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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest online at www.thefigtree.org • check The Fig Tree Facebook page daily for news and links

New leader brings skills needed

By Mary Stamp

As the only one of the three vice presidents remaining in the 96-year-old Spokane NAACP in June, Naima had the background in community activism, caring sensitivity and leadership acumen to become president when Rachel Dolezal resigned June 15 amid concern that she is a white woman who represented herself as black.

“Naima” is Swahili—a mix of African languages and Arabic—and means “gentle strength.” She chose her name in the 1990s, when she dedicated her life to follow Christ.

It’s what Spokane’s NAACP needed: gentle strength.

Naima said Rachel brought energy to the NAACP as president and reorganized committees. Many students who joined under her leadership, however, have pulled back.

Despite some loss in membership, the NAACP has gained 30 new members since then. Many came in response to Spokesman-Review columnist Shawn Vestal’s call for people to stand with the NAACP, Naima said.

“We seek to re-involve students based on a commitment to our cause of working for justice,” Naima said.



Naima Quarles-Burnley reflects on responsibilities of NAACP Spokane.

“I have spent time answering questions about how this could have happened, and restoring credibility with government and community entities,” she said.

At the first meeting after Rachel resigned, the NAACP offered a public forum, a “Community Conversation: Moving towards Healing.” They talked about issues and answered questions, encouraging continued conversation, which Naima hopes will go on in small groups to address such questions as: What is race? How does race shape how we experience life?

“Anyone can be an ally or advocate, but it’s hard to speak for people without living their experience,” she said, aware that not all people of the same race experience the same things, because of varied skin tones, personalities and circumstances.

For example, Naima said that when she went to South Africa in 1994 to observe the election of Nelson Mandela, she felt solidarity and kinship with South Africans. Many there believed African Americans had experienced apartheid with laws that separated them from other races. South Africans patterned their protests and nonviolence on

Continued on page 4

Area faith leaders tell how people assist others in their burned out towns

As fast-moving fires have consumed the air, water, forests, grasslands, fields, homes, outbuildings and lives in the Inland Northwest, faith communities have prepared to assist in the long term, as well as immediately.

President Barack Obama declared Washington’s wildfires a federal emergency on Aug. 21, directing federal aid to fight the fires, allowing FEMA to coordinate relief and recovery efforts.

Regional church offices contacted suggest that funds for emergency shelters go to the Red

Cross. Each faith group also has its own disaster response funds being set up to help with recovery. Many are also contacting their national disaster relief entities.

Dan Curley, communications director with the Salvation Army in Spokane, said families affected can visit local Salvation Army offices for gas cards and vouchers for their local thrift stores.

A chaplain is available to support families.

A mobile feeding unit—canteen—was deployed to Brewster to serve meals to firefighters and aid workers. One

is also in North Idaho.

With fires burning and none contained yet, Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services Director Shaun Jones expects the situation will become worse. “We’re in the field and helping everywhere we can. When the fires are contained, we will transition to clean up and helping families rebuild their lives.”

The Rev. Mike Denton, conference minister for the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC), invites congregations to do three things:

- Pray for those affected and those fighting the fires.
- Take an offering for the Red Cross for immediate relief or to send to the regional church office for long-term recovery efforts.
- Consider joining a work team to help with recovery efforts – email pncucc@gmail.org with information on skills you might share.

Bishop Martin Wells of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s Eastern Washington

Continued on page 8

Fig Tree gears up for publication and events

The Fig Tree plans are underway for its annual Eastern Washington Legislative Conference in January 2016 and its annual Benefit Breakfast and Lunch in March 2016.

It is recruiting people interested in serving on planning committees for both events.

The Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, organized in conjunction with Catholic Charities Spokane and the Faith Action Network of Washington, will be held from 9 to 3 p.m., Saturday, January 30, at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave.

The committee organizing the benefits has set the Benefit Lunch, as usual, during Gonzaga University’s spring break. It will be at 11:45 a.m., Friday, March 11. Usually, the Benefit Breakfast is the Wednesday of that week. In 2016, it will be held at 7:15 a.m., Wednesday, March 16, during the first week after spring break so faculty and staff from Gonzaga will be available to participate.

The Fig Tree newspaper publishes monthly from September through June, with ad and editorial deadlines on third Fridays.

The Resource Directory: Guide to Congregations and Community Resources publishes annually. The 2015-16 Resource Directory is now available. Copies have been mailed and are being delivered during September. Those who would like larger quantities may make orders and pick them up.

The Fig Tree needs volunteers to help with office tasks, deliveries, editing, writing, event planning, displays and promotion.

For information, call 535-1813, email news@thefigtree.org or visit www.thefigtree.org.

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Church leaders visit South American countries

To strengthen relationships and support churches in Latin America in their struggles for justice and peace, a pilgrimage of church leaders organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC) is visiting Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Colombia from Aug. 24 to Sept. 7. The visit is part of the WCC Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – a call from the WCC’s 10th Assembly in 2013 in the Republic of Korea.

They are meeting with representatives of 27 WCC member churches, ecumenical partners, civic organizations and government officials to learn concerns and how the WCC can help build bridges between local churches and global actors in the quest for justice and peace. The delegation includes the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC general secretary, the Rev. Gloria Ulloa, WCC president for Latin America and the Caribbean and Marcelo Schneider, WCC communication liaison.

WCC condemns destruction of Syrian monastery

“The world must support a real peace process in Syria now to stop these tragedies for peoples and cultures,” said World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit. He said the reports of the destruction by the so-called “Islamic State” of a fifth-century monastery near Homs, Syria, is “a further expression of Islamic State’s extremist agenda of not only eliminating the members of religious minorities, but also evidence of their presence and contribution to history and culture.”

Photos recently posted on social media sites associated with “Islamic State” show the destruction of Mar Elian monastery in Qaryatayn. About 1,800 Christians lived in Qaryatayn before it fell to “Islamic State” on Aug. 6. Hundreds of civilians were taken captive, including more than 180 Christians. The captives were transferred to areas near Raqqa, the “Islamic State” stronghold.

In the past year, ISIS has captured thousands of people, and destroyed dozens of churches, religious shrines and places of worship as well as ancient archaeological sites in Syria and Iraq.

“It is long overdue that the international community find the political will and means to protect the religious and cultural diversity of Syria and Iraq against the depredations of ‘Islamic State.’ The future political and social stability of the region depends on diversity,” he added.

Christians observe ecumenical ‘Time for Creation’

Joined in prayer, Christian churches around the world will again observe the ecumenical “Time for Creation” Sept. 1 to Oct. 4, this year bolstered by Pope Francis’s proclamation of Sept. 1 as the “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.”

The movement toward a yearly commemoration of the biblical mandate to exercise stewardship over God’s creation (Genesis 1:26-28) first took shape after a Sept. 1, 1989 encyclical from the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople, in which he extended an invitation to “the entire Christian world.”

He urged both the faithful in the world to admonish themselves and their children to respect and protect the natural environment and those entrusted to govern the nations to act without delay to protect natural creation.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

H2KNOW builds concern for river level

The H2KNOW: Our Spokane River Is Low campaign has started as a local, low-budget, citizen-led effort to build concern for the Spokane River during this critical period of high heat, drought and low snow, along with record-setting water use, said John Osborn, one of the organizers.

“To protect our river, our region must conserve water,” he said. “During these 100-degree days, people are getting our message.”

The campaign has received coverage in local media.

In a recent meeting with the City of Spokane, H2KNOW jointly called on citizens to reduce their water use by 10 to 20 percent. It succeeded in having the City of Spokane, the major water user, commit to water conservation to help protect Spokane River flows.

“We must move forward and stop exploiting our aquifer and our river,” said John.

In less than two weeks, the Spokane City Council passed emergency funding for a Water Conservation Education position and the City of Spokane will publish a target voluntary water conservation goal.

Our River Is Low H2KNOW has a website through the Center for Environmental Law and Policy at h2know.info and seeks donations. For information, email john@waterplanet.ws.

Symposium features Sr. Simone Campbell

The Common Ministry at Washington State University is hosting the 35th Roger Williams Symposium, featuring Sr. Simone Campbell, executive director of NETWORK in Washington, D.C., speaking Sunday and Monday, Oct. 4 and 5 in Pullman.

Sr. Simone, the organizer of the Nuns on the Bus Campaign, will give a lecture on “Working for a Just Society in Today’s World” at 6 p.m., Sunday, at the View Room in Gladish Community Center, 115 NW State St.

