partnership, (208) 769-2315
- Sept 1, 8, 15, 22, 29** • **Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR)** Coffee, Saranac Commons/Community Building 19 W. Main, 9 a.m., scarspokane.org
- Sept 3** • **Day of Prayer on Miraculous Help** in Time of Need, with Sr Mary Eucharista, SMMC, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr, 9 am to 3 pm ihrc.net
- **Dementia Friends Information**, Otis Orchards Library, 22324 E. Wellesley, 6:30 p.m., 893-8390
- Sept 3-5** • **Northwest Tribal Food Sovereignty Coalition Annual Gathering**, Heritage University, 3240 Fort Rd, Toppenish, 5 p.m. to 5 p.m., lil.ms.ombw
- Sept 3, 10, 17, 24** • **Tuesday Memory Café**, North Spokane Library, 44 E. Hawthorne, 11 a.m., 893-8350
- Sept 4** • **Dementia: Warning Signs & Early Dementia**, South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry, 10:30 a.m., 444-5300
- **Who Tells Your Story?** Framing Climate Change by Women and Indigenous Peoples at the United Nations, Gonzaga Institute for Climate, Water and the Environment, Hemmingson Auditorium, and livestream, 6 p.m., climateinstitute@gonzaga.edu
- **The Grief Cure: Cody Delistraty** in Conversation with Jess Walter, Auntie's, 7 p.m., 838-0206
- Sept 4, 11, 18, 25** • **Spokane Community Against Racism Meeting**, Community Building/Saranac Commons 19 W. Main, 12 noon, scarspokane.org
- **Beginning Buddhism**, Sravasti Abbey Buddhist nuns, "Open Heart, Clear Mind, Souls Center," 7078 N. Cedar, 6 to 7:30 p.m., 447-5549
- Sept 5** • **Lawyer in the Library**, Coeur d'Alene Public Library with Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program
- **Dawn Wolski & Eckart Preu: They're Back**, selections from R. Schumann, Schubert, Wolf, Hahn, Faure and Argento, Hamilton Studio, 1427 W. Dean, 7:30 p.m., 327-9501
- Sept 5-6** • **Rooted Expansion**, Wellness practitioners workshops on personal growth/healing, People's Park, Th 2 to 9 p.m., Fri 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., 589-0609
- Sept 6-8** • **Girl Scouts Women's Weekend**, Camp Four Echoes, benefit, 22270 S. 4 Echoes, Worley, 12:30 p.m. to 11 a.m., 747-8091
- Sept 7** • **Game Day in the Park**, Riverside State Park Nine Mile Recreation Area, 11226 W. Charles, Nine Mile Falls, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., 468-2286
- **Meditation for a Peaceful Mind**, Coeur d'Alene Library, 10:30 a.m., 702 E. Front, (208) 769-2315
- **Nurture Our Nature Fundraiser**, Campfire Inland Northwest, Camp Dart-Lo, 1400 N. Dartford, 4 to 7 p.m., campfireinc.org
- Sept 7, 14, 21, 28** • **Summer Dance Market**, tour the world with different dances, foods, crafts and vendors, Downtown Spokane, 211 N. Wall, 5 to 9 p.m., downtownspokane.org
- Sept 8** • **The LoweDown**, Spokane Symphony Director James Lowe, preview Masterworks, NW Museum of Art and Culture, 2316 W. First, noon, 456-3931
- **Eastern Washington Legislative Conference Planning**, 1 p.m., Zoom, 535-4112
- **Monthly Women's Hearhtenders**, Harmony Woods Retreat Center, 11507 S. Keeney, 5 to 8 p.m. 993-2968
- Sept 9** • **Dementia Friends Information**, Cheney Library, 610 First, 6:30 p.m., 893-8280
- Sept 9-20** • **Spokane YWCA Racial Justice Challenge**, ywcaspokane.org/challenge
- Sept 9, 16, 23, 30** • **Transform Your Troubles**, Sravasti Abbey nuns, CREATE arts center, Newport, 6:30 to 8 p.m., 447-5549, sravastiabbey.org/events
- Sept 10** • **IHRC Auxiliary Card Party**, IHRC, 11:30 am to 3:30 p.m., ihrc.net
- **Medicare: Getting Started**, Spokane Valley Library, 22 N. Herald, 6 p.m., 893-8400
- **Peace and Justice Action Committee**, Zoom, 5:30 p.m., ucarter@pjals.org
