Churches’ ties open opportunities

By Mary Stamp

Simple acts of sharing love between Covenant United Methodist Church (UMC) in North Spokane and Buenas Nuevas Lutheran Church in El Paisnal, El Salvador, opened the opportunity for Flor Chavez to study nursing in Ohio and return to serve her community.

“I hope people appreciate what they have, and if they have enough resources that they find a way to share with others,” said Flor who visited Spokane May 13 to 23. “For those who lack resources, don’t be discouraged. There are opportunities. God will open doors for us to overcome every circumstance.”

Diane Thomas, who with her husband Rick and the Sister Church Ministry Team, hosted Flor for a 10-day visit to their church and community, encourages other congregations to establish partner churches and then find ways to show Christ’s love.

As part of the two churches’ 30-year sister-church relationship, she visited El Salvador three times, in 2004, 2006 and 2008. Rick has gone twice. On their visits, they met people and learned about their lives.

Delegations of 10 to 12 people go every two to three years—involving about 60 of the 200 church members since 1992. Along with visiting the El Paisnal church and the church where Monsignor Oscar Romero was assassinated, they learn about challenges of life there.

Some delegations also have a mission project. One sponsored by the United Methodist Committee on Relief built block homes to replace homes destroyed by an earthquake. Another with Living Waters built wells for a school with tainted water. A third worked with a local agronomist organization, Aprodehni, to fund a project for church members to plant and grow fruit trees and medicinal plants for personal use and to sell for a small income.

Diane, who grew up in Spokane, has always been interested in social justice. She was especially impressed by the tree-planting project, seeing that the children dug holes and put in plants, and then kept them watered and cared for.

After a hurricane and severe flooding, the church needed a new building, so Covenant UMC sent money for the 30 families.

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Representatives of six faiths observe common themes of spring holy days

Hindu, Muslim, Baha’i, Jewish, Christian and Buddhist speakers described their spring holy days and their faith’s teachings on creation care in an April program at the Cathedral of St. John.

Malcolm Haworth, ecumenical and interfaith liaison with The Fig Tree, asked panelists to describe their spring holy days, how they relate to creation care.

There were six panels.

• Sreedharani Nandagopol, a Hindu who has lived in Spokane for 45 years, has shared South Indian cultural programs.

• Karen Stromgren, co-chair of Muslims in Community for Action and Support, has been Muslim for 24 years.

• Shahid Khalil, who is Baha’i, attends Whitworth University.

• Rabbi Tamar Malino serves Temple Beth Shalom and Congregation Emuna’El in Spokane.

• Lauri Clark-Strait, a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) pastor, has lived in Spokane 18 years and is pastor at Rockford United Methodist Church.

• Melissa Opel is a minister in the Spokane Buddhist Temple, a Japanese based Jodo Shinshu temple.

Sreedharani said that, while Ugadi on April 2—the first new moon after the equinox, which is a signal of the arrival of spring—North India celebrates Holi, her area of South India celebrates Ugadi on April 2—the first new moon after the equinox, which is a signal of the arrival of spring.

Started in 3100 BC, Ugadi featured on the cover.

Flor Chavez and Diane Thomas continue relationship through the years.

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The Fig Tree will publish 18,000 copies of Directory

The 2022-23 Resource Directory will print at least 18,000 copies because of demand, said directory editor Malcolm Haworth, as he works to finalize listings and prepare the layouts for publication by the Tribune Publishing Co. in Lewiston.

We need to know now how many copies people would like to receive and distribute,” he said.

“We are also finalizing advertising and community partners, who are the primary sources of support for our much used, comprehensive directory,” he added.

This is the 49th year the directory has been published to inform people of congregations, ministries, human services, health care, families/children, seniors, justice, environment, cultures, human rights, arts and culture and civic resources.

Community partners who donate major gifts have their logos featured on the cover.

“We appreciate all who collaborate and contribute to make this directory possible to serve people in crises, people in need, people in transitions, people who are stabilized and seek to give back,” Malcolm commented.

The Fig Tree staff continue to request and receive donations toward the Spring Benefit—seeking $6,500 more from those who have given in previous years and new supporters, said Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp.

Volunteers and staff are already working with an ecumenical and interfaith team to plan the 2023 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, now set for Saturday, Jan. 13. Workshops topics will be decided in upcoming meetings at 1 p.m., Tuesdays, June 21 and Aug. 23. That group and benefit planners invite interested people to join them.

For information, call 535-4112 or email mary@thefigtree.org.
The NCC urges Congress to pass gun control, and legislation to end systemic racism and repair the damage done by past white supremacist attacks, and now the violence has to stop. We must increase efforts to end racism.

"Our communities have not healed from the onslaught of violence from past white supremacist attacks, and now the scalps are ripped off to bleed again," she said. “This racial violence has to stop. We must increase efforts to end racism. That will not happen with only ceremonial gestures that don’t go to the root causes. We have to do deeper work.”

At a Governing Board retreat in Montgomery, Ala., in May, NCC leaders visited the Legacy Museum, where they saw the connection between the shooter’s terrorism and America’s history of racism and policies that intimidate and dehumanize the black community.

“The majority of Americans want common sense gun legislation, but politicians refuse to pass the laws,” Bishop Vashit said.

Through its 2018 ACT NOW to End Racism (Awaken, Confront, Transform) initiative, the NCC urges: • Individuals in minority communities to commit to be aware of racism in their lives and resolve to dismantle it
• Local ministers to communicate with members—in preaching and teaching—to confront racism and White supremacy.
• National efforts to transform the hearts, minds and behaviors of people and fight for policies that change structures.

In addition, the NCC urges Congress to pass common sense gun control, and legislation to end systemic racism and repair the damage done by past white supremacist attacks.

“We must continually plant seeds of love that recognize the humanity of all people in order to detoxify the planted seeds of hate and realize ‘Beloved Community,’” said Bishop Vashit.

Orthodox meet to prepare for WCC Assembly

An Inter-Orthodox Pre-Assembly in May affirmed “the utmost importance of love” and a “call for unity, reconciliation, justice and peace,” said delegates from 20 Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches.

The consultation, hosted by the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, articulated the Orthodox perspective on the theme of the upcoming World Council of Churches (WCC) 11th Assembly, prepare delegates for participation and express expectations of the upcoming assembly and life in the WCC beyond.

“In Orthodox theology, love is of utmost importance,” reads the communiqué. “The One God in Trinity in His divine goodness created the world, and maintains and protects humanity and All His creation with love.”

Community-Minded names new director

After a six-month national search, Community-Minded Enterprises (CME) has named John Hindman as its new CEO, overseeing its programs for addiction recovery, child care, early learning, job readiness, TV/digital media and other services.

The organization seeks to match its programs to the needs of people in the region, so some programs are long term and some are short term.

John comes to CME with more than 30 years of experience in nonprofit and social services. Most recently, he was a director for Pioneer Health Services, where he established Spokane’s Mental Health Crisis Stabilization Facility.

Previously, he was the executive director of Morning Star Boys Ranch and worked as a licensed independent clinical social worker. John is the fourth CEO for local and independent Clinical Social Workers. He follows two previous executive directors, Wade Schwartz, Mary Stamp, Michelle Girardot, executive director of Habitats-Spokane. Families in Habitat’s Homeownership Program earn 250 hours of volunteer time per year, or make a $5,000 cash donation. They build their homes and neighbor’s homes. They also take financial education courses to learn about mortgages, budgeting and improving their credit while saving for the home-building project.

Habitat-Spokane volunteers help build homes year-round, but volunteers partner work side-by-side homeowners to build homes. They also take financial education courses to learn about mortgages, budgeting and improving their credit while saving for the home-building project.

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World Refugee Day will be June 20

World Refugee Day returns to celebrate refugees in the Spokane area from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, June 18, two days before the United Nations-designated World Refugee Day, on June 20. The event on the theme, “Coming Together in Solidarity,” will be held at the Nevada Playground at Garry Middle School, 725 E. Joseph Ave.

