

38TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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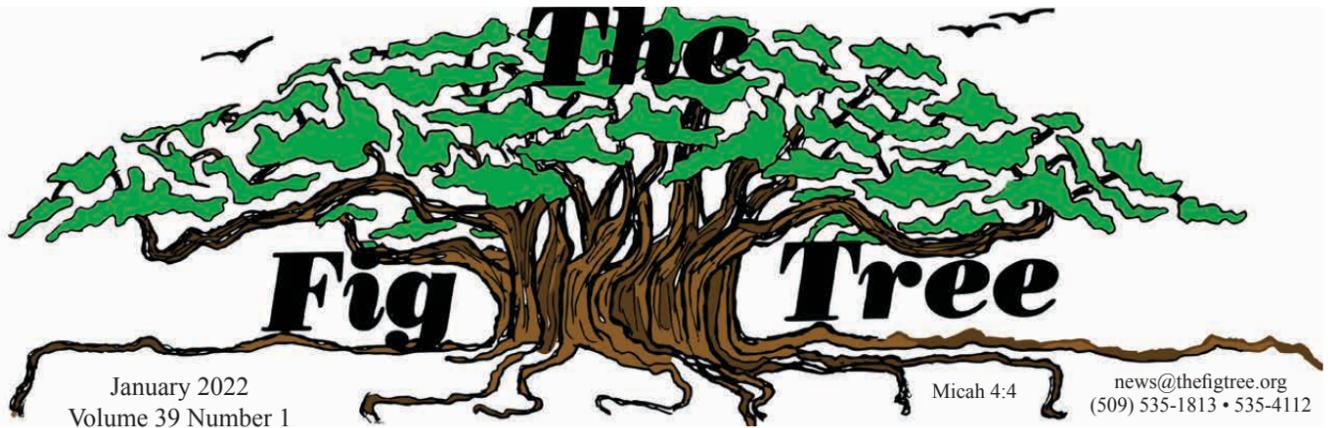
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Pacific Islanders gain advocate

By Mary Stamp

As community organizer and now director of policy and civic engagement with the Pacific Islander Community Association of Washington (PICA) since May 2020, Kiana McKenna has been serving Spokane area Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders who were hit hard by COVID.

Early on, the Pacific Islander population accounted for 67 percent of the COVID positive tests, so she and PICA-WA director Joseph Seia sought to reach out to community leaders and organizations to remove barriers and later to set up vaccination clinics.

“The Marshallese are the largest Pacific Islander population in Spokane, and the second largest Marshallese community in the U.S.,” she said. “Many are essential workers, limited in English speaking and live in multi-generational housing, making them more vulnerable to COVID.

In Washington state, Pacific Islanders experienced 11 times the hospitalization rate and six times the death rate of the white population.

PICA established a Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (NHPI) COVID-19 Response Task Force



Kiana McKenna organizes for Pacific Islander Community Association in Spokane.

to work with the Spokane Regional Health District and partners like CHAS, the Marshallese Community Advisory Board and the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC).

“We continue to grow our capacity to serve and respond to community needs,” she said.

Beyond COVID education through the Wellness Navigation program, the needs include rental assistance, food insecurity, and COVID-19 testing and vaccination clinics.

PICA continues to provide those services and is expanding its capacity to serve more families.

“After just a few months of education and outreach within the community, positive tests dropped from 67 percent of those in the county to 3 percent. Vaccination clinics have helped keep the numbers low in the NHPI community,” Kiana added.

Now on the state level 89.5 percent of the NHPI community are fully vaccinated and in Spokane 85.5 percent of the NHPI community are, said Kiana. In the general population in Spokane County, 64 percent of the total population have had one dose.

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Fr. Pat Conroy shares his journey to ministry of presence at Gonzaga

After 10 years of serving as chaplain to the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., Fr. Pat Conroy, SJ, is engaging freshmen at Gonzaga University through a campus ministry of presence.

As he lives in their midst and joins them in student dining halls, he is experiencing some of what freshmen in colleges or high schools experience as they transition from being on the top to starting all over.

As a white, male, Catholic priest who needs to listen and learn, he said he is experiencing

“voicelessness.”

Fr. Pat steps out of the “voicelessness” to share insights from his time as chaplain of Congress when he gives the keynote speech for the 2022 Virtual Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, which is from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 22.

Speaking on “Mobilizing for Our Future,” he will tell of his hopefulness in these politically divisive times.

Growing up in Everett, Wash., Arlington, Va., and Snohomish, Wash., the son of an attorney, Fr. Pat was headed for a career

as an attorney and politician. He studied political science at Claremont Men’s College in the Los Angeles area.

As he began studies at Gonzaga Law School in 1972, he was drawn into the campus ministry where he discovered that “Jesuits were the kinds of priests I could imagine being,” he said.

“My religious imagination expanded as did my vocation, which was there from the beginning, and I was able to nurture,” he said of his decision to enter the Jesuit novitiate at a hillside monastery near Sheridan, Ore., and completing the two-year program in Portland before returning to Gonzaga University to study philosophy with Jesuit seminarians as a “scholastic.”

After he completed a master’s degree, his superiors sent him to St. Louis Law School. On graduating in 1979, he was assigned to be a lawyer with the Colville Confederated Tribes until 1980, when he went to the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley. He earned a master

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Legislative Conference will be held on Jan. 22

The 2022 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference (EWLC) will explore some of the issues before the 2022 Washington State Legislature. It will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 22, on Zoom. Displays by nonprofit groups begin at 8:00 a.m. before the conference and are open at 1:30 p.m. after the conference.

The keynote speaker, Fr. Pat Conroy SJ recently retired as chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives and now serves as campus minister at Gonzaga University. He will speak on the theme, “Mobilizing for Our Future,” looking at the political divisiveness of these times and offering words of hope based on his experiences in Congress and previous work teaching and serving with the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus.

An interfaith panel with representatives of four faiths will discuss how their faith communities mobilize people to act on issues, current priorities, blocks to mobilizing and where they need solidarity. Anastasia Wendlinger of the Gonzaga University Religious Studies Department will moderate the panel. Panelists are Melissa Opel of the Spokane Buddhist Temple, Jeremy Press Taylor of the Spokane Jewish community, Naghmana Sherazi of Muslims for Community Action and Support, and Benjamin Watson, pastor of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Two workshops on the climate crisis include one led by Jerry White, Spokane Riverkeeper, Larry Luton, 350 Spokane, and Rowena Pineda, Washington State Department of Health environmental advisor. The afternoon session on environmental legislation is led by Jessica Zimmerle of Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light.

A workshop repeated on affordable housing and homelessness is led by Ben Stuckart of the Spokane Low Income

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WCC representatives receive Pope Francis

On Dec. 9, World Council of Churches (WCC) acting general secretary Ioan Sauca—accompanied by Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity—received Pope Francis in a private audience at the WCC headquarters in Geneva. During the visit, Ioan expressed gratitude for the close collaboration between the WCC and Holy See.

The meeting was an opportunity to discuss the relationship between the Catholic Church and the WCC, as well as preparations for the WCC 11th Assembly in September 2022 at Karlsruhe, Germany, on the theme, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.”

“This visit is part of a pilgrimage we continue to take together,” said Ioan, who shared theological perspectives of the assembly theme, pointing out that the love of God in Christ is inclusive and seeks the reconciliation and unity of all creation. Pope Francis shared his views on the theme, restated his appreciation for the WCC’s work and committed to keep the WCC in his prayers along with sending a message and delegation.

They told of challenges COVID has raised to ecumenical relations and discussed preparations for the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, ecumenical opportunities in 2025 to celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the first ecumenical council at Nicea in 325 and strengthening of the theme of Christian unity for common mission and witness to the world.

50 discuss gender-based violence

As churches and other groups battle sexual and gender-based violence, 50 women church leaders at a Dec. 15 to 17 human rights training in Abuja, Nigeria—organized by the Women’s Wing of the Christian Council of Nigeria and the WCC—said it is urgent to include men in trainings and amplify the issues for global accompaniment and support.

At the training for young women and girls, participants called for using advocacy tools and asserted that “doing nothing accomplishes nothing.” While their country has been in throes of a deadly wave of kidnappings and abduction, armed banditry and rape—among other ills—the women highlighted the need to develop strategies for protection, counselling and trauma transformation among individuals and in communities.

