Pastor sees opportunities in chaos

By Mary Stamp

The Fig Tree is focusing a section on stories about how vaccinations are having impact on rural, urban and ethnic congregations, and on creative ways congregations have been responding in their settings. Full stories of each will be published at thefigtree.org.

Benjamin Watson arrived as the new pastor of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Spokane in September 2020 in the midst of the pandemic. The building was shut down but open a few Sundays for him to meet some of the congregation, and then gatherings were on Zoom.

Recently he preached on “Can’t Be Business as Usual,” making the point that “God did not take us out of the church for 15 months to have us come back and do church as usual.” “With God, some things change. In Methodism, we can be very methodical, so we need to continue to seek God as we come back. Ministry will never be ‘normal,’ as we have known normal. We are entering a new norm in this new season where God is doing a new thing as we emerge, walking with God,” he said. Benjamin reminded his congregation that after Jesus’ resurrection, he met the disciples in a room and then disappeared. Peter said, “Let’s go fishing.” The other disciples followed and went back to what they knew. They labored all night but caught nothing. “Jesus came to them and said, ‘Hey fellas, got any fish?’ Then he told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat,” he said. “We must not become distracted by the old ways. We must trust God will guide us and expect an authentic move of God.”

So when vaccinations were being offered twice a month at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center in East Central Spokane, Benjamin used worship, meetings and emails to educate people to help them overcome apprehensions they may have had about health care. Emmanuel Family Life Center and Bethel AME received a grant to do COVID vaccination education and testing.

He acknowledged that hesitations arise among Blacks leading to reluctance to take vaccinations, both because of history, such as syphilis “tests” that spread the disease, and because of the assumption that faith communities are set in their ways.

“Jesus came to them and said, ‘Can’t be business as usual,’ ” he said, “because 2021 marks Lutherhaven’s 75th anniversary.” Lutherhaven has taken a regional and national lead in developing and communicating ever-changing COVID guidelines to fellow Christian camps.

“Camp directors have followed our lead,” he said, “because we draw campers from so many states and internationally. It means we can’t simply follow Idaho protocols, because what’s everyday practice in Idaho might seem foreign to a camper, family or group from another state.”

Lutherhaven Ministries is fully open this summer at all three of its North Idaho sites—Camp Lutherhaven, Shoshone Mountain Retreat and Ranch, and its new McPherson Meadows.

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The annual Resource Directory will be printed by June 30. The guide includes listings of faith-related programs, ministry, health, senior care, justice, culture, and civic organizations. Faith communities, non-profits, government programs and others may request copies so they can receive them by mail or bulk delivery. Copies will also be distributed at various grocery stores throughout the region.

For information, call 515-1813 or email mary@thefigtreecom.

Faith Action Network summit is June 6

A Faith Action Network (FAN) 2021 Spring Summit will be held from 2 to 4 p.m., Saturday, June 6, for people across the state to gather to celebrate wins in this year’s legislative session and plan for next year. There will be breakout sessions and local stories about wins out groups by region and issues. Through this legislative session, FAN communities in our region and across the state took their beliefs and values beyond words to make lasting policy change through our legislature.

Sppoke’s Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) residents will celebrate AAPI Heritage Month, sharing information on history, culture and arts from vendors, free children’s activities and an island-style food truck.

For information, call 928-9643 or email charitydoys@ymail.com.

Unity in the Community will be in person

Organizers of the 26th Annual Fall Folk Festival set Oct. 2 and 3 said applications for musicians, dancers and storytellers are available online and due July 1. The 2021 festival of the Spokane Folklore Society, held at The Lair at Spokane Community College, promotes the preservation and appreciation of folk music and cultural traditions in the Inland Northwest. It draws more than 6,000 people a year with 300 performers.

“We do not know what guidelines will be for gatherings in the fall. We hope to host a live festival,” said festival director Sylva Gobel, “but if necessary, will do a virtual festival.” For information, call 828-3683 or email director@sppokanefolkfestival.org or visit spokanefolkfestival.org.

Faith Leaders plan short story contest

Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience of Eastern Washington and North Idaho (FLLC) invites sixth grade to adult short stories for its Next Short Story Contest, “Brilliant Blunders that Left a Mark.” Stories are to express the struggles humans have with admitting mistakes, and the transformation when people reveal their imperfections, said Gen Heywood, FLLC convenor. Stories, which may be fiction or non-fiction, are due Sept. 3. Said Gen FLLC’s next Vigil for the Healing of the Earth will be from 3 to 5 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 3, at Cataldo’s Old Mission in Idaho. Participants will hear from affected people and learn from those making a difference how they can effect change.

For information, email FLL-Conscience@gmail.com.

Immaculate Heart Retreat Center in August, after being a temporary CO-VID-19 Isolation Center operated by Spokane Regional Health District and Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington, will reopen.

For further details or a tour of the campground contact Christy at 208-892-4842 or campssanderson@gmail.com
Habitat for Humanity Spokane has been “Blitz Building” for 20 years, drawing more than 1,000 volunteers each year. The 2021 Blitz Build is June 7 to 18.

Lydia Duffy, chief development officer, invites Women of Habitat to put on hard hats and join in three shifts for women. Those shifts are afternoon on Wednesday, June 9, morning on Monday June 14 and afternoon on Thursday, June 17. At all the shifts, 20 volunteers will help frame two homes.

“At a Blitz Build, professional builders, sponsor groups and volunteers work side-by-side with families to build safe, healthy and affordable homes and communities,” Lydia said. “It is time to safely swing hammers again.” For information, call 999-7141 or visit habitat-spokane.org.

**Meals on Wheels Spokane**

Meals on Wheels Spokane will enhance services for seniors by doubling the number of meals produced internally in its own kitchen. This change will improve meal delivery efficiency, increase partnering and save costs.

They are joining GiveBigWA to raise funds to acquire equipment to produce and freeze up to 1,000 meals a day. The equipment includes a blast freezer, a convection oven, a sealer and chill freezer. Partnership with local non-profits will make it available as a resource for other organizations fighting food insecurity.

The plan will reduce the average cost per client, allowing for expanded services. For information, call 456-6597 or email info@mowspokane.org.

**Habitat Blitz Build will be June 7 to 18**

The 2021 Blitz Build program that allowed her to put down just $1,000.

“THAT changed the trajectory of my life and my children’s lives,” she said, citing the Sheridan Elementary School principal, saying his students need homes. “Affordability is the issue. Low down payments help. Government has in a role. We should not leave it to the private sector. Home ownership requires capital, education and additional support.”

**Vange experienced homelessness when she was 14 after being evicted with her mother and seven siblings. She moved in with a neighbor, and then found a job so she could rent a room in Queens in New York City.**

“Now I have a doctoral degree in economics. Some see someone who is homeless and think it’s from drug use or risky behavior,” she said. “It’s the other way. Poverty and homelessness happen first. As a result, people lack food and self-medicate.”

“Some wonder why they should help an addicted person get into a house, but homelessness happens first,” she said concerned about youth homelessness.

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**Michelle Girardot and Vange Ocasio Hochheimer, top, and Ezra Eckhardt and Betsy, bottom, are a couple of housing issues.**

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**2021-22 Resource Directory**

Much-used, comprehensive directory includes human services, health care, and resources for community, veterans, environment & justice advocates.

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Pastor educates people to trust God, love neighbors, vaccinate to gather

Continued from page 1
disease among men at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, and be-
cause of the ongoing disparities many experience in health care. “We encouraged everyone to take a vaccination shot, espe-
cially our seniors. We don’t ask who has been vaccinated, but I know a large number have been vaccinated,” Benjamin said.