She will lead a workshop on

“Working for a Just Society: Taking Action” at 9 a.m., Monday, at St. James Episcopal Church, 1410 NE Stadium Way.

For information, call 332-2611, email office@interfaith-house.com or visit www.interfaith-house.com.

Second Harvest presents resource fair

The sixth Annual Growing Healthy Communities Resource Fair of Second Harvest is from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 10, at Mirabeau Park Hotel.

Second Harvest provides food

to 250 food banks, meal sites and other programs that feed hungry people in 21 counties in Eastern Washington and five counties in North Idaho. Each year, its Partner Agency Conference

brings education and information to the nonprofits it serves.

For information, visit www.2-harvest.org/resourcefair, email agencyconference@2-harvest.org or call 252-6246.

Parenting educator offers classes at Unity

Parenting educator Susie Leonard Weller will offer classes on “Parent with Greater Resiliency: Integrate Your Whole Heart and Mind,” and on “Strengthen Yourself, Children or Grandchildren” from 6:30 to 8 p.m., on six Mondays from

Sept. 14 to Oct. 19, at Unity Spiritual Center of Spokane, 2900 S. Bernard.

Pre-registration is required for these classes, which look at parenting as a spiritual practice.

Parents will learn to expand their capacity to respond to

challenges by exploring skills for resilient families.

Susie is the author of *Why Don't You Understand? Improve Family Communication with the 4 Thinking Styles*, and a Q-Effect Coach.

For information, call 838-6518.

Transitions holds Growing Hope Garden Party

Transitions will hold a Garden Party to celebrate the harvest season at Transitions Growing Hope Garden from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 9, at the Fairview Hemlock

Community Garden, 3128 N. Hemlock.

It will be an opportunity to learn about Transitions’ vocational services and to sample food from New Leaf Bakery Café.

For information, call 328-6702 or email rsvp@help4women.org.

VOA moves Alexandria’s House

Volunteers of America-Spokane’s Alexandria’s House program for pregnant and parenting teens has moved into a historic home in Brown’s addition.

There will be an open house from 2 to 5 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 24, at 2236 W. Pacific.

For information, call 624-2378, ext. 120 or visit voaspokane.org/



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Editorial Team

Editor/Publisher/Photos - Mary Stamp
Directory Editor - Malcolm Haworth
Website Developer - Lorna Kropp
Volunteer Coordinator - Kaye Hult
Editing - Kaye Hult, Inga Jablonsky, Mary Mackay, Sara Weaver and Pava Young

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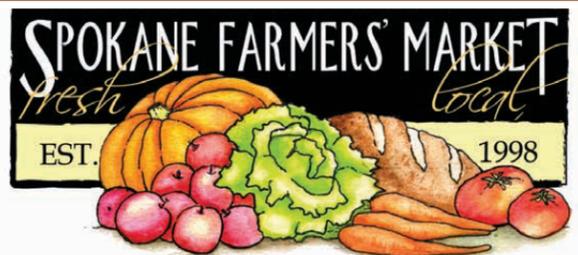
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One Peace, Many Paths hosts local Compassion Games

One Peace, Many Paths is planning its second annual Compassion Games, from Sept. 11 to 21. The opening ceremony is at 7 p.m., Friday Sept. 11, at All Saint's Lutheran Church, 314 S. Spruce in Browne's Addition.

Speakers include Kris Christensen of the West Central Episcopal Mission and Omy K, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide who now lives in Spokane. He has started an organization, Impanda

Rwanda, to provide for the material, emotional and spiritual needs of Rwandan street kids.

There will also be music, a compassion pledge, and opportunity to donate food to Northwest Harvest.

The closing gathering, "Let's Keep It Going," will be at 4:30 p.m., Monday, Sept. 21, at the West Central Episcopal Mission, 1832 W. Dean. It includes a potluck and a service activity to

support the mission and homeless people, including vets.

Participating organizations encourage random acts of kindness, sponsor service projects and promote the "Secret Agent of Compassion" activity at compassiongames.org.

The Global Compassion Games take place in the 11 Days of Global Unity from Sept. 11, a U.S. National Day of Service, to Sept. 21, the International Day of Peace.

People participate as individuals or teams to support local causes, build community, serve people and celebrate strides towards compassion throughout the year.

Compassion Games International amplifies what is working and inspires new ways to care for people and the Earth. Instead of being competitive, they are about "co-opetition" as people challenge one another to make the planet a better place to live.

For information, email onepeacemanypaths@gmail.com.

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Young Child Conference is Sept. 30 to Oct. 2

Gonzaga University with Los Niños Services of New York City will host the western debut of the Young Child Conference and Expo from Sept. 30 to Oct. 2, at the Grand Hotel in Spokane.

The conference focuses on education and health issues for children from birth to age six. It is geared towards early childhood and medical professionals, educators and therapists, elected officials and policy-makers, and parents. They will learn about products, services and resources to help young children learn, grow and reach their potential.

Vincent Alfonso, dean of Gonzaga's School of Education, is organizing the event based on his experience at New York's

Fordham University's Graduate School of Education, where he served 19 years.

"Our goal is to deliver a comprehensive approach showing best practices and information critical to the community involved in those crucial early years," he said.

Half of the event covers topics affecting all children, such as speech and social development, sleep and behavior. Half is for children with special needs.

Keynote speakers include national leaders in early childhood development.

Beck Taylor, president of Whitworth University, will speak on "Links Between Poverty and Early Child Development"; Marc

Brackett, of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, on "Emotional Intelligence: Our Best Hope for Safe, Caring and Effective Schools"; Chris Blodgett, director of Washington State University CLEAR Trauma Center, on "Improving Child and Family Outcomes Using the Science of Adversity?" and Sam Whiting, president and CEO of Thrive Washington, on "Community Voice Key to Closing Opportunity Gap."

For information, call 313-6095 or visit youngchildexpo.com/spokane-conference.

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Human trafficking film set

The Inland District of the Pacific Northwest Conference of United Methodist Women will show the documentary, "The Long Night," at 7 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 1, at Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, 115 N. Raymond Rd.

Set in Seattle, the film by Tim Matsui and MediaStorm, explores the crisis of minors forced into the American sex trade. It weaves the stories of seven people whose lives have been forever changed.

Viewers follow how Natalie and Lisa survive; how Tom and Nacole watch their daughter slip out of their hands; what three police officers experience

as they try to create a more just system, said Madelyn Bafus, Inland District coordinator of social action.

After the film, Erin Williams-Heuter, director of advocacy and prevention services with Lutheran Community Services (LCSNW), will lead a panel with Mabel Elsom, LCSNW anti-human trafficking coordinator, Jason Benedetti, a FBI special agent, and Harlan Harlan, Spokane Police human trafficking detective.

For information, call 869-8213, email at maddyb47@msn.com or visit www.thelongnightmovie.com.

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Church showcases sustainability

"Earth to Spokane - Time to get Sustainable!" is the theme for Sustainable Living Fair Spokane. It will be held from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 19, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, 4340 W. Fort Wright Dr.

The church and PacifiCAD, a local technology solutions company, are sponsoring the fair to promote environmentally friendly practices by showcasing businesses, technologies and

organizations that empower people to be better stewards of the Earth.

There will be music, sustainable living demonstrations and discussions, a farmers' market, and a green car show.

The church will show the 75-panel solar array it installed in 2012.

For information, call 325-6383, email minister at uuspokane.org or visit EarthtoSpokane.org.



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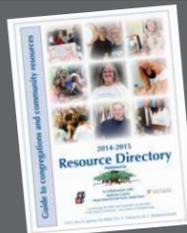
The Ministry Institute invites you to pray with music, readings and silence in the style of Taizé prayer, starting up again on Thursday, September 3, 2015.

For more information, contact Shonna Bartlett at 313-5765 or bartletts@gonzaga.edu.

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Spokane's NAACP carries on in its work for justice and equality

Continued from page 1
the U.S. civil rights movement.

"We came to say that God wants justice in South Africa," Naima said. "We did not know, however, what they experienced deep in their souls, but we could be allies and advocates."

Naima had been involved during her studies of political science at Oberlin College in urging the university to divest from companies doing business in South Africa. "I understood alliance, but didn't speak for South Africans, even though the cause was dear to my heart," she said.