Nicqi Ashwood, WCC program executive for Just Community of Women and Men, said participants affirmed training to stem sexual and gender-based violence needed to include men.

Uzoaku Juliana Williams, national president of the Women’s Wing, hoped collaboration with WCC would accelerate eliminating all human rights abuses in the country.

Conference discusses future of interfaith dialogue

An online conference, “The Future of Interfaith Dialogue,” Dec. 7 to 8, discussed principles for common formation as a vital element for the future of interfaith dialogue. Participants said interfaith dialogue is best accomplished by common formation in which people, especially young people, of different faiths learn together with a common goal, and as they discover more about each other.

“Learning from books about the other is easier, but living together and sharing the same location and community is challenging,” said WCC acting general secretary Ioan Sauca and director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey. “Even students who have studied about faiths or lived with people of other faiths as neighbors at home discovered in Bossey that their knowledge is partial. Common formation is an expression of interfaith dialogue that enables people to work together both face-to-face and side-by-side.”

Simone Sinn, academic dean for Bossey’s Certificate of Advanced Studies in Interreligious Studies, said the international course in English has diverse teachers, and is student-centered, without specific outcomes in terms of knowledge.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Fig Tree plans online benefit events

The Fig Tree is developing its plan for virtual Benefit Events in 2022. They are scheduled at lunch time, noon to 12:45 p.m., Friday, March 4, and 8 to 8:45 a.m., Wednesday, March 9. For both events, there will be a gathering time prior to noon and 8 a.m. for people to meet and converse in small groups.

“We are currently recruiting people to host those small groups as a means to help us invite people,” said Mary Stamp, editor.

The organizing team, which

is also seeking more volunteers, is also inviting people who were featured in The Fig Tree articles in 2021 to be four-minute speakers on the theme, “Spreading Seeds of Hope.” That theme was decided by the board after an orientation session reviewing the importance of The Fig Tree.

For 2022, The Fig Tree is partnering with Hamilton Studio to take videos of the speakers and prepare a promotional video, as well as to present the events online. After those events, the

presentations will be available online for those unable to attend to view—if they wish with small groups or congregations—at a time of their choice.

During COVID, Hamilton Studio has found a new outlet for its skills and resources: to prepare benefits for nonprofits.

“Our goal will be to raise \$42,000,” said Mary. “We invite anyone interested in offering matching funds to let us know.”

For information, call 535-1813 or email mary@thefigtree.org.

Family Promise seeks to meet rising need

The ripple effects of COVID-19, lack of accessible childcare and the shortage of affordable housing have forced many families to face homelessness. It has been impossible to help all the families in need in the community, with the current space available, said Joe Ader, executive director of Family Promise.

“Imagine being out in the elements this winter instead of viewing them from a reassuring distance. Picture you and your family navigating the harsh

weather without the security of a home,” he invited. “You’re sleeping in your car at night or maybe in a tent. When conditions become unbearable, you seek out a shelter as a respite from the ice and cold. Then, you find out that all the shelters are full.”

That has been the experience of many families.

“We’ve seen a 1,200 percent increase in rental assistance requests compared to 2020,” Joe said. “We’ve increased shelter capacity by 40 percent.”

Still, in August 2021 alone, 156 family members, including 81 children, were turned away from Family Promise shelters because there wasn’t any available shelter space.

Joe said that Family Promise can assist families by sheltering a parent and child for \$49 a night or a family for \$171 a night. He said the cost of ending homelessness for one family is \$2,450.

For information, call 747-5787 or visit familypromiseofspokane.org.

FAN plans training and advocacy events

Faith Action Network (FAN) welcomes advocates of faith and conscience across Washington State to engage in the upcoming 2022 Legislative Session.

On Monday, Jan. 10, FAN will have two trainings to help people prepare for the 2022 State Legislative Session. It is also co-sponsoring the 2022 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference and FAN’s Interfaith Advocacy Day focused on Olympia.

FAN is collaborating with Paths to Understanding (PTU) to host virtual Pre-Session Trainings at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 6, and 3 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 9. Attendees will view advocacy videos produced by PTU, hear a legislative preview by FAN’s

new policy engagement director, Kristin Ang, and dive into FAN’s 2022 legislative agenda.

The legislative agenda is at fanwa.org/advocacy/legislative-agenda, and registration is at bit.ly/2022Pre-Session1 or bit.ly/2022Pre-Session2.

FAN’s Advocacy Days begin with the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 22. The event offers an interfaith panel, a discussion of bills, issue workshops and keynote speaker Fr. Pat Conroy, SJ. Registration is at bit.ly/2022EasternWALegConf.

On Thursday, Feb. 10, FAN hosts Interfaith Advocacy Day online. Advocates across the

state will hear from legislators, join workshops on issues from FAN’s legislative agenda and gather in caucus groups by legislative district to plan for meetings with legislators.

The program begins at 9 a.m., and meetings with elected officials are planned for Thursday afternoon or Friday depending on availability. Registration at bit.ly/IFAD2022 is needed by Tuesday, Feb. 4 to guarantee that appointments will be scheduled.

FAN’s weekly E-News offers legislative alerts. Issue Fact Sheets offer updates, and Bill Tracker is a way to follow the progress of a bill.

For information, email fan@fanwa.org or visit fanwa.org.

Vanessa Behan now runs program at court

Vanessa Behan is taking over operating the Children’s Waiting Room, a child friendly place for children ages birth to 12 to spend time while parents and care giv-

ers do court business.

The Children’s Waiting Room (CWR) was established in 1997 to shelter children from the traumatic situations adults deal with when they are at the courthouse. The program aligns with Vanessa Behan’s mission of keeping kids safe and supporting their caregivers.

Caregivers who need to use the CWR from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.,

Monday through Friday may call 960-0532 to reserve times before their court date.

Spokane County financially supports the program, but it requires staff and resources to meet the need. Vanessa Behan seeks support for its efforts to keep children safe and strengthen families.

For information, call 939-4138 or visit vanessabehan.org.

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Conference features 22 presenters

Continued from page 1

Housing Consortium, Terri Anderson of the Tenants Union of Washington and Julia Garcia of Jewels Helping Hands.

For a Food Security workshop, Eric Williams of Second Harvest and Jon Edmundson of Northwest Harvest lead two sessions.

Workshops on refugees and immigration, include Kevin Benson of World Relief discussing Afghani refugees in Spokane in the morning, and a session on advocacy and issues at the border with Mexico.

In a morning session on human trafficking, Erin Williams of Lutheran Community Services Northwest will discuss her agency's work on trafficking, and in the afternoon, Margo Hill of the Spokane Tribe and Eastern Washington University will share on issues of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

To discuss "Securing our Democracy," Kristine Hoover of the Gonzaga University Institute for Hate Studies will offer a morning presentation. **On schools and racism**, Nikki Lockwood of the Spokane School Board and Oscar Harris of the Family and Community Engagement Office for Spokane Public Schools will give the afternoon session on the board's equity resolution, community engagement to create it and other work.

Mid-day, there will be a "Legislative Briefing" on bills that are priorities for the faith communities in the 2022 Washington State Legislature. Presenters are Kristin Ang, the Faith Action Network's new policy engagement director; Mario Villanueva and Donna Christensen of the Washington State Catholic Conference and Jessica Zimmerle of Earth Ministry/WAIPL

The event is organized and sponsored this year by The Fig Tree, Catholic Charities Eastern Washington, Faith Action Network, Earth Ministry, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Sisters of Providence and the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane. With the event online, participants must register ahead for the link.

To register, call 535-1813, email event@thefigtree.org, download a flier from or use the link at thefigtree.org or visit givelively.org/event/the-fig-tree/mobilizing-for-our-future/2022-legislative-conference.

Shelters, homeless camps show the need

Maurice Smith, a documentary filmmaker on homelessness in Spokane through Rising River Media, reported that the City of Spokane's new warming shelter in the Convention Center opened Dec. 26 with the capacity to shelter 150 people. Within 24 hours the shelter had 220 guests, and the next night had 193 guests.

In addition, there were also about 100 homeless campers at the Freya and Thor camp in 75 tents offered by Julie Garcia of Jewels Helping Hands.

