Big disasters stir people’s generosity, but fires are most frequent disasters

In response to the many major disasters of 2017—hurricanes and floods in Texas, Florida and the Caribbean, the California wildfires, shootings in Las Vegas, Texas and Freeman High School, and the Amtrak derailment—the American Red Cross deployed 56,000 disaster workers, provided 658,000 shelter overnight stays, 13.6 million meals and snacks and recovery assistance for more than 624,000 households.

While big disasters draw media coverage that stirs people’s generosity, the most frequent disasters the Red Cross responds to are house fires. In 2017, the Red Cross responded to 60,000 house fires a year, said Megan Snow, executive director of the Greater Inland Northwest Red Cross.

For Central and Eastern Washington and North Idaho, there are offices in Spokane and Wenatchee. 4.5 staff and more than 600 volunteers trained to “deploy” locally and nationally.

Over the last 10 years, the Red Cross has shifted from each chapter operating as an independent unit under the national Red Cross mission to chapter units aligning with the national organization.

Chapter boards define service areas, but boundaries do not matter when there are disasters, she said.

“When the Oso landslide hit, our chapter’s volunteers who were trained went as soon as they were needed,” she said. “Now we are watching Rattlesnake Ridge near Yakima and have volunteers ready to go there.”

Megan said that 97 percent of those responding nationally are volunteers, and 99 percent locally are volunteers.

“Staff recruit, interview and screen volunteers to fill specific job descriptions. About two-thirds are on call to respond to disasters,” she said.

Some are trained to run Red Cross shelters. Others are trained to feed people. Some are trained to assess needs after larger disasters, such as a wildfire. Some are case workers working with people through recovery.

Continued on page 6
African-American historian speaks at Whitterth

Dwayne Mack, author, historian and professor, will present Whittworth University’s African-American History Month Lecture at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 15, in Weyerheuser Hall.

“Black Women in Spokane: Emerging from the Shadows of Jim and Jane Crow” is the focus of his lecture.

Dwayne’s chair of African-American history at Berea College, is the author of Black Spokane: The Civil Rights Struggle in the Inland Northwest.

He earned a bachelor’s in history from Methodist University, a master’s in American history from the University of Southern Mississippi and a doctorate in American history from Washington State University. His research focuses on the Black West, the civil rights movement, policing in America, and narrative inclusion and diversity in academia.

In this lecture, Dwayne will focus on African-American women in the Inland Northwest’s largest city and explore the intersections of racism and sexism in the city during the 20th century.

He is also the co-editor of Violence Against Black Bodies: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of How Black Women Discover the Law and Law Enforcement in the Age of Black Lives Matter: Policing and the Law Enforcement.

For information, call 777-4215 or email antialewis@whitworth.edu.

Video conference on values set at St. John’s

“Values in Action,” a conference presented by the Fig Tree, Infinity Institute in New York City, will be streamed from 7 to 9 p.m., Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 2 to 3, at St. John’s Cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave. in Spokane.

It includes content of a conference at the Infinity Institute in New York, local discussion groups and interfaith worship.

It features activists, theologians, authors and experts on how to integrate core values into strategic and effective action, said Rev. Kristi Philip of the cathedral.

Keynote speakers include the Most Rev. Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church; Michelle Alexander, author of The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness; Padraig O’Tuama, poet theologian and meditator; and the Rev. Elizabeth Edman, Episcopal priest and author of Queer Virtue: What LGBTQ People Know about Life and Love and How It Can Change the World.

Antonio Vargas, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and filmmaker.

Organizers invite interfaith participation in Spokane.

Local co-sponsors are the NAACP, Spokane Churches Against Racism, The Episcopal Diocese of Spokane, St. John’s Cathedral and Morning Star Missionary Baptist.

For information, call 438-4277 or email kristi@spokanediocese.org.

ALTCEW offers seniors balance classes

Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington (ALTCEW) will offer a series of classes to train volunteer coaches to teach groups of eight to 12 seniors in “A Matter of Balance,” a national evidence-based program to reduce fear of falling and increase activity levels of older adults.

More volunteer coaches are needed, said Mark Haberman of ALTCEW.

Spokane County rates of falling are greater than the state rate and result in a high rate of hospitalization and emergency Medical Services calls by the Spokane County Fire Department EMS, he said.

“The average cost in the United States of falls in older adults is more than $30,000,” Mark pointed out.

After taking “A Matter of Balance,” developed at Boston University, 97 percent of participants reporting they have less fear, increased activity and will recommend the program to others.

ALTCEW has offered “A Matter of Balance,” in Spokane County for two and a half years.

Volunteer coaches agree to lead two classes within the next year.

They teach participants good communication and interpersonal skills, enthusiasm, dependability and a willingness to lead small groups of older adults. They need to be able to lead low- to moderate-level exercise. ALTCEW staff train and support volunteer coaches.

The next training is from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, March 3, at ALTCEW, 1222 N. Post.

For information, call 458-2509, ext. 211, or email mark.haberman@dshs.wa.gov.

The Fig Tree is published 10 months each year, September through June.

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Around the World

As the World Council of Churches (WCC) celebrates 70 years since its founding in Amsterdam on Aug. 23, 1948, Kenyan An
glican Agnes Abuom, moderator of the WCC Central Committee, said in an interview that women’s rights are her number one priority.