- Sept 11** • **Executive Director Coffee Hour**, Nonprofit Association of Washington, 9 a.m., nonprofitwa.org
- Sept 11-14** • **Veterans Build**, Habitat for Humanity, Deer Park, 824-2595
- Sept 11, 17** • **Medicare Workshop**, Coeur d'Alene Library, Wed 3 to 4:40 p.m. Introduction to Medicare, Tuesday 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., Medicare Annual Enrollment, (208) 769-2315 x 455
- Sept 12** • **Medicare One-on-One Counseling**, Aging & Long Term Care, 316 W. Boone, Ste 260, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., 625-4801
- **Free Immigration Clinic**, Latinos En Spokane, 1502 N. Monroe, 5 to 7 p.m., latinosenspokane.org
- **Spokane County Affordable Housing** and Homelessness Policy Forum, Spokane Community College, 1810 N. Greene, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., wliha.org
- **Dementia Friends Information**, Spokane Valley Library, 22 N. Herald, 6:30 p.m., 893-8400
- Sept 12, 26** • **Showing Up for Racial Justice**, Zoom, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., slichty@pjals.org
- **Dances of Universal Peace**, Unity Spiritual Center, 2900 S. Bernard, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., 714-1770
- Sept 13** • **Dinner on the Farm**, benefit for Women and Children's Free Restaurant, Owens Farms, 11010 S. Sharon, 6 to 9 p.m., wcfspokane.org
- **Sequins and Velvet**, benefit for Mujeres in Action, Spokane Tribe Casino, 14300 W Highway 2, Airway Heights, 6 to 9 p.m., 599-5527
- Sept 14** • **Annual Spokane River Clean Up**, The Lands Council, High Bridge Park, 9 a.m.
- **A Hitchhiker's Guide to Christian Mysticism** with Ruth Fletcher, Harmony Woods Retreat Center, 11507 S. Keeney, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. ruthafletcher.com
- **Historic Seventh Avenue Tours**, Corbin Art Center, 507 W. Seventh, 10 to 11 a.m., 979-0183
- **Let's Vike It Viking Age Faire**, Newport City Park, First and Calispel, Newport, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., (208) 217-0793
- **SNAP Pajama Party**, Brick West Brewing Co, 1318 W First, 3:30 to 8 p.m.,
- **Deutsches Haus Schnitzel Dinner**, 5 p.m., 954-6964
- Sept 14, 15** • **Spokane Symphony Masterworks 1: "The Turning World,"** with Awadagin Pratt, The Fox Theater, 1001 W. Sprague, Sat 7:30 p.m., Sun, 3 p.m., 624-1200
- Sept 15** • **Julie Morris Memorial Benefit Lunch**, Spokane Area Jewish Family Services, Cataldo Hall, 429 E. Boone, 10 to 11:30 a.m., 737-7394, sajfs.org
- Sept 15, 22, 29, Oct 13** • **"Christian Nationalism and U.S. Christianity,"** Kevin VanderSchel of GU Religious Studies, Hamblen Park Presbyterian, 4102 S. Crestline, 10:30 a.m., 448-2909
- Sept 15-Nov 6** • **Ludmila Pawlowska: Icons** in Transformation, St. James Episcopal Church, 1410 NE Stadium Wy, Pullman, Sun 1-4 p.m., Fri 4-7 p.m., Wed 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 332-1742
- Sept 16** • **Democracy in a Hotter Time**, David Orr, professor at Arizona State University, Climate, Water, and the Environment Institute, Gonzaga Hemmingson Auditorium and livestreamed, 5 p.m., climateinstitute@gonzaga.edu
- **Dementia Basics and Support**, Shadle Library, 2111 W. Wellesley, 5:30 p.m., 444-5300
- Sept 16-18** • **Journaling as a Spiritual Practice: A Reflective Walk through Leaves** with Kathy Villemure, Harmony Woods, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., villemure7@gmail.com
- Sept 17** • **Caregiver Training Series**, Colfax Library, 102 S. Main, 1 p.m., 777-1629
- Sept 18** • **Dementia Friends Information**, Deer Park Library, 208 Forest, 6:30 p.m., 893-8300