Maurice is pleased with the level of community support, such as one staff at a local business who brought food left from their Christmas party.

Recently a friend on the staff of a local shelter phoned to tell him that on Thursday, Dec. 9, a City of Spokane Valley employee was checking the old White Elephant store on East Sprague, which is vacant and now owned by that city. The employee found a deceased homeless individual sitting propped against an outside wall, surrounded by his belongings.

"I find it sadly ironic that someone experiencing homelessness should pass away leaning against the wall of a building that could and should have been a shelter," said Maurice. "I see this as a metaphor for how regional homeless policymakers are failing our homeless community. What we lack in homeless policy is not buildings or locations, but the vision and the will to make decisions needed to save lives and address homelessness."

A Dec. 14 meeting between the Spokane Homeless Coalition and a senior member of the City of Spokane's homeless services department discussed how the city and coalition could better communicate and collaborate on homeless policy solutions.

Maurice told of driving to film Camp Hope 2.0, set up outside City Hall and noticing the bridges were clear of homeless campers who chose to join Camp Hope. Their move to a safe place didn't require a police sweep, he noted.

As he left the Dec. 14 meeting, he received a call that Spokane Code Enforcement and the Spokane Police Department were at the camp, handing out 48-hour notices to vacate.

Maurice is concerned that the city administration believes there are sufficient shelter beds and will use police power to solve homelessness. He would prefer that the city scale up resources to match the scale of the problem.

He said the tragedy of the removal of Camp Hope shows the administration's "attitude toward peaceful protests against their failed homeless policy. They don't appear to want to solve homelessness. They just don't want to see it, downtown or anywhere else," he observed.

"We need something better," he said, challenging the city's emergency appropriation of \$500,000 for law enforcement rather than for safe shelters.

For information, call 475-8797 or visit myroadleadshome.org.



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Homeless Connect is Jan. 27

The 2022 Spokane Homeless Connect will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 27, at the Spokane Convention Center, 220 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.

Organizers offer services from agencies, showers, housing, veterinarians, a meal—everything a person experiencing homelessness needs. Courts will come to help people address legal issues and restore their IDs.

Instead of expecting homeless people to make and go to appointments all over town, they can receive services in four hours under one roof.

Organizers expect 100 service providers and are at a large space in the Convention Center to allow for social distancing and space between tables. They are taking other COVID precautions, so people feel comfortable coming.

"In 2021, COVID forced us

to cancel, but in 2020, we had 1,100 people—70 percent of that year's Point-In-Time Count—in contrast to 500 in 2019. In 2022, we are planning for up to 2,000, but we do not know what to expect because of COVID," said Maurice Smith of the Spokane Homeless Coalition.

Organized by Spokane Homeless Coalition, Spokane Homeless Connect is an outgrowth of the Coalition that was first held 10 years ago.

The Coalition is still recruiting service providers to bring their resources, volunteers—individuals, groups and faith communities—and sponsors—to help underwrite the event that makes a difference for attendees who come in search of help.

For information, contact <http://www.spokanehc.com/2022-homeless-connect.html>.

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Former chaplain to Congress finds hope despite political divisions

Continued from page 1
of divinity degree in 1983 and a master of sacred theology in missiology in 1984.

For the next five years, Fr. Pat was pastor for four tribes on the Spokane and Colville Confederated reservations.

With Jesuit education in philosophy and theology and education in political science and law, he felt culturally challenged. In the tribal communities, he felt voiceless.

“Interests and concerns of the people on the reservation were not consonant with my thinking about national, world and political affairs,” he said. “In a different culture, I experienced what immigrants and poor people experience: having my voice silenced.”

“It was formative for me as a white, American, male, Jesuit to experience how the Lord hears the cry of the poor. It gave me Ignatian insight: how could I maximize my interests and talents, doing a ministry I was not capable of doing in a lifegiving way,” Fr. Pat said.

Much as he wanted to live among the poor, he saw it might not be his gift.

“I realized I was gifted to work with freshmen,” said Fr. Pat, who served from 1990 to 2003 with college students at the Jesuit Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

“There, I served some of richest, brightest, most privileged young people in the U.S.,” he said, “challenging them to see their privilege as a gift, so they would not be snobs.”

He identified with them transitioning from being a big fish in high school to a nobody starting college, as he did when he went to Claremont as a “hotshot” student with his ambitions, but “not God’s ambitions.”

Mid-year the Oregon provincial leader sent him to Portland, where the Jesuit high school needed a superior to teach theology to freshmen. He was 50 and a Jesuit for 30 years. Fr. Pat found a similar angst as eighth graders transitioned into ninth grade.

The provincial one day asked how he was doing. Fr. Pat expressed his frustration dealing with adolescent angst. The provincial had a request for a Jesuit priest to serve as chaplain for the U.S. House of Representatives and thought Fr. Pat, who had studied law and had lived in Washington, D.C., would be good in that ministry.

“I like to think I got the job that was consonant with my gifts and experience by holy obedi-



Like his ministry of presence in Congress, Fr. Pat Conroy SJ, is present, living on campus with students at Gonzaga.

ence,” he said, soon aware the chaplain was not ministry as a pastor building a community, but a ministry of presence.

Fr. Pat realized that he would serve 435 people from different cultures and faiths from all over the U.S. and from two different political philosophies.

“My role would be to encourage them to be true to themselves, rather than challenge their political opinions,” he said. “Once I figured I would never weigh in on issues, it was easy.”

“I might think, ‘Oh, my God, this must pass,’ or ‘that can’t pass,’ but I could not betray those thoughts,” he said. “I gravitated to a ministry of befriending members of Congress and encouraging them to be better human beings.”

“I did that in a toxic environment arising from unhealthy human living conditions, because constituents demanded that representatives’ families live in their districts, not with them in Washington, D.C.,” he said, asking, “How could men and women in Congress do their best job if they were separated from their families?”

“When I aspired to Congress, representatives lived with their families in Washington, D.C.,” he said. “Their wives and children were friends with each other. They had personal relationships with political opponents, which humanized them so they could respect each other.”

Now Fr. Pat said his ministry is to educate American voters that it is abusive to demand that members of Congress be separated from their families while doing difficult work.

“My ministry there was to remind representatives of their humanity and of the humanity of other members,” he said, noting that recent rhetoric and COVID led to a tribalism and people in cocoons as if to protect themselves.

“The world, nation and communities do not need more conflict. They need peace, reconciliation, healing and hope,” Fr. Pat said. “We need to approach our representatives not as warriors on issues, but as bringers of peace and healing.”

He does not give in to the despair, disagreement and hate of these times.

“I am hopeful we can each bring reconciliation to our lives and world. I am hopeful because young people elected to

Congress bring a different philosophy of government. They are not interested in past political approaches. That can be hopeful or fraught with the worst, but what I see is hopeful,” Fr. Pat said.

“Most Americans in their 30s and younger do not buy into theoretical, binary divisions of gay-straight, black-brown-white, man-woman,” he said. “That makes me hopeful.”

Similarly, most young religious people—whether Baptist or Catholic—do not understand why some churches have a problem with LGBTQ people. Their peers came out, and they know them as gifted people, he said.

“I’m hopeful that young people see the church’s exclusion as irrelevant and don’t show up,” he said. “COVID means fewer go to church. Healthy churches accept people who are different and attract people who want to come rather than coming out of obligation. Students tell us what the church needs to hear.”

At Gonzaga, Fr. Pat is thankful that students see no obligation to be in community with him just because he is a priest. He lives in a freshman dorm. His door is always open. He is the only campus minister on campus after

4:30 p.m., when the day begins for students.

His contacts with students mean that as this year’s freshmen become sophomores, juniors and seniors, more will know and feel comfortable with him because he hangs out with them.

While he preached only twice this fall at the 5 p.m. Sunday Mass, he started a 10 p.m. Sunday Mass in the dorm and drew 45 because it’s convenient and directed at them.

For information, call 503-939-3127 or email conroy@gonzaga.edu.



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Volunteers build carts for people who cannot walk from war or disease

By Catherine Ferguson, SNJM

In 2005 Dick Carpenter read a newspaper article that changed the lives of thousands of people throughout the world.