Former refugee chefs from Feast World Kitchen will prepare food for attendees by 5:30 p.m., said Kathryn Gairns, director of Refugee Connections. There will also be a cultural marketplace selling crafts and art created by former refugees, traditional song and dance performances, speeches from community leaders, a citizenship ceremony, fashion show, community agency fair to share resources and activities for children.

Rebecca Gairns convenes the planning committee of representatives of International Rescue Committee, Manzanita House, the Community Colleges of Spokane, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, World Relief Spokane, and Spokane County Evangelical Church.

World Refugee Day will be June 20

The World Council of Church (WCC) 11th Assembly, Aug. 31 to Sept. 11, 2023, in Karlsruhe, Germany, as the September issue of The Fig Tree will come out. Fig Tree staff will be at the Inland Northwest of opportunities to participate in worship and speeches online.

The assembly theme for business, worship and engagement is “Christ’s love moves the world to remember and act.”

The assembly is a gathering of “the fellowship of churches that confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior” that occurs amid global realities of wars, conflicts, COVID-19, climate change, racism, authoritarian politics, digitalization and militarization. As the world seeks hope, an assembly offers a multi-faith response.

Each day begins and ends with prayer. There are plenaries for reflecting on theological and contextual issues. Participants will dig into plenary topics in “home groups” and Bible study. Dialogue will occur in ecumenical conversations. There will be regional and national gatherings and the “Brunnen,” or gatherings in the water, for networking and sharing.

The assembly, as the WCC’s highest governing body, normally meets every eight years to elect its 150-person central committee and eight presidents, as well as elect working business committees and make statements on issues of international concern.

Delegates of WCC member churches speak and participate in decision-making to set direction, make statements, review work and consider the WCC constitution and finances by consensus. Delegates use orange and blue cards to signify whether they feel warm (orange) or cool (blue) about a decision. The idea of consensus is that delegates prayerfully discern God’s will and seek a common mind through dialogue. It requires time to listen, pray and discern.

Local hosts will welcome more than 4,000 people to Karlsruhe, Germany. There are pre-assessment gatherings for specialized ministries, Ortho-

dox, women, youth, indigenous persons and disability advocates.

With a vision for unity to inspire the churches, public statements on world issues and a message capturing the assembly and hopes and experience will inspire the next years for the ecumenical movement.

For information, visit oik-
ung.org.

LCSNW raises funds with 8 Lakes Bike Ride

Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW) is sponsoring its annual 8 Lakes Bike Ride on Saturday, July 18, exploring the scenery of Spokane, West Plains, Medical Lake and Cheney. Routes will be marked and include food stops, medical and mechanical support and camaraderie.

“Our interest is to give the people – both those who cycle and those who don’t – a fair chance to see the area, experience the fun and feel the support and camaraderie,” said Raylee Houser, program director at LCSNW.

LCSNW plans to choose a 5-mile or 10-mile route, leaving from Kaiser Permanente’s corporate office, 5615 W. Sunset Hwy. Riders can collect pledges to help support LCSNW’s mission. The goal is to raise $70,000 for LCSNW programs.

For more than 65 years, LCSNW’s mission is to provide hope, resources and healing to thousands of Spokane-area residents affected by violent crimes and other traumatic, life-altering events,” said Denise Rapp, director of human resources at LCSNW.

For more information, contact Raylee Houser at 922-0206.

Foley Library hosts Holocaust exhibition

Foley Library hosts the “Americans and the Holocaust” traveling exhibit from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and American Library Association from Aug. 23 to Oct. 7, Foley is one of 50 U.S. libraries hosting this traveling exhibit, which examines motives, pressures and fears that shaped Americans’ responses to Nazism, war and genocide in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. The exhibit from the museum will be on display at the Foley Library for the entire month of September 2023. Accompanying it will be a series of events presented by the Gonzaga University’s Foley Library “AMERICANS AND THE HOLOCAUST” gallery.

A program on “Americans and the Holocaust: Remembering Our Past to Inform Our Future” will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 8, in the Hemmingson Ballroom and live streamed. Speakers include Paul Bracke, associate provost and dean of libraries, Kevin O’Connor, who teaches history, Paul Reggelbrugg of the Holocaust Center of Humanity. Holocaust survivor Carla Paeperzk interviewed by Julia Thompson and Kristin Hoefer of the Gonzaga Center for the Study of Hate.

Based on new research, “Americans and the Holocaust” explores themes in American history and history, including the Great Depression, isolationism, xenophobia, racism and antisemitism that influenced decisions by the U.S. government, media, organizations and individuals in response to Nazism. It challenges assumptions that Americans knew little and did nothing about the Nazi persecution and murder of Jews as the Holocaust unfolded. It calls for the inclusion of U.S. individuals and groups who responded.

For information, visit gonzaga.edu/foley-library/about-news-events/americans-and-the-holocaust-exhibit-events-and-streaming.

WCC Assembly resources available now

“From Our Past to Inform Our Future” will be held at 6 p.m., Thursday, June 22, at the Center for Humanity, and supported by the Gonzaga Jewish Center for the Study of Hate and the Seattle Holocaust Memorial Museum and American Library Association from Washington, D.C., will be traveling through November 2023.

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Organic Methods

Vinegar Flats Farm
Spokane’s Local Farm is on Facebook, Instagram & the web: VinegarFlatsFarm.com
#VinegarFlatsFarm
VinegarFlatsFarm.com
40 acres inside Spokane City Limits!
By donating scholarships, church educates 80 to 90 children a year

Continued from page 1

In Iglesia Buenas Nuevas to rebuff a myth is also central to where people come for health care, education and resources. Over the years, Covenant UMC has donated $120 per student each year for scholarships so 80 to 90 children have books, uniforms, school and supplies to go to school. In addition to personal donations, Covenant sells fair trade coffee, tea, chocolates and olives oil to support the mission.

Flor was one of the children receiving scholarships. She is one of seven siblings her single mother raised after her father left the family. She has been in Iglesia Buenas Nuevas since childhood and met Diane and Rick when they came in 2004. She finished basic education—first through ninth grade—and high school in El Paisnal. Few go beyond basic education, so she feels lucky Diane, Rick and her sister helped her pursue her dream of college. Flor earned a bachelor’s degree in education with a major in English at a Pedagogical College in San Salvador. Back in El Paisnal, she taught Sunday Bible classes for children and did youth work for her church and the National Youth Committee. In 2015, she joined her sister, Yenix, to teach Saturday English and computer classes the church offers children in the church and community.

Her volunteer work at the Lutheran Church on the Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., led to a full-time job coordinating delegations from U.S., German and Canadian partner churches. The Synod assists partnerships between about 35 churches around the world and 57 churches in El Salvador. Many partner churches help with scholarships. “Over the years, about 200 students from my congregation have gone to college,” Flor said.

In 2017, she first came to the U.S. to Chicago and then to South Dakota as a camp counselor. In 2021, she came again and now studies nursing in Wapakoneta, Ohio, assisted by church partners there. She will finish the program to be a RN in five semesters and return to El Salvador to work as a nurse and help other students accomplish their goals. “I see how God’s love grows in us and helps us serve others,” Flor said.

“When I was young, my faith was not strong. I would hear about God’s love and about martyrs in my country,” she said. “That helps keep me going and asking more of myself, so I encourage other children to fight for what they want to accomplish.”

“Because we have many disapprovals, being part of the church has helped me begin loving myself and loving others for who they are,” Flor continued. “I have had opportunities in life encountering people in many countries, opening my mind to see that lack of resources sometimes brings us down, but even if we lack resources, having a job, community and family and friendship can move us from emptiness and fear about not having food for the next day.”

Flor has seen how love has sustained communities and families that struggle. “You have to have enough for the day. She values sharing love with people she meets every day.”

In the U.S., she is impressed with how involved parents are in their children’s education, “because they are educated themselves. It’s hard for a single mother in El Salvador who does not have education to help her children with studies.”