- Sept 19** • **Medicare One-on-One Counseling**, Spokane Valley Library, 22 N. Herald, 1 to 4 p.m., 625-4801
- **Dementia Friends Information**, Argonne Library, 4322 N. Argonne, 10 a.m., 893-8350
- Sept 19, 20, 21** • **Greek Festival**, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox 1703 N Washington, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., 328-9310
- Sept 20** • **The Fig Tree** at Emerson Garfield Farmer's Market, SCC Adult Basic Education Center, 2310 N. Monroe, 3 to 7 p.m., market.emersongarfield.org
- Sept 20-21** • **Coeur d'Alene Oktoberfest**, Fri 4 to 9 p.m., Sat. 12 to 9 p.m., (208) 415-0116
- Sept 20-22** • **Valleyfest**, 13500 E. Mirabeau Pkwy, Parade on Fri 7:30 p.m., Sat 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sun 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., valleyfest.org
- Sept 21** • **Dementia Friends Information**, Medical Lake Library, 3212 Herb, 10 a.m., 893-8330
- **Morgan Richter**, formerly of Spokane, speaks on new novel, The Divide, introduced by Spokane author John Keeble, Auntie's, 7 p.m., me_richter@yahoo.com
- **An Evening with Jess Walter**, Spokane Symphony, The Fox Theater, 7:30 p.m., 624-1200
- Sept 21, 22** • **Market in the Mountains**, Moose Valley Ranch, 4617 Hwy 231, Springdale, Sat, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Sun., 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., (406) 845-4079
- Sept 22** • **Sharing the Dharma Day**, Sravasti Abbey, 692 Country Ln., Newport, 447-5549
- **Fairmount Cemetery Walking Tour**, with historian Chey Caskey, Fairmount Memorial, 5200 W. Wellesley, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., mysokane.org/parksrec
- **Dee Dee Bridgewater & Bill Charlap**, Jazz vocalist and pianist, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, 211 W. Desmet, 7:30 p.m., 313-2787
- Sept 24** • **Dementia Friends Information**, Airway Heights Library, 1213 S. Lundstrom, 6:30 p.m., 893-8250
- Sept 25** • **Dementia Friends Information**, North Spokane Library, 44 E. Hawthorne, 10 a.m., 893-8350
- **PJALS Benefit Luncheon**, Spokane Valley Event Center, 12 p.m., Oct 9 - Virtual Watch Party, 6 p.m., slichty@pjals.org
- Sept 27** • **24 Hour Retreat on Mercy**, IHRC, 4:30 to 4:30 pm ihrc.net
- **APIC Democracy Summit**, Tacoma Dome Exhibition Hall, tinyurl.com/2024apicdemsummit
- Sept 28** • **Dementia Friends Information**, Moran Prairie Library, 6004 S. Regal, 6:30 p.m., 893-8350
- **El Mercadito**, A.M.Cannon Park, 1920 W. Maxwell, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.,
- **Spokane Symphony Pops 1: What a Wonderful World: Legend of New Orleans**, The Fox Theater, 7:30 p.m., 624-1200
- Sept 30** • **Medicare: Getting Started**, online, 6 p.m., 893-8200
- Oct 1** • **Silent Day of Prayer on St Therese** and the Carmelita Spirit with Sr Mary Eucharista's, SMMC, IHRC, 9 am to 3 pm, ihrc.net
- Oct 2** • **Fig Tree Benefit and Board meetings**, noon Benefit and 1 p.m. Board, Zoom
- Mon-Fri to Oct 28** • **Rick Singer: Photography Retrospective**, Chase Gallery, 808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., 321-9416
- Tues to Suns to Sept 8** • **Expo '74: Films from the Vault**, Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture, 2316 W. First, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 456-3931
- Tues to Suns to Jan 26** • **It Happened Here: Expo '74 Fifty Years Later**, Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture, 2316 W. First, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 456-3931