He learned about a project in Florida for making hand propelled carts which served as transport for people who could not walk because of war or disease. These carts provided mobility for leg-disabled persons who crawl on the ground without them. Cart recipients are too poor to afford them or other means of transport.

The first years of the similar project he founded here in the Inland Northwest were described in a Fig Tree article in 2005 at thefigtree.org/dec05/120105PETcarts.html.

Much has stayed the same since then but much has also changed. The operation has grown bigger in many ways.

Then, a small number of volunteers from Colbert Presbyterian Church made the carts. Now the production team includes 73 volunteer men and women who produce about 70 carts each quarter to ship to different parts of the world.

Then, they were called PET carts because they were associated with the PET Project located in Missouri. Now they are an independent nonprofit organization, called the Inland Northwest Trinity Project.

This month, a shipment of 70 carts left Dick's shop on the Little Spokane River via Peninsula Truck Lines to be delivered to World Vision in Seattle and from there to El Salvador, Senegal and Eswatini (formerly Swaziland).

In early days, Dick had to ship the carts to California. The project paid \$10,000 for each shipment. Once there, he had to identify where they needed to go and then do the customs paperwork required to ship them.

Now, NW Trinity Project partners with World Vision, which identifies needy recipients around the world, sees to the paperwork to ensure they can be sent safely and ensures the persons who need them receive them.

"World Vision has been such a blessing to us. Without this connection we would not be able to get so many carts to people who



Photos by Frances Kendrick, SNJM

Awaiting assembly, colorful seat backs for rainbow freedom carts hang from the roof of the Inland Northwest Trinity Project shop near Colbert. No two carts are alike.

need them," explained Joe Kramarz, one of the volunteer painters of "rainbow freedom carts."

Although it is rare for them to hear from recipients directly, after 17 years of the project, they have many success stories to tell.

In a photo posted on the shop wall, one recipient shows how he altered his cart, making it into a little shop where he could sell small items to the people in the area. From being a burden to his family, he was transformed into a bread winner.

In Africa, the people used to take a woman to church in a wheelbarrow. Once she had a cart, she was able to begin participating in the church's sewing project. Now she runs the project.

In another situation, a mother used to have to carry her son on her back whenever he needed to go somewhere. When he got a cart, both the mother and son were relieved of that burden.

Not all the stories are about success: "Over the years we had a tragic event. We had shipped 40 carts to Ethiopia, but those who had to clear them for distribution wanted a bribe. Our agents refused to give them the bribe and so they burned the 40 carts. That's the worst thing that ever happened," said Dick.

How have they continued for so long and grown so much?

"We have a great team," replied Dick, identifying many of the companies who help their project with donations.

Joe, Maurice Feryn and Ron

Bohman, the volunteers working in the shop during the interview, explained that even though they don't often hear back from cart recipients to know how much they mean to them, they do this work for Jesus.

The project exemplifies Margaret Mead's insight: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has."

For information, email bebold@comcast.net, or visit www.nwtrinityproject.org or [facebook.com/trinityfreedomcarts](https://www.facebook.com/trinityfreedomcarts).



A workbench contains tools and parts that men and women working on subassembly of the carts need. Volunteers schedule times to come in to work on assembly as their time permits.



An assembled rainbow freedom cart is taken apart and packed with tools and instructions for reassembly at its destination in one of 103 countries to transport disabled men and women.

Each 80-pound cart is packed into a large box sealed with steel tape. Sixty-nine boxes are shipped via the generosity of Peninsula Truck Lines of Spokane to World Vision in Seattle. Solid green wheels take seven months to be shipped from China. They first used tires with inner tubes and sent pumps, but some people took them for other uses, and the carts became useless.



Above founder Dick Carpenter is a sign with the running count of carts built since 2005.



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New PICA leader helps expand services to Pacific Islanders

Continued from page 1

“For an underserved community, that’s a good rate,” she said. More than that has changed.

“The community as a whole has gained visibility,” she said. “We continue our advocacy and seek to be invited to tables where decisions are made that have impact on the health of our communities.”

For example, NHPIs participate in designing how rental assistance funds are distributed and the process for families to receive the funds, said Kiana, who grew up in Spokane.

She studied public relations and psychology at Gonzaga University. Since graduating in 2017, she worked with Empire

Health Foundation and Group Health Foundation to create relationships that helped her know the Spokane community better.

Volunteering has also given her connections and resources.

She has volunteered with the YWCA Spokane and served on its board nearly five years. She is on the APIC Advisory Board and the Providence Community Mission Board for Spokane and Stevens Counties. Recently she joined the Tenants Union of Washington Board of Directors.

Working with PICA, Kiana’s role is to advocate alongside the community for better policy and improved civic engagement to strengthen the Pacific Islander community.

Through APIC, she learned of PICA and met Joseph Seia in Seattle. He was looking for a community anchor to help organize in Spokane.

PICA seeks to establish a cultural home and center for the community to build power and wellness physically, culturally, socially and economically.

“We seek to live out our indigenous values,” she said, “through community organizing and speaking truth to systems of power, to provide social supports and cultural spaces for the community.”

Kiana’s area is Eastern Washington, but her focus now is on Spokane.

PICA, which formed as a non-profit in 2019, also has organiz-

ers in Southwest Washington and Western Washington.

“It’s growing quickly statewide and in Spokane,” she said.

PICA is led by Pacific Islanders from different island nations.

“We have a diverse population in Spokane. In addition to Marshallese, Native Hawaiians and Samoans, there are Chuukese, Tongans, Papua New Guineans and many more NHPI communities present,” she said.

Kiana seeks to involve more Pacific Islanders in events and as volunteers.

For example, PICA helped the Samoan community organize a recent rally calling for the City of Spokane to remove the statue of John Monaghan, who massacred

thousands of Samoan villagers.

“We are finalizing a letter asking the city to remove the statue,” she said.

According to the PICA website, addressing racism is one of its roles to heal Melanesians, Micronesians and Polynesians from the historical and generational trauma of colonialism, to address disempowerment and disenfranchisement and to network with those who share anti-racist values.

“We are one big Pasifika family, and will continue striving to improve the health, wellness and cultural connection of our many NHPI communities,” she said.

For information, call 800-7289 or visit picawa.org.



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Couple apply Sikh tradition of hospitality and food in restaurant

By Marijke Fakasiieiki

In the midst of fast food restaurants along North Division in Spokane, Taste of India offers food that is “good for the soul,” said owners Ajit (A.J.) Singh Khinda and his wife Hardish Khinda.

They recently shared about their love of food, the joy in friendships that form around a table and their role in helping start two Sikh Temples in Spokane Valley.

The Khindas are celebrating 20 years as owners of the Taste of India, a restaurant at 3110 N. Division.

The Sikh community has a long-standing tradition of feeding and caring for people as part of their spiritual practice.

Three teachings of Sikhism include “Kirat Karo,” being dedicated and earning a pure living; “Vand Chakko,” sharing what one has with others, and “Naam Japo,” praising God and giving thanks.

A.J. and Hardish see their restaurant as an extension of those Sikh values.

In addition to sharing their Punjabi cuisine with the community, over the years they also have served meals for charitable organization fundraisers, such as Second Harvest, Wishing Star and others.

Taste of India has been one of the mainstays at the week-long Pig Out in the Park, in which they participated annually for 18 years until COVID.

“Spokane has been good to us. We have many people who come back to the restaurant as friends and family, not just customers,” said A.J.

Their path to Spokane, starting the restaurant and founding two Sikh communities was a long journey and many years of hard work.

Coming from a small farming village in Punjab, A.J. headed to West Germany in 1976 to seek a better life. He started with eight German marks, which he spent on drinks with a new friend. After befriending a Frankfurt resident, who saw he was a hard worker, A.J. was given 800 marks, which he used for rent and to help another friend. He was there four years.

When he came to the U.S., he landed in Seattle and did odd jobs at Pike Place Market.

“I was looking for a smaller farming community,” said A.J.

While working in a Seattle hotel, he learned from a man from the Spokane area that Spokane is in the heart of a farming area, so A.J. decided to visit.

“I stayed in a hotel managed



Hardish and A.J. Khinda start each day with gratefulness.

Photo courtesy of the Khindas

by a Pakistani. He was buying, renovating and selling run-down properties. When I signed my name as Singh, he asked if I was from India,” A.J. said.