Later, despite danger and threats, she went for three months with an international team through the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Monitoring Program in South Africa. She was on the staff of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church's Department of Overseas Missions in New York City. The team worked with the South African Council of Churches to "stand by believers who wanted to bring a new day to that country," she said.

She helped with the pre-election, election and counting processes, and saw Nelson Mandela elected as president.

Naima, who grew up in New Rochelle, N.Y., graduated from Antioch School of Law in Washington, D.C., in 1984, after graduating from Oberlin.

For seven years, she worked with Neighborhood Legal Services in Pittsburgh on civil cases for the poor for fair housing, employment, protection from abuse, bankruptcy and entitlements.

Her involvement in Pittsburgh with Bethany Baptist Church's mission ministry led her to lead short-term ministry outreaches in Mexico. Naima's love for cross-cultural ministry culminated in

her taking a two-month leave of absence to work with the Ministry of Hope in Liberia, West Africa. She led Bible studies and shared Christ's hope with government officials and people in rural villages.

"Returning, I wanted to use my legal skills to help mission groups and do cross-cultural ministry," said Naima.

In 1994, she began doing mission training with Ambassadors Fellowship in Los Angeles, leading groups to Mexico, inner city LA and Spain. That led her back into the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, in which her maternal grandmother was a minister. She served with the national church in mission, traveling around the world to assist with development and outreach projects.

In 1997, Naima met Larry Burnley, who was with the United Church of Christ (UCC) and Disciples of Christ (DOC) Global Ministries, also in New York, at an assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In 1998, they went as newlyweds to the WCC's eighth assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe.

When the UCC-DOC offices in New York closed, Larry moved with the UCC to Cleveland. Naima worked five years with the UCC refugee ministries.

Larry returned to higher education, developing Diversity Affairs at Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pa. While nearby Harrisburg was 25 percent African American, the suburb where they lived was five percent.

Once she found childcare for Thulani, their three-year-old son with special-needs, Naima worked at the college's Agape Center, designing orientation and a friendship family program for international students. She led a

group of faculty and staff to do cleanup and rebuild in Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina, and trained them on Southern culture.

She told them the Confederate flag is scary, because it "represents slavery, and hatred of and violence against African Americans."

In 2010, Larry's work to promote diversity in Christian higher education led them to another less diverse area, Spokane, to work at Whitworth University.

Naima at first cared for her parents, who moved to Spokane, until their deaths, and has served as local outreach coordinator for the Seattle-based African Americans Reach and Teach Health Ministry.

"As in other cities, I sought to be involved in the NAACP, as had my parents and grandparents. It's one place to connect with people of color beyond the church," said Naima.

She became one of three vice presidents. Two had resigned before the controversy last spring related to Rachel's identity.

There also were concerns about the Office of Police Ombudsman Commission and alleged falsification of hate mail in Coeur d'Alene and here, Naima said. Then came the explosion of media coverage.

"I sought to address concerns in a unified way," she said. "It was a politically charged time. We felt community input and interaction were important."

Since then, communities of color have helped interview ombudsmen candidates, and that process is still under way.

Other issues have emerged.

The NAACP is concerned about four deaths—compared with one or two a year—in three months in

the jail. One this summer was an African American.

The NAACP seeks a voice in criminal justice reform through the Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council, which had 35 applicants for two council positions.

"We want to populate its subcommittees with people of color so our voice will help shape criminal justice in the future," she said.

That council has received a McArthur grant to design a proposal for up to \$2-million-a-year for criminal justice reform. Spokane was chosen because it had the highest racial disparity of incarcerated persons of the 20 applicants who received grants across the United States, she said.

"We seek reforms to reduce the length of stay, the number of people and the racial-ethnic disparity of those who are incarcerated," she said.

The NAACP hosted an "Employment Bootcamp" in August to help job seekers sharpen skills.

"When people are not employed, they do not feel connected with the community," Naima said.

"We want people to be productive citizens."

The Spokane NAACP Branch is hosting the Alaska, Oregon and Washington State Area Conference Sept 18 to 20.

It will hold its 96th Annual Freedom Fund Banquet at 7 p.m., Nov. 7, at Northern Quest Casino in Airway Heights, featuring lobbyist and policymaker Hilary Shelton, director of the NAACP's Washington Bureau, as speaker.

The local branch is recruiting new vice presidents. Current committees include education, economic development, health care, criminal justice, political action, Freedom Fund Banquet and membership.

Over the years, the Spokane National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Branch #1137 has had a commitment to ensuring the political, educational, social and economic equality of all people.

"It is committed to advocacy for a society in which all individuals can have equal rights without discrimination," Naima said.

For information, call 209-2425 ext. 1141, email spokanenaacp@gmail.com or visit SpokaneNAACP.com.

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Spokane, WA 99205

All Saints Lutheran has multi-faceted ministry to feed and comfort

All Saints Lutheran Church in Browne's Addition in Spokane is the hub of six congregational, synod, community and ecumenical ministries. They are a Tuesday dinner, a food bank, a community garden, housing units, a companionship ministry and a community center.

The former Emmanuel Lutheran Church at 314 S. Spruce, and the former St. Paul's Lutheran on N. Hamilton merged several years ago to form All Saints Lutheran, but Sunday attendance dwindled to 45 with the average age of 70. Now younger families are among the 150 members and 75 who attend, so the average age is 50.

"I'm doing more baptisms than funerals," said the Rev. Alan Eschenbacher, pastor. "People are drawn because they like the ministries we do. The meal, food bank, garden, housing, companionship and community center are about the church's responsibility to welcome strangers."

Soon after Alan came as minister, the church asked neighbors what they thought the neighborhood needed. Many were concerned about homelessness and people asking for handouts. So the church decided to offer food at a meal and food bank.

It started as a Tuesday dinner 10 years ago. About 100 come each week, and 20 volunteers serve the meal. They are among 150 volunteers in Eastern Washington Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America churches and ecumenical partners who take turns serving.

Each week, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, the church administrator gives out 10-pound bags of canned and dried food to about 200 people who come. On Fridays, Second Harvest's mobile food bank brings fresh food through the Southwest Spokane Community Center.

Eight years ago, the church started an organic community garden on its south lawn. People sign up and commit to care for one of the 12 beds. Some produce goes to the dinners.

All Saints also participates with Spokane Urban Ministries, which built Walnut Corners low-income housing units in 2009. It has 18 units for disabled mentally ill people above the Indaba Coffee Shop, 1425 W. Broadway and 29 units in the Mallon Building behind Salem Lutheran Church.

In addition, All Saint's com-



Alan Eschenbacher shows the new entry for the community center.

mitment to the community made it natural to transform its 3,000-square-foot basement Sunday school space into the Southwest Spokane Community Center. It opened Dec. 1, 2014, replacing the 1,500-square-foot Peaceful Valley Community Center.

For a handicapped-accessible exterior entry, contractors removed 1,100 cubic feet of soil from the church's east lawn. Inside, new wallboard, a sprinkler system, fire alarms and handicapped accessible features were added. The \$385,000 project received \$280,000 from the state and the rest from Spokane City Council, a Community Development Block Grant and the church.

Community center staff run an after-school program for 19, summer program for 30 and care for disabled adults. Youth have access to a computer lab and library.

Encounters with homeless people who suffer mental illness led to the ecumenical Spokane Mental Health Companionship Ministry.

Thirty pastors and lay leaders from 11 area congregations participated in two Companionship Training sessions in February and April. Leading the sessions were Craig Rennebohn, retired chaplain and founder of the Seattle Mental Health Chaplaincy, and Kae Eaton, the current chaplain.

Alan and the Rev. Kris Kristensen of the West Central Episcopal Mission are now trainers, using training guides Craig created on mental health ministry, companionship and congregational mental health teams. They plan to do a training in the fall.

Five years ago, Spokane Mental Health brought Craig to Spokane to explore duplicating his Seattle mental health chaplaincy here.

Alan went to the meeting, was impressed and read Craig's book,

Souls in the Hands of a Tender God. He invited Craig back in 2010 to meet with people from St. John's Episcopal, Spokane Friends, Central United Methodist and Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ. Organizing took several years.

"In companionship ministry, a person or a team from a congregation does companionship on purpose. We all do it. We all know someone with mental illness, people we support on the phone or in person," Alan said. "The training helps us understand how to do it effectively."

For example, Alan met with mentally ill people at Tuesday dinners, on the streets and in the neighborhood.