Here’s what he tells people: • “First, I share that we trust God in everything. People with high blood pressure and diabetes are helped by taking medicine. They trust that will happen, so they take it. • “Second, we are to love God with all our hearts, minds and souls, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Being vaccinated is a way to protect our neighbors and ourselves from getting COVID.

• “Third, we cannot open up the community yet. If we want to come to a new norm, we need to do our part and get vaccinated,” he said.

Benjamin is pleased that young people waited for their time and when appointments opened up for them, they went to be vaccinated.

“I’ve also been pleased by the spirit of everyone doing their part when vaccinations came available, including taking se-
niors to the clinics,” he said.

For Easter—Resurrection Sunday—on the first Sunday of April, the congregation was back in the building to worship—with masking and social distancing. In mid-May, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) said for those who are fully vaccinated mask wearing is optional.

“I took the shot, because I didn’t want to wear a mask all my life,” Benjamin said. “The CDC said it’s safe for fully vaccinated people. Some who are vaccinated may continue wearing masks, but I share with the congregation that if they are not vaccinated please continue to wear a mask, and we will continue to encourage them to get vaccinated. ”

Benjamin pointed out that Bethel AME is part of a campus that includes the Richard Al-
len Apartments and Emmanuel Family Life Center. It also works hand in hand with other churches of color and the Martin Luther King Jr Cen-
ter, which together have reached the wider African American community with education.

When Bethel AME’s building was closed, it held its worship ser-
vice on Zoom. Now that it offers worship at the church, it no longer offers Zoom. Instead services are being offered livestream as they were before COVID.

“My children who live on the East Coast and in other states could log on to our service after their services. Local people who would not step into a church can come,” he said.

Some meetings are still on Zoom for convenience, Benja-
min said. Church Conferences are for all members. We meet at 5:30 p.m. just after many are off work, so those people can attend from home on Zoom. Men’s and women’s meetings that are smaller groups are meeting at the church.

He also found that Zoom church meant anyone wanting to work out of town or staying home sick could participate.

“It’s also a convenience with gas prices going up,” he said.

Benjamin grew up in Big Springs, Texas, the seventh mem-
er of his family to be an African Methodist Episcopal pastor. His grandfather was the first.

After school, he served in the Navy until 1991 and then worked with the Federal Bureau of Prisons in Big Springs. He began ministry nearly 29 years ago, driving three hours one way to serve his first church in Crowell, Texas.

Working with the Federal Bu-
reau of Prisons, he was “bi-voca-
tional.” When he transferred with that work to Denver, he was as-
sistant pastor at the AME church there. Then he served the AME Church in Casper, beginning in 1996, commuting from Denver.

One day in 1996 when he was commuting to work, there were 36 inches of snow in Denver. Snow was piled on the sidewalk.

Seeing a blind man with a cane, he wondered how the man would get over the mound of snow. The man came to the emb-
bankment and walked over it, his stick hitting a light pole on the other side. He walked around it.

Benjamin said he audibly heard a voice say, “If I can take him who can’t see over and around obstacles, what can I do with someone who can see?”

Tears streamed down his face as he drove to his job. He gave two-weeks’ notice to focus on ministry.

“The church in Casper was thriving and growing, but I had only been in the community Saturday evening and Sunday morning. I moved there and went from earning $60,000 a year to $12,000 a year full time at the church, but we were never hungry and never hurt.”

In 2000, Benjamin moved to Cheyenne to serve a church and came back then to Denver as pastor of the church he previ-
ously served. He then returned to Cheyenne, where he served until coming to Spokane.

At Bethel AME in Spokane, his wife Debbie ministers with him as an evangelist, which he said is important, because she can better address issues women in the church face than he can.

Benjamin appreciates the gen-
erosity he sees in Spokane with the abundance of food banks and groups donating food. Working in maintenance with Richard Allen Apartments, he sees people bring boxes of food to give to people there and in the neighborhood.

He also sees the struggles of people who live there, so he-ap-
plied for and received grant funds to provide rental assistance.

“When businesses shut down, people lost jobs and lacked in-
come to buy food,” he said. “They also lacked income to pay rent.”

As part of a sermon on “Op-
portunities in the Chaos,” Ben-
jamin shared three points: “shed unnecessary excess, shape the place you call home and redis-
cover intimacy with God.”

“The opportunities we have had in the chaos have helped us learn that we can live on less, share with others and reengage with our families,” he said.

“Often in our hustle and bustle of rushing in and out of the house, we did not know who our family was. It’s a time to rediscover our relationship with our families, our church, our community and our God.”

For information, call 307-253-
8436 or email bethelpastor645@gmail.com.

Upscale Garage Sale Southside Community Center 3151 E 27th 9-4 September 10 & 11 Bring donations 15-2 Mondays No clothes/bedding Volunteers needed Call 208-6645 or email dennis_anderson@mac.com.

FREE ‘In Person’ After School Projects Visit IfYouCouldSaveJustOne.org 4421 N Nevada - Spokane WA 99207 Accommodates youth with social anxiety or special needs.
The church offered education events when a nurse from the county hospital came to answer questions people had in a judge- ment-free way, Katherine said.

Another pastor said the church is across the street from the health clinic, and the community has access to a local hospital.

Michelle at Harrington said her church has three health professionals—a nurse practitioner, a pharmacist and physical therapist—who have helped members understand what is going on.

“They helped us stay safe, doing Zoom services. As things opened up, the Greater Northwest UMC Conference gave us the freedom to open up,” she said. “A few people asked us to do what the denomination and governor asked and posted when it was okay to open up with distancing and masks. One woman, in prepara- tion for opening up, put tape every six feet. At first, there was some reluctance, but following health guidelines, people jumped in so we could be ready for people to come back.”

For some pastors, education was part of pastoral care.

First Congregational United Church of Christ in Walla Walla has a Reopening with Care Task Force to help guide decision- making, said the pastor, Nathaniel Malberg. “We have a doctor and a nurse to help us be objective in our assessments. We did not make assumptions and just have anecdotal evidence on whether members are vaccinated.”

Some members helped others with no computer or having diffi- cultly navigating how to sign up. “For the most part, our people trust data-driven medical sci- ence and were overjoyed when vaccines were deemed safe and available,” he said. “Some vol- unteered at vaccination clinics, seeing it as a public service to promote community wellness.”

“Our education has been more one-on-one between pastor and member. Some were nervous, so we talked them through that. A few were reluctant, so we talked with them,” Nathaniel said. “Un- derstanding the science behind the vaccinations is reassuring, so is knowing that medical profes- sionals who developed the vac- cines are giving their endorsement.”

Pastors report that people have told them they feel better because of the vaccinations.

Jeff Mlbten, pastor of Re- deemer Lutheran in Dayton and Pomery Congregation, explained. “When I’ve been challenged, I’ve said vaccina- tion is positive and a personal choice. I want it for myself and for my children, so I don’t have to worry.”

“For my congregations, if ev- eryone will vaccinate, we won’t have to wear masks,” he said. “We can start doing things we previously couldn’t.”

Stacey Friedelien, pastor at Zion Lutheran in Davenport and Christ Lutheran in Egypt, said: “It makes a huge difference in feeling comfortable about safety. It is important to do get back to some sense of normalcy.”

Most in American Lutheran Church at Newport “shed tears of gratitude and hope to be able to together again,” said Ja- nine Goodrich, pastor. “A few are concerned about the overwhelming majority is grateful.

“Because vaccines reduce fear, we can visit places and visit each other. There is hope because we can be together without being afraid,” she said.

Mission Community Outreach Center celebrates 25 years of service. Thanks to volunteers, donors, customers and the Spokane community for helping us reach this milestone.