In addition to a commemoration service in Amsterdam on Aug. 23, 2018, the WCC, member churches and partners plan events to honor the WCC’s 70 years of ecumenism. They include the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January, the Confer
ence on World Mission and Evangelism, the June WCC Central Committee and a consultation on sustainable development with the ACT Alliance in Uppsala, 50 years after the WCC Assembly there.

The year offers opportunities to “envision our common future: united in faith, eager for witness, and fearless in the quest for justice,” she said.

Agnes’ doctoral studies at the University of Nairobi were on the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in develop
ment. Because of her political work as a student leader fighting injustice in Kenya and imprisonment in 1989 for promoting human rights, she left Kenya to earn her degree at Uppsala University in missionology on the role of NGOs.

Elected by the WCC 10th Assembly in 2013 in Busan, South Korea, she is the first woman and the first African moderator.

Q: Tell about the WCC’s evolution in the past 70 years?

Agnes: The WCC is a celebration of a commitment and building on milestones and lessons for the future. The ecumenical movement has become global. Since 1961, issues of unity, mission and justice have been integrated. The Just Community of Women and Men is more visible in churches, with women assuming leadership roles.

Perhaps the greatest impact on social justice issues was evidenced in the 1979 World Alliance Program that Racism in Churches accompanied people in their struggles for freedom in Southern Africa and for human rights in Latin America. The WCC also provided space for churches from former colonialist and socialist countries to connect with the world. The Lima Faith and Order document, “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry,” was a landmark.

We should also remember humanitarian work in Europe and rec
onciliation efforts in places like Cambodia and Laos.

Q: What do you wish for in the coming 40 years?

Agnes: We must debunk the domion theology of consumerism that relegates “mother earth” to an instrument of exploitation by a few individuals driven by greed. We must embrace global citizenship and community. We must care for one another and the earth for the sake of posterity. I hope humanity will acknowledge the pilgrimage of justice for a better world, the need for spiritualization, not materialism, will be the bedrock of future generations.

Q: What do you wish for the future?

Agnes: The dream of a world where every man and woman’s dignity is upheld, every person’s basic needs are secured, there is no racial discrimination, xenophobia or related violence—a world free from discrimination and violence. Systems and rules of law will effectively deal with criminals. I dream of a global world without borders and, at the same time, security for people who want or need to move around.

Q: As you meet with youth, what are their interests?

Agnes: I see youth reaching for hope and direction for their destiny. There are differences in the levels of unemployment and desperation, but in general youth are struggling with finding space in our ecclesial bodies, in public space and in defining their destiny. Their response to the challenges is where the difference lies. We should empower youth to integrate icons of the ecumenical movement who, in their youth, left landmarks and on whose shoulders we now stand. These icons should inspire youth. Second, young people can restore embodied solidarity among themselves as they increasingly are networking globally but not actively connec
ted. Third, we need clarity in discriminating the role and direction youth can play in the age of technology and in combating nationalism.

About 165 attended the Jan. 27 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, sponsored by The Fig Tree, Spokane, Spokane Valley and the Action Network, the United Methodist Women Spokane District, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and other partners.

The conference, video of the panel and some of the workshop online through thefigtree.org.

Responsible travel advertisers are confirming their support of the 2018-19 annual directory and The Fig Tree is beginning to recruit support through the Community Partners Program, which last year drew $11,800 in underwriting.

This year, The Fig Tree will publish 10,000 copies, because the increase of 1,500 from 2016 to 14,500 in 2017 was not enough to make a move to due to skyrocketing production costs.

Advent Lutheran Church in Spokane Valley has granted The Fig Tree $1,000 for its Endowment Fund that supports local and synodal ministries.

The church supports strengthening The Fig Tree’s capacity, constituency, staff, volunteers, interns, website and Resource Directory as a tool for service providers and people in need.

Other grants of the nearly $13,500 dispersed went to modernize voice communication, quilt batting, the pastor’s discretionary fund, campus and seminary education. Some helped fund projects of local churches like foster children, elderly support, veterans, a clothes closet and food pantry, a Latino ministry, a neighborhood youth group, seniors on a fixed income, a child center, Sunday school supplies and an ecumenical food program.

For information, call 928-7733.

About 165 attended the Jan. 27 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, sponsored by The Fig Tree, Spokane, Spokane Valley and the Action Network, the United Methodist Women Spokane District, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and other partners.
Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS) is organizing the event. It is the story of transitions and opportunities to connect, said Liz Moore, co-director of the Peace and Justice Action League (PJALS), which is organizing the event. Erica worked in community, national and regional organizing and philanthropy. From 2011 to 2017, he was a Ford Foundation officer for gender, racial and ethnic justice and an executive for The Atlantic Philanthropies U.S. Reconciliation and Human Rights Program. He began his civil rights career with the American Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation, now the Palmetto State Head Start. He began his civil rights career with the American Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation, now the Palmetto State Head Start. Erica worked in community, national and regional organizing and philanthropy. From 2011 to 2017, he was a Ford Foundation officer for gender, racial and ethnic justice and an executive for The Atlantic Philanthropies U.S. Reconciliation and Human Rights Program. He began his civil rights career with the American Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation, now the Palmetto State Head Start.