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 Harmonywoods.org

Kathy Villemure, facilitator
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villemure7@gmail.com

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Late editor's family gives Fig Tree major gift to start endowment

As part of The Fig Tree's 40th anniversary, the family of the late former editor Nancy Minard—who died Jan. 29 in Portland and was laid to rest June 15 in Spokane—gave a \$10,000 donation to start a long-term investment/endowment fund for The Fig Tree.

It was given in recognition of her commitment to the mission of The Fig Tree and with the hopes that others would join in long-term gifts.

For 14 years after Nancy and her husband Jim moved to Spokane in 1998 to care for their mothers, Nancy brought to The Fig Tree editing, writing and editorials her knowledge from more than 20 years as a reference librarian in Montclair and Verona, N.J.

When she started attending Veradale United Church of Christ (UCC), the pastor had encouraged her to be involved with the Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries (SCEM).

After The Fig Tree became an independent nonprofit in 2000, Nancy chose to be involved with it and was on its first board in 2001.

Nancy spent her early childhood in northern New York, and then she moved with her family to Hanford, then to the Olympic Peninsula and later to Renton.

Nancy completed a bachelor's degree in journalism and education in 1958 at Whitworth College and taught for two years in Bellevue before marrying Jim, whom she met at Whitworth. His graduate studies and post-doctoral sleep research took them to Colorado, New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

After returning to Spokane, when she visited her mother in a care facility in Newport, Nancy would deliver The Fig Tree to churches there.

At Veradale UCC, Nancy helped in the office. She also taught basketmaking for an after-school class at the church and during summers at N-Sid-Sen, the UCC camp on Lake Coeur d'Alene. She pointed out that, just as learning to swim, canoe and water ski at camp can build confidence, completing a basket can develop confidence and competence.

She valued the friendships with Fig Tree editors and appreciated the dedication of Sr. Bernadine Casey, SNJM, who in her final days of life still helped edit the May 2007 issue.

Nancy was part of The Fig Tree family in Spokane until 2012, when she and Jim moved to Portland to live next door to two of their grandchildren. For a



The late Nancy Minard helped edit The Fig Tree for 14 years.

while, she continued to help edit.

"I wrote editorials from books I read or the conversations I had," said Nancy, who appreciated writing about nonprofits, which "take responsibility for some of the country's biggest problems as more is dumped on them."

She believed that it required faith to work for nonprofits, "even if it's not overt faith," she said. "Stories of faith in action are often about volunteer service with nonprofits."

Through the years, Nancy's interactions with her grandchildren and observations through their eyes gave her insights into some of the "obviousities" about our faith, society, economy, politics and lives.

Nancy had a knack for catching and correcting facts from her knowledge of history and current events, said editor Mary Stamp.

"The Fig Tree's approach is refreshing. It's not about getting saved and living happily ever after, but about what people do because of their faith," said Nancy. "People come up with ingenious ways to be of service."

Nancy shared her wisdom and challenged with a twist of humor.

The Fig Tree compiled some of the editorials she wrote from 2004 to 2012 on a range of topics. The following are some of her thoughts.

- Educating and empowering women raises economic productivity, reduces infant mortality, aid health and nutrition, and opens opportunities for future generations.

articles emerged, showing how pieces fit together.

- Even in a tight economy, congregations find ways to assist in disaster areas long after mainstream media turn to other issues.

- Behavior lessons that children learn in kindergarten—"be kind, be fair and be responsible"—apply in response to national economic woes.

- In public discourse, people can disagree without being disagreeable and people of faith need to foster safe, civil and sacred spaces for discourse.

- Issues are interconnected. With immigration policy, health care, high unemployment, food insecurity and increasing demands on food banks, life resembles the domino game: jiggling one small element affects the others.

- Caution is needed when seven politicians or pundits repeat the same talking points: Then words can become inflammatory rhetoric.

- Some words enter the realm of uselessness because of misuse. Language is always changing.

- "We will suffer less if we share our wealth in money, goods and love."

- "Enough" is about the theology of the abundance of God's love and care. In U.S. society, advertising tries to convince people they don't have enough of anything "except the shortcomings their products can cure."

- Too often young adults judge churches' hypocrisy before knowing stories of hope from the many ways people live their faith.

Donations are welcome to add to the major gift from Nancy's family to start a long-term investment/endowment fund to sustain support for The Fig Tree's mission well into the future.

These remembrances of Nancy's life were compiled by Mary Stamp, editor, from articles and editorials in The Fig Tree.

- Fig Tree editing began with random stories. As editing progressed, connections among the

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