She is also impressed with the weather in the U.S., in contrast to El Salvador, where they have had severe flooding followed by long dry summers that often dry up crops.

Flor said 85 percent of El Salvadorans use public transportation. In smaller communities, a bus leaves once a day in the morning and returns in the afternoon. For health care, it’s hard to find transportation to the nearest clinic. “Many children have poor health because they lack good nutrition. They go to school in the morning without eating breakfast or in the afternoon without lunch. It’s hard for them to focus and understand when their stomachs are empty,” she said.

“While many have access to water, it’s not clean. They drink it and get sick,” said Flor, who plans to work in the government clinic in El Paisnal. Because of violence and poverty, many children think there are no opportunities, but Flor hopes they see an example of opportunities that come from support of people in the U.S. and other countries.

“They help us see beyond our struggles,” she said.

In her visits, Diane has learned that a few “ultra-rich families” rule the country and there are very limited resources or government support to build people up through education or jobs. She has seen little change on that level over the years.

Gary Proctor, a Vietnam vet, went with a 1989 Eastern Washington University delegation to Central America as the civil war was ending. He returned troubled by what happened because of U.S. involvement.

That was the catalyst for starting our relationship with the Buenas Nuevas church in El Paisnal, located 45 minutes from the capital, San Salvador,” said Diane, who retired after years as a counselor and administrator at Whitworth University.

The goal of the partnership is to “implement an active and prayerful interchange with Christian sisters and brothers in El Salvador and accompany them in their pursuit of education and social justice.”

“Our congregation is diverse. Many are involved in other ministries,” Diane said. “It’s a way for me to live out my Christian faith. Sometimes it’s discouraging because there is little we can do to make things different because of roadblocks from the Salvadoran leadership. It’s hard to see progress.”

“I have become more aware of the impact of our government on other parts of the world,” Diane said. “I pray for El Salvador and the people. I pray for change and hope there is a better life for them in the future. It’s heartbreaking how challenging their lives are, but the program provides support and education they otherwise would not have.”

Flor said the partnership with Covenant UMC has helped her and those in her church see that “life is not just bad things that happen in our turn, to see beyond our struggles to know there are many people who are ready to help us find opportunities.”

Manzanita House is gathering place for immigrants

Manzanita House, which is creating a space for immigrants to participate in the community, is hosting two events over the summer.

Manzanita House was created as a place for immigrants to develop community and collaborative solutions—inspired by the resilience of the manzanita plant that withstands wildfires, said Brielle Balazs, of Manzanita House.

The first event is a Community Block Party from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, June 4 at 806 W. Knox Ave.

This is a free event with cultural music, food, immigrant businesses and local organizations. There will be a free food distribution in partnership with Second Harvest Mobile Market from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

The second is a Back-to-School Resource Fair from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 27, at 806 W. Knox Ave.

There, resources will be shared with families needing backpacks, children’s clothing and shoes, school supplies and other resources.

For information, call 309-8404, email bbalazs@mhspokane.org or visit manzanitahouse-spokane.org.

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Presiding bishop reminds Christians their faith is about love

One word sums up Christian faith and evangelism for the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church USA, Michael Curry. That word is “love.”

He quoted the song, “They will know we are Christians by our love,” and the scripture, “We are to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves.”

Bishop Curry spoke at the Friday Evensong, Saturday conversation and Sunday worship service April 29 to May 1 at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Spokane.

His presentations were a walk through the Bible.

“I am a follower of Jesus, a disciple. I believe Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection shows us God’s way of life, which is God’s way of love,” he said. “Not to know love is not to know God, because God is love. Love is key to life for all Christians.”

In Luke 10, a lawyer, who asks Jesus how to inherit eternal life, knows about loving God and neighbor.

“Eternal life is about life now and to eternity,” the bishop said, about God’s will being done on earth as in heaven.

Part of Michael’s family is Pentecostal, his father was a Bishop in Episcopal, but the same family preacher, who spoke at all funeral services, said pentecostalism had little control over their birth or death dates, but need to consider what they do after they are born and before they die of having “a life of integrity, dignity and eternity.”

When the lawyer in Luke asked Jesus to define “neighbor,” Jesus told the story of the good Samaritan – an ethnic, religious enemy – finding a man beaten and taking him to be cared for. That was something unlikely for someone coming from the world view of political party, race or religion to do, Bishop Michael said.

The Samaritan knew the man was a child of God, created in the image of the God of love.

The bishop said Jesus told the lawyer: “Do this and live.”

“Love is not an emotion or sentiment. Love seeks the good, the welfare and wellbeing of others,” the bishop said.

Just as the Episcopal Church helped Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust in 1938, it wel- comes refugees today, he said, telling of a poster of Mary riding a donkey holding Jesus. It says, “In the name of these refugees, help all refugees.”

“Do this and you will live,” he said, quoting the prophet Amos’ words, “Let justice roll like riv- er and righteousness as a mighty stream,” and adding Isaiah’s call to “beat swords into plowshares.”

Doing that, “people would not go to war. People would not invade Ukraine and the people of Ukraine would be free as God intends them to be,” he said. “Do this: love God, neighbor and self, and you will find life abundant.”

Eight years ago, Bishop Michael was asked to attend the enthronement of the new Arch- bishop of Burundi, where the CIA warned U.S. citizens not to travel. It was 10 years after the conflict of Tutsis, Hutus and Pygmies spilled over. A quarter of a million people were killed and half a million fled as refu- gees. He had seen Louisiana Hurricane Katrina, but had never seen “what the hand of human hatred, bigotry and injustice can do” until he landed in Burundi and was met “by deacons with machetes and clubs.”

Because the Anglican Church worked for peace and reconcilia- tion in Burundi, the Archbishop of Canterbury wanted an Anglican representative to go. After his en- thronement, the archbishop took Bishop Michael to tour the country.

“It was a heap of rubble. Children without parents walked by. People had died,” Michael said. “He took us up a hill and sat down like Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Pointing to the city, the archbishop said, ‘This is man’s way. Jesus has shown us a better way. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. That is how we will rebuild our country.’”

A few years later in 2008 at the Lambeth Bishops Conference, the archbishop told Michael, “Peace has come to Burundi. We are rebuilding our country. There is a different city.”

“I never thought Starbucks would be a sign of God.” Bishop Michael said.

“Love is the way. It flows from God’s love. Don’t be afraid or ashamed of it. It’s not easy, but it’s the path to life abundant that is meant for all,” he said.
In a recent sermon, Andrea (Andy) CastroLang, pastor of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC), likened the congregation she has served for 20 years to “a garden that shares life and hope, spreads its branches in welcome, and is a safe resting place for sharing stories that ground people in life and lead them to challenge injustice.”

As she prepares to retire in August, she is reflecting on her time with the church through grief and struggles, renewal and laughter.

“I’m retiring because I’ll be 65, not as part of the wave of folks retiring or facing retirement from COVID burnout,” she said. “I’m retiring on a high note with the church. We will have a good-bye, and Westminster is ready to be challenged by a new leader.”

When Andy came to Westminster in 2002, the interim minister handed her two folders. She was on her own to learn about the people and the ministry.

The church has already chosen its successor, who will overlap two months with her. The goal is to help Westminster maintain its momentum. Usually, UCC churches search for an interim and then for a permanent pastor.

“Westminster has committed, energized lay leaders, who know who they are and what their ministry is, so they do not need an interim for that,” she said.

“We encourage members to go into the community, represent us, speak up and make good trouble,” she and other members point out. We participate in marches and rallies and Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Black Lives Matter. Climate change, gun violence, and women’s, indigenous, LGBTQ and Asian American rights,” Andy said.


Andy CastroLang and the church adapted readily to Zoom.

“We join others to make the planet a better place,” she said. “There is plenty to do to stand for what we believe is Gospel truth, especially acting to end homelessness and racism. We see and hear marginalized people and stand with them.”

Inside the church, the momentum includes many efforts.