Individuals and families needing items, please contact us at mcoc–spokane@gmail.com.
Rural church has rethought and restructured how it does ministry

COVID has led Wilbur Community Church not only to grow emotionally and spiritually but also to move from its food-based fellowship and outreach. Katherine Tuttle, the pastor, said church leaders have been intentional about working on listening skills and staying calm during this anxious time.

The church has been rethinking and restructuring how it does ministry, since it shut down in person worship last spring. “Now we are doing in person worship, it’s not the same as before.” Katherine said. “We are now thinking of our mission and identity in a new way, before COVID. They used to be hungy and hands on.”

The church has increased monthly online book club, even though everyone was vaccinated, because they like the online format.

In the community, the church is partnering with Lincoln County Help Rural Resource Victims Help Rural Resource Victims to provide wraparound social services and COVID support. It seeks to strengthen Latino immigrant families, community members, leaders, businesses and organizations. It has a tech corner, where people can access computers and advice on insurance, tenant, legal and immigration matters.

Latinos En Spokane also has four CHW/Community Co-madres working with families to provide wraparound social services and COVID support. For information, call 558-9359 or email info@latinosenspokane.org.

Latinos En Spokane started El Mercado outdoor market.

Wilbur church replaced food-based fundraising with new ideas. Photo courtesy of Wilbur Community Church

“We stopped most of the food-based ministry, except for the food pantry,” Katherine said. The church celebrated Shrove Tuesday with pancakes, held salad lunchcins to help people in need and hosted spaghetti feeds after fires to raise money for families.

“What could we do besides food? We decided to do an outdoor rummage sale, with people distanced,” she said.

When a young man in the congregation needed a kidney transplant, members ordered yard signs that said, “We Love Cole.” They set them up outside by a table, and people made donations to put a sign in their yard.

“Typically we would have done a luncheon, but this was a hit,” she said, “The entire town could support his operation. We are continu- ingly rethinking how to raise funds respectful of people’s safety and limitations in the pandemic.”

Wilbur Community Church partnered with Lincoln County Health twice as a vaccination site for first responders. The church offered its large fellowship hall, which has space for people to be distanced. The room is climate controlled, and a sanitation team comes through regularly. A nurse from the county hospital came to answer questions in a non-judgement way, she said.

Katherine said Lincoln County Health later set up a mass vac- cination site in the school for people 65 and older. Speakers told of risks and benefits. Katherine has not asked mem-

bers if they are vaccinated, but a majority feel it’s good for them and are vaccinated, she said.

More people are coming because they know they are vaccinated and others are, too, reducing anxiety about safety, Katherine said.

“In our reviewing, we learned we had a hole in outreach to homebound members, so we’ll fill that gap after the pandemic,” she said. “We have a stronger online presence and continue that because we have had feedback that people feel closer to the church because of the online choices.

The pandemic took us out of our comfort zones to use technology.”

“We also pushed in-home spiritualism, said Katherine, who preaches and teaches about care for self, family and neighbor, and doing more than just Sunday morning worship as the center piece of faith life.

In Lent, the church offered six weeks of online contemplative prayer with an online video series.

“We have seen how spiritual practices in members’ homes reduce stress and connect to communal life,” Katherine said.

For information, call 647-5781 or email wilburuniting@gmail.com.
Impact of COVID-19 and vaccinations on communities of faith

Don Short, pastor at Pilgrim Lutheran Church in Othello, said one church group COVID had impact on was the women who met to make 300 quilts a year. They would donate quilts to the local fire fighters for their annual Christmas basket program. “We have done things differently,” he said. “Instead, the fire fighters asked for donations.”

“Members prepared personal care kits in response to a plea from Lutheran World Relief (LWR). They collected care kits in the past, but never to this scale. The congregation has been extremely generous,” he said. “We also collected a special offering for LWR’s work to mitigate effects of COVID-19 overseas.”

“God didn’t take time off for COVID. It has been gratifying to see how God has been working through the pandemic,” he said. “Our people and the whole community have coming together to provide what they need.”

The church took advantage of technology and put their services on YouTube and Facebook.

“People realize it is something we have to do to get back to a normal life. Most people think it’s good to be vaccinated,” he said. A county health nurse, who is in the congregation, has been “a good guide for us to find a vaccination site and be informed about what is going on.” Stacey said, adding that the local hospital keeps the community educated. “Vaccinations make a difference in terms of people feeling comfortable about safety, needing to mask or distance,” he said.

COVID meant the churches were unable to do in-person worship for six weeks and began livestreaming worship then, said Stacey Friedli, pastor of Zion Lutheran in Davenport and Christ Lutheran in Egypt.

They discovered that 150 to 200 people joined by livestreaming. Even when the churches were back to in-person worship, they continued to livestream. Because they can reach more people than they could before COVID, “That is good for our rural churches,” he said.

Stacey estimates that 90 percent at Egypt are vaccinated, because the youngest members are in their 50s. At Zion, about 50 percent are. He finds few people resist vaccinations.

“People realize it is something we have to do to get back to a normal life. Most people think it’s good to be vaccinated,” he said. A county health nurse, who is in the congregation, has been “a good guide for us to find a vaccination site and be informed about what is going on.” Stacey said, adding that the local hospital they prepared during Lent for Lutheran World Relief.

Two rural Lutheran churches found that 150 to 200 joined by livestreaming

Once COVID hit, Lutheran churches in Davenport and Egypt were only unable to do in-person worship for six weeks and began livestreaming worship then, said Stacey Friedli, pastor of Zion Lutheran in Davenport and Christ Lutheran in Egypt. They discovered that 150 to 200 people joined by livestreaming. When the churches were back to in-person worship, they continued to livestream. Because they can reach more people than they could before COVID, “That is good for our rural churches,” he said.

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Stacey estimates that 90 percent at Egypt are vaccinated, because the youngest members are in their 50s. At Zion, about 50 percent are. He finds few people resist vaccinations.

“People realize it is something we have to do to get back to a normal life. Most people think it’s good to be vaccinated,” he said. A county health nurse, who is in the congregation, has been “a good guide for us to find a vaccination site and be informed about what is going on.” Stacey said, adding that the local hospital keeps the community educated. “Vaccinations make a difference in terms of people feeling comfortable about safety, needing to mask or distance,” he said.

COVID meant the churches were unable to do in-person school, which is an outreach to children in the community. The youth did not gather. The church was unable to offer Bible studies at a retirement center. Funerals that were postponed have now been rescheduled, Stacey said.

“The online ministry is new for us,” he said. “Rather than in the sanctuary, sitting at table for the online ministry was difficult, vast our ability to reach people through Facebook and Zoom enhanced our reach to people outside the community across the country, connecting so we can still feed people and involving people on Sunday mornings or for our weekly Bible studies.”

The churches organized a call team to contact members on a regular basis to keep in touch. Although they were unable to gather on April 25, Pilgrim Lutheran blessed 142 personal care kits that they prepared during Lent for Lutheran World Relief.

On April 25, Pilgrim Lutheran blessed 142 personal care kits that they prepared during Lent for Lutheran World Relief. They just launched a new dinner at the church, “when COVID shut us down,” Don said. “The Holy Spirit said, ‘Not right now.’” He estimates 60 to 70 percent of the congregation is vaccinated, more than in the community.

“Generally, people in Othello are favorable about getting vaccinated,” he said.

Two church members on the Othello Community Hospital board have been strongly encouraging people to get vaccinated.

“We’ve been following state guidelines, keeping track of what it allows for service attendance and fellowship, reintroducing fellowship and in-person worship. Those attending worship are not getting COVID, but we have less worry. We are still wearing masks in worship,” Don said.

Food security issues have been important. The church ran a food drive in January to gather food for the local food pantry.

“It was successful because people knew staples were in short supply in the grocery store,” Don said. “Not everyone in Othello has access to government assistance. There have been gaps so people need extra assistance.”