"I just made friends, meeting with one to three monthly or weekly. It grew to 10. They range from people suffering occasional depression to people who have paranoid schizophrenia and are sometimes hospitalized," he said. "Someone who suffers mental illness can be your best friend one day and curse you out the next day," Alan said. "Companions have to be prepared to be persistent through that."

"Companions are responsive to the suffering, supportive of their companions' wellness and meet in public places for coffee or dinner, not privately as therapists do," he said.

To be responsive begins with being aware that someone has problems. A companion, coming alongside a person to offer friendship, recognizes that the person has a "circle of care" with friends and relatives, as well as doctors, social workers and others.

The companion model supports recovery by encouraging a person to participate in his/her circle of care, and to visit his/her psychia-

trist and social worker. People have problems when they become isolated and do not use their circle.

"It may take five years to develop a sense of mutuality in which the person knows as much about you as you know about him/her," Alan said. "When companions see a friend has an issue, they ask questions to support recovery."

Spokane's Mental Health Companion Ministry's motto is "bringing hope, caring and human contact." The goal is to "develop the capacity of congregations and the community to support wellness."

At Tuesday dinners, they try to have one or two volunteers who are trained in companion ministry. If someone is sitting alone or acting out, they come alongside the person to talk, offer suggestions, listen to the person vent to de-escalate the situation.

Only twice in 10 years has Alan called authorities to take someone who was violent. Alan visited them later in the hospital and jail.

In Seattle, the mental health chaplaincy has several halfway houses where people go for recovery, because homelessness is a factor. In Spokane, homeless people go to Eastern State Hospital or to jail, and are often released with no housing.

Alan challenges the myth of "pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps." He believes "not everyone can play the game of life well enough to succeed."

"As we recognize that people need help with everyday needs, we as churches can help," he said. "Companions are loving and sen-

sitive to others' suffering."

Some companions are peers, meaning they also suffer with a mental illness. An on-site manager at Walnut Corners and a custodian at All Saints are peers and counsel others.

"Caring is part of being Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and other faith traditions," said Alan, who would like more faith communities to be involved.

All Saints is Alan's first call in ministry after 22 years in the insurance and investment business.

For three years, from 2001 to 2004, he was both in ministry and in business while doing Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary's Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) degree. He took classes in Berkeley one week three times a year and worked with a study mentor in Spokane. That degree is designed for people to work on site in an urban or rural ministry.

Alan felt called to ministry in high school when he was a member of Messiah Lutheran. He was active in church through the years.

Early in his ministry, he began to wear a clergy collar and shirt, but black and plain colors were not his style. His wife, Laurel, makes his clergy shirts with bright Hawaiian-like designs.

"I wear them, because I want people to know they're talking to a pastor. Knowing that, people may tell me things they wouldn't tell others, or they may say less," Alan said.

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Brooks' newest book, *The Road to Character*, explains why selflessness leads to greater success. In it he tells the story of 10 great lives that illustrate how character is developed, and how we can all strive to build rich inner lives, marked by humility and moral depth. In a society that emphasizes success and external achievement, *The Road to Character* is a book about inner worth.

Brooks has worked at *The Weekly Standard*, joining the magazine at its inception and serving as senior editor. He has been a contributing editor at *Newsweek* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. He worked at *The Wall Street Journal* for nine years in a range of positions, including op-ed editor.

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Couple plan ways to bring care and healing to street kids in Rwanda

Omy and Samantha Karorero of Spokane and Rwanda established Impanda Rwanda as a nonprofit both in Washington and in Rwanda to provide for the physical and spiritual needs of youth on the streets in Kigali.

Because he lived on the streets in his teen years after his parents were killed in the 1994 state sponsored genocide, Omy understands their needs.

His Spokane-born wife, Samantha, said that Rwanda, which is the size of Connecticut, has 12 million people, over half of whom live in Kigali.

Nine years old when the genocide started, Omy escaped his home through a small window. He ran and hid for two years.

"I did not know what was going on," Omy said. "What happened to me happened to millions of others. Many children ran and hid."

It's hard for him to remember what happened because he was so young, and Omy, now 30, said, "I do not want to remember. It's past. I forgot some on purpose. I don't want to talk about it, because when I do, I relive it and become sad."

Now it's part of his job and his music, which has been a means of healing and a way to tell stories.

Omy K, his stage name, will speak at 7 p.m., Friday, Sept. 11, for the opening of the Compassion Games at All Saints Lutheran Church, 314 S. Spruce.

He will also give a concert, "One Beat, One Rhythm, One World, One Voice, One Tribe, One Night with Impanda" at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday Sept. 22, at the Bing, 901 W. Sprague. That and selling T-shirts are fundraisers for Totes for Hope, so he can take backpacks to street kids when he goes to Rwanda in September.

He knows the backpacks—with shoes, a change of clothes, a rain jacket, a water bottle and a first aid kit—will have an immediate impact. When he was on the streets, having a backpack meant he could carry his few belongings wherever he went.

Omy K said his songs are in the Bob Marley reggae genre, communicating hard experiences and injustices he and others experience.

"Listening to Marley's songs helped line my soul to connect with myself and what I pass through, knowing my current experiences are just part of my life and connecting me with good things. Music turns hopelessness about negative experiences into something positive, rather than saying this is all there is to my life and I can do nothing.

"I sing, write and play



Samantha, Omy and Zion Karorero start Impanda Rwanda in both Spokane and Kigali, Rwanda.

guitar. Music continues to help me. Reggae music is about empowering people to know everything will be all right."

One song, "Save the Children," is on YouTube.

A common message of his songs is that although one suffers, suffering can be turned to good.

"Music is powerful, it can build us when we use it for good," he said. "Songs and poems can teach us to open our eyes to what we experience. They can give voice to follow a calling. When I feel bad, I write a song and think deeply to put out the feelings."

Omy K has been singing since 2006. In 2008, he joined a band.

Omy made the best of his life on the streets. The other street children became his family.

"We would build each other up, take care of each other, console each other and encourage each other to believe the future would be better," he said. "It took time to know whom to trust. What I had for the day, I shared with friends, and they shared with me."

When Omy was 17, a man whom he had met when he was in hiding during the genocide recognized him when they passed on the street.

"What are you doing on the streets?" the man asked.

"I have no place to go. My family was killed," Omy said.

"Can I be your father?" he asked.

Omy went home with the man, who paid for him to finish high school. He took care of many others, too.

After Omy graduated, he knew it was his turn. So at 19, he rented

a house and started doing what he had experienced, helping others in the same situation by giving back to street kids. Omy cooked for them and provided for their education.

"Now I have that calling, 'impanda,' in Kinya Rwanda, the native language. The calling is the heart to give back to change youth and build a beautiful world," he said.

Impanda Rwanda plans to open a center in Kigali to teach teens and bring healing through art and music.

Youth are on the street now because their parents died from AIDS or poverty. Some beg for income to go to school. Some parents have eight children and no work, so they cannot feed them all. Some parents are mentally ill, so traumatized by the genocide they cannot take care of their children.

Samantha, who graduated in math, secondary education and special education from the University of Montana in 2011, went to Rwanda in January 2012 to teach math at a girls' science and technology boarding school through the Rwandan Girls Initiative, a Seattle nonprofit.

She met Omy K when he was singing at a restaurant bar.

"I knew when we met he was the one," she said. "We had many questions about how we would make it work, but over time, we found a way."

Samantha continued teaching at the school in Rwanda to give their relationship time. In September 2013, they married.

During the year-long visa process,

she taught at an international school in Kigali. While they were waiting, Samantha became pregnant. Since they came back to Spokane in September 2014, their now seven-month-old son, Zion was born.

Samantha teaches English as a Second Language part time with the Spokane Community College Institute of Extended Learning.

Omy K is developing the vision for Impanda Rwanda to help street kids. He plans to study digital media production at Spokane Community College this fall, so he can use media to create documentaries to help youth tell their stories. He continues to sing.

Despite his negative experiences, Omy K is proud to be Rwandan. He wants his son to grow up in the United States and in Rwanda.

His goal is for the Impanda Rwanda Center to provide for basic needs of food, education and a place to sleep, and to be a place to empower children.

"We usually don't see living on the streets as success, but the skills it takes to survive on the streets can be used for good," Omy K said. "The center will help teens use art and music for therapy, as means to work on the souls of youth to help them find meaning from their suffering," he said.