Having met few people in Washington from India or Pakistan, the manager encouraged A.J. to move to Spokane. So A.J. did and worked several different jobs.

His work ethic coming from past experiences of hardship led him into jobs in clothing, hotels, maintenance, property renovation, landscaping, farming and cooking. He saved so he could run his own business.

In Spokane Community College (SCC) evening classes, he was certified in heating, air conditioning and ventilation (HVAC). On graduating in 1996, he started, A.J. Heating and Air Conditioning, which he still owns.

A.J. and Hardish also recently built and opened Sammy’s Pit Stop, a gas station in Spokane Valley. Hardish, who married A.J. 38 years ago in the Punjab region of India, studied to be a teacher and then a nurse.

“I came to Spokane from a small village in India to be with my husband. After we married, I had to wait for my visa for more than a year,” she said.

On arriving, she worked while continuing nursing studies at SCC. Since graduating in 1998 and becoming a registered nurse, she has worked full time at the Spokane Veteran’s Home on Fifth Ave. As a nurse, Hardish experiences the COVID pandemic every day.

“It’s been tough, because I am an infection control nurse and staff development coordinator. On the front lines of COVID, I take it one day at a time, doing my best to follow the guidelines. Health care professionals must follow strict protocols to keep our residents safe,” said Hardish, who is tested for COVID daily.

“A.J. always wanted to open a restaurant, but we didn’t have money for that. We both worked while finishing school,” she said.

In 2001, A.J. came home one

day and said that the Indian restaurant where they sometimes ate was for sale and a buyer needed a silent partner.

They thought they would not have to work there, but then the partner left the business to them.

Because they knew many people in Spokane, and loved sharing their Indian cuisine, they decided that by working hard, they could do it.

They had much to learn, such as portion sizes and pricing meals. They listened to customers to determine spice levels and include seasonal produce in dishes.

Thriving on word of mouth, they draw customers from around the region and many stop on road trips on the way to or from Seattle, Montana, Canada and beyond.

“Customers appreciate that we welcome them as family and friends,” Hardish said.

Changing COVID restrictions mean Taste of India has changed how they package and offer food. Much of their business is now online deliveries. That means adding delivery costs and eco-friendly packaging. It now helps them track customers, so they know they have many return customers.

“Now it’s tough to find and keep employees, so the restaurant involves mostly family members who moved to Spokane and needed jobs,” said Hardish.

One of their two children helps manage the restaurant and gas station while studying engineering at SCC. The other, a Gonzaga alum who works in communications and health equity, supports the family businesses on the side.

For many years the Khindas, who are now members of the Spokane Sikh community, traveled to Seattle to meet with a Sikh community there.

Because there was no temple in Spokane where they could pray and connect their children with Sikh beliefs, they considered leaving Spokane. Instead, in 2003, they helped found Sikh Temple of Spokane at 1420 N.

Barker Road in Spokane Valley.

After that temple grew to about 150 families by 2017, they helped found the Gurudwara Shree Guru Nanak Darbar at 12122 E Cataldo Ave. in Spokane Valley, with about 80 Sikhs and their previous spiritual leader, Baba Ajit Singh. They also sought to have more outreach to children and youth. Today Baba Ji Balraj Singh leads that congregation.

The Sikh faith began in Punjab at the end of the 15th Century, and currently has 25 to 30 million followers. Guru Nanak, the first guru, and nine Sikh gurus who followed him, developed the spiritual teachings of the religion. The Sikh ideal is for humanity to know God’s will

and carry it out.

Sikhs believe in one creator; unity and equality of humankind, engaging in selfless service, striving for justice to benefit all and honest conduct in one’s livelihood, said Hardish.

A.J. and Hardish start each day with gratefulness and practice “Chardi Kala” to attain a mental state of optimism and joy.

They pray informally at home and gather weekends for services at the temple with the Sikh community. During the pandemic, gathering has looked different as people wear masks, stagger their visits to the temple and distance to keep everyone safe.

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World Relief receives 180 Afghan families

World Relief Spokane had received about 180 Afghans as of mid-December, with about 25 more arriving each week, reported executive director Mark Finney.

“The Spokane community has been amazingly supportive and we are so grateful for the hundreds of people who have stepped up to donate, volunteer, advocate and pray for our newest neighbors,” Mark commented.

“We anticipate receiving about 350 total by Feb. 15 when the government has set the deadline to have all the evacuees off of military bases,” he said.

Housing is still the biggest challenge and World Relief Spokane seeks any leads on available rentals.

For information, call 484-9829 or email mfinney@wr.org.

Groups host welcome party

Muslims for Community Action and Support (MCAS), Bridges Not Walls, Refugee Connections Spokane, Spokane County Human Rights Task Force, Dorothy Day Labor Forum, World Relief, Spokane Public Schools, Spokane Islamic Center and Veterans for Peace recently co-sponsored a “Welcome to America” party for newly arrived Afghan families at the Women’s Center.

Families shared stories, and attendees offered encouragement for them and support to the Afghani community.

Mayor Nadine Woodward welcomed the Afghan families, and MCAS asked for setting up a Community Center for the

Afghani community.

The Mayor has agreed to work with MCAS to create a space so these folks can begin their healing supported by the community, and can integrate into the larger Spokane community, said Naghmana Sherazi, co-chair of MCAS with Karen Stromgren Munawar.

“MCAS is working on a proposal that we will share in the new year,” she said.

Organization representatives will speak with the Mayor at 2 p.m., Friday, Jan. 28, about providing a community center for Afghani refugees.

For information, call 823-274-6044 or email mcasforspokane@gmail.com or visit spokanemcas.org

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Church expands building with technology for hybrid worship, meetings

Building a new sanctuary while doing church virtually during the pandemic, St. Luke Lutheran in Spokane incorporated the technical capability to “do church” both in-person and virtually. They did that not only in the sanctuary but also in rooms throughout the building for committee meetings, Bible studies and small groups.

Now, in addition to drawing 350 to 400 in person to three Sunday services, the same number join their live stream on Facebook. Before the pandemic, 500 worshiped at the three services—8 and 9:30 a.m. for the traditional, Lutheran liturgical worship and 11 a.m. for a contemporary, less formal worship with a praise band.

In August 2021, the building for the new sanctuary was completed, along with remodeling the old building and enlarging the parking lot.

Those who were ready to be back in person came there, and those who wished to continue to worship online have continued to do that, “attending” the 9:30 a.m. service livestreamed on Facebook at any time.

Jim Johnson, lead pastor for 21 years, believes it’s important for worship to be convenient and safe.

The online congregation includes those not comfortable in crowds, as well as those around the country and world—in Houston, Boston, North Dakota, Montana, England and Saudi Arabia.

Six of 20 in an evening men’s gathering join online from Colville, Newport and Moses Lake. One young woman joins a Bible study from Houston.

“Our congregation is more than people who live in the church’s neighborhood,” he said.

Jim said his passion is to preach the gospel both “to share the good news of God’s grace, forgiveness, love and salvation through Jesus Christ and to invite people to compassion to serve their neighbors in need.”

Jim grew up in Spokane, the son of Wally Johnson, who was pastor of Calvary Lutheran in North Spokane until he retired in 1987.

After Jim graduated from Pacific Lutheran University in Seattle with a degree in secondary education, thinking he would teach social studies and coach basketball, he took a year off to explore questions “that led to 100 more questions,” and to his decision to go to Luther Seminary at St. Paul Minn., where he met his wife, Lori.

Before coming to St. Luke in 2001, he was associate pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran in Sedro Woolley from 1993 to 1996, and pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran near Lake Stevens from 1995 to 2000. When they came, he and



St. Luke Lutheran’s staff team includes Jim Johnson, Nikki Serenzia, Jacquie Larson and Taran Denning.

Photo courtesy of St. Luke Lutheran

Lori had three young sons, and were soon joined by a baby girl.

In 2000, St. Luke had 250 worshiping on a Sunday. Although it was experiencing a time of struggle, Jim saw that it had strong lay leadership.

The congregation’s average age is now 42, with as many over 60 as under 20, he said. The church includes students, faculty and staff from Whitworth and Gonzaga universities.

Along with being diverse in age and economic status, it is diverse in political ideology but not to the point of polarization, he said.