The ministerial group keeps track of who needs what and provides people what they need.

“We weren’t using electronic media before COVID. Now we’ve spent money to ensure technology is adequate, upgrading when necessary so live streaming is available every week,” he said.

In Northwest Intermountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Mary Morrow, director of evangelical mission, asked “what resources we needed and shared resources with us.” Don said: “With God’s help, we have all we need.”

For information, call 488-9952 or email pilgrimlutheran@hotmail.com.

Srivasti Abbey blessed 142 personal care kits that they prepared during Lent for Lutheran World Relief.

Srivasti Abbey, a Buddhist community near Newport, was able to put its monthly Sharing the Dharma Day, residential courses and meditation retreats online, said Thubten Chonyi.

“Participants have had to practice at home, but we led discussions over Zoom, and streamed the scheduled teachings. More teachings were added throughout 2020 in response to student demand for our programs during the pandemic,” she said.

“We have let it be known that when we open – we are not yet – only fully vaccinated people will be able to visit,” Thubten Chonyl said.

To educate people on vaccinations, the abbey posted photos of the abbes receiving a vaccination, directed people to information about His Holiness the Dalai Lama taking the vaccine, and have frequently spoken in online talks about the benefits of vaccination as part of the basic Buddhist ethic of non-harming and thinking of others, she said.

In Pend Oreille County, when they opened a mass vac site at the rodeo grounds, they welcomed all comers.

“Everyone in our resident community, aged 31 to 70, is fully vaccinated,” Thubten Chonyi said. “We’re looking forward to having guests when we open again.”

For information, call 447-5549 or email office.sravasti@gmail.com.
Members respect others

Stan Hughes, pastor of Waitsburg Presbyterian Church, said the church learned the value of respecting others during COVID. In response to COVID, they hunkered down and, following the governor’s directives, didn’t meet until the end of June 2020, when they began meeting with social distancing and masks.

“Attendance dropped to 60 percent of what it was,” he said. “People understand the need to respect others and do our best to assure the health of our congregation of mostly older people.”

They suspended live meetings of the children and youth ministry until two months ago. Stan estimated that 75 to 90 percent of members are vaccinated. “There is a high degree of support in the congregation. In community, there’s less,” he guessed. “We have new systems, so we adjust.”

“Social media are a way to maintain participation. We have new systems, so we adjust.”

“A common concern for families is figuring out child care.”

The community has been responsive and generous to donate to the resource center and food bank, so there has been adequate support when people in need make requests,” Stan said.

For information, call 337-6589 or email makingpeace-ww@gmail.com.

Pastor, church find new ways to minister

COVID has affected Holy Temple Church of God in Christ in Spokane, said the Rev. Ezra Kinlow, pastor.

“We have been back in our sanctuary for a month, but fewer than 50 percent are back, especially senior citizens. They are doing Facebook and YouTube while others come in person,” he said. “Social media are a way to maintain participation. We have new systems, so we adjust.”

“It’s a different ballgame,” said Ezra, who has no sense of how many members have had COVID. Only four reported having COVID and recovering.

HTCOGIC arranged on Saturday, May 15, for a company to do COVID testing. Ezra estimated that about 50 percent of his congregation have had vaccinations, but knows some don’t want to take it.

“We do not advocate for it. It’s up to them.”

he said, adding that he and his wife, Eleise, have been vaccinated.

“I’m unsure what God has allowed. We just deal with it and protect ourselves as we can,” he said.

With 50 percent attending in person, they are allowed to sing. Singers take their masks off when they sing, and people leading worship take their masks off to speak, but everyone else is keeping their masks on. Some feel it restricts the volume of praising and response to have something over their faces, he said.

“We are positive and keep going, hoping and trusting the Lord will give a breakthrough,” Ezra said. “I do not expect we will go back to doing things completely as we did before. Our ministry is different as we reach out to people and find new ways to minister.”

For information, call 624-6522.

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Find more information at covid.srhd.org/vaccination
Camp Spalding expects another record year, following protocols

Camp Spalding, the camp and retreat center of the Presbytery of the Inland Northwest on Davis Lake near Newport, will open fully, and director Andy Sonneland reports a record pace in registrations similar to 2019, when there were a record of 1,207 campers.

“Some camps will sell out,” he said. “People are anxious to come back to camp. We can accommodate 180 people a week.”

Last year the camp operated at a limited capacity with five weeks of youth camps and two weeks of staff camps. This year Camp Spalding will offer nine weeks because Spokane and Mead School districts run to June 22. Christian camping is unequivocally well suited for children to get away from their routines and unplug. In a week that is a blast, they also hear, consider and respond to Jesus’ call to follow,” he said.

Andy said that in his 31 years, seeing campers respond never gets old. What fun looks like has changed, but the formulas are similar.

“In the 1970s, it was a dock and aluminum canoes,” he said. “Now we offer more recreation opportunities for campers to have fun in the midst of creation.”

The wrinkle this year as last is that Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines will be in place, but Andy expects guidelines may loosen as more 12-year-olds and up are vaccinated.

“We encourage parents to have their children and youth vaccinated. Elementary children won’t yet be vaccinated, but seventh graders up will be,” he said.

Camp Spalding has a new first-aid building to address health and safety issues.

“We will do what the state requires,” he said. “The CDC has been very careful about summer camps. Data shows that COVID transmission is rare outside. The CDC website acknowledges that the threat of serious health issues for children is greater from the flu than for COVID. We hope that whatever protocols are required are based on science, and with warm weather and vaccination, we may see a return,” he added.

Recently 150 members of the Washington State Camp Coalition met on Zoom and then two met with the Governor’s office to address protocols and plans.

“We are CDC compliant in terms of pre-assigning bunks to head to foot and assuring cross ventilation in cabins with windows open all night,” Andy said. “Meals will follow CDC guidelines, which I hope by June 26 will loosen. Tables are six feet apart, and campers will eat with cabin groups.

Andy advises campers to check the website, because it’s also possible “we may have to revert to last year.”

Program offerings will be “normal” with campers swimming and participating in a variety of activities. There is a new archery pavilion. Staff sanitized equipment last year and will this year if it’s mandated, but the CDC has said that COVID is not picked up from surfaces, he noted.

There are two middle-high camps, two high-school camps, a family camp in August and two two-day fourth grade camps and two-week long fifth and sixth grade camps. Staffing them are 42 college-age leaders, most from Whitworth University.

For information, call 447-4388, email andy@clearwaterlodge.org or visit campspalding.org.

With over-changing guidelines, N-Sid-Sen updates information online

With the ever-changing guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), American Camping Association (ACA) and states of Idaho and Washington, leaders of N-Sid-Sen camps are communicating “tweaks” in COVID protocols for campers coming to N-Sid-Sen Camp and Conference Center summer camps on the east shore of Lake Coeur d’Alene.

In a recent phone conversation with other camp directors in the region, Mark Boyd, managing director of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC) camp, said that they all used the CDC’s latest guidance on masks.

“It’s hard keeping up with the changes in protocols,” he said.

“We still need to do what we need to do to take care of our constituents. Counselors will be vaccinated, but we won’t know if all the youth will be vaccinated before they come,” he said.

Even though counselors are vaccinated they need to model mask wearing and other behavior, because there will be no way to know if campers are vaccinated.

Mark, who was relieved when he completed his two vaccinations in April, said the camp requires that people coming to partner camps be vaccinated and follow protocols. Traditionally, Lady of the Lake holds several dance camps. We require campers to go with two of three rules—masking, distancing and being outside.

Meals will be served outside.

Because of concern about weather early in the season, Mark said, the Pacific Northwest UCC Conference decided to hold youth and family camps later in the summer when the weather is better.