- Lay groups are looking at ways to sustainably use its space at 411 S. Washington and at options for ministry beyond there.
- Tuesday Night Talks, which replaced Sunday forums during COVID, looked at activism after studying racism in 2021.
- Previously, the forum discussed mental illness and justice issues.
- The youth group studies issues, like racism and the Holocaust, and reaches out to the community, collecting items for Afghan refugees and joining the effort to remove Spokane’s statue of John Monaghan.
- In 22-year involvement, the Spokane Alliance offers Shan and community organizing—members relationship building sharing stories to discern issues and actions on health care, apprentice workers, the university district, the medical school, affordable housing and more.

Financially, giving is strong, and there are opportunities for growth with plans for a six-story apartment building on property the church sold in 2005 for affordable housing. They put some proceeds in a Second Century Fund and use the rest to sustain the church.

Community organizing with the Spokane Alliance taught Andy what she felt intuitively—relationships endure beyond differences of opinion. Building meaningful relationships is more than coffee hour after worship.

In 2021 we asked the city how we could help,” she continued. “They needed a warming shelter. We were ready to do that. “We open our doors to artists and musicians. During a Spokane Symphony strike, workers held a strike concert. When the symphony sought a venue for chamber music concerts, we offered our sanctuary,” Andy said.

Westminster joined with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane (UUCS) to visit and partner with Folsomak, a Romanian village with a toxic water supply. The churches raised funds for a well. The Folsomak pastor has visited Spokane, and Westminster and UUCS members have visited Folsomak.

In 2007, Westminster voted to be open and affirming of LBGTQ members. That November, the church ordained Mary Johnston, a lesbian. In 2012, members advocated for marriage equality when a bill was before the state legislature.

A book she read early in ministry challenged pastors to commit to a place through good times and bad. That in part inspired Andy to stay at the church.

It also resonated because she was influenced by Benedictine spirituality from regularly visiting a monastery with her parents.

“Benedictine vows are not just poverty, chastity and obedience, but also a vow of stability—to not leave when things get tough, but to work through issues,” she said. “There can be disunity, distant and toxic relationships in churches and society. We are not to give up on people.”

Andy started as a Catholic and was a campus minister at Fort Collins, Colo., in 1981, when she met Jim, a priest. They fell in love. In 1983, Jim came to Washington, and she followed.

In 1985, they married. Jim is pastor. She also will attend worship at First Congregational UCC in Colville, where Jim is pastor. She also will attend online worship services in the Pacific Northwest UCC Conference, where she has been involved and will continue in leadership roles.

For information, call 624-1366 or visit westminstercou.org.
Camp Gifford celebrates 100th year of offering camps for children

The Salvation Army Spokane is welcoming the public for the 100th anniversary of Camp Gifford from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, June 11, at Camp Gifford, 3846 N. Deer Lake Rd. in Loon Lake.

The Salvation Army Auxiliary helped fund many projects. Those included a larger dining hall, waterfront renovations, plus a 45-foot, three-sided climbing tower in 2000, and a dining hall and composting toilets at the wilderness camp in 2003.

Over 40 years, the camp grew, adding first canvas-roof, wood clapboard cabins, a dining hall and a boathouse. In the 1970s, A-frame cabins and a central bath facility were built.

More A-frames and bathroom rooms were built, making space for 120 children for 10 weeks. By the mid-1990s, the cost of running 10 weeks of programs was more than the Salvation Army Corps in Spokane could afford, so it opened to retreat groups. There is now a year-round camp administrator, as well as a caretaker.

In 1995 and 1996, improvements were made so the camp could operate all winter. Letters invited local churches, nonprofits and businesses to rent. There were five groups in 1995 and in recent years, 40 to 50 groups.

In 1997, with help from AmeriCorps with Educational Services District 101, Major David Bowler, then Spokane’s city coordinator, and Ray Anton, AmeriCorps director, had groups of young men and women do construction. They added bathroom rooms on the A-frames and two homes for permanent camp staff.

In 1998, the Spokane Salvation Army Corps purchased nearly 120 acres adjacent to Camp Gifford’s 20 acres, adding hills, a small lake and land for a wilderness camp for teens.

The Salvation Army Women’s Auxiliary helped fund many camps.

In 2012, Camp Gifford added a camper cabin with handicap-accessible bathrooms and showers.

Ken said COVID was hard on the camp, which relies on rentals, but it operated at half capacity for the children’s and teen camps last year. The camp, which will be fully open with protocols this year, is still recruiting staff.

For information, call 329-2721 or visit campgifford.org.

A-frame cabins replaced canvas roofed shelters in 1970s.
This year is Camp Sanders’ 87th year of operation in southern Benewah County, Idaho. It draws visitors from Montana, Washington, Idaho and Oregon to the family and youth camps, retreats and annual events it hosts.

Groups can rent the facility any time year-round to host their own camps, seminars and retreats, or they can participate in annual camps or retreats that are sponsored by Camp Sanders. If needed, “we provide a full meal package, meals and lodging, while groups provide their own programming,” said Daniel Willms, executive director since 2016. “We are happy to accommodate them and make Camp Sanders enjoyable for all.”

Dance camps, quilting, church, youth and yoga groups that use the facility are again using N-Sid-Sen, the Camp and Retreat Center on the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC) north of Harrison, Idaho, on Lake Coeur d’Alene.

Making connections with people from different walks of life at this sacred site is my favorite aspect of camp,” said Mark Boyd, managing director. “It’s an incredible place to be and to see transitions that happen with folks at N-Sid-Sen,” he said. In 2021, COVID precautions were closely followed. This year, those precautions have become more relaxed, but are still followed.

“Still require vaccinations and boosters for those who can get them,” said Mark. “We’ve relaxed mask wearing in most settings. When gathering in the dining hall is a large group, folks are still required to wear masks.”

Basic precautions like regular washing hands and sanitizing are still in place. It is important to “be respectful of the places and spaces we are in,” he said. Before arriving at camp, campers must fill out a health survey and health history. Camp numbers are not quite back to normal from 2019. Numbers for youth and family camps are more like 2021, with about 50 percent capacity. Mark finds positives in hosting smaller groups.

“Last year with smaller numbers, there were more intimate, personal connections that don’t happen with larger groups,” he said. “Folks are still cautious about gathering in big groups. I think we will see more intimate connections this year because people are more than ever,” he said.

Ross Point has more family camps

Ross Point Camp and Conference Center on the Spokane River in Post Falls draws people primarily from the Spokane and Coeur d’Alene area, but some travel up to 400 miles to come.

Ross Point has camps and retreats for both youth and adults. There are more youth programs in the summer and more adult programs throughout the year, said John Batchelder, director of Ross Point.

“We anticipate that numbers will be equal to or larger than last summer,” he said, hoping the number will eventually reach the level they had before COVID.

Restrictions related to COVID have become more lenient at camp, but basic precautions are still followed, including regular hand and surface sanitization. Mark noted these precautions are still followed.

Since COVID, “we have had more groups willing to come back and gather as a community,” John said. “People recognize just how much they need a community environment. We are thankful that we have gone through the steps needed to come with the health department and make our center available.”

Ross Point, a year-round facility, is busiest from May to October with nonprofits, school, church and university groups. There is no official off season, but “December is when we have the fewest people,” said John, who has been at Ross Point for more than 22 years.

He and staff look forward to the break in December for planning and making improvements. Until mid-October, meals are served every day to groups using the facility. This year there are about 40 seasonal or part-time summer employees and eight full-time employees.

Like 2021, the 2022 camp theme for the Baptist camps is “We Receive Grace upon Grace” from John 1:16.

“Watching transformation take place in individuals and groups” are John’s favorite experiences. “Ross Point is a special place that allows God to work with love in peoples’ hearts,” he said. For information, call 208-773-1655 or visit rosspoint.org.

This year, Daniel and staff look forward to remodeling the RV park by updating and adding utilities and gravel parking. They hope to have renovations partially completed by June, he said. The renovations will make Camp Sanders more accessible for families, youth, seniors and other groups that use the facility.