"Suffering is education, a way to know who we are and what we are capable of doing," he said.

"The idea is a calling from The Source, God, Jah, The Universe—whatever name people of different spiritual backgrounds use. It's

about the higher calling embedded in us when we came on the earth," Samantha said.

Omy K believes "we are enough: You give. I give. You get. I get. Each and everyone then receives what they deserve."

Along with donations, they seek ideas on how to do the work, so the money will solve problems.

"Many people go abroad with good intentions, thinking money will solve problems, but that's not what it takes. You need to understand the culture and the problems at their roots," Samantha said.

Omy K, whose parents were Muslim and who has attended churches and mosques with friends, knows youth have skills to help themselves and teach others.

"Empowering them will create a better world," said Samantha, who grew up in a Christian family and studied eastern religions at the University of Montana.

For both, love is the focus of their religion.

"I believe in God and I believe if we all love each other as the Bible and Koran say, we can change the world," said Omy, whose vision for Impanda extends to caring for children globally.

"I believe we can reunite the world by taking care of the next generation," he said, "so skin color, culture and tribe do not matter, and so we can recognize our common humanity."

For information, call 991-9201 or email impanda.rwanda@gmail.com.

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Providence sisters had ties to Monsignor Romero, beatified this May

Among more than 250,000 people from around the world who attended the beatification ceremony for Archbishop Óscar Romero May 23, in the Plaza of the Savior of the World in El Salvador's capital, San Salvador, were two Sisters of Providence with ties to Spokane. They were honoring family members lost in the 1979 to 1992 civil war.

Romero was assassinated as he said Mass March 24, 1980, after he called Salvadoran soldiers to disobey if they were ordered to attack innocent civilians. The Salvadoran civil war claimed 75,000 lives.

Sr. Maria Vilma Franco, SP, and Sr. Ana Dolores Orellana-Gamero, SP, shared their stories of life in and leaving El Salvador, and of their participation in the beatification.

Sr. Vilma wanted to go to El Salvador when she heard Monsignor Romero was on the road to sainthood. In 2006, she moved to Spokane from El Salvador, where she lost her father and six brothers. Her mother, a brother and a sister survived.

Born during the war, she said she was six years old when her father was killed March 24, 1985.

After he was killed, her family moved to Chalatenango, where she grew up and gave catechism. She started to teach kindergarten. In 1992, she moved to Usulután, a town founded in 1993, and started teaching first grade, an adult Bible class and catechism with children as part of a Christian base community, which promoted principles of Vatican II.

Sr. Frances Stacey, SP, with whom she served as a catechist, invited her to be a sister. At first she said no, but then felt a call to teach the poor to change their lives. Romero inspired her vocation. As a catechist, she worked for justice for the poor.

In 2004, she entered the novitiate and went to Chile. In 2006, she came to Spokane and made her first vows. She learned English at Spokane Community College and Gonzaga University, and volunteered at St. Ann's Children's and Family Center. She made her final vows in 2012.

In Spokane, she studied early childhood education at Spokane Falls Community College and worked with the St. Aloysius School's daycare. She appreciates that St. Aloysius parish has a sister church in the Bajo Lempa area of El Salvador.

"To be a Providence Sister is to give my life, to be Providence wherever I am, to live in God and give my life in commitment to people," said Sr. Vilma, who went to the beatification because



Sr. Vilma Franco, SP, holds picture of Monsignor Oscar Romero.

Archbishop Romero stood for justice for the poor and gave his life for them, as her father did.

As many in the crowd at the beatification, she saw a rainbow.

"It was like at Jesus' baptism when God said, 'This is my son.' It was a sign Monsignor Romero is alive and continues to work for the poor. It strengthened my heart to continue to work for justice. It was a gift to see the symbol. It gave me hope that his work continues."

Sr. Vilma, who visits El Salvador when she can, stayed an extra week to care for her mother.

When she first moved to Spokane, she was upset with the United States because it had supported the government," she admitted. "I was upset with whoever killed my father."

The civil war was fueled by U.S. aid to the Salvadoran military and government, which crushed dissent. The war destroyed the infrastructure. Peace did not bring social justice.

Now Sr. Vilma, who recently moved to Seattle to be in discernment for her next ministry, is a U.S. citizen.

Sr. Ana, a Eucharistic minister at Providence Elder and Providence Medical Center in Portland, was living in Italy when her uncle, a local priest, told her that her father had died of a heart attack. It wasn't for another year that she learned he had been killed.

José Villalobos, or Tanis, had been a catechist with Archbishop

Oscar Romero in El Congo, a city north of San Salvador, serving with a guitar in one hand and a Bible in the other. Growing up, she and her sisters Luisa and Ester, now in Spokane, learned to play guitar, sing and teach the Bible.

Sr. Ana left home at the age of 11 to go to school in Serro Plata. She wanted to be a nun, so she needed to read and write. She moved to Italy in 1979 and spent 24 years with the Mothers of the Orphans Sisters.

Sr. Ana was inspired by letters her father wrote her in Italy. In one, he wrote: "Being a nun is not just about prayer, it is about action. You must be authentic with the poor people."

Tanis, who received death threats after Romero's assassination, would say, "The Gospel invites us to imitate Christ in all senses of the word."

Military death squads captured, tortured and killed him on March 16, 1983. His body was never found.

"My father came to me in dreams for a year after his death," Sr. Ana said. "Each night he woke me and asked me to pray for my mother, sisters and brothers because they were not safe."

When Sr. Ana came to Spokane to visit her family for the first time in 1987, she heard of his persecution. She said her mother, Transito, like Moses, brought her family through Guatemala and Mexico to the United States. They arrived in 1984 to live in

sanctuary at St. Ann's Church in Spokane.

In Italy, Sr. Ana worked with elderly people and orphans in Milano, served a year as a secretary to the Pope at the Vatican, assisted Bosnian war refugees, did social services for women and men, and helped people dying of cancer.

She was tired and sick when she visited her family in Spokane in 2000, so she stayed there. She later transferred her vows to the Sisters of Providence in 2005 in Portland. Her sister, Luisa, is a Sister of Providence associate.

For many years, she and her family were burdened because they were unable to find her father's body.

Because Monsignor Romero was their friend and they were devastated when he was killed, her family visited El Salvador for the 25th anniversary of his death.

Sr. Ana prayed at his tomb, asking to find her father's body. A man approached her and invited her to share her family's story with a group of students from the Jesuit University of Central America. She showed them her father's biography, written by Luisa. The students were collecting stories for a book about martyrs. They interviewed Transito.

After the book was published, it was sent to the Pope. In April, the names of people whose stories were in the book were included on a list of martyrs on a monument in the National Park in San Salvador.

"That started my family's healing," Sr. Ana said. "My

father's name is now on the list of companions of Monsignor Romero.

"My father was a good father. He worked to spread the Good News. Now I understand why he was persecuted. Jesus was a good man and was killed, too. We cannot find the body, but we can find the soul of my father, so we do not need his body," she said.

"His recognition is like a resurrection," she said. "We now feel joy. His work is not lost. The church recognized that my father was holy. Now I do his job of working with the poor, and I am not angry with anyone."

At the beatification of Romero, Luisa, Transito and Sr. Ana, as others, saw a circular rainbow in the sky with an image of Romero's face in a star in the center of the rainbow.

"We felt his spirit," Sr. Ana said.

Both Sr. Vilma and Sr. Ana minister with the spirit of Romero. Their journey to the beatification was part of their journey of faith, justice, reconciliation and hope, said Jennifer Roseman, director of communications for Sisters of Providence in Spokane.

For information, call 474-2395 or email jennifer.roseman@providence.org.

This article includes information from interviews with Sr. Ana and Sr. Vilma, and with permission from a feature for Global Sisters Report by Jocelyn Sideco, a retreat leader and high school teacher in Oakland, Calif.



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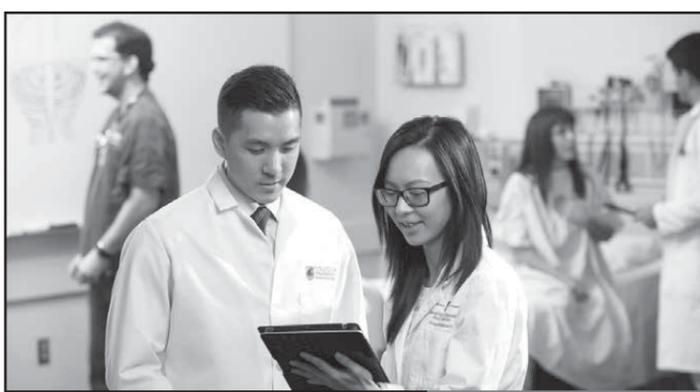
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Faith communities begin to assess ways to begin recovery after fires

Continued from page 1

Idaho Synod reported on activities.