The UCC camps will be smaller, aiming at 50, which is 50 percent of normal capacity, so if the weather is not good, they can eat inside on staggered schedules. Usually dance camps draw 150, so they will be at one-third of the capacity, but many partner groups opted not to have events this summer, Mark said.

Camp sessions will also look different. They are four days, Thursday through Monday, not a week, so there is time between guests for buildings to air out and staff to deep clean.

Most staff come in June. There are usually six, but will be eight this summer because of need for more cleaning.

Three youth camps are junior high, senior high and the class of 2020, will decline to around 50, which is 50 percent.

In June, there are several four-day opportunities for “Family Camps,” the model for use of the facilities that began last summer. Family groups “in a bubble together” came to stay in one of the cabins or lodges.

Most brought their own food and did their own cooking. This year there are also “Family Escapes” that Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines will be in place, but Andy expects guidelines may loosen as more 12-year-olds and up are vaccinated.

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For information, call 447-4388, email andy@clearwaterlodge.org or visit campspalding.org.
‘Woven As One’ theme appropriate as campers come back together

John Palorine, who is director of Camp Cross and youth formation in the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane, has been preparing for the 2021 camp season of eight weeks of youth and family sessions with no limits to campers, but expecting fewer to come. In 2020, when there were no campers, 20 staff worked on the facilities, and offered virtual camp experiences and online worship services for the diocese. Staff and contractors painted, rebuilt a deck and did other repairs at the camp on the western shore of Lake Coeur d’Alene. 

“COVID protocols will be followed and this year to assure campers have a healthy, safe time,” Bob said. “Camper testing is the kingpin to assure we operate as normally as possible,” he said.

Protocols begin at home with people keeping camp wellbeing in mind for activities 14 days before coming—avoiding large gatherings, washing hands, mask wearing and monitoring temperatures. Campers will come by car, not on a bus. At check-in, they will answer questions and have their temperatures taken. Staff includes a camp nurse who is a senior in nursing school, and a physician and nurse practitioner as advisors. 

“Woven As One,” the theme for the capital campaign for Camp Cross and diocesan formation, is the camp theme. A resource team with a pastor and two lay leaders will lead the week’s program. 

“The theme is appropriate given we have been apart and are coming back together, John said. “It is about how God weaves us together as people. We will do most regular activities, complying with the CDC,” he said. “We will be outside much of the time, swimming, canoeing, hiking and building friendships.” 

Working beginning June 1, 2021, with John, who came to the diocese in 2018, is Sara Gunther, who will succeed him as camp director and executive director of Camp Cross when he retires the end of October. She has been program director at St. Dorothy’s Rest Camp in the Episcopal Diocese of California. 

“Our camp and youth programming model is for youth to lead to raise their gifts in ministry and leadership,” John said. “We have collaborative leadership, with all having a voice and sharing in decisions. The director is no more important than a fourth grade camper. All are equally important. 

“Our focus is to be witnesses to Jesus and live our faith. Our vision is for the diocese to be a compelling, creative witness to Jesus Christ in the Inland Northwest,” said John, who spent his year with family in Florida, working remotely using Zoom.

John said there will be a new session this year, a teen Wilderness Quest Camp June 20 to 25. Also there will be a Women’s Weekend June 25 to 27, exploring relationships between generations and led by three generations of women in Bishop Gretchen Rehberg’s family, women with different perspectives on life and the way of love.

For information, call 624-3191 or visit campcross.org.

Lutherhaven marks 75 years

Continued from page 1

advocated by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), American Camp Association (ACA) and the Association of Camp Directors. “At defining times like these,” Bob said, “camps have to pick a North Star to follow. Those organizations, and the excellent, science-based procedures they recommend, are the guides we’ve chosen to follow.”

Lutherhaven campers will not wear masks in their cabins, to create a more normal camp experience.

“We are blessed to have a health care team made of medical and public health professionals,” Bob said. “Following ACA best practices, they are requiring all campers to be tested prior to coming to camp, and all of our front line counselors to be vaccinated.

“Because we’re a revolving door of kids and families, our #1 goal is the health and safety of all our kids, staff, families and the folks back home,” he said.

Camper testing is the kingpin to allowing our summer camp programs—from worship to games to Bible studies to campfires—to operate as normally as possible,” he said.

Along with requiring staff who are in close contact with campers to be vaccinated, Lutherhaven urges everyone 12 and older to be vaccinated, as medically advisable.

The theme for Lutherhaven this year is “Always,” based on Psalm 100: “The Lord is good. God’s steadfast love endures forever, and God’s faithfulness to all generations.”

“It’s a perfect theme for our 75 years,” Bob said. “It’s not too hard to imagine—after me being here 28 summers—to imagine our 100th summer.”

In addition to traditional youth camps, Lutherhaven is offering family and church camp programs alongside kids programs.

Plus, Lutherhaven’s Idaho Servant Adventures will bring in youth from around the nation for community service and outreach programs in the Silver Valley—helping elderly homeowners with home repairs or leading camp programs for campers with special needs.

New this year, Lutherhaven will offer free Day Camp programs to Silver Valley children, including three weeks of busing kids from Kellogg, Wallace and Orofino to Shoshone Mountain Retreat for faith-based day camp programs and activities. The day camps are sponsored by a grant from the Laura Moore Cunningham Foundation and United Way of North Idaho.

“We are so thankful to God, so thankful to our faithful and generous donors and congregations, who have allowed Lutherhaven to not just survive this challenging COVID year, but to thrive,” Bob said.

For information, call 208-667-3459 or email registrar@lutherhaven.com.

Photo courtesy of Lutherhaven.
Holden program focus on Samaritan story uplifts value of relationships

Holden Village on Lake Chelan, which has been closed since the beginning of the pandemic last March with only staff and volunteers on site, will be open with a modified summer session from July 12 to Sept. 4, said Calie Mabry, communications and development lead.

To promote wellness, participants will come Mondays and leave Saturdays, creating weeklong cohorts rather than having people come and go.

COVID protocols will follow state guidelines, which include 50 percent of its lodging and dining capacity.

“I hope after September we can expand our capacity,” she said.

Each week, four to five faculty from around the world will lead programs in visual and performing arts, sciences, theology, diversity, inclusion and racial justice.

While Holden’s program is geared to adults, there are limited programs for four- to 17-year-olds while adults are in sessions.

Holden Village is on the site of a 1930s mining town with four guest lodges, where miners once stayed. They have dorm rooms for two to four people with shared bathrooms. In 2021, guests will stay in every other room.

Meals will be served from self-service buffet lines with seating indoors at 50 percent capacity and overflow outdoors, Callie said.

Because Holden Village is remote, requiring travel by ferry up Lake Chelan far from medical care, all staff, volunteers and guests are required to be vaccinated before they arrive.

“We want to be thoughtful and intentional on health and wellness,” Calie said. “We continue to follow CDC and Washington State guidelines regarding masking, distancing and other safety practices, and adapting as the science and regulations evolve.

Because Holden Village is remote, Callie said, hospitals with emergency services in the Seattle area.

Camp Journey was canceled. Far fewer people came.

“This year we have groups from June through October, with just a few open days,” she said.

For information, call 208-773-1655 or visit holdenvillage.org.

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Methods find enthusiasm to come to camps

Alan Rognstad, who is responsible for camps and retreat centers at four sites for the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC), said they gradually opened this spring and will be open in the summer in various ways.

Twinlow Camp and Retreat Center, which is on Spirit Lake near Rathdrum, Idaho, will have a standard summer program at 50 percent capacity for youth camps, wilderness camps, age-level programs, Idaho mission camp and day camps.