For information, call 208-482-4842, email campSanders@gmail.com or visit campSanders.net.

Camps are a time for singing and community building.

Daniel said the beauty of nature surrounding Camp Sanders with Indian Creek and Little Gem Lake nurture the communities that gather.

This summer, there is a family camp from June 30 to July 3 and a kid’s camp in late August for children from first to sixth grade. After being closed in 2020 because of COVID, Camp Sanders opened again in 2021 and followed COVID precautions closely according to the Center for Disease Control and the health district’s guidelines.

This year, COVID precautions and restrictions have become more lenient at Camp Sanders.

“We go by the health district, so there aren’t really precautions since they’ve been revised,” said Daniel, who is pastor of the Sanders Community Church at the campground.

Basic precautions are still encouraged, such as washing hands, disinfecting surfaces and covering coughs and sneezes to keep the community safe.

“We are in a rural, underpopulated area,” Daniel said. “Annual events are important to the local community and encourage community involvement.”

‘Those events include a senior retreat in September, a men’s retreat in March, a women’s retreat in April and the Sanders Community Apple Fest in October, sponsored by Sanders Community Church at the campground.

Ross Point has more family camps

Swimmer enjoys Spokane River at Ross Point.

Ross Point Camp and Conference Center on the Spokane River in Post Falls draws people primarily from the Spokane and Coeur d’Alene area, but some travel up to 400 miles to come.

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This year’s Northwest United Methodist Church (UMC) camps are enthusiastic about a gradual return to the camp environments they had been used to pre-pandemic, said Alan Rogstad, executive director for camp and retreat ministries for the Pacific Northwest UMC Conference.

Four Methodist camps are in Alan’s jurisdiction in Washington and Idaho: Twinlakes Camp and Retreat Center near Coeur d’Alene; the Lazy F Methodist Camp in Ellensburg; Camp Indiana in Indianapolis, and Ocean Park Retreat Center and Methodist Camp in Ocean Park. In 2020, camps were shut down because of COVID. They used that year to improve the grounds. In 2021, they re-opened at a reduced capacity and with strict COVID regulations.

These two years, while tough with the loss of operating income, had what Alan called “unintended benefits.”

“The break allowed us to do maintenance and projects we wouldn’t otherwise have been able to when we were running summer programs. There have been quite a few improvements these past two years. All our camps have had significant facility improvements.”

For 2022, camps are moving towards pre-pandemic status but still following COVID rules. “We’re in the mode of restarting our standard camp programs,” Alan reported. “The camps are in line with what we’ve done in the past, but with alterations to be mindful that COVID is still with us.”

For example, campers will eat meals outside and have outdoor activities whenever possible.

“We seek to do that anyway, but this time, it’s now even more important,” said Alan.

They’re also weaving capacities of some camps to ensure social distancing to make it a little safer for campers when they’re in their cabins, he said, predicting accommodations will be about three fourths what it was in 2019.

The four camps are following the Center for Disease Control and American Camp Association guidelines for camps and overnight programs. Recruiting staff for the year has been a challenge. Most camp organizations and especially Christian camps are reporting challenges finding staff as they did last year, he reported, noting that small businesses are also struggling to find people for hospitality and service-oriented roles.

“That said, we have the staff we need. It’s just taken a lot of work this year,” he said.

Alan also expects camps may experience some culture shift in coming years. Shutdowns of the past few summers led many families to fill their time with other activities, rather than sending their kids to camp.

“Now family camps are bigger,” he said. “Families want to come as a unit, not just send their kids. We’re taking advantage of it and offering those types of camps.

“For now, the focus is that camps are back open, operating and doing what they do well,” Alan said. “Our theme this summer is ‘What’s in a Name?’ For information, email aros@pnwumc.org.

Summer Camps of Faith Communities by Emma Maple

Camps took time with fewer campers to make improvements to sites

Camp Spalding, founded by area Presbyterian churches in 1957, has recovered from the sting of COVID, and enters this year stronger than ever, said executive director Andy Sonneland. It is focusing on inclusion and trust and power: conversations with God.

This year represents a different season. At camp, we will explore: What makes something sacred? How do we know when we’ve experienced the sacred? What importance does community have in our experience and understanding of the sacred?” she said.

“The world is changing rapidly,” Sara said. “So how do we navigate that together in community? How do we make decisions about keeping colleges, relationships, or family, personal or community identity?”

The camp is now...
Holden Village celebrates 60th year

The 2022 season is the 60th annual summer program for Holden Village, located in the Cascades up the mountain from Lake Chelan.

Classes and worship will be oriented around the theme, “Jubilee,” because a 60th anniversary is a diamond jubilee. “We will focus on the biblical concepts of jubilee and what abundant life for people and the land means in contemporary life,” said Callie Mabry, communications and development lead.

Guest faculty will explore different aspects of it, looking at subtopics of “Release, Renew and Re-turn.”

“These concepts related to jubilee offer powerful connections on how we think about our relationships with God, the earth and each other,” said Callie. “Release is about letting go and letting be—fasting, unlocking, exhaling—addressing how many consider busyness and exhaustion as measures of their worth,” she began. “How do we trust, forgive and live in grace?”

“We need to Renew and repair what systems do, unlearn or dismantle our social and economic systems that separate us from each other and right relationships with the land,” she continued.

“We view Re-turn, not as going back to the way things are, but turning again, finding home, ing back to the way things are, and each other,” said Callie.

Callie said there is a relationship between the Sabbatical cycle of seven days, the Sabbatical or Shmita cycle every seven years and Jubilee the year after seven cycles of seven years.

She said Shmita connects to Holden’s mission of renewing relationships with God, the earth and each other.

Staff hope that those who visit for a short while will go back to their communities with renewed perspectives and practices that fuel new programs.

While educational faculty offer classes to adults, there will be programs for children and youth, ages four to 17. There will be hikes with a naturalist, art and pottery classes, and daily worship and meals.

“We will still operate with reduced numbers, but more than the 50 percent limit we had last year,” Callie said.

Holden Village will continue the revised model of arrival and departure in groups to improve contact tracing. This year, they will add flexibility with everyone arriving on Mondays, departing three, five or seven days later.

They will continue to encourage good health practices.

Holden Village will celebrate its anniversary during its opening week, the second week of June. The board of directors will come for a gathering to celebrate.

Holden is open year-round, with college groups coming for a January term that focuses on spiritual development lead. The 2022 season is the 60th anniversary during its opening week.

The board of directors will come for a gathering to celebrate. Beginning in the pandemic, they engaged the community in new patterns of wellness and reflection.

Kathie and Mark previously worked at international schools in Taiwan, Japan, India and the Seattle area, where they taught and served in leadership positions. Stacy’s career has been in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, faith-based community organizations, and college and seminary education. They have a five-year term.

For information, visit holden-village.org.

For more information and to schedule an appointment, call: 509-926-3547 shfi.com

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spirit-center.org
Generosity of church, community helps New Hope serve neighbors

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

In her 16 years of volunteering, one of Jeanna Swanson’s most rewarding years was as a full-time director of New Hope Resource Center in Colbert. Jeanna Swanson has been impressed with the generosity of church and community members who share their funds and resources, and who volunteer their time.

“Without them New Hope wouldn’t exist,” she said.

The New Hope Resource Center is a faith-based ecumenical social service organization supported by 14 local churches and the community. It helps meet the basic human needs of people living in North Spokane County, which includes the communities of Riverside, Elk, Chattaroy, Colbert and Mead.

“Prior to becoming the director,” Jeanna commented, “I had done everything else at the center at least once.”

Despite that, she acknowledged that she had many new things to learn when she became director. It was more challenging because the first and only director had moved on after training someone else as an interim. It has taken Jeanna two years to feel confident in her role as director in an organization where everyone else works as a volunteer.

“I have now done all of the seasonal events, some grant writing and various reports, and I am beginning to feel like I know what needs to be done.”

Jeanna grew up in the Colbert area and went to Washington State University where she became a registered dietitian. She also met her husband, Ben, there, and the two went to the West Side of the state for her husband’s job and her internship.

