Fr. Pat Conroy shares his journey to ministry at Gonzaga

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.

“Thousands are the largest number of 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.

Continued on page 6
The Fig Tree is developing its plan for virtual Benefit Events in 2022. They are scheduled to lunch time, noon to 12:45 p.m., Friday, March 4, and 8 to 8:45 a.m., Wednesday, March 9. For both events, attendees will greet the the burning 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 project. We need a couple 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 promote 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 513-1813 or email mary@thefigtree.org.
**Safeguards, homeless camps show the need**

Maurice Smith, a documentarian, examined homelessness in Spokane through Rising River Media, and reported that the City of Spokane’s warming centers have struggled to keep up with the demand.

"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 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 Spokane’s mayor and senior members of the City of Spokane’s homeless services department discussed how the city and coalition could better communicate and collaborate on homeless policy solutions.

**Shelters, homeless camps show the need**

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 their belongings.

"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 don’t know what to expect because of COVID," said Maurice Smith of the Spokane Homeless Coalition.

Organized by Spokane Homeless Coalition, Spokane Homeless Coalition 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.


**Homeless Connect is Jan. 27**

The 2022 Spokane Homeless Connect will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 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 agencies to bring a large space to the Convention Center to allow for social distancing and space between tables. They are working to cancel, but if other COVID precautions are followed, people feel comfortable coming.

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Formal changel 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 and my ministry if I was not capable of doing in a lifewinning 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.

“Then, I served some of rich, 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 “hoosier” 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 25 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 Representa-
tives 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 vacant because of my gifts and experience by holy obedience, grace, and providence,” 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 tribunal and people in cocoons as if to protect themselves.

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

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, disappointment 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.”

About Fr. Pat: “I am 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 509-939-3127 or email corryp@
gonzaga.edu.

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For further details or a tour of the campground
Contact Christy at 208-892-4842 or campsanders@gmail.com

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At Gonzaga, Fr. Pat is thankful for opportunities to direct students to an LGBTQ welcoming liberal religious congregation.

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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 crawled 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 ffigtreetree.org/dec05/120105PETcarts.

Interfaith Advocacy Days

A waiting 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.

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

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.

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

“Interfaith Advocacy Days”

Register Now!

bit.ly/2022Pre-Session1
bit.ly/2022Pre-Session2

Early WA Legislative Conference
1/30 8:30AM-1:30PM
WALegConf

Interfaith Advocacy Day
2/10 9AM-12PM
203-625-9790 - fan@fanwa.org - www.fanwa.org

“Aworkbench 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.”

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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 nonprofit in 2019, also has organizers in Southwest Washington and Western Washington. “It’s growing quickly state-wide 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.

Continued from page 1
Couple apply Sikh tradition of hospitality and food in restaurant

By Marijke Fakasiieiki

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

They recently shared about their love of food, their family’s friendship in the community and how it formed 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 “Kirtar 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 at 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 have been participating for 18 years until COVID.

Spokane has been good to us. We have 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 workers, who 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 same farming region, so A.J. decided to visit.

“I stayed in a hotel managed by a Pakistani. He was buying, renovating and selling run-down properties. When I asked him what his name is, he asked if I was from India,” said A.J.

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 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 unsafe 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 space levels and include seasonal produce in dishes.

Thriving on word of mouth, they drew 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.

“No 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 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, gatherings have looked different as people wear masks, stagger their visits to the temple and distance to keep everyone safe.

For information, call 509-327-7313 or email toispokane@gmail.com.
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

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.

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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 heirs by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. No one is entitled to or deserves masks—can spread out. There is no passing of the peace or offering plates. For communion, worshippers pick up individual cups with bread. “We for long the day when more will come in person, when people can sing without masks and fill the room with boisterous music,” he said. “We for long, but we are grateful to be able to celebrate word and sacrament in a new time of isolation. For information, call 467-2525 or visit sllcspokane.org.

Crashes are NOT Accidents! Have you been impacted by an impaired driving crash? Are you willing to share your story to help save lives? Become a Spokane County DUI Victims Panel speaker Contact the Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council (509) 922-8383 or llhompson@gssac.org • www.gssac.org

Let STA take care of your winter driving. Sign up and get text or email updates on winter conditions at SpokaneTransit.com/STALinked.