Buddhist nuns training at Sravasti Abbey

Fifty Buddhist nuns from nine European, Asian, South and North American countries are gathered Jan. 22 to Feb. 8 at Sravasti Abbey near Newport for “Living Vinaya Training.” The Abbey contains the largest permanent community of Western Buddhist nuns for change, state’s upside-down tax code, the power of storytelling, beyond allyship, federal budget realities, restorative justice, resistance to fascism, building networks, and facilitating peer support for trauma. For information, call 838-7870 or visit pjals.org/2018conference.

Winter Waters honors journalists

Winter Waters 2018 is “Honoring Watershed Hero Journalists.” Rich Landers, Julie Titone and Karen Dom Steele, who “report for journalism” from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., Friday, March 2, at the Patty Clark Mansion, 2208 W. 2nd Ave. Organizers believe fact-based journalism is essential for protecting waters, forests and wildlife habitats, and cleaning up pollution in the Columbia River Basin.

Winter Waters is co-hosted by Sierra Club’s Upper Columbia River Group and the Center for Environmental Law and Policy to recognize individuals, tribes, and organizations who have contributed to protecting and restoring the Upper Columbia River.

Tom Soeldner of Sierra Club said Winter Waters 2018 is honoring journalists because of the rise of “fake news” from people with “narrow political and social agendas.”

“It is vital that honorable journalists dedicated to truth and the common good be recognized,” he said. “In the context of business and political interests concerned only about bottom lines, and commodifying nature, it is essential that environmental journalists have rigorous ethical standards.”

“Today, with the speed and quantity of news, we need reporters who not only can write a wimborne phrase and paint a convincing verbal picture of wildlife and landscapes, but also love the earth and seek to support and honor its intricate web of life,” Tom added.

Rich, Julie and Karen have covered stories about asbestos contamination in Libby, lead contamination in the Silver Valley, toxins in the depths of Lake Coeur d’Alene, PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in the Spokane River, over-pumping of aquifers for golf courses, waste at Hanford, the Waste-to-Energy Plant and management by the U.S. Forest Service. They have exposed dangerous environmental practices and advocated for a just and sustainable future, Tom said.

For information, call 270-6995 or email waltsoe@gmail.com.

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Initiative advocates for patients by challenging systems and policies

Northwest Buddhist Convention to draw 300 to Spokane

The 71st Northwest Buddhist Convention, sponsored by the Spokane Buddhist Temple, will be held from 8 a.m. to noon, Feb. 18, at the Hotel RL Spokane at the Park, 303 W. North River Dr.

The three-day convention, expected to draw 300 from the Northwest and Canada, features the Rev. Henry Adams of San Mateo Buddhist Temple, who discovered Buddhism on a 1995 high school exchange in India.

Opening and closing Buddhist services will be officiated by the Rev. Kodo Umezu, Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America.

There will be 12 workshops in English and Japanese, a bookstore, gift shop and banquet.

The Convention includes a shorter "Intro to Buddhism Program" for people wanting to learn about Buddhism.

Henry studied Buddhist scriptures at St. Olaf College in Minnesota and earned a master's in Buddhist studies at the University of Michigan in 2003. He worked in Miyazaki, Japan, from 2004 to 2007, completed ministerial studies at the Chuo Bukkyo Gakuen Buddhist Seminary in 2010 and serves Buddhist Churches of America.

Kodo, who grew up in Fukuoka, Japan, earned a bachelor's in Buddhist studies at the University of Minnesota and earned a master's in Buddhist and practical philosophy at St. Olaf College in Minnesota, wrote "A Short Biography of the Rev. Kodo Umezu, Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America.

Continued from page 1

was upset by the trash thrown over the back of my car. I wanted to help make the world a better place," Barry said.

After his honorable discharge in 1999, he finished undergraduate studies at Evergreen State College in 2000 and worked with a U.S. Congressman, a Washington State Senator and two governors.

"I thought I could help people through safety or housing issues but found it lacking," Barry said. "I realized many people called who wanted the governor about safety or housing issues needed legal aid."

So he applied to Gonzaga’s Law School and was wait-listed. For a year, he worked in Spokane with Climate Solutions, a nonprofit working on global warming and modernizing the power grid with alternate energy.

Then he was accepted at the law school. During his studies, Barry did work-study with the Center for Justice on veterans’ advocacy. He graduated in 2009.

After he passed the bar exam in Bellevue, the Northwest Justice Project, Washington’s publicly funded legal aid program, hired him to work in Spokane as a staff attorney, helping low-income people stay in their homes, secure benefits due them and advocate for consumer protection.

After leaving the Center for Justice, he worked with the legal-medical partnership model, he left the Northwest Justice Project in 2012 and started the Health and Justice Initiative in 2013 through the Center for Justice. In 2015, a community collaborative effort of Empire Health Foundation, Providence Family Medicine Residency Clinic, Providence Internal Medicine Residency Clinic, Gonzaga University School of Law, Spokane Teaching Health Center (STHC) and the Center for Justice began the multidisciplinary effort to train future doctors and lawyers about the impact social determinants of health have on the cycle of poverty.

For a while, he had offices at the Center for Justice, the STHC and Gonzaga Law School. Now his office is at the Gonzaga Law School, where he is an adjunct professor and director of the Health and Justice Clinic for University Legal Assistance.

Barry teaches up to 10 second- and third-year students a semester to improve access to justice for low-income and marginalized people with health concerns. Students have cases loads they manage under his supervision.

The clinical law program, which began in 1974, also has clinics in Business Law, Environmental Law and Land Use, Elder Law, Federal Tax Law, General Practice Law and Indian Law. The elder and tax programs take walk-ins, but others require referrals.