Pastor Paul Palumbo of Lake Chelan Lutheran Church received exiles from Holden Village. When fire spread to Chelan, he attended to his parishioners and the town.

Pastor Kent Narum of Fullness of God, Holden Village, left with others as the fire grew. He ministered in Chelan and 25 Mile Creek to the "exile community."

Celebration Lutheran in East Wenatchee served Holden and Chelan evacuees, opening the building and ministering to their needs and boredom.

Martin said, "Holden is safe thanks to Forest Service work and the plan of the Holden fire chief to install huge rainbird devices that drenched the Village for weeks."

"With a backburn in late August, the fire moved to 25 Mile Creek, where Holden has a Bed and Breakfast," said Cathy Stiner, program administrator.

Pastor Betty Krafft of Chewelah reported fire in the Addy area. Her church is involved in relief.

Pastor Gail Hart tended churches in Orofino and Kamiah as fires moved through the Clearwater River area. One member lost a home in the Wieppe area.

The synod is collecting online donations—at ewaidssynod.org—for fire victims.

Cathy said Lutheran Disaster Resources will assess what resources may be needed for long-term assistance to fire victims. The synod is receiving funds for NW Fires and will work with pastors in communities affected by fires to disburse designated funds.

For information, call 838-9871 or visit ewaidssynod.org.

Scott Cooper, director of Parish Social Ministries at Catholic Charities, and Rob McCann, executive director, spoke with three pastors in Okanogan County.

Fr. Pedro Bautista-Peraza, who serves in Twisp and Brewster, said the Twisp parish building was barely spared. He prepared for evacuation by gathering sacramental records. Brewster high school is an evacuation center because most of the "fuel" in that area burned last year.

Fr. Luta Nsubga, who has been priest three months in Okanogan and Omak, has been responding.

When called, Fr. Jose Jaime Maldonado at Tonasket and Oroville, said less was happening to the north. Fire eventually approached Tonasket.

Rob and a fellow employee to drove a truck with basics—food, water, towels and blankets—to the evacuation center in Brewster.

Fr. Michael Savelesky sent a message to parishes saying



Fire photo was taken Aug. 11 along Hwy. 12 outside Kamiah.

Photo by Volkhard Graf at vgrafphotography.com

the diocese will report when they know the needs. Then Bishop Thomas Daly will set a coordinated plan.

Last year, Catholic Charities sent groceries and gift cards to victims of the Carlton Complex fire. Funds from parishioners' donations were used months after the fires to buy furniture and beds for families who lost their homes and relocated.

"We bought beds at local vendors to help the local economy," Scott said.

"First responders are the Red Cross, and state and federal agencies," he said. "We come later to assist with unmet needs."

Scott said it's important not to lose sight of fires that still burn after media turn their attention to bigger fires.

"The fires that grab the headlines grab the resources," he said.

Volkhard Graf, commissioned ruling elder of the Nez Perce Joint Session and member of the First Indian Presbyterian Church in Kamiah, is posting photos of the fire on Facebook, Volkhard Graf Photography.

He shared a post from Youth with a Mission, Native Ministries, in Kamiah, asking for prayers for Kamiah, the Nez Perce Reservation and surrounding communities. They said 50 homes and 75 other structures were lost.

He shared photos of fires near Kamiah, local volunteers, airplanes and hot shot crews.

A fire west of Kamiah had burned out, except for hotspots. When interviewed, he reported fires near Woodland and Weippe.

Volkhard drove into the area where the fire had burned out, and saw that some homes were saved and some were lost.

The Rev. Luann Howard, pastor at Kamiah Community Presbyterian and First Presbyterian in Kooskia, asked the Presbytery of the Inland Northwest to alert

the national Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA). A team came the third week of August and stayed to assess the needs.

For information, call 208-935-6404 or email volkhard.graf@gmail.com.

The Rev. Sheryl Kinder-Pyle, Presbytery of the Inland Northwest executive minister, joined three volunteers from the PDA team visiting the area. They will provide national funding.

Luann said Kamiah was out of imminent danger, but fires threaten homes.

"There are plenty of clothes, and bedding. Our community has been pouring in everything they can spare," she said.

"Many people made it out with camping trailers, however, the power and utilities are gone outside of town. We need inflatable mattresses, towels, water, tarps, bottled water, coolers and food. Local people are sharing produce," she said. "Given that the area is economically challenged, there is especially need for household goods."

"Miracle stories are beginning to emerge," Luann said. "God has been merciful and gracious to us."

Episcopal Diocese of Spokane communication officer Cate Wetherald said diocesan staff and Bishop Jim Waggoner Jr. are using Facebook, Twitter, email and phone calls to receive and share information about fires burning in the north part of the diocese in Washington, throughout Idaho and hazardous smoke throughout the diocese.

"Our buildings are okay so far, but that's the least of our worries," she said. "We're more concerned with the wellbeing of our church family and neighbors."

The diocese is still working on recovery from the 2014 Carlton Complex fire, said the Rev. Cannon **Karen Schomberg**, so "we will look for ways to help with recovery after these fires. We held a diocesan prayer vigil for the three firefighters killed, the one severely burned and the many people under stress."

Scott Clark, who is working with Episcopal Relief and Development in the Okanogan, also connects with the Washington Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters, which coordinates efforts of churches, government and agencies to help with rebuilding and long-term recovery.

"Wildfires are unlike other disasters such as hurricanes that may last 48 hours and be over.

Until the flames are out and the air is clear again, our focus will be on where and how we can best help," Karen said.

For information, call 624-3191 or visit spokanediocese.org to donate to the disaster Relief Fund.

The Inland Empire Baptist Association is responding to the Idaho fires. For information call 208-437-0212.

Two churches in the Northwest District of the Church of the Nazarene had been in danger but were not damaged.

Red Cross evacuation centers were set up at schools in East Wenatchee, Brewster, Hunters, Coulee Dam, Loon Lake and Chelan, and a Colville church.

For information, call 326-3330 or visit redcross.org/ewa.

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Post Falls churches lead summer worship

By Kaye Hult

For the third year, seven local churches came together to lead the Community Worship and Prayer Service for the Post Falls Festival weekend on Sunday, July 12.

They said the service was local Christians joining together to worship in song, pray for the community and express gratitude for God's many blessings.

Post Falls Church of the Nazarene's Band led praise songs. The pastor, Mark McWhorter, offered a welcome and invocation.

Roger Schwartz of Summit Northwest Ministries, a Seventh-Day Adventist Church, directed hymn singing.

Pastor Matt Erickson of Calvary Lutheran Church offered prayers for the Church, missionaries, Christian ministry and the world.

Pastor Nancy Goodwin of Community Presbyterian Church invited children forward and conversed with them about "how plants need water and how we are promised the water of life by Jesus to quench our spiritual thirst."

Pastor Dan Chance of Oasis Foursquare Church led prayers for children, schools and organizations serving children and families. He invited people to form small groups to add their own prayers. Later, he prayed for government, military, police and first responders.

The preacher, Pastor John Weston of Sky Prairie United Methodist Church, had a youth group visiting from Salmon Creek United Methodist Church in Vancouver, Wash. They read and acted out in costume the Scripture from John 4 about Jesus interacting with the Samaritan woman at the well.

John said she was into "us" and "them" thinking. Jesus said that through the living water of spiritual nourishment he offered, turf wars would not matter.

"The Holy Spirit closes gaps and brings us together," he said. "Things that divide us are fewer than Jesus' bringing us together in the family of God. We're on different teams in the same league."

During the offering, people filled out cards with requests for prayer or visitation. These were divvied up among the pastors. The offering went to Family Promise of North Idaho and Convoy of Hope - North Idaho.

To dedicate the offering, the Beth Shalom Messianic Jewish Community choir sang and their liturgical dancers danced.

During planning for the 2013 Post Falls Festival, Pam Hauser, a member of the Post Falls Chamber of Commerce, suggested having a worship service as part of the festival. Three churches, Calvary Lutheran Church, Post Falls Church of the Nazarene, and Sky Prairie United Methodist Church, were Chamber members.