Opportunity

GRANTS FOR SPokane ARTS AND ARTS PROGRAMMING REQUESTS UP TO $10,000
Grants for performance, literary, musical, craft, traditional, visual arts, educational programming. Local individuals, non-profits, and businesses for operational costs, projects, and programs can apply. Applications are due online FEBRUARY 1, JUNE 1, and OCTOBER 1 every year.

APPLY NOW!
www.spokanearts.org/grants

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 technology capability to “do church” both in-person and virtually. They did not stop, 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, 590 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 wanted to continue to worship online have continued to do that, “attending” the 9:30 a.m. service streamed on Facebook at any time.

Jim Johnson, lead pastor for 21 years, believes it is 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, London, Rome, Dubai, Saudi Arabia, 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 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 heirs by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. No one is entitled to or deserves masks—can spread out. There is no passing of the peace or offering plates. For communion, worshippers pick up individual cups with bread. “We for long the day when more will come in person, when people can sing without masks and fill the room with boisterous music,” he said. “We for long, but we are grateful to be able to celebrate word and sacrament in a new time of isolation. For information, call 467-2525 or visit sllcspokane.org.

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Sounding Board

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Expressions of joy are a way to oppose oppression, hate

Gail Hammier, associate professor of criminal justice and anthropology at the Gonzaga Law School’s Clinical Legal Programs, believes that finding and expressing joy is a way to oppose oppression and hate.

To help in identifying what brings one joy, she invited looking online for a McGill university’s survey on “authentic happiness.”

“Resistance to oppression requires library of the ancient world, 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 asked then: “Who are your people? Who do you do God to go to? Who helps you repair? 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 a McGill university’s survey on “authentic happiness.”

She also invited finding alternative definitions of situations from those offensive, imposing, hurting.

“When people create their own definitions, they re-envision what a powerful paths for choosing joy.

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, instead of pushing into the other person changes the way their hands meet to a dancing position, sings a melody to dance to, and leads the first person in some sort, it redirects and redefines the pushing and adds an element of fun.

Another technique comes from the Holistic Movement and it uses agents of social justice around the world. Street bands with brass and percussion instruments go to the streets, as Mary Luther King Jr. marches. When people with bull horns show hate speech, attempting to define the event as a hostile confrontation, the brass band defines the event as a concert, drumming out the hate speech. Their joyful noise dismantles the opposition.

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.

Let's take a look at the current issue of the Fig Tree:

Mary Stamp - Editor

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

Examining Joy: A Way to Oppose Oppression, Hate

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Letter on Women’s Health

I appreciated The Fig Tree’s recent article on the Women’s Health. However, in talking about the history, you omitted Mary Rathert, OP, who was director there for 20 years preceding Susan Tyler-Babyrinth.

Those were very challenging transition- al years. Without Mary’s administrative expertise, and unfailing commitment to the mission and women of the Drop-in Center/then, Health, it might have closed.

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

Letter to the Editor: We at The Salvation Army Spokane, thank businesses and residents for their wonderful support during the holiday season. Our Ringing Bell Campaign relies on volunteers, especially young people, to earn Christmas money while helping those in need. Some, bell ringing leads to permanent employment at stores and restaurants. It was a joy to see so many young people 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

Sounding Board

Photo by Laurie Clark-Smith

Editorial Reflections

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

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

To overcome oppression and hate, having perspectives 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 his life could 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 majority oppressed the minority white, and continue to do so today. This is true of all authentic faiths.

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Examining Joy: A Way to Oppose Oppression, Hate

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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 systems of erasure, genocide, and amplify Indigenous voices,” she said.

“False universality exists is resistance,” she said.

“Social change requires an array of approaches,” Gail said. “Using expressions of joy don’t play down the negatives of oppression and hate.”

In the face of oppression can keep people in fear, and when people are afraid, they are more easily controlled, said Gail. Giving people the tools that oppression sadden and depress people, leaving them depleted and discouraged. Fear can immobilize them and prevent effective action.

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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 ampflag 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 lens for our culture,” 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 teaches us fear is a lie we are 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 "Canvas 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?” 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 "Canvas 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?” 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 "Canvas 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.

EMERSON RAKES

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