Barry and students work with health care professionals at the Spokane Teaching Health Clinic (STHC) and Eastern State Hospital, where there are also social work students from Eastern Washington University. The medical students are majoring in pharmacy, nursing, medical and physical therapy, psychiatry, internal or family medicine.

Barry said the medical-legal partnership model 1) advocates for patients, 2) looks at systems that affect patients and 3) looks at policy issues.

• It addresses issues such as landlord-tenant relations, housing discrimination, translation for patients, health care access, refugee concerns, public benefits and mental health hospitalization and discharge experiences.

• The interdisciplinary approach helps people deal with systems. For example, HIPAA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act designed to protect patient information, may inhibit health care coordination. Lawyers can keep patients sign releases to improve their care.

• A policy issue they identified involved the city improperly interpreting its chronic nuisance law and compelling landlords to evict tenants who were victims of domestic violence, because they were part of an assault.

• Students helped the city draft a notice informing landlords of tenants’ rights as domestic violence victims. Under state law, a victim cannot be evicted, but a perpetra-

tor can, Barry said.

“We have saved tax money and improved patients’ lives, while teaching law students about complexities of patients’ situations,” said Barry.

Students also work with Hotspotters, a community action organization at Volunteers of America. The program works with “super users” of emergency medical services and first responders.

“We provided consultation to help start the program and advocate for clients,” Barry said. “The program collaborates with Com- munity Court to protect clients’ safety and assets.”

Barry counsels students not to judge people who are experiencing poverty, but to take direction from their clients, because they know what they need.

Throughout his life, Barry has found there is not equal access to services in America or in the world. Some are held back by social determinants of health, the conditions in the places where people live, learn, work and play.

For instance, Spokane Health District’s study: “Odds Against Connections to the Land” reported that people living at the top of the South Hill live 18 years longer than those living downtown.

Barry believes the Health and Justice Initiative works in Spokane because it’s small enough that all the players can meet to discuss cases—prosecutors, public defenders, fire fighters, nurses, engineers, police, emergency room doctors, primary care providers, mental health providers, social workers, housing providers, homeless advocates and substance abuse services.

“We help people regain their lives and health,” he said.

For information, call 313-5791 or email pfundt@gonzaga.edu.

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Happy Watkin’s mark on Spokane is much more than MLK’s dream

Along with being known for passionately reciting the words of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. in 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech, the Rev. Percy Watkin often comforts parishioners or lends insights in community discussions with wisdom from many proverbs and quotes he has committed to memory.

Happy is retiring as pastor and will be honored at a retirement party from 6 to 9 p.m., Saturday, March 3, at location TBA. He will serve as pastor emeritus.

The oldest of 10 children growing up in a poor family in the Bronx on a block with thousands of blacks, whites, Puerto Ricans, Irish, Poles, Italians and Jews, he was shocked by the lack of diversity when arriving in 1961 in Spokane at 19 in the Air Force.

Within a month, he began attending Morningstar Baptist Church, which lightened the depression, homesickness and loneliness he first felt. There he met his wife, Etta, in 1962, and they moved to the North Hill.

He stayed and, while they raised their sons, Percy, James, John and Paul, he made an impact on the faith and wider community.

He worked six years with a grocery store, treating every customer with respect. Then he traveled as a salesman. As the first black person some had seen, he defused racial slurs and stereotypes, breaking down distrust and putting people at ease by his friendliness.

10 years elapsed before he began in 1990 as pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, which lightened the day of his family living in Spokane, their parents can go to work. They drive them to school, pick them up and keep them until their parents return from work.

Happy said his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, the fifth generation of her family are living in Spokane, lighten their days.

As Happy has had an impact in the community and region in civil rights, race relations and ecumenical ties, he has also had an impact on many lives and families.

He has worked with the Ministers’ Fellowship Union, NAACP Spokane, the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center, The Fig Tree Board, the Police Accountability and community programs and organizations.

“The dream has validity,” he said. “As we people need to work together toward it. We need to recognize the invaluable roles men or women where they stand in moments of challenges and contradictions.”

For information, call 535-1336. Article compiled from stories in The Fig Tree over many years. As a Board member, Happy has contributed ideas for many stories and connections in the community.

Happy Watkin's mark on Spokane is much more than MLK's dream.
More than 97 percent of Red Cross disaster response is volunteers

Continued from page 3

Many volunteers are retired, but some are employed week days, can deploy quickly and stay two to three weeks. When they travel a distance they stay longer because of the expense of flying. A deployment within the region may be just for a week.

Some volunteers with specialty training such as mental health counseling or nursing can be deployed for short periods because we need to care for them, said Megan, who has worked in the Spokane office for nine years, as communication manager for six years and serving as executive director the last three years.

Disaster volunteers receive training before they are deployed as members of the Disaster Action Team. They have live classes and online training on Red Cross procedures, personal safety and interacting with clients. Volunteers learn they need to care for themselves when they work with people experiencing trauma.

Regina in the Disaster Action Team, who live around the region, are on call as much as it fits their schedule, as part of teams on-call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If a fire happens, first responders or others call the Red Cross. Volunteers may be called at 3 a.m. to go to a fire and help make sure they don’t know.

“We are typically the only service agency on scene at a disaster. Our role in the first 72 hours is to make sure people have a safe place to stay, food and clothes to start them on the road to recovery,” Megan said.