“We are willing to live together with our differences. We do not have to agree on social issues, but we are united by our call as Christians to live our faith in different ways. We recognize we are all sinners and here by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. No one is entitled to or deserves God’s love, but we are all loved and called by God,” Jim said.

Over his 21 years, he said new members said they were drawn because the church is welcoming. They were also drawn by its music, preaching, youth programs, and community and world ministries.

Jim said as members are involved with outreach ministries, they find fulfillment in their call to help people.

“We keep the congregation aware of opportunities,” said Jim, “and aware of their calling as Christians to reach out and be the voice for the voiceless, to advocate for the outcast and those in need, all based on forgiveness of sin, and God’s grace and love. God brings the powerful down from their thrones and lifts up the lowly.”

St. Luke encourages members to be involved in community outreach at Crosswalk homeless

teens program, the Family Promise shelter, Habitat for Humanity home building, the Mead Food Bank, All Saints Lutheran’s Meal Program in Browne’s Addition, Lutheran World Relief quilt donations, Bite2Go and Holiday Packs at Brentwood Elementary, Easter baskets at Mead Elementary schools, a neighborhood after-school program twice a week, Lutherhaven camp ministries and support of global ministers.

Three ministers are among the seven other staff.

• **Nikki Serenzia**, congregational care coordinator for six years, is responsible for the “people ministries,” which include the social outreach listed above, as well as visitation, new members, small groups, senior meals, adult education and holiday meals “to bring people closer to God and one another,” she said.

Nikki, who was previously a TV news director, began attending church in 2008 with her husband.

• **Jacquie Larson**, youth coordinator, is in charge of middle school and high school youth groups, young adult gatherings and youth mission trips.

Until COVID, the church took 15 to 35 youth to the Dominican Republic every other summer. Youth helped build basic houses and latrines, played with children and improved dirt roads in Dominican Republic.

“Most have never visited another country or seen extreme poverty, so the trip was life changing, leading some to enter law or social services,” said Jacquie.

Alternate summers, they did outreach projects in the Pacific Northwest.

Jacquie grew up in the Sedro Woolley church Jim served and came to Spokane to study at

Gonzaga University from 2014 to 2018.

She joined the staff in July 2019. There were no summer mission trips in 2020 or 2021.

• **Taran Denning**, her predecessor in youth ministry, was ordained last year as associate minister.

He took groups three summers to the Dominican Republic, alternating with mission service on the Yakama Indian Reservation and at Lutherhaven’s servant leader camp.

Taran, who had been active in a Helena, Mont., Lutheran church youth group, came to Spokane to study biology at Gonzaga University, planning to be a dentist. After graduating in 2011, he began serving as youth coordinator at St. Luke. That stirred his call to ministry. He studied in Luther Seminary’s online program with one-third of the time on campus.

For his intern year, he served a church in Vancouver, Wash. In 2020, after graduating, he was called to St. Luke.

Taran now shares ministry

with Jim, preaching, and doing baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals and crisis visitations.

The worship coordinator just retired, and the church is hiring a new one. That person is responsible for music.

“Music is central,” said Jim. “We provide a variety of music and musicians, including Whitworth students, a church choir, a percussionist and a violinist.”

Jim summed up with comments on COVID and protocols. In the new, big sanctuary, people—who are required to wear masks—can spread out. There is no passing of the peace or offering plates. For communion, worshippers pick up individual cups with bread.

“We long for the day when more will come in person, when people can sing without masks and fill the room with boisterous music,” he said. “We long for a lot, but we are grateful to be able to celebrate word and sacrament after a long time of isolation.”

For information, call 467-5256 or visit sllespokane.org.

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The late Desmond Tutu's words are his best legacy and challenge today

To overcome oppression and hate, having perspective fed by a sense of humor and ability to laugh at the irony of those who think they can hold power through fear, intimidation and threats is crucial.

South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who died Dec. 26 at age 90, told the Associated Press how he wanted to be remembered: "He loved. He laughed. He cried. He was forgiven. He forgave. Greatly privileged."

Humor accompanied his persistent challenges to end the apartheid system in which the white minority oppressed the majority black and colored population of South Africa. Once the African National Congress was in power, Tutu did not hesitate to challenge them when corruption overtook the goal of economic equality.

He loved, laughed and cried through the Truth and Reconciliation process he oversaw to bring people back together through hearing the stories of what happened, forgiving and accepting forgiveness.

For me, the words of late Archbishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Cape Town,

speaking in 2012 at the Gonzaga University commencement are his best eulogy:

"All! All! All!" Thirty times he repeated "all" to make his point that Jesus draws all people, not just some, into God's "incredible divine embrace of love."

God embraces all, regardless of their beauty, cleverness, height, shape, race, gender, sexual orientation or faith, he told graduates in the 125th commencement.

Tutu closed with God's call, "Help me so my children will know we belong in one family, God's family, the human family, and no one is outside this embrace.

"Help me! Help me! Help me!" he repeated about as many times, as God's call to everyone. He challenged people to collaborate with God to make the world more hospitable to gentleness, caring, compassion and sharing.

"God is calling you. God is depending on you to make this the kind of world where no one goes to bed hungry," he said. "Please, my children, help me."

He also challenged people to dream.

"Please, please, please dream. Don't

allow yourself to be infected by the cynicism of oldies," he said. "Dream incredibly idealistic, creative things.

"This can become a world where war is no more. Think of the billions we spend on instruments of war and destruction. A minute fraction of the obscene amounts would assure that God's children everywhere can have clean water to drink and would not die for a lack of cheap inoculations," he said.

Tutu urged dreaming of a world without poverty, a world marked by equity, where everyone, everyone has a decent life.

"We can have such a world!" he said.

"Have you discovered how extraordinary God, the Omnipotent One is? God almost always waits to have a human collaborator for what God wants to happen in the world. If there are hungry people, the Omnipotent One is not able to do it without human collaborators," he said.

Through salvation history, Tutu said God has had co-workers, often young people like Joseph, David or Jeremiah.

"No one of us is an accident. God knew

you, and you, and you, and you, from all eternity. You are totally indispensable. Youth are fantastic," Tutu asserted.

He recalled coming to U.S. campuses "a long time ago," and having his heart warmed by students out in the hot sun, demonstrating to ask their institutions to divest from companies that did business supporting apartheid in South Africa. That movement helped free Nelson Mandela from prison and be president five years.

"You helped to free us. We have freedom and democracy now," Tutu said. "We seek to be a non-sexist, non-racist democracy. You were part of that movement to make God's world beautiful."

From years of struggle to end racial apartheid in South Africa, he challenged those who would dismiss or penalize half the world because of gender or exclude people because of race or sexual orientation

"Go out! You are extraordinary creatures. God says please help me. God is calling you," he said.

May his words inspire us to act today.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Stories matter: life-giving stories inspire us to the work God calls us to do

Stories matter. Within my calling as an ordained pastor in the Mennonite Church U.S.A., one of my jobs is to remind people that the story of faith they profess must always be a story leading to life and never to death. This is true of all authentic faiths. I am convinced we literally live and die by the stories or narratives we tell ourselves.

In the religious world, clergy folk work with what writers, psychologists and philosophers call "meta-narratives." This is to say we speak of a large, eternal story within which our smaller, personal story resides. In the Christian faith, the meta-narrative is the biblical story of God's overarching love for imperfect people.

As a preacher, good interpretation passes through the lens of one question, "Is the story life-giving or not?" If the story is not

life-giving, then it is unworthy of my time.

For a story to be life-giving we may have to abandon unhelpful theological narratives. We may need to let go of narratives that make God into a vengeful judge; cause us to hide in shame or suggest that one group of human beings is more "chosen," "saved" or "loved" than another group.

In contrast, Jesus taught and lived out of a narrative of peace, justice, love and compassion. Furthermore, if you hold to the resurrection story, as I do, then resurrection is also a grand narrative that says, Love (God) always wins. In the end, resurrection says that nothing—not cruelty, not meanness, not ignorance—nothing can defeat God (or life itself).

As one who tries to live by this narrative, I know that my smaller, personal

stories must pass through its "gates." If the faith story I carry around in my head is based in fear, selfishness, exploitation, greed or division, it's not resurrection/life giving, and therefore not true.