After a few years her mother was diagnosed with a spinal tumor. A surgery left her partially paralyzed and in need of more help. They had also been collecting their rent did so illegally. They had also been traumatized because the husband, who was present when his band, who was present when his band, who was present when his band, who was present when his band, who was present when his band, who was present when his band, who was present when his band, who was present when his band, who was present when his band, who was present when his band, who was present when his band. They represent about 280 households.

Seventy percent of households New Hope serves are extremely low-income and have an annual income of less than $23,150 for a family of four.

Since COVID and the rise of homelessness, New Hope’s clients have decreased. They have filled out 50 or 60 job applications but have only one or two requests for interviews—and then rarely any call backs or job offers. Some have even moved to other states.

The chance paid off and been a gift for the family. They have been able to offer an extended hotel stay to a couple in a difficult situation.

It is in the lives of those it serves. The center is grateful for all that they have become homeless, evicted because the person who was collecting their rent did so illegally. They had also been traumatized because the husband, who was present when his father committed suicide, was taken to jail. The trauma led to their beginning to self-medicate and becoming addicted to drugs.

The center took a chance on this couple and used part of the grant to provide them with a temporary home through an extended hotel stay.

The chance paid off and became because the increase in lot rents in the mobile home parks has been an issue. They have only one or two requests for jobs, much more time is spent on conference calls or job offers.

The center is successful and gives them the stability they needed to turn their lives around.

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Thrive is new venture with immigrants

Thrive International, a non-profit empowering multicultural immigrants and citizens to thrive together has launched in Spokane.

" Globally, we are experiencing the largest migration of people in history with many fleeing violence such as in Ukraine and others seeking opportunities and needing help to survive materially, socially and spiritually in new communities," said Mark Finney, executive director.

"Our mission is to move local refugees and immigrants from surviving to thriving in two ways: empowering local multicultural communities in Spokane and equipping leaders internationally who care for similar refugee and immigrant communities," he said.

They will have education programs, work opportunities and events to create mutual transformation for refugees and citizens to learn and thrive together. There will be a focus on youth and adolescents—a significant portion of refugees—through sports camps, a youth choir and weekly meetings, he said.

Another focus is refugee women, who are often overlooked. Thrive will offer a driving class and support for grocery shopping with a translator.

"Our community will never reach its potential unless its multicultural communities are thriving," said Mark, former director of World Relief Spokane.

To offer physical, emotional, social, financial and spiritual support, Thrive will collaborate with other organizations to develop programs such as serving local Afghan evacuees who fled Kabul and more than 100 families who have arrived from Ukraine with out government support.

In addition to Mark, Thrive’s co-founders include Saw Gary, Jim CastroLang, Daryoosh Ka-beer, Sajda Nelson, Marshall McLean, Jackson Lino and Shannon Price.

As a new nonprofit, Thrive International is seeking donations to do its work.

For information, visit thriveinternational.org.

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Protect Us All

Thrive is new venture with immigrants
Shahd Khalili

Baha’i believe in universal education, equality of men and women, and balance of science and religion. “Balance starts with our behavior and attitude towards our earth — what we are expected to do for the earth and what we can expect the earth to do for us.” Shahd said. “For the earth to be sustainable for future generations, people are to care for the world God created.”

First, we encourage children and youth to be mindful, to love themselves and serve their community.” Shahd said. “We have them do projects for nature and community building. Second, communities should balance science — objective and subjective understanding — and religion — moral understanding — to build the common good, she said, and “find concrete ways to solve environmental problems.”

Tamar told a midrash: When Tamar was pregnant and traveling during the winter months, people were hungry. “God led the first human around the earth,” she said. “Each of the 2 billion Muslims on the earth has the duty to care for the earth God created. ‘Look at how beautiful my baby Buddha burst from her right hand,” she explained. “For the flower festival, we put fresh flowers on the roof of a little structure, called a Hanammito. Inside is a statue of the baby Buddha with one hand up and one hand down. We make a temple over the baby Buddha’s head.”

Karen Stromgren

“Tamar said Passover also celebrates a new year and the arrival of spring. “Central to the observance is the connection of time, seasons and cycles of the earth,” Tamar said, adding that two months later is the holiday of Shavout, the barley harvest, when the people received the 10 commandments. “The time is a transition from freedom to responsibility, recognizing that to be free means we are responsible to care for the earth,” she said.

Karen said the Koran mentions care for the environment 155 times. The environment includes all things on the ground and in the atmosphere.

“Isaam says people are responsible for damage to the earth. We are to protect the environment and natural resources,” she said. “Maintaining balance of natural resources is the only way to guarantee survival for future generations.”

Shahd said Baha’i celebrate two holy days. Norurud on in Baghdad, Iraq. Man Garden on the Tigris River — the Baha’i faith in 1863 in Ris.

“Maintaining balance of natural resources is the only way to guarantee survival for future generations.”

“Each of the 2 billion Muslims on the earth has the duty to care for the earth. The Holy Koran and Sunna are a guiding light to promote sustainable development in Islamic countries and the world,” she said. “Allah commands humans to avoid doing mischief or wasting resources, she said, “and find concrete ways to solve environmental problems.”

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Karen Stromgren

“The time is a transition from freedom to responsibility, recognizing that not only my happiness and my strength, be kind and gentle to every living thing and those weaker than me. I will think pure and beautiful thoughts, say pure and beautiful words, and do pure and beautiful deeds, knowing that not only my happiness but also the happiness of others depend on what I do. May every link be bright and strong so all attain perfect peace.”

Buddhists know all sentient beings suffer and they want everyone to find enlightenment and nirvana, she said.

For information, call 535-1813 or email news@thefigtree.com.

New research supports delays in screening mammography during the COVID-19 pandemic may lead to increased mortality.

Over the past couple of years, many women put their annual screening mammograms on hold. Data tells us that about 50% of women who were scheduled missed their appointments. In addition, 25% of women put off evaluation of their breast cancer symptoms, resulting in delayed diagnosis and treatment.

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Sreedharani Nandagopol

On care for the earth, Sreedha- rani told of five princes banished to a forest. One started to chop trees, destroying the forest. Krish- na, the divine, asked what he was doing. The prince was expressing his anger. “Why do you take your anger out on innocent trees? Did they take your kingdom from you? Did the animals or birds do anything? You destroyed their homes,” The prince stopped chop- ping. Krishna said: “Only take from nature what is necessary. If human beings forget this principle and abuse their power over nature, future generations of humanity will pay the price.”

For Muslims, Ramadan — April 26 — is a time to fu- cus on prayer, fasting and giving back to the community and the world, said Karen.

Karen Stromgren

“Tamar said Passover also celebrates a new year and the arrival of spring. “Central to the observance is the connection of time, seasons and cycles of the earth,” Tamar said, adding that two months later is the holiday of Shavout, the barley harvest, when the people received the 10 commandments. “The time is a transition from freedom to responsibility, recognizing that to be free means we are responsible to care for the earth,” she said.

Tamar told a midrash: When God led the first human around the trees in the garden, God said, “Look at how beautiful my works are. I created you to care for the earth.” She said, “And find concrete ways to solve environmental problems.”

Tamar told a midrash: When Tamar was pregnant and traveling during the winter months, people were hungry. “God led the first human around the earth,” she said. “The time is a transition from freedom to responsibility, recognizing that not only my happiness and my strength, be kind and gentle to every living thing and those weaker than me. I will think pure and beautiful thoughts, say pure and beautiful words, and do pure and beautiful deeds, knowing that not only my happiness but also the happiness of others depend on what I do. May every link be bright and strong so all attain perfect peace.”

Buddhists know all sentient beings suffer and they want everyone to find enlightenment and nirvana, she said.

For information, call 535-1813 or email news@thefigtree.com.

New research supports delays in screening mammography during the COVID-19 pandemic may lead to increased mortality.