The Disaster Action Team assesses the number of people affected and immediate needs. They may offer a pre-loaded debit card to ensure the critical needs of those affected are met, from paying for food to leasing or renting.

“A after an initial meeting, our caseworkers conduct a follow-up meeting,” said a Red Cross volunteer said.

Counseling and coordinating with other agencies, like the Salvation Army, SNAP and Second Harvest, to broaden the base of support.

Over the following week or so, the Red Cross checks every few days to see if the family has housing and other needs met.

“no one can manage someone else’s recovery. So along with direct assistance, we guide people to resources and make referrals so they can manage their own recovery,” she said. “Caseworkers help people recognize their needs.”

Spokane volunteers have worked 160 days to 240 days on the same case. Some have flexible work schedules, can deploy a distance they stay longer. Some have yelled for a week.

The Red Cross can use people with any skills, including technology, because there is a need to set up computers and printers at disaster operations headquarters. In the Caribbean, technology volunteers set up satellites so people could phone families on the mainland to say they were okay.

The Red Cross is still in Puerto Rico and other islands because the disaster is so extensive, said she. They rely on local chapters to shelter people.

“We are the community, we have to assure their safety and that they are prepared to live with hardships like no running water or power,” Megan said. “Volunteers have to be in good health, because there may be no access to medicines. Nurses check volunteers’ health status before they deploy.”

“Everyone has a different reason for volunteering with the Red Cross. Some took swimming lessons as a child, were helped in the military or experienced a house fire. Some want to have an immediate impact on people in need. Some have volunteered for years. Some want to see other places. Some want to help locally. Some are motivated by faith, and some want to do a service.”

Some faith communities are partners, opening doors to shelter and feed people. The Red Cross trains them. VOADS, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters, involve congregations in long-term recovery.

In larger-scale disasters, the Red Cross offers emergency aid and then hands the work to VOADS to develop Long-Term Recovery Groups, like after the 2014 and 2015 wildfires in the Methow Valley and Okanogan.

“Emotional trauma may arise as people struggle to reconcile their faith with how the tragedy could happen to them,” Megan said.

“Some victims have spiritual care needs, as well as mental health and health care needs because the trauma can have impact beyond the immediate disaster.”

Spiritual care may be needed for a neighborhood of someone whose house burned.

George Abrams, a retired Unit ed Methodist pastor who has worked with his denomination’s disaster response, helps lead the Red Cross’ disaster spiritual care, along with Mike Bullard, a retired Presbyterian pastor, who is chair of the Inland Northwest VOAD.

Related to religion, Megan said the Red Cross is impartial and neutral, two of its seven principles. The others are humanity, independence, volunteer services, unity and universality.

“we respect individual choices and faith. Our volunteers help people recover based on the client’s faith. Volunteers listen, support and respond,” she said.

“Our work makes life better for people in the hardest times,” said Megan. “I believe we should do that for each other.”

The Red Cross also offers preparedness classes.

Americorps volunteers go to elementary schools to teach about fire safety, smoke alarms, escape plans and evacuation.

As part of a national initiative, the Red Cross also partners with organizations such as the City of Spokane and Spokane Valley Fire Departments to install free smoke alarms in high risk communities. Faith organizations, such as the Latter-Day Saints, have supported these efforts with volunteers. It also trains people in First Aid, CPR and how to use AEDS.

“When we are often seen as a big national organization, the reality is that the Red Cross is local, volunteers are local people, who decide to help make our communities and neighborhoods more resilient,” said Megan. “As an independent nonprofit, we receive no government funding. When there are big disasters, generosity is amazing. Local disasters need the same support.”

With recent disasters, there has been a new swell in volunteers who need training to respond here and be ready to go to the next big one.

For information, call 326-3330 or email megan.snow@redcross.org.

Megan Snow is executive director of region’s Red Cross.

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New Hope's new pastor was mentored by his father and predecessor

 Pastor Happy Watkins will pass the mantle of pastor of the New Hope Baptist church to his young- est son, the Rev. James Watkins, on Sunday, March 4, at the church, 9021 E. Boone. Happy will be pastor emeritus, continuing his work in the community. James will take over the duties as full-time pastor of the church.

Since he was ordained in 2012, James has been assistant pastor—trained and mentored by Happy and other pastors. James also works 40 hours a week at Airway Heights Correction Center.

In recent years, James filled in when Happy struggled with health issues. James doesn’t have a knock for memorizing speeches, so he likely won’t recite Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, but he is involved with the Ministers' Fellowship Union and the NAACP Spokane Chapter. He was recently certified as a MLK Commemoration Service.

“The challenge of ministry is to reach people who have disconnected from and lack respect for churches and ministers,” James said. “To reach them, we need to connect on a level of understanding about ministry, church and Christ. “People who are not in church will not suddenly start coming in the unchurched Northwest, where only 20 percent of 18- to 30-year-olds go to church,” he said.

James believes it’s possible to counteract low interest by meeting people where they are, even on social media. New Hope Baptist is on Facebook and has a website.

“Some churches are afraid to go on social media, but we must take Christ’s message to the four corners of the world, so the church will look different than it has in the past,” he said.

As it was for Happy, New Hope’s call to be its minister included serving the community, as well as the church.

While James attended Rogers High School, he played football and was a champion wrestler, leading to a scholarship to North Idaho College. He has also competed in judo and now coaches. “I went to school to teach and coach,” James said.