If my faith story is grounded in connection, community, unity, justice, sharing, trust and compassion, it is a worthy "resurrection" narrative because it leads to life.

We live in times when people are hungry for life-giving narratives. Our souls hunger for stories that affirm life. Stories of ordinary people feeding the hungry, educating the ignorant, holding powerful entities accountable. Stories that affirm the world with all the blessings and opportunities it affords, even when the seemingly larger powers exploit our weaknesses toward narratives of fear,

ignorance, greed and indifference.

My point is this: Stories matter! Our spiritual and psychological well-being depend upon the narratives we adopt. More importantly, our collective survival depends upon these narratives.

This is why The Fig Tree is so important. It is dedicated to telling stories about people who are doing good work because they see the world through the lens of life-giving narratives. It is only through these narratives of life that we have the power to confront and engage with the false narratives of division and death.

May all of us, in whatever context we are in, bring life-giving narratives to the work that God has called us to do.

The Rev. Gary Jewell
Fig Tree Board member

Commentary

Sounding Board

Letters to the Editor

Photo by Lauri Clark-Strait

Expressing joy is a way to oppose oppression, hate

Gail Hammer, associate professor of law and coordinating attorney for the Gonzaga Law School's Clinical Legal Programs, believes that finding and expressing joy is a way to oppose oppression and hate.

In acknowledging the ancestral land of the Spokane Tribe in a workshop on "Joy as Resistance" for the recent International Conference on Hate Studies, she invited support of tribal sovereignty as a way to "reject generations of systemic erasure and genocide, and amplify Indigenous voices," she said.

"Indigenous existence is resistance," she said.

"**Social change requires** an array of approaches," Gail said. "Using expressions of joy doesn't downplay the negatives of oppression and hate."

Hate and hate speech as tools of oppression can keep people in fear, and when people are afraid, they are more easily controlled, she said.

Gail pointed out that tools of oppression sadden and depress people, leaving them depleted and discouraged. Fear can immobilize them and prevent effective action.

"**Resistance to oppression requires** liberating brain function from the primitive brain to create a path to the prefrontal cortex," she explained. "Joy facilitates that movement, inviting fluid, expansive thinking and facilitating

effective action.

Gail suggested some techniques for choosing actions to facilitate joy, making joy possible in troubling times.

First, people can connect with joy by gathering those around who can share their inner joy and radiance. These people help create a home base as a place to recharge.

Second, people can find and engage their own source of joy, their own source of radiance. The arts and music can be powerful paths for choosing joy.

Gail then asked: "Who are your people? To whom do you belong? Who helps you recharge? Who's on your side? Who lights up when they see you? What brings you joy? Drumming, running, dancing, researching, reading? What makes you lose track of time? What makes your heart sing?"

For help in identifying what brings one joy, she invited looking online for Martin Seligman's surveys on "authentic happiness."

She also invited finding alternative definitions of situations from those offered by oppressors using hate speech.

"**When people create** their own definitions, they re-envision what a situation is. Joy can help," said Gail, using the idea of people pushing against each other's hands from the Alternatives to Violence Project.

If two people stand facing each other,

with their palms against each other's palms, when the first person pushes against the second person's hands, the second person naturally pushes back. If, instead of pushing back, the second person changes the way their hands meet to a dancing position, sings a melody to dance to, and leads the first person in a dance, it redirects and redefines the pushing and adds an element of fun.

Another technique comes from the Honk Movement, which creates agents of social justice around the world.

Street bands with brass and percussion instruments go to events such as Martin Luther King Jr. marches. When people with bull horns spew hate speech, attempting to define the event as a hostile confrontation, the brass band defines the event as a concert, drowning out the hate speech. Their joyful noise dismantles the oppression.

"**With connections to people** and sources of joy, and the ability to redefine situations, people and groups can use joyful methods to develop resilience without giving in to distressing definitions of situations," she said.

"With connections to people and sources of joy, and with willingness to use joy to respond to hate speech and attempted oppression, people can develop the ability to resist and to redefine situations in ways that dismantle hate, and have fun doing it," said Gail.

Letter on Women's Hearth

I appreciated The Fig Tree's recent article on the Women's Hearth. However, in talking about the history, you omitted Mary Rathert, OP, who was director there for the several years preceding Susan Tyler-Babkirk.

Those were very challenging transitional years. Without Mary's administrative expertise, and unflinching commitment to the mission and women of the Drop-in Center / then Hearth, it might have closed.

Mary is a key person in the heart and history of the Hearth, and also deserves recognition and gratitude.

Joan Shea, SNJM

Letter to the Editor:

We at The Salvation Army Spokane, thank businesses and residents for the wonderful support during the holiday season. Nearly 30 CEOs and employees rang bells during our three-day Corporate Kettle Kick-Off.

In the count down to Christmas, we faced tough times with fewer bell ringers and sites. Ringing bells allows women and men, who are struggling financially to earn Christmas money while helping those in need. Sometimes, bell ringing leads to permanent employment at stores where they ring bells. Some volunteer to ring bells because they felt blessed by help they received in difficult times.

Although it looked like we might not meet the financial goal of Red Kettle campaign, we did so on Christmas-Eve.