When retreat groups are in the camp, there is less capacity, he said.

As of the time he was interviewed in mid-May, state guidelines and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) was allowing 50 percent of capacity with protocols following CDC, American Camping Association (ACA), state and county guidelines.

“We require ventilation, but we strongly encourage it, and all staff are vaccinated,” Alan said.

Protocols include ventilated cabins, most activities outdoors— including meals— with sleeping in cabins and cabin time the only time indoors together. Campers are spaced with partitions, educational sessions in filtered cabins. Mask wearing, distancing and hands washing are other protocols.

Some of the protocols are for all camps, but three sites are not doing overnight camping programs.

Lazy F Camp and Retreat Center near Ellensburg will offer family camps and day camps, as will Ocean Park Camp and Retreat Center on the Long Beach Peninsula. Camp Indianola, closest to Seattle, will have day camps and outdoor adventure camps. Family camps are two to three days with sanitizing in between.

Registration opened in January and some camps were half full by March. “Some plans could change if Washington changes restrictions and further opens up in the coming days and weeks,” he said.

At UMC camps, staff lead the programs.

“We hired fewer staff than in normal seasons at each site. It has been hard to find qualified staff,” Alan said.

“Water of Life” is the theme, focusing on biblical images of water.

“We ask campers to avoid risky behavior before coming and not to come if they have a temperature or are sick,” he said.

“When they arrive, campers will have their temperatures taken and fill out questionnaires. Orientation will be different.”

Through spring, camps have gradually had permission of the PNW United Methodist Conference leader to reopen. Following protocols, they have held retreats with success, said Alan.

“Teens climb climbing wall.

Teen Adventure Camps provide teen wilderness fun with activities such as hiking, sailing, high ropes elements and outdoor survival skills.

“Teens will explore nature, and will grow and develop their relationship with Christ while developing friendships with other teens from around the Pacific Northwest,” he said.

Fees are on a sliding scale and there are scholarships available. Bus transportation is available from Spokane.

For information, call 329-2759, email david.tollerud@ws.salvationarmy.org or visit www.campgifford.org.

Camp Sanders is fully booked in July, August, more than usual

Camp Sanders, which has camp, retreat and conference facilities on 90 acres in southern Benton County in Idaho, canceled camps and was closed last year, using reserve funds to keep three part-time staff employed mowing the grounds and maintaining the camp.

In 2021, in its 96th year, it is open again with a schedule of camps for children, adult families, other by-church church groups, and camps offered by Washington State University, the University of Idaho and fraternal organizations, as well as family retreats and weddings, said Daniel Willkins, executive director since 2016.

Camps, which are primarily Thursdays through Sundays, are fully booked in July and August with more reservations than other years.

Camp Sanders sponsors five camp programs—a men’s winter adventure, a women’s spring retreat, a family camp, kids camp and senior adult retreat.

The camp began in 1935 as a Free Methodist camp and then it was sold to a group of investors from Free Methodist churches who formed Sanders Christian Camp, Inc., the nonprofit that manages it.

Drawing many Free Methodist from Montana, Washington, Idaho and Oregon, the camp has a capacity of 195.

Other groups rent the camp’s dorms, cabins, dining hall, chapel, gym and RV spaces year round for meetings, seminars, trainings and retreats, with reduced capacity in the winter because not all facilities are heated.

In Idaho, Daniel said he had no COVID cases, said most COVID protocols require mask wearing for food preparation and food services. Idaho recently ended mask mandates.

He is not asking for campers’ vaccination status, and said that there has not been a big push for vaccinations in the area of the camp.

Camp Sanders is fully booked in July, August, more than usual. Bell tower at Camp Sanders. Photo courtesy of Camp Sanders.

Camp Sanders has overnight camps for children, wilderness camps for teens

From June 21 to July 30, The Salvation Army’s Camp Gifford on Loon Lake will offer six weekly overnight camp programs for children, ages seven to 12, and adventure or wilderness camps for teens, ages 13 to 17.

The camp provides a Monday to Friday outdoor camp experience for children that is “exciting, educational and spiritual,” said said Daniel Tollerud, who is the director for the Salvation Army Spokane Youth Center and Camp Gifford.

Children will have the opportunity to play games, create fun arts and crafts, learn archery, swim, boat, sing and learn more about God in a fun and uplifting environment, he said.

“I’m not aware of any cases. We began with five then 10 and then 25 people gathering. Now we can have 50 onsite. We have had a good arrow of retreat groups signed up to do the camps in the spring and fall.

“It has been a challenge for everyone involved with camps and directors, not able to do what we normally do and have passion to do,” Alan said.

“It has taken a toll, but if we are opening we have been a shot in the arm for our enthusiasm. The pandemic has also been an opportunity to ‘effect changes we have wanted to do,’ he said.

For example, staff at Indianola redesigned the camp for more adventure programs.

“It has been difficult to be closed and has been a financial hit, losing about $1 million in income in 2020—mitigated some by reduced costs in staffing, receipt of PPP grants to keep the core staff employed and camps in a state of readiness. However, there has been tremendous generosity in the form of gifts from our supporters to help see us through,” Alan said.

For information, email arogstad@pnwumc.org.

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From June 21 to July 30, The Salvation Army’s Camp Gifford on Loon Lake will offer six weekly overnight camp programs for children, ages seven to 12, and adventure or wilderness camps for teens, ages 13 to 17.

The camp provides a Monday to Friday outdoor camp experience for children that is “exciting, educational and spiritual,” said said Daniel Tollerud, who is the director for the Salvation Army Spokane Youth Center and Camp Gifford.

Children will have the opportunity to play games, create fun arts and crafts, learn archery, swim, boat, sing and learn more about God in a fun and uplifting environment, he said.

“I’m not aware of any cases. We began with five then 10 and then 25 people gathering. Now we can have 50 onsite. We have had a good arrow of retreat groups signed up to do the camps in the spring and fall.

“It has been a challenge for everyone involved with camps and directors, not able to do what we normally do and have passion to do,” Alan said.

“It has taken a toll, but if we are opening we have been a shot in the arm for our enthusiasm. The pandemic has also been an opportunity to ‘effect changes we have wanted to do,’ he said.

For example, staff at Indianola redesigned the camp for more adventure programs.

“It has been difficult to be closed and has been a financial hit, losing about $1 million in income in 2020—mitigated some by reduced costs in staffing, receipt of PPP grants to keep the core staff employed and camps in a state of readiness. However, there has been tremendous generosity in the form of gifts from our supporters to help see us through,” Alan said.

For information, email arogstad@pnwumc.org.
Ministry Institute closes, but continues legacy through endowment

S taff reminisced about empowering global and intercultural interactions that occurred over 40 years at the Mater Dei Ministry Institute at Gonzaga University, a center for spiritual renewal.

The 21-unit residential building at 405 E. Sinto, which housed the institute’s offices until May 31, was sold to the Bishop White Seminary as a pre-seminary for candidates for the priesthood to discern their vocation. It will be renamed McGivney Hall.

Six other buildings, including single-family and duplex houses in the 400 blocks of E. Sinto and E. Mission, went to four other buyers.

The Ministry Institute’s executive director Nate Greene, program director Shonna Bartlett and administrative director Diane Imes reflected on the ministry that had taken place there since Fr. Armond Njigo, SJ, founded the institute in 1981.

It was originally a canonical seminary that had been approved by the Vatican to train men who entered the priesthood as a second career after turning 30 and some after being widowed or divorced. “He saw it as a way to address the shortage of priests,” said Imes. “Over 15 years, bishops around the world sent seminar- ists to us, about 150.” About 75 priests studied there and were ordained.

By the mid-1990s, the late-in-life students who had succeeded led other seminaries to offer similar programs, attendance diminished and a papal team decided it would no longer be a canonical seminary, she said.