He worked as a youth counselor at a community center before he began working with the Washington State Department of Corrections as a corrections officer at the Airway Heights Correction Center when he was 24. Now a custody unit supervisor, overseeing programs for 300 offenders, James sees that experience as part of his training for ministry. He oversees GED classes, chemical dependency and sex offender treatment, employment opportunities and job training, parenting classes, the fathers program and counseling.

In 2012, James started a pilot project, “Thinking for a Change,” a cognitive behavior program to build self-awareness, problem solving and awareness of feelings among inmates to reduce recidivism after they are released. “It’s effective. I have seen offenders change,” said James, aware that for many of the 2,300 inmates, the prison has a revolving door and many return.

While James felt called to ministry when he was 17, he put it on the back burner. In 2000, his wife Shawn’s aunt asked when he was going to be a minister. He had no plans to be a minister. He could serve the church as a lay person, but in the prison, he gained skills for dealing with people in positive ways, hearing their needs and cries for help.

“It prepared me for what I do in the community and as pastor,” James said. “I see the worst in the men there, but I know God can redeem them. Most people see those who go to jail as throwaways.”

Over the years, James has learned from Scripture and life that God can save even those who commit crimes. “Our challenge is to love people and love humanity, not judge,” he said. “It is easy to love those who look like us, but can we love others? The Gospel is about treating others with love, dignity and respect,” he said.

“We can ‘preach God’ by living the Gospel. We can’t preach Christ without showing Christ.”

As he grew older, after serving faithfully in many local and state church positions, he knew God was calling him to be a minister. In 2007, he was ordained a deacon and taught Sunday school to further his study of Scripture.

James still hesitated, because he knew the challenges of people’s perceptions and expectations of ministers. He knew that, even though his father was loved, some were unfazed if they disagreed with a decision or stand he made.

“I also did not feel prepared to give of myself personally and financially as he has done,” he continued.

From 2010 to 2011, James was ill, and doctors didn’t know what was wrong.

“God needed me to be separate from everything to figure what God wanted me to do. I cried out and God answered,” James said.

When he regained his health, he announced his call to ministry and was ordained. So James was able to fill in when Happy was ill and needed time off.

It was great training for me to preach most Sundays, make decisions, help people in need find resources, do weddings and funer-

als, visit people, attend meetings, deal with church conflicts, go to events in the community and fill his big shoes. My dad has always been busy,” James said.

Along with full-time work, being pastor and serving in the community, James spends time with his family—Shawn, a stepson who is 10 and two sons, 10 and 13. “I can do it because I have family support,” he said. “My mother and father are caregivers for our boys after school. My brothers take them to sporting events. With that support, I can address church and community needs.”

James’ brother John is a wor- ship leader, preparing to be ordained as a deacon. Percy III, the oldest, is a minister, but works Sundays. Paul, a singer, also works Sundays. Their children are involved in the church.

James knows the church needs new approaches. While he knows of many programs, coun- seling approaches and self-help efforts to effect change in prison, he is powerful in Christ’s presence through how he lives, because few are open to preachers or evangeli- zing.

“We need to show love so the Holy Spirit changes lives,” he said. “We need to step out of our comfort zones.”

One step was for New Hope Baptist to move from the converted pool hall where they worshipped for 25 years at 409 E. Greene.

Last year, a member saw a for sale sign between a house and a church at 9021 E. Boone along N. Argonne. She asked the pastor if the church was for sale. It wasn’t, but later the pastor was interested.

New Hope raised $20,000 for a nonrefundable deposit toward the price of $275,000. New Hope sold their buildings for about half that amount. They needed $150,000 more. Two banks turned them down. They prayed. Then one bank granted a mortgage.

They moved out of the old church in March 2017, and wor- shipped six months at Beth Afri- can Methodist Episcopal Church until moving into the new-to-them building in September.

Both James and Happy sense excitement among inmates to reduce recidi- vism after they are released.

Last July at the Annual General Baptists Convention in Portland, they shared the church’s story. The General President offered to match money churches gave there. They collected $2,600, but he de- cided to give New Hope $10,000.

Victory Faith Church north of New Hope Baptist on Argonne gave the church $5,000 and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane raised another $5,000.

“God is blessing us,” said James. “We are now focusing on how the church can serve the community in our new facility. We want to be a church that has impact on its community.”

For information, call 869-2941 or 535-1436; email jwatk71@comcast.net or visit newhopespokane.com.

Pastor James Watkins, who will be installed March 4, with his wife, Shawn, and family.

James Watkins

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Martin Luther King Jr. commemoration expresses unity and support

Pastors of the Spokane Ministers Fellowship planned for the Martin Luther King Jr. commemoration service Jan. 14 to demonstrate their unity and support for the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center as it moves services to the East Central Community Center and picks up responsibility for services there.

“I dedicate my life to the center’s success to have amazing impact on children, youth and adults to keep the legacy of Martin Luther King alive,” said Freda Gandy, executive director of the center, which will offer many services under one roof.

“Martin Luther King Jr. was an angel. Angels are messengers of God,” said Walter Kendricks, beginning his sermon for the Martin Luther King Jr. commemoration service Jan. 14 at Spokane’s Holy Temple Church of God in Christ.

Walter is pastor of Morning Star Baptist Church and president of the Spokane Ministers’ Fellowship.