Matt was at the meeting and took the idea to a pastors' monthly breakfast meeting. Four agreed to plan a service.

The first year, pastors of the three Chamber member churches

and Community Presbyterian Church planned an informal service in front of City Hall. About 175 people attended, mostly members of those congregations.

The second year, more churches were involved and about 180 people gathered there.

The venue changed this year to the Grand Pavilion at Q'emiln Park. Matt believes that made a difference in the make-up—fewer from participating churches—and more people—246—attending.

"We do not call it ecumenical worship. Ecumenism always has its eye on the next thing," Matt said. "We're simply doing *this*."

They hope more congregations will participate in the future.

"Participating churches rotate roles each year. Each congregation lives into its tradition in its part of the service with no coordination," Matt said.

The preacher chooses the Scripture. Musicians and singers choose the music, using hymns familiar to many. Prayer leaders pray in their own style.

For information, contact Matt at (208) 773-5321 or at PastorMatt@CalvaryPostFalls.com.

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What do media, faith say about our identity as brothers and sisters?

The usual media frenzy since June has raced from coverage of one woman's racial identity to the wildfires in the region to focus on a controversy-inciting presidential candidate. A barrage of coverage for a period is usually followed by waning coverage and disappearance. There is need for more conversation as there is need for continued firefighting and recovery. There are always long-term implications.

Thankfully the presidential candidate with billions to spend and a celebrity reputation, has raised the questions among and even outraged conservative columnists and pundits for running roughshod over issues of immigration and the people who have immigrated. His "solution" is reminiscent of blaming Jews in Germany in the 1930s and the internment of Japanese in the United States in the 1940s.

Hate may be an easy sell on the political trail, but when media to foment it among voters it's unconscionable. Just because one candidate has private funds to self-promote and broadcast his message to score in the polls in a crowded field of candidates, does not mean the messages of others should be downplayed or invisible.

How long will his rants be featured?

A liberal candidate in the other party draws as many to rallies but seems off media radar, and headlines on the former Secretary of State seems stuck on emails, even though the articles do not substantiate any scandal.

We're used to it. Heavy coverage for a few weeks is followed by dwindling attention if media anticipate that their audiences may lose interest.

For those who think and care, there seems to be little time for that.

That's why we also need faith and non-profit communities. They help address long-term concerns as issues that matter and disasters' impact continue.

Our ability to identify with others can help us live out the love, care and commitment to justice our faith calls us to do.

In the ecumenical sphere, we talk of being in solidarity with people as we work for justice.

We talk of being partners and allies with people of different races, cultures, groups and nations.

We talk of compassion and empathy stirring common action or action on behalf of

and along side of oppressed people.

Can individuals or groups understand the struggles of another person or group, race or culture?

What is the role of media? What is the role of faith communities?

In the 1960s, media played an important role in the civil rights movement.

When they showed white Southern police dispersing crowds of blacks with hoses, many identified with the African Americans. When people crossed the bridge at Selma, many identified with those who walked and were beaten. We identified with the actions and words of civil rights leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr. The coverage was ongoing, as was the struggle.

The coverage helped changed minds, lives and laws, making a difference.

In encounters with people locally and from around the world, whether brief, intense or longer-term, we can learn by listening to people's stories and walking with them to see through their eyes, to gain compassion, empathy and love that inspire us to act in solidarity, to challenge injustice, inequality, insensitivity, intolerance and ignorance whenever we can.

People who are poor, homeless, victims of violence, lacking education and opportunities, subjected to hate and ostracism, and even suffering from substance abuse or mental illness, need to be in solidarity with each other, not divided by race, ethnicity, gender or other dynamics.

We need to unite to challenge powers and principalities that forge the ever-widening economic disparity that threatens our democracy and our society.

We need to be who we are, but we also need to identify with each other. We need to love each other as brothers and sisters in God's family, seeing each other by the content of our characters.

Let's celebrate diversity of race, culture and each person.

Let's use our experiences and struggles, however different from others, so we suffer with those who suffer and bear their burdens in prayer and action.

May media offer coverage and faith communities engage in interactions that build understanding, companionship, alliance and solidarity in addressing racism, wildfires and unwise political rhetoric.

Mary Stamp - editor

We are called to 'suit up,' to volunteer, to work for social justice

Christians are called in Ephesians 6:10-20 to "suit up," to put on the armor that God gives, because "we are not fighting against humans. We are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and powers in the spiritual world."

The letter to the church at Ephesus contains exhortations to live transformed lives, setting aside selfishness and taking on godly righteousness and holiness. Christian individuals, households and communities become moral examples, living in love, forgiveness and thankfulness. Early Christians knew the struggle to live peacefully under Roman military might. Paul's call was to resist the urge to fight, but instead to live a life of peace.

If living peacefully was the goal, why does Paul use a metaphor of battle? It's because the Ephesians would recognize each piece of armor and its use. In their context, war language made sense.

For us in 2015, a different image is called for.

For the last few weeks, we have watched

as wildfires claw their way across the Pacific Northwest, wreaking havoc in our beautiful wilderness areas and causing devastation in cities and towns. I can't imagine what it would be like to lose everything I owned, and yet that loss is nothing compared to the tragic loss of life.

As Christians, we occupy a position of "already and not yet." I've never liked the saying, "It's all good." Frankly, a lot of things are NOT all good, and much is really, really bad.

Young black men and trans women are being killed every day. Our criminal justice system is busted. We have millions of homeless on the streets every night. The drastically unequal distribution of wealth causes both situations to grow worse.

As Jesus said, we have, "wars and rumors of wars; nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and famines and earthquakes in various places." It is NOT ALL GOOD!!! It's seriously, inhumanely bad!!

So what do we do? Bury our heads in the

sand and say it's all too much? NO! We suit up! We prepare, but not for combat. No, we prepare to fight an enemy we can't see. We fight the system that creates the chaos.

If we are fighting spiritual forces, then we must prepare for spiritual battle. This passage does not denote passive resistance. The word "stand" as used four times in this passage is an imperative, a command that has the sense of "drawing up a military formation for combat."

We must prepare ourselves first.

Our Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ mission and covenant statement says, "We are centers of service seeking to build neighborhoods of decency and justice, and a world at peace."

People battling the systems and powers that be get tired. Weary from the fight and facing the sheer volume of need, it is easy to lose hope. This scripture is a rallying cry: "Hang in there! You can do this!"

One reason we come together once a week is to gather the troops in one place. We need each other. We need to hear

each other's heart and challenge each other to greater works of service. Our greatest resource is the Body of Christ, the Church. We do the best work when we work together.

The foundation of this suit of armor is peace. Peace that we stand in and stand on. If we do not have peace in our hearts, we cannot bring peace to our world.

There is no armor for our backs. This is a call to fight, not to run. This is no time to quit. If we are not volunteering or helping in some area of social justice work, we can start today, choosing an issue. The work is demanding but rewarding. We need everyone to pitch in.

We pray for God's help to strengthen and equip us and others, for wisdom to know how and when to act, and for courage to say what needs to be said.

Pray always. Pray without ceasing.

Pastor Jan Shannon
Guest editorial – from Aug. 23 sermon
- Westminster Congregational United
Church of Christ

Guest Commentary

Sounding Board

Guest Commentary

When wildfires surround, they raise new questions about life, faith

Where I live, fire and water are the main considerations these days – too much of one and not enough of the other.

Were I to drive in any direction on the compass, I am guaranteed to confront a wildfire, and the Okanogan River is the lowest I've seen it in the 31 years I've lived on its banks.

As a journalist, I covered a wildfire for the first time in 1979, the year I married John Andrist and moved to the Okanogan. It was a devious fire, dodging and changing direction every time firefighters thought they had it beat.

I thought wild fire was a phenomenon, not realizing I was witnessing the advent of a new normal. It's no longer a question of whether there will be fires, only a question of where and how terrifying.

Inevitably, every fire is followed by fireworks of finger-pointing, blame and anger. One of the stages of grief, I guess.

If we could only figure out whom to blame: the politicians who are clueless about environmental issues, the insurance companies that won't pay up, the developers who put houses in crazy places, even the firefighters themselves who may not put the fires out quickly enough.

It's easy to be a Monday morning quarterback, second-guessing decisions of fire managers who are tasked with pitting limited human knowledge and resources against the unlimited power and vagaries of nature.