Ken Perine, Major

Calendar of Events

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| <p>Jan 1-9 • What We Make: Nature as Inspiration, Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. 1st Ave. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tues-Sun, 456-3931</p> <p>Jan 1-20 • "Refurnish JieMei Lin" Art Exhibition, Brian Oliver Gallery, Whitworth University, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., M-F, 777-3258, WUArt@whitworth.edu</p> <p>Jan 1,8 • Practical Centering: Yoga, Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 9 to 10 a.m., virtual, 456-3931</p> <p>Jan 4, 11 • Eastern Washington Legislative Conference planning on Zoom, 4th at noon, 11th at 2, 535-4112</p> <p>Jan 5 • The Fig Tree Distribution and Mailing, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 535-4112</p> <p>Jan 6, 13, 20, 27 • Taize Prayer Service, online, 4 p.m., bartletts@gonzaga.edu</p> <p>Jan 5,8,19,22 • United by Water, NW Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. 1st, 456-3931</p> <p>Jan 6 • The Fig Tree Benefit and Board meetings, 12 p.m. to 3 p.m., 535-4112, mary@thefigtree.org for link</p> <p>• Peace and Justice Action Committee, Peace and Justice Action League, 5:30 to 7 p.m., slichty@pjals.org</p> <p>Jan 6, 13, 20, 27 • Engaging the Bodhisattva's Deeds, Sravasti Abbey, 9 to 10:30 a.m., sravastiabbey.org</p> <p>Jan 7, 14, 21, 28 • Samsara, Nirvana and Buddha Nature, Sravasti Abbey, 6:15 to 7:30 p.m., sravastiabbey.org</p> <p>Jan 10 • The Path to Self-Acceptance, Sravasti Abbey, 9 to 10:30 a.m., sravastiabbey.org</p> <p>Jan 10, 13 • Domestic Violence 101 Training: "Recognize, Respond, Refer," YWCA Spokane, 10th -10 a.m., 13th - 2 p.m., education@ywcaspokane.org.</p> <p>Jan 11 • Climate Action Meeting, Earth Day Planning, 350 Spokane, 6:30 to 8 p.m. 350spokane.org</p> <p>Jan 12 • Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council Committee, 12 p.m., 477-3860</p> <p>• Sabes Que? Speaker Series and Membership Meeting, Hispanic Business and Professional Association, 6 to 7:30 p.m., hbpasspokane@gmail.com</p> <p>Jan 13, 27 • Showing up for Racial Justice, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., slichty@pjals.org</p> <p>Jan 14 • Gallery Art Walk, Human Rights Education Institute in Coeur d'Alene, 208-667-4544, hrei.org</p> <p>Jan 15, 16 • Master Works 4: Eckart Preu Returns, Spokane Symphony conductor laureate (2004-2019), Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 3 p.m., spokanesymphony.org</p> <p>Jan 16 • Talking Circle, American Indian Community Center, 1025 W. Indiana Ave., 6 p.m., 535-0886, alccinc.org</p> <p>• Martin Luther King Jr Commemoration Service, <i>check</i> for plans with Martin Luther King Jr Community Center, 868-0856, mlkspokane.org</p> <p>Jan 17 • Martin Luther King Jr. <i>check</i> on plans for Rally, March and Day of Service in Spokane at mlkspokane.org, 686-0856</p> <p>• Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Peace March, <i>check</i> for plans in Yakima with rtrimble51@gmail.com</p> | <p>Jan 20 • NAACP Spokane Monthly Membership Meeting, 7 p.m., facebook.com/spokane.naACP, spokanenaACP@gmail.com</p> <p>• Score Workshop: Small Business Resiliency Tools and Ideas, noon to 1:30 p.m., spokane.score.org</p> <p>• Kickoff Spokane County United Way Emerging Leaders Society, 835 N. Post Ste 102, 5 to 7 p.m., https://youtu.be/1F4ZTR_BFno, Loree Swegle, 777-3280, music@whitworth.edu</p> <p>Jan 20, 21 • Children's Opera: St. George and the Dragon, Music Building Byrhe Recital Hall Room 101, 7 p.m., https://youtu.be/1F4ZTR_BFno, Loree Swegle, 777-3280, music@whitworth.edu</p> <p>Jan 21-23 • Gatsby Gala, Stop the Silence and Spokane Regional Domestic Violence Coalition, 4 p.m., endtheviolencespokane.org</p> <p>• Virtual Basic Mediation Training, Northwest Mediation Center, nwmediationcenter.com</p> <p>Jan 23 • Live from Somewhere, Magic Lantern Concert Series, 5 p.m., magiclanternonmain.com</p> <p>Jan 24, 27 • Domestic Violence 201: Learning in Action, YWCA Spokane, 24th -10 to 11:30 a.m., 27th - 2 to 3:30 p.m., 385-6623, education@ywcaspokane.org</p> <p>Jan 26 • "The Secret of Bears," first of three National Geographic programs, Martin Woldson Theatre at the Fox, 7 p.m., spokanesymphony.org, see ad page 12</p> <p>Jan 27 • This Is the End: How Movies Prepared Us for the Apocalypse, 6:30 p.m., humanities.org</p> <p>Jan 29 • Wholehearted 22: Regional Gathering of Catholic Women, St. Joseph's Catholic, Otis Orchards, 8:30 a.m., eventbrite.com/e/new-wine-wholehearted22</p> <p>• Stop the Trafficking Penny Drive, HRC Ministries, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., theresa@hrcministries.com, 216-4455</p> <p>• Spokane Symphony Pops features Pink Martini, orchestra conducted by Music Director James Lowe.</p> <p>Feb 2 • The Fig Tree Distribution and Mailing, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 535-4112, development@thefigtree.org</p> <p>• "Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man," Emmanuel Acho, New York Times bestselling author, 2022 MLK Keynote, Washington State University, Pullman, mlk.wsu.edu/2022-keynote/, 328-9209</p> <p>Feb 3 • The Fig Tree Benefit and Board meetings, 12 p.m. to 3 p.m., 535-4112, mary@thefigtree.org</p> <p>Tues to Sun • Continuous Lines: Selections from the Joe Fedderson Collection, Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. 1st Ave., 456-3931</p> <p>• Awakenings: Traditional Canoes and Calling the Salmon Home, Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. 1st Ave., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 456-3931</p> <p>Sat, Sun • Spokane's Be YOUTiful Farmers Market, Northtown Mall, 4750 N. Division St., 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., 315-9608</p> |
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Teachers use ‘amplifier art’ to help students understand Anne Frank

By Kaye Hult

Language arts co-teachers Margo Swanson and Jontie Meehan were in a quandary. The eighth grade at Lakes Middle School in Coeur d’Alene was to read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, written by a teenage Jewish girl in hiding from the Nazis for two years during the Second World War.

They realized that 80 years since Anne lived and wrote, their students lacked background to understand what she described.

So they created a project using amplifier art to help students dig into the meaning of her diary.

“Amplifier art has more meaning than is evident on the surface,” Jontie explained.

“Art is more than beauty and decoration. It has the power to serve as a catalyst for change,” they wrote in the introduction to the project. “It can unite people with shared values in ways other mediums cannot.

“Art gives us symbols to gather around, builds community and helps us feel like we are not alone. Amplifier art serves as a compass and points the audience to the future we want to live in. We hope these pieces of art will help young people feel represented, listened to and empowered to make the change they want to see in the world.”

Margo and Jontie provided background on World War II and the Holocaust to set the context.

“The students looked at various types of artistic expressions and how they shared messages, such as music videos, street art and poetry,” Margo said.

“We provided questions to give them a lens through which to analyze and understand what they were reading,” she said.

The questions were:

- To what extent do trauma, tragedy and adversity build resilience?
- What is the role of hope in survival?
- How does the way we treat others reflect who we are?”

Then they read the book, analyzed and discussed it. Even though Margo and Jontie teach a language arts class, the project required the students to create art in response to one of the questions.

They suggested options for the artistic product, such as a “Canva Amplifier Artwork” poster—essentially a collage—or an original art piece, such as a sculpture, 3D model, painting or drawing. More options were to create a poem or a photo series or a video.

One student, Emerson Rakes, chose to respond to the question, “How does the way we treat others reflect who we are?” She decided to paint and write a poem.

Another student, Zac Kerns, chose the first question, “To what extent do trauma, tragedy and adversity build resilience?” For his artistic product, he put together a series of photographs he had already collected.

The students analyzed their projects by responding to their chosen question, using evidence from *The Diary of Anne Frank* or related texts and describing how their artistic piece represented their response to the question.

“Part of the project required putting the students’ work before an audience,” said Jontie, “to help them realize that what they are doing is life-giving. It also could help to bridge the gap be-



Margo Swanson and Jontie Meehan introduce Anne Frank.

tween then and now. I love their ‘Aha’ moments.”

The Gallery Walk, as this is called, consists of two events.

First, in class, everyone’s artwork was displayed for all to see. The students separated into small groups, where they presented their projects to their peers.

“The way we treat others reflects who we are by spotlighting our past traumas, personal growth, upbringing and empathy,” Emerson wrote in her essay. “Empathy reflects. Here’s an example from the *Diary of Anne Frank*, ‘In spite of everything I still believe people are really good at heart.’ If Anne, facing systemic

hatred, thinks that these people who are quite literally hunting her down are good, doesn’t that show how good she was?”

“The project made me think,” said Zac of his photo series going from cold and dark to bright.

“Trauma can build resilience as a reference to how strong we are after we’ve overcome,” he wrote in his essay. “My photos demonstrate this. Each has its unique answer to the question, but all connect to a theme of overcoming. Once we overcome trauma, we can look back at how strong we are for overcoming it. Trauma may be strong, but we are stronger.”

The second Gallery Walk event is yet to come. The students’ art will be displayed during the Friday, Jan. 14 Art Walk at the Human Rights Education Institute (HREI) in Coeur d’Alene. Some student essays will be there for people to read.

“HREI is proud to host the student exhibit and share human rights history through the lens of our young artists,” said HREI executive director Jeanette Laster.

“The story of Anne Frank is a powerful reminder of the victims of the horrific Holocaust and how, through lived experiences and storytelling, we can share the importance of sharing compassion, kindness and love,” she continued. “It will be our youth who create a world without hate and bigotry through this educational experience.”

The artwork will stay up at HREI for six weeks, through the end of February. That time includes Holocaust Remembrance Day on Thursday, Jan. 27.

The amplifier art project demonstrated the community building that takes place within classrooms of Lakes Middle School, an inclusive school, the teachers said.

“Having special education

students included in the regular classroom, with no student knowing who is or is not special education, increases their learning tenfold,” Jontie commented.

She works in special education and also co-teaches at Lakes. This is her second year teaching there, her ninth in the Coeur d’Alene School District.

Jontie was born and raised in Alaska. She moved to Coeur d’Alene 10 years ago. She went back to school at 37 to go into education and became certified in K-12 special education and K-8 teaching. She began as a behavioral interventionist.

Originally from Sandpoint, Margo has been at Lakes for six of the 11 years she has been teaching. She teaches eighth grade language arts. She worked with Teach for America after college and taught English at North High School in Denver, a school with a 95 percent Latino student body. She and her husband moved back to North Idaho to be with family.

“I love challenging students to grow past their expectations,” she said.

For information, call 208-667-4544 or email mswanson@cdaschools.org.

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