“God1reetings me, just as I am, not because of my color, money or education. Because I believe, I come to God,” he said.

Walter agreed to preach for the service because he believes in MLK’s words that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

“I am not about a lot, because I am impatient. Many things King talked of, we are still in search of. Here in Spokane we know the battle.,” Walter said.

In seminary he learned it’s not what great theologians, televangelists or pastors say, but what matters is what God says.

“God has the final word,” he said. “We need to be quick, but not in a hurry. God’s voice cannot and should not be silenced,” he said.

Walter read from Joel 3:1-3, 16, that God would bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, and gather all nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat to judge them, because God’s people and the land were divided.

“The Lord will roar, and the Lord will be for his people and strength for the people of Jerusalem” he said.

“Our lives begin to end the day we are silent about things that matter,” Walter said, concerned about the nation. “If we believe in God, we have to believe in right and wrong. The rhetoric and policies from Washington D.C. are wrong. I believe, so God is still on his throne.”

Walter was meeting April 4, 1968, with a Boy Scout troop with boys of different races and creeds and colors. He was standing by their oath to do their best, to do duty to God, country and others.

The scout master suddenly told them to hurry home. He expected there would be trouble, because Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated in Memphis.

“Dr. King’s personal voice was silenced, but God is a good God and raises others to lift their voices in their generation and time to confront institutions of systematic racism, powers and principalities, and people,” Walter said. “We misunderstand who we fight, so we fight each other rather than with the powers and principalities of evil that continue to suppress, oppress, enslave and subjugate.”

These actions in American history stand against the words of the founding documents, words of hope and dreams for Americans: “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

“inalienable” means that the rights cannot be taken away by the current President,” Walter said. “The rights are given by God, not by a man, a government or a country. You can’t take them away, no matter how many people are put in jail. God will be the final judge. The concept of right and wrong comes from God.”

Turning to the Scripture in Joel, Walter said that: “The day of the Lord is the day of judgment. God is loving, merciful and forgiving, but God is also judgmental, jealous and just and righteous.”

So the day of judgment will be a day of salvation and judgment, gathering all the nations and judging them because God’s people and their proceedings have been scattered and their children sold, he said.

“God is at work. We often take credit and ignore that God gives us strength and health, anoints and appoints us, and gives us the will. There is a day and time intercedes in the affairs of men and brings back those enslaved and brings all nations together for judgment, but God did not send his son to judge the world but to save the world.”

“Many think we can do whatever we want to whomever we want however we wish, but the scattered will be returned. The people have been displaced, the land has been divided, and many people are deemed throwaway people,” he said.

“We have prisons for profit. Something is wrong when we put people in prisons and make a profit. The system of bail is wrong and unfair. If I’m accused of a crime. I’m to be presumed innocent until I’m proven guilty, but when people are arrested, bail is set so high they have to stay in jail,” he said.

Walter also challenged the bias in the justice and school systems.

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More than 3,000 rally and march for MLK Day 2018 in Spokane

More than 3,000 gathered at Spokane’s Convention Center for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day rally and march to hear a student’s essay, the NAACP Spokane president, a candidate for Congress, a Congresswoman, a singer, a Whitworth minister and a pastor celebrate the legacy of Dr. King. Freda Gandy, executive director of the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Family Outreach Center, was emcee.

Jada Richardson, a Pride Prep freshman who has been involved with the NAACP Center, expressed in an essay that she is both resilient and broken. Early in her 15 years, she thought she had to be obnoxious and angry. Now she knows it does not matter how others identify her, but how she identifies herself.

“I am on a journey of self-discovery. I realize I am more than the stereotypes placed on me. I am determined to make an impact on the world,” Jada said.

Kurtis Robinson, NAACP Spokane president, said that today Dr. King would say, “Let’s stay focused, not give up, lean on each other and get it done.”

Dismayed at the “ridiculous things” leadership is saying and the efforts to take civil rights backwards, he challenges the system that perpetuates classism, transphobia and destroys the planet.

“We cannot afford to stand by. We need to stand up and be our best self, doing action until we accomplish civil rights,” Kurtis said, pointing out that each person must take responsibility to find their own healing so “we can go to the table of change with an attitude to be respected. We need to hold up the country’s ideals and do it by loving each other as human beings, loving even perceived enemies,” he said.

“King urged people not to give up,” said Kurtis, telling of new energy in the NAACP Spokane, with 14 on the executive committee, new task forces and partners.

Lisa Brown, a candidate for U.S. Representative in the 5th District, urged people to stand up and speak, because “America does not yet have Dr. King’s dream. The promises of freedom and justice are not met.”

“Let us… be inspired to keep talking, walking, marching and inspiring others to change hearts to peace and love and stand in integrity and truth for all who serve us in public life. Let’s vote,” Lisa said. “Let us walk, talk and march and act to change the country.”

Linda Stone, a local singer, said MLK was God’s representative, a Baptist pastor who laid down his life for freedom and justice for all. Things are possible for those who believe. Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who goes before us.”

“I am honored to stand with you to dream for a better tomorrow. We are to love one another,” said Cathy, who couldn’t confirm what the President said about immigration, but decried the language. “It’s not where we stand in times of comfort, but in times of challenge and controversy,” he reminded. “We have conquered space but have not learned to live together on earth.”

He recited MLK’s dream for the nation to live its creed of equality and for the sons of former slaves and former slave owners to sit together “at the table of brotherhood.”