Over the past couple of years, many women put their annual screening mammograms on hold. Data tells us that about 50% of women who were scheduled missed their appointments. In addition, 25% of women put off evaluation of their breast cancer symptoms, resulting in delayed diagnosis and treatment. That could mean thousands of unnecessary deaths and more advanced and difficult breast cancer cases as a result.

Don’t skip your mammogram. Call (509) 455-4455 to make your appointment, or visit inlandimaging.com/schedule.

Sreedharani Nandagopol

On care for the earth, Sreedha- rani told of five princes banished to a forest. One started to chop trees, destroying the forest. Krish- na, the divine, asked what he was doing. The prince was expressing his anger. “Why do you take your anger out on innocent trees? Did they take your kingdom from you? Did the animals or birds do anything? You destroyed their homes,” The prince stopped chop- ping. Krishna said: “Only take from nature what is necessary. If human beings forget this principle and abuse their power over nature, future generations of humanity will pay the price.”

For Muslims, Ramadan — April 26 — is a time to fu-
Indigenous knowledge helps in fighting climate change today

In fighting climate change, we need to incorporate indigenous knowledge. As we continue to struggle with the issue of climate change, some scientific research has been working to provide critical information on how climate change affects our world. In addition, scientists have attempted to provide us with knowledge of how to resist and fight this disaster.

In order for us to fight this disaster, we must open up and include the knowledge, practices, and values of indigenous people in these discussions at the global level. This knowledge has been suppressed, subjugated, and ignored for too long.

For Pacific Islanders, fighting climate change is fighting for our life. That fight cannot be won with scientific knowledge alone. This knowledge helps us prepare and plan. We must open up and include the knowledge that recognizes the humanity of all people in our world. In addition, scientists have at their disposal a range of ever-changing environments, and direct constant contact with a wide range of ever-changing environments. Not only through scientific experiments but also through real life experiences over many generations.

Indigenous people, through exposure and direct contact with a wide range of ever-changing environments, continue to acquire knowledge that helps them minimize the risks in more natural ways that are not harmful to the environment and humanity.

I remember growing up on our small island in Tonga, long before any of the traditional weather cycles for many years. Although it is harder now because of climate change, they have proven effective in our way of living.

One of the traditional Tongan knowledge models is that the broadband season comes at the beginning of every year. When the broadleaf produces more fruit, it indicates that there will be a cyclone coming that year.

If we allow some time to learn more about indigenous knowledge from different indigenous communities, we may be surprised to discover that there are close connections and relations between indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge.

Their co-existence will provide us with resources for solutions to our environmental disasters. This is a good time not only to continue collecting and storing these understandings but also to make them to current and future generations, for they are the keepers of this earth now and in the future.

Ikei Fakasileli – Guest Editorial

Double task to overcome racism, end mass shootings

Again, we have a mass shooting targeting Black lives. This time at a TOPS Supermarket in Buffalo, NY.

Again, most media turn their focus on the perpetrator to highlight who he is and what he was. Let us open up the discussion to include his racist ideas and fears that people of other cultures, races and religions will replace white people as our country becomes more multicultural.

Again, media follow a shooter to court, giving him more attention than the victims.

Again, the victims become mostly lost in a number and a brief mention of their names, who they were and the tragedy of their story.

We see the pain and grief of the Black community for whom the TOPS Market was an anchor store for an entire neighborhood and desert. We learn of the structural biases that cut the East Buffalo community with a freeway, and the investments made in outlying communities.

That’s important, but how does someone in the Inland Northwest respond to these injustices on the other side of the country—except to see them mimicked right here with our freeway and investments made in outlying communities.

There are responses right here: gatherings, conversations, panels, commissions, elections and actions that can make a difference even in our own communities.

The white supremacy that was evident in the black community in Buffalo is in a state of emergency. Children are afraid to go to school or to have their parents leave their homes. Schools lack counselors equipped to deal with this level of trauma, so students experiencing trauma may be punished for acting out rather than get the psychological help they need.

The only wellness center in the community is heavily guarded in order to keep it safe. For those who can afford the ‘VIP’ experience, this stops them from seeking help.

Buffalo clergy are overwhelmed and struggling to provide pastoral counseling and understand racial trauma.

VOICE Buffalo is sharing information on resources, including rides to grocery stores because the East Buffalo community again a food desert without one of the important wellness centers.

Federal authorities offer several ideas:

• Let us visualize what the “Beloved Community” could look like and work together to see the vision become reality.

• Agencies call for partnerships in community models that recognize the humanity of all people.

• Let us take responsibility to be vocal about/partnerships/office-of-partner engagement/active-shooter-resources.

Another resource that these experiencing desolation and thoughts of suicide is the NCC’s “A Christian Approach to Suicide Prevention,” at https://www.ncc.us/about/partnerships/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-resources.

I sit here today wondering: what words can I offer, yet again, to the tragedy of children killed by another youth using guns like the ones we see on TV, in our own heart area, fear and despair. I find a desire to simply write down those who I believe turn a blind eye to the problem, or who dismiss it with pious words and no action. I find that the feelings in my own heart are similar feelings that lead others to violence. So I must look inward, to see the capacity for sin within and repent.

This recognition cannot, however, stop me from speaking out as a Bishop of the Church against the violence I believe infects the soul of our nation. We are too quick to trust in weapons and force of arms to get what we desire. We are too quick to follow the way of Jesus.

As followers of Jesus we are called to love, love in words and love in deeds. Love cannot be only for the “good” or those who we like, or those who think or vote like we do. Love must be for all. When we love as Jesus loved us, we see one another as neighbors, who can provide pastoral counseling and understand racial trauma.

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June 1 • The Fig Tree Distribution and Mailing, 10 a.m., 350-4112, development@thefigtree.org
June 1-30 • Big Brothers Big Sisters
June 2 • Climate Action Meeting, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., IHRC, info@ihrc.net
June 4 • Friends of the Moran Prairie Library Sale, Moran Prairie Library, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
• Community Block Party
June 5 • Central WA Spring Summit
• The Significance of Juneteenth:
June 8 • SCC Hagan Center Diversity
The Sinixt
June 10-19 • Columbia River Canoe Journey, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho, stgertrudes.org
June 9, 23
• The Fig Tree Distribution and Mailing
• The Fig Tree Benefit / Board Meeting, Monastery of St. Gertrude, 6 p.m. to 1 p.m., ihrc.net
July 1 • What I Learned from My #MeToo Journey
July 8-10 • Come to the Quiet, Monastery of St. Gertrude, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., ihrc.net
July 9 • Art on the Grass, North Idaho College, Coeur d’Alene, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., ihrc.net
• Kootenai County Farmer’s Market, Coeur d’Alene Summer Theatre, 4951 N. Bldg Center Dr., Coeur d’Alene, 7:30 p.m. and 2 p.m., cdasummertheatre.com
August 5 • Scramble for Hospice, 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Hospice of Spokane, hospiceofspokane.org
August 6 • Unity in the Community, Riverpark Town Center, 10 a.m., ihrc.net
August 27 • El Mercadito, Latinos En Spokane, AM Cannon Park, 4:30 to 7 p.m., spokanenaacp@gmail.com
August 31 • Fig Tree Distribution and Mailing, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 350-4112, development@thefigtree.org
September 17 • Summertime Spiritual Moment, “Prayer Habits” – John Rauschenberg, IHRC, 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., ihrc.net
September 18 • Nanaimo, Coeur d’Alene Summer Theatre, 4561 N. Bldg Center Dr., Coeur d’Alene, 7:30 p.m. and 2 p.m., cdasummertheatre.com
October 15 • NAACP General Membership Meeting, 7 p.m., spokanenaacp@gmail.com
October 27 • Nunsense, Coeur d’Alene Summer Theatre, 4951 N. Bldg Center Dr., Coeur d’Alene, 7:30 p.m. and 2 p.m., cdasummertheatre.com
November 12-19 • Come to the Quiet, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho, stgertrudes.org
November 27 • “The Messenger of the Light,” Fr. Max Oliva S.J., IHRC, 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., ihrc.net
December 21 • “Farewell to a Loved One” – Sr. Mary Eucharista, SMMC, IHRC, 5 to 8:30 p.m., ihrc.net
December 27 • “A Time to Remember,” Sr. Mary Eucharista, SMMC, IHRC, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., ihrc.net
December 31 • Contentment and Gratitude: A Reflection for New Years Eve, Sr. Mary Eucharista, SMMC, IHRC, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., 994-0182

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Priest and St. Gregorios have served in Spokane for 35 years

By Marijke Fakasieki

As Fr. Michael Hatcher marks the 35th year of his ordination, the multi-cultural St. Gregorios Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church celebrates its 35th year of serving in Spokane.