It then became the Ministry Institute (TMI) to support Gonzaga’s Religious Studies students who planned to enter various ministries.

By the end of the 1990s, it incorporated Gonzaga’s two sabbatical programs, CREDO and FOCUS.

Then the Ministry Institute began offering housing and services to priests and nuns on sabbatical from around the world, as well as to international students from Gonzaga, Whitworth and Eastern Washington universities, and Spokane Community College.

Until this past year, the build- ings housed about 70 interna- tional students, including priests and nuns on sabbatical and working on advanced degrees.

With the decline and aging of the donor base in recent years, Gonzaga University closing the sabbatical programs in preference to degree programs, the difficulty of arranging visas and finally with COVID-19 cutting the number of students in fall 2020 to two, The Ministry Insti- tute decided to close. Funds from the sales will be used to establish a foundation to carry on Fr. Njigo’s mission.

As a master’s degree student in pastoral ministry, Shonna, who previously worked as a medical transcriptionist, began preparing liturgies with sabbatical students in the 1990s. She graduated in 2002 and began working at TMI in 2005.

Leaving her home in Wyoming, she earned a bachelor’s degree at the Colorado College, where she met her husband, Bob. They moved to Pullman in 1984. After he completed graduate school in 1989, they moved to Spokane when he began working with Unity House at Gonzaga. They attend St. Ann’s Catholic parish.

Diane grew up in Kendrick, Idaho, and moved to Spokane in 1981. With a certificate from Kin- man College in accounting, she started as TMI’s bookkeeper in 1983, learning the administrative role and the jobs working with 19 different staff members—directors, program directors to main- tenance staff—over the years. She and her husband Dale did women’s and men’s ministry in previous churches and now attend His Place Church in Post Falls.

Her intersection with the changing international village made her work more than just an administrative job.

“I’ve been like a second moth- er to the students,” she said.

Scholars came from Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ni- geria, Cameroon and Congo in Africa, as well as from Turkey, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea, China, Brazil, Colombia, Mex- ico, Belize, Italy, England, Ire- land, Australia and Canada.

While they ate common meals in the early years, later each pre- pared their own meals.

Shonna taught students in the hall speaking in different languages and smelling the dishes they were cooking. She and Diane often taught priests from other countries to cook and do laundry, which they didn’t have to do at home.

Once a week they ate a meal together and had a prayer time. In free time, they joined in educational, social and spiritual outings Shonna arranged.

Diane said the students valued living in community in an environment of cross-racial and cross-culture respect, learning of each other’s lives, countries and cultures.

Some students stayed for nine years, for graduate degree pro- grams. Most sabbatical students came for two semesters.

“Many came from some of the poorest areas of the world. The first semester they settled in to adjust to life in the new cul- ture. The second semester, they learned as much as they could, auditing classes to gain knowl- edge and renew skills before go- ing back to their vocations,” said Shonna, who recruited students.

Recruitment was not hard because former students referred people.

“I was impressed by their deep faith,” she said. “One Af- rican sister unable to get Gon- zaga’s medical insurance said, ‘God will take care of me. I will have medical problems,’ and she didn’t.”

“They came from places in the world where they placed their lives in God’s hands, which is not a normal experience for Americans,” she said.

“I learned more from their difficult experiences as they communicated their different opinions and dealt with their different personalities,” she said.

“For example, some of the Chinese students were in the state sanctioned church and some were in the underground churches. They learned to man- age their political differences.”

The endowment they are establishing will continue the ministry and vision of Fr. Njigo.

Nate, who was hired in 2009 as executive director because of his background in finance, will set up the endowment, which will also be used for scholarships for Gon- zaga ministry students, sabbatical programs, seminars and retreats around the globe—such as alums who make it possible. “The hearts of the African students were on fire for the Lord. They have a servant heart. I don’t see often in American people. They strengthened my faith, opening me to be more loving and less judgmental,” said Diane.

Shonna enjoyed the multicultural liturgies students led in the chapel and at St. Ann’s—”singing in Chinese, dancing in with the gifts and carrying a Bible in on their heads.”

“I now judge worship by whether it is joyful, rooted in faith and sends people out to do God’s work,” she said.

Diane said African celebra- tions were joyful, with tambourines, ululating and colorful garb.

“Their joy was overwhelming. They were filled with gratitude for the biggest thing,” she said.

Muslim students would go into the chapel and pray to the East. Rabbi Elizabeth Goldstein came to Taizé services and taught Hebrew chants.

Remembering the students, former staff and retreatants who shared “this sacred space,” the three are grateful for supporters who made it possible.

I gained a broad understanding of faith,” said Shonna, who will continue services on Zoom through July, take August off and look for a permanent meeting place near Gonzaga in the fall.

“We do Taizé on Zoom with 15 to 18 people joining locally and from Kansas, Korea, Minne- sota and Georgia. This summer, we will meet in homes once a month,” she said.

For information, email bartlett@gonzaga.edu.
In responding to a recent survey: The Fig Tree did on COVID impacts, pastors are sharing their experiences of what they have learned in these times.

In COVID, we discovered new tools and people we haven’t been reaching. It has made us open ourselves up. This congregation already had a wide-open heart. It was not a closed, exclusive community, but COVID pushed us further. We learned there were things that weren’t working. This is an opportunity for the church to get beyond itself. Sometimes we have to be pushed. Some said, “this is a disaster.” God said, “I can use this, we can use this.” That is the way it often works. I will urge my people move out of a rut.

Wesley Howell Trinity Lutheran, Pullman

God has always been active. God didn’t do this on purpose. God has been gratifying to see how God has been working through the pandemic. Our people and the whole community are coming together to have what they need.

Ron Short Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Othello

It’s made us aware of a sense of responsibility for the health of the community. We don’t live in silos, in terms of COVID or vaccinations. Our actions are not just about our own health, but about the community as a whole.

Fr. Michael Savaleys Holy Rosary Parish, Rosalia

Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. John

As for spiritual growth, one of the things that has happened in COVID is that we are never alone. God never leaves us alone as a community. There is always a way for us to grow together. Many folks couldn’t see how they could worship using live streaming. Now we know we don’t have to be in the building for spiritual growth.

Our outreach reminds us that the needs of the community are outside the building, and we don’t have to do that. The pandemic had us to do new things. We have to be other focused, to love our neighbors as our very own selves.

The dynamics of families have changed during COVID. Families are doing more together, communicating better, helping spiritually, worshipping together at home, sharing our daily table or in the living room. We have shared spirituality in a way that was not happening before COVID.

Zion Lutheran, Davenport

Many have reflected on how we’d like to go back to “the way things were.” It’s hard for a leader to remind people that we can’t do that. The world has changed. We need to be other focused, to love our neighbors as our very own selves. It’s harder for us to think of putting other people in front of our selves and putting ourselves into other’s shoes. We are our neighbors. We need to be more aware of the world, giving us the opportunity to continue our spiritual search.

Sometimes the church emphasizes the value of outreach and provides new tools in the pandemic established and reconnected us with our roots, a good root system from which we can grow. We have a stronger online presence now, and are continuing that. In feedback, we have had some good comments from people. People say they feel closer to the church because of the online choices. The pandemic has provided us with comfort zones to use technology.

We have had a larger focus in on-home spirituality, that the pandemic pushed us to. I have been preaching and teaching that church is about care for self, care for family, care for neighbor and that church is more than just Sunday morning worship as the center piece. How we take care of ourselves and others spiritually supports our communal life.