The dream calls for:
• places of oppression to be transformed into oases of freedom and justice;
• children to live in a nation where they are not judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character;
• black boys and girls to join hands with white boys and girls;
• the low to be made high and the high made low;
• for all God’s children to sing with new meaning: “My country, ’tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, from every mountain side let freedom ring!”

As Happy listed hills, molehills and mountaintopss from which freedom should ring, he added, “Let freedom ring from Trump Tower in New York City. “When that happens, all God’s children, black and white, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics will join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty we are free at last!”

For information, call 455-8722.

Jada Richardson shares essay, Linda Stone sings of the power and possibilities that come with belief.

Jada Richardson, who identifies herself.

Linda Stone identifies herself.

Linda Stone sings of the power of possibilities that come with belief.
In marching and challenging zoning policies we need to keep on...
Access 4 All seeks to make Spokane more accessible and welcoming

By Lynn Swedberg

One thing that some- 
one was excluded from a place of 
business because of a disability, 
Dave Reynolds' heart 
bruised.

For five years, he has been 
the founding and guiding force 
behind Access 4 All Spokane, a 
group working to make the re- 
gion a more welcoming place 
for people with disabilities.

“This isn’t about ADA compli- 
ance,” he said, referring to the 
Americans with Disabilities Act 
that forms the basis of accessibility 
guidelines. Dave feels that 
eliminating barriers that exclude 
others is about social justice.

Access 4 All Spokane is work- 
ing to make the region more 
welcoming and accessibility because it’s the right thing to do,” he said.

Believing that the way things are wrong, which raises defenses of an organization or business, Dave identifies what is being done right 
and steps to improve. He uses 
positive approaches, appealing to 
those who understand it isn’t right to shut out 20 percent of the 
population who live with a visible 
or hidden disability. His focus is on building relationships with 
organizations that want to change.

“If they have the right mindset, 
they are trying to do the right stuff,” he said.

Access 4 All Spokane grew 
out of an idea in 2012. Dave wondered 
why Spokane never received an 
Accessible City award and what 
the criteria were.

Dave Reynolds, coordinator of Access 4 All Spokane, 
attends the first meeting in October 
of which are still active today, 
inviting 35 people, some 
to an informational meeting. 
Organizations to send represen- 
tatives for accessibility. They quickly 
-founded the Spokane Center for Independent 
Living with disabilities help class 
participants learn how some busi- 
nesses can meet their needs.

For instance, a deaf man said 
round or oval tables are easier 
for reading lips or using sign lan- 
guage, and keeping TV captions 
on helps everyone have access.

A woman who is blind relates 
her pet peeve: servers who walk 
away without telling her they 
are leaving, so she continues talking 
when no one is there.

Finding Accessibility is another 
course in which Dave trains people 
to look for and point out accessible 
features of the environment.

Advocacy for All teaches col- 
laborative problem-solving so 
participants learn to generate solu- 
tions to barriers they find.

Dave believes his approach 
has parallels with ministry, and 
churches also need to be wel- 
coming.

When Access 4 All representa- 
tives visit, businesses are often 
pleased to learn many changes 
cost next to nothing. For example, 
they can lower a restroom sign 
to be more visible to a person using 
a wheelchair and can add a lower 
hook in the accessible stall.

The checklist reflects local 
priorities. Eastern Washington 
University disability studies stu- 
dents conducted focus groups and 
learned more through an online 
survey and interviews. The stu- 
dents are building a platform for 
recording reviews. The program 
will generate a report, increasing 
the speed of the review process.

In addition to working for Ac- 
cess 4 All, Dave works part-time 
for the Arc of Spokane, which 
supports his efforts. They released 
him to do the two grant projects and 
let him work out of his office. 
Dave has served individuals with disabilities throughout his 
career, beginning with helping 
some find employment. He serves 
as an advocate for his clients. He 
likes the work because he helps 
them realize what potential they 
have.

He trained agencies on Positive 
Behavior Support in 11 counties. 
He edited a daily Disability Rights 
News service from 1999 to 2016. 
For his work, he received an 
Access Spokane award for advo- 
cacy in 2016.

“I’ve always been a disability 
rights activist without realizing 
what that was,” he said.

As a child, Dave wondered 
why some classmates didn’t 
understand a friend who had a 
speech impediment. 
“You just had to take the time 
and listen and ask him if you 
didn’t understand,” he said.

It didn’t dawn on him why he 
ever saw some friends at school 
or that they had “labels.”

Except for attending George 
Fox University, where he earned a 
degree in human resources, Dave 
has lived in Spokane County. He 
graduated from Freeman High 
School. His family has lived in the 
region for nearly 150 years.

His grandmother took him to 
the Four Square Gospel church 
when he was a child. He now 
attends Manito United Method- 
ist Church, where he discovered 
cousins. He has also joined Manito’s Inclusivity Committee.

The church’s theology res- 
onates with his focus on the 
positive, said Dave, whose wife, 
Joyce, supports his work.

What the future holds is un- 
known, but Dave believes he will 
take the next steps and Access 
4 All will continue to help the 
region become more welcoming.

From interest shown when 
people stopped by the Access 4 
All booth at a recent national 
festival, he hopes the model 
will be replicated across the U.S.

For information, call 216-2611, 
email dave@access4allspokane. 
org or visit www.Access4AllSpokane.org.