Bishop Zakarias Mar Aprem of the Diocese of Southwest America from Houston will lead Holy Qurbana, the divine liturgy, at 9:30 a.m., Saturday, June 18, at the church at 1725 E. Bridgeport Ave., for the anniversaries.

While an Orthodox community first gathered for prayers in 1984, they were not officially a church until 1987 when Fr. Michael was ordained and could officiate for Holy Qurbana.

Fr. Michael grew up Catholic in Clark Fork, Idaho, and Spokane, and from 1965 to 1973 was on a path to becoming a Catholic priest, with high school studies at Mater Cleri in Colbert and continuing at Bishop White Seminary at Gonzaga University in 1969. In 1973, he graduated with a bachelor’s in languages with a minor in theology from Gonzaga.

He and Gita met in 1976. She had just finished 3 years of college in Madras (now Chennai), in Tamil Nadu State South India, when she came to study at Fort Wright College, earning a bachelor’s in human services in 1978 and a master’s in public administration from Eastern Washington University in 1985. Gita introduced him to Oriental Orthodox faith.

They married in 1978. “I liked the Eastern liturgy and its distinct ties to the Fathers and Mother of the early church,” said Fr. Michael, who did a few years of directed study plus seminars at the old seminary in Kottayam Kerala, India.

In 1979, Fr. Michael began 37 years of working in Elder Services, which is what was most needed—Mental Health and is now Frontier Behavioral Health. He did master’s in public administration from 1986 to 1994. The parish was small and poor, so he earned a living from this work until he retired in 2015.

Gita, who helped establish the church and, as the priest’s wife is called Kochamma in the parish, worked from 1991 to 2018 in human resources and civil service with the City of Spokane.

Her home state of Kerala is where the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church was founded in 52 A.D. by St. Thomas, who established seven churches there before he was martyred.

The Hatcher’s had a heart for Eritrean and Middle Eastern immi-grants in Spokane and drew many into the mission, which started in 1984 with 30 people—mostly white, plus a few Ethiopi-ans, a Native American and a few Indians, including Gita and their three children, Sulochana, Rajiv (George) and Pradeep, who were 8, 5, and 2 in 1987.

They first rented space at the Anglican Church of the Resurrection in Hillary, then moved to Fort Wright College. For 10 years, they rented at St. Andrew’s Episcopal, growing to 100 people in 40 families.

When they moved in 2002 to a former Church of God at 2003 N. Lincoln, the congregation was a third Ethiopian, 40 percent Indi-an and Middle Eastern, and some Russians. Members spoke eight languages—English, Malayalam, Amharic, Arabic, Arabic, Span-ish, Russian and Coptic.

In 2017, the church moved to the former Trinity United Meth-odist Church at 1725 E. Bridgeport. There are now 70 families, including white Americans, Ethi-pians, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Greek, Lebanese, Jordanians, Turks, Egyptians, Mexicans, Pakistanis, Syrians and Guatemalans.

Their common language for the liturgy is English—possible because their son Pradeep translated prayers into English. Parts of the liturgy are in Syrian and Malayalam, and they sing the Lord’s Prayer in as many lan-guages as there are in the parish.

Gita’s and Michael’s sons, George and Pradeep, were ordained in May 2021 as deacons.

Fr. George graduated in June 2021 from St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Seminary in Florida and was then ordained a priest. He is now assistant priest with his father with whom he trained.

Pradeep is director of multimedia and public relations at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theologi-cal Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y. St. Gregorios’ liturgy fo-cuses on the holy mysteries,” Fr. George said, “but its outreach is down to earth ministry, helping individuals and families survive materially and spiritually, keep-ing people fed and in their homes. In 2003, Fr. Michael explained that the Orthodox worship takes people “out of the earthly realm and cares for a short time so they experience in a limited way the glories of heaven. Then they return to daily life with a sense of blessing. Receiving the body and blood of Christ in holy communion gives me a boost so I feel I can start the next week and hope it is better.”

Fr. George said the “holy mys-teries” empower St. Gregorios to “create spontaneous ministry as needed” to serve in the surround-ing low-income neighborhood.

For him, “keeping the timeless faith of Orthodoxy is inspiring. Aside from good works, we are transmitting an experience of God that is beyond popularity and culture. Worshiping God for us is: ‘We are not tied to entertainment, comfort or materialism.’”

Fr. George said his father, as a spiritual father, has had to understand the spiritual needs of those in the parish who come from different cultures. “They understand that every culture has challenges, blessings and subcultures,” Fr. George said. “Then there is the culture of the Kingdom of God, which we seek to bring to everyone’s culture to help them grow.”

“Ministry is to always be open to learning about different cultural traditions,” said Fr. Michael. “It’s an opportunity to learn and appreciate people’s insights and how they do things, as well as communalities.

“In terms of faith development, we recognize that immi-grants may have lived in isolated communities. So we offer adult education classes so they can learn more of the Orthodox faith. Our Ministry of Education teaches adults, as well as chil-dren. For Orthodox, the liturgy helps educate us in our faith. Translation of curriculum has been key to doing that.”

Fr. Michael connected with Eritrean and Ethiopian parishioners eight years ago, as an-other wave of immigrants from Ethiopia and Eritrea arrived in the area, experiencing culture shock more deeply than other immigrants, said Fr. George. Recognizing that this wave of immigrants did not speak English or read in their mother tongue, Fr. Michael listened to their needs to understand how to meet them where they were.

As he discovered the blocks to serving them, he invited another priest to meet with them to pro-vide ministry for these people with many needs and a language barrier. It made sense for them to have their own congregation to focus there intensely. To be of use, everyone get on their feet, he said.

St. Gregorios gave birth to the St. Mary’s Orthodox Church. Many Ethiopians and Eritreans stayed at St. Gregorios and visit St. Mary’s liturgies. St. Gregorios stays attuned to chal-lenges, offering liturgy in Eng-lish, and maintaining African and Middle Eastern services.

Fr. George said much par-ish work focuses on outreach to parishioners, with an increasing witness of sharing food and necessities with the neighbor-hood. They put in an alley light to reduce drug deals and make the facility safer.

“We spend time in the neighbor-hood doing outreach,” he said. “We’ve become a refuge. Now people living on the streets come to us for help.”

Parish leaders are developing understanding of servant leader-ship so they know how to be faith-ful and pass on the faith through their service, said Fr. George.

For information, call 859- 7011.

Jewels Helping Hands seeks donations Jewels Helping Hands serves Camp Hope, a homeless en-campment at Second and Ray that is home to 435 people, said Julie Garcia, director.

“We rely on community do-nations to support the needs of people there, such as men’s clothing, pre-packaged foods and bottled water,” she said. “We need tents, bedding, garden tools and funds.

Jewels invites volunteers to help provide one hot meal a day. For information, email info@ jewelshelpinghands.org.

The Faith Action Network plans its 2022 Spring Summits as a time to reconnect with its regions and to look ahead.

The events will be held from 2 to 4 p.m., Sunday, June 5, at St. Michael’s Episcopal Church, 5 S. Naches Ave., in Yakima.

FAN holds regional summits in June

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Central Washington, and from 2 to 4 p.m., Sunday, June 12, at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave., in Spokane for Eastern Washington.

For information, call 206-625-9790 or visit fanwa.org/regional-spring-summits.

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