Katherine Tuttle Wilbur Community Church

For spiritual growth, I learned to bake sourdough bread because I couldn’t buy any yeast. Personally, I did things I didn’t think I would ever do in my life, like sending sermons to parishioners. I thought people needed to be there to hear them. A sermon offers spiritual growth, so it’s about reaching out people to make a connection. I had to learn technology. I have all learned hybrid worship. I think that the good thing that will come from this is that we will be able to continue with people that would never walk through the doorway of the church.

Marilyn Wilder Trinity Episcopal Oroville

Relationship is clearly number one. People miss it terribly. That is true between family members in the same home, between friends and at workplaces, but especially for people in church. We’ve had no gatherings. In church, relationship is a vital part of the congregation. It helps us to be healthier and stronger together, stronger in faith. It’s the reason. So when the relationship tie is disrupted, it’s not just a part of faith, it’s an incredible love as much.

Jeff Milsten Redeemer Lutheran, Dayton Pomeroy Congregation
June 14 • “The Incarnation in the Holy Eucharist,” Sacred Liturgy Conference, Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes, Catholic Diocese of Spokane, 8am-9pm today. Call 464-7677.
June 16 • Women in Leadership 2021, webinar on empowering women in corporate leadership, overcoming gender obstacles and shaping healthier business environments. sandiego and Wheaton universities, 11 a.m. sacramentojournal.com
June 22-24 • “For Such a Time as This: Faithful Witness in a Chaotic Culture,” Whitworth Ministry Summit, annual gathering of pastors and ministry leaders. Whitworth University, 300 W Hawthorne Rd. 8:00-9:00 a.m. wheaton.edu, 771-3275.
June 23 • “Militarism and Nonviolence,” Peace and Justice Action League (PJALS) webinar on militarism and principles of nonviolence, 7 to 8:30 p.m., https://secure.everyaction.com/AC05PDNY8KtD3bL9dG

June 26-28 • Training Opportunities for the Justice Involved, Spokane Resource Center - see following listings
June 28 • “Trauma Informed,” Layne Pavey, 10 a.m. to noon

June 29-30 • 7th annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival, Spokane Riverkeeper, online films about adventure, advocacy and water protection, 7 to 9 p.m. 464-7674, hello@spokaneriverkeeper.org

June 30 • June What?

July 1 • “Implicit Bias,” Kurtis Robinson, 9 a.m. to noon

July 2 • “History of Race in America and the Criminal Justice System,” Jac Archer, Revive Center and the GSP Race Equity Training Team, 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

July 3 • “Militarism and Nonviolence,” Michael Reid, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

July 4, 22 • “Militarism and Nonviolence,” Casey Jackson, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

July 19-21 ~ Praying with Jesus, Monastery of St. Gertrude, 208-962-9600, MonasteryofStGertrude.org

July 23-30 • Come to the Quilt, Spirit Center, Monastery of St. Gertrude, 208-962-5000, spirit-center.org


July 28 • “Self Care and Preventing Burnout Workshops, 7 to 8:30 p.m., pjals.org

July 29 • “Voices of the River,” event with poet Laurnace Fezzi Pic to book presentation of the Lummi Nation, Humanities Washington, online. Humanities.org/events/2021-06

July 30 • Faithful Resistance,” short videos, Northwest College, 5:30 to 7 p.m., pjals.org

August 21 • “Unity in the Community, multicultural celebration of the Northwest’s diverse communities. Riverfront Park Clock Tower, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., wwww.nwunity.org

August 22-29 • “Living as a Monk in Everyday Life: A Benedictine Cohort," Spirit Center, Monastery of St. Gertrude, 208-962-5000, spirit-center.org

August 24-25 • “The Fig Tree, order copies at 535-4112

August 24-26 • “For Such a Time as This: Faithful Witness in a Chaotic Culture," Whitworth Ministry Summit, annual gathering of pastors and ministry leaders. Whitworth University, 300 W Hawthorne Rd. 8:00-9:00 a.m. wheaton.edu, 771-3275.

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September 2 • “The Fig Tree Development, noon, and 7 to 8:30 p.m., pjals.org

September 3 • “Brilliant Blunders That Left a Mark,” Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience, Short Story Contest entry deadline, FLConscience@gmail.com

September 5-11 • “For Such a Time as This: Faithful Witness in a Chaotic Culture," Whitworth Ministry Summit, annual gathering of pastors and ministry leaders. Whitworth University, 300 W Hawthorne Rd. 8:00-9:00 a.m. wheaton.edu, 771-3275.
Mission Community Outreach Center marked its 25th year by finding new ways to serve Spokane community with online orders and curbside pickups to meet COVID protocols and protect clients and volunteers.

On May 14, it held an outside anniversary party, honoring two of the four men who founded it in 1996 and their wives who were volunteers, Walt and Barbara Shildes and Duane and Marnene Arklls. The other founders from the former Mission Ave. Community Presbyterian Church nearby were the late Ray Border and the late Irwin Winship, former pastor.

The church envisioned a community center for low-income people living in the Missis- g Cat to serve on the board in 2008 and became executive director of the Center in December 2017. 

“Last year, COVID changed the way we operate,” she said. “We launched an order form for online shopping. Volunteers come in weekly and fill the orders. People come by to pick up the orders outside.”

Those without access to a computer could order by phone, and a few come to the door.

The center also has referrals from homeless shelter case managers who made orders for clients.

“We have also given clothing, hygiene and baby items to 14 nonprofits this last year,” Ali said.

Bob added that they have also had referrals from the Red Cross and agencies serving domestic violence victims.

“A broad array of people come—families stretch financial resources and families in Malden, people experiencing difficult situations, physical and mental health struggles or unemployment,” Bob said.

“One of my favorite parts of the work is serving everyone and making them feel welcome,” Ali said, telling of upgrades to improve the atmosphere so people feel they are shopping in a store and can pick out what they want. “It’s important for people to feel they are shopping, not coming to get free stuff.”

Volunteers keep the place clean and organized.

The center has not been as busy with online orders as it would be in person, she said. It has served more people in need through agencies this year. We are looking forward to serving out clients in person again soon.”

For information, call 536-1084, email mcoc.spokane@gmail.com or visit www.4mission.org.

Our Team of Bereavement Counselors are here for patients’ families to instill hope, reassurance and validation throughout the grief process.

Bob Fisher and Ali Norris outside Mission Community Outreach.

Photo courtesy of Mission Community Outreach Center

from July 2011 to October 2014, Mission Community Outreach Center has been run exclusively by volunteers. Walt was volunteer executive director.

Now, however, Ali is paid as full time executive director.

Bob said the center is an extension of the ministry of many Spokane area churches collaborat- ing on “doing what Christians are called to do.”

Some support it financially. Some provide volunteers. Some collect clothes, shoes and other items.

Currently the supporting churches include Mary Queen and St. Aloysius Catholic parishes; St. Luke, St. John’s, Hope, Beautiful Savior, Redeemer and Holy Cross Lutheran churches; Millwood, Hamblin Park and First Presbyterian churches; Spokane Valley United Meth- odist and North Hill Christian churches.

For example, St. Aloysius Catholic Parish and others re- cruit volunteers to help with the back-to-school shoe event. Millwood Presbyterian does a toilet paper drive providing up to 30 cases a year.

Along with churches, some agencies, service clubs and busi- nesses like Kiwanis, Rotary, J.C. Penney’s, Liberty Mutual and Thrivent provide items, grants and volunteers, said Ali.

“Last year, COVID changed the way we operate,” she said. “We launched an order form for online shopping. Volunteers come in weekly and fill the or- ders. People come by to pick up the orders outside.”

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--- Patricia Valets, MD, PhD Bereavement Supervisor

Mission Community Outreach does curbside pickup during COVID

Bob Fisher and Ali Norris outside Mission Community Outreach.

Photo courtesy of Mission Community Outreach Center

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