I am in awe of firefighters, from the bosses in command posts to the heroes on the ground and in the air.

Earlier this summer I was hiking with friends above Lake Bonaparte, near the Canadian border. We'd reached the ridge just as a Forest Service pickup drove up. We pointed out to the driver a plume of smoke a considerable distance up the valley in a deeply forested area, wondering if it were a new fire from the previous night's storm. "Yup," he answered, "and in a few minutes you're going to have a chance to watch smoke jumpers land on that fire."

He'd barely finished speaking when a plane flew into the valley and two parachutes emerged.

"How will they get back once the fire's out?" we asked.

"Walk," he answered – untold miles through deep forest with their hundred-plus pound packs.

I spent an inordinate amount of time last

week on social media as the Wolverine Fire surrounded Holden Village, where I was privileged to live and work for two-and-a-half years. The village was safely evacuated and its historic buildings saved, but the beautiful, surrounding forest burned.

The Holden community is global, comprised of people who may not even know each other but share the experience of having been in that sacred place at one time or another.

While they mourn the devastation, they console each other with the knowledge that regeneration begins even as the charred earth cools.

One evening last week, as the temperature began to drop after reaching triple digits, I sat with a friend at the hour when her father, who'd died the previous week, was being cremated.

With readings, prayers and songs, we contemplated the life-giving blessings of fire.

She'd chosen the Taizé song: "Within our darkest night, you kindle the fire that never dies away, never dies away."

Then, as darkness fell, we went for a swim in Omak Lake. My late husband claimed the lake has healing powers, and I

agree. I felt especially buoyant as the water lifted me onto a large rock, which seemed like an altar.

For a while anyway, the smoke had cleared and we contemplated the stars, the infinite number of fires that light our sky.

The next morning all hell broke loose with a lightning storm that swept through the region, sparking new fires, forcing evacuations, closing roads, burning structures, stretching firefighting resources beyond reason.

We don't know how much worse it can get.

Yet a blessing that comes with age is that one's faith is fortified by experience.

We will survive, and we will learn. Oftentimes too slowly, but we must and will learn the lessons that fire and drought have to teach us.

"Every New Season" is an email column I occasionally write as I contemplate this passage of my life. I'm posting it on Facebook out of consideration for those who, like me, struggle to keep up with their overstuffed email inboxes.

Mary Koch
Reprinted from "Every New Season"
an email and Facebook column

Calendar of Events

- Sept 2-7 • Pig Out in the Park**, concerts and food booths, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., spokanepigout.com
- Sept 9 • "Transitions Growing Hope Garden Party"**, 3128 N. Hemlock, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 328-6702, rsvp@help4women.org
- Sept 10 • Second Harvest Resource Fair**: Growing Healthy Communities, Mirabeau Park Hotel, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 252-6246, 2-harvest.org/resourcefair
- Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS) Gratitude Potluck and Membership Meeting**, 35 W. Main, 5 to 7 p.m., 838-7870
- Sept 11 • Compassion Games Opening Ceremony**, All Saint's Lutheran Church, 314 S. Spruce, 7 p.m., onepeacemanypaths@gmail.com
- Sept 11-21 • Compassion Games**
- Sept 12 • "Many Voices"** Concert inaugurating new Steinway Grand Piano, Veradale United Church of Christ, 611 N. Progress, 7 p.m.
- Sept 13-15 • 8th Annual SpokeFest 2015 and Bike Safety Rodeo**, Riverfront park, 7 to 9 a.m., www.spokefest.org
- Grandparent's Day** lunch, silent auction and entertainment, Greater Spokane County Meals on Wheels, Center Place, 2426 N. Discovery Pl., 1 p.m., 924-6976, denac@gscmealsonwheels.com
- Sept 14-Oct 19 • "Parent with Greater Resiliency"** classes, Susie Leonard Weller, Unity Spiritual Center of Spokane, 2900 S. Bernard, 6:30 to 8 p.m., Mondays, 838-6518
- Sept 15 • Parents, Families and Friends of LGBT persons** Support Group, Bethany Presbyterian, 2607 S. Ray, 6:30 p.m., 509-593-0191, support@spokaneplg.org
- Sept 15 • Whitworth art exhibit**, "The Devil Is in the Details," Lied Center for the Visual Arts' Bryan Oliver Gallery at Whitworth, Sept. 15: opening reception 5 p.m. and artist talk 6 p.m. with Elisabeth Higgins O'Connor and Andy Messerschmidt, 777-3258
- Sept 16 • Coffee and Contemplation Discussion**, "Living with Forgiving," Charles Finck of Liberty Cross Ministries, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6913 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9 a.m., 448-1224, ihrc.net
- Sept 17 • Kathryn Lee**, Whitworth professor of political science, 2015 Constitution Day Lecture, "From Selma to Shelby County v. Holder: Voter Suppression in 21st Century America." Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m., 777-3834
- Sept 18-20 • "Fresh Invitations for Midlife and Beyond: Crossing the Threshold of Midlife with Grace,"** Mary Sharon Moore, weekend retreat, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224, ihrc.net
- NAACP Annual Convention** for Alaska, Oregon and Washington State Area Conference, Red Lion Inn at the Park, 303 W North River Dr., 6 to 9 p.m., Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Saturday, banquet 6 p.m. Saturday, naacpaowsac.org
- Sept 19 • Sustainable Living Fair**, Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, 4340 W. Fort Wright Dr., 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., 325-6383, uuspokane.org
- Fiesta Spokane Heritage Festival** with food, mariachi, dancers, Riverfront Park's Gondola Meadow, noon to 8 p.m., latinohopefoundation.org/hispanic-heritage-festival.html
- Sept 21 • Compassion Games Closing**, "Let's Keep It Going," West Central Episcopal Mission, 1832 W. Dean, 4:30 p.m., onepeacemanypaths@gmail.com
- "God, Grace and Partaking in the Divine Nature,"** lecture by Carl Olson, Catholic theologian, author and editor of Ignatius Insight and Catholic World Report, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 6 p.m., 777-4482
- Sept 22 • Impanda Rwanda Benefit**, concert with Omy Karorero, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 7:30 p.m., 991-9201, impandarwanda.org
- Sept 23 • Whitworth Community Building Day** with community service in Spokane County, 8 to 10 a.m., 777-4279
- Equinox Celebration**, Unity Spiritual Center, 2900 S. Bernard, 6:30 p.m.
- Sept 24 • "Every Child Has a Story,"** 19th annual Caring for Kids luncheon to benefit St. Anne's Children & Family Center and Morning Star Boys' Ranch, Nancy Bartley, author of *The Boy Who Shot the Sheriff—the Redemption of Herbert Niccolls, Jr.*, DoubleTree Hotel, 322 N. Spokane Falls Ct., 11:30 a.m., 358-4254, jlee@ccspokane.org
- Volunteers of America—Spokane's Alexandria's House** open house, 2236 W. Pacific, 2 to 5 p.m., 624-2378, ext. 120, voaspokane.org/alexandriashouse
- Annual Lindaman Chair Lecture** on Christian understandings of God's reign in a world torn by sectarianism and religious difference, Whitworth associate professor of history Anthony Clark, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m., 777-3270
- Sept 24-26 • Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church** 80th annual Greek Dinner, 1703 N. Washington, 11 a.m. lunch, 4:30 to 8 p.m. dinner, 328-9310
- Sept 25-27 • Valleyfest 2015**, Mirabeau Point Park/CenterPlace Regional Event Center, Hearts of Gold Parade, 7:30 p.m., www.valleyfest.org
- John Roskelley mountaineering lecture**, inauguration of the Whitworth Library's William C. Fix Mountaineering Collection, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m. 777-3207
- Sept 26 • "Sharing Our Gifts,"** L'Arche Spokane Dinner and Auction, St. Thomas More Church, 515 W. St. Thomas More Way, 4:30 to 8 p.m., 483-0438, larchespokane.org
- End AIDS Walk**, Spokane AIDS Network, Riverfront Park's North Bank Shelter, 11 a.m., 455-8993, kylar@san-nw.org
- PJALS Fall Workshop** on "Race: The Power of an Illusion," Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Ft. Wright Dr., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., pjals.org/RPI
- Sept 26 • Chinese Lantern Festival**, cultural performances and activities, Riverfront Park, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., spokanelanternfestival.com, ticketswest.com
- Nov 1 • First Dinner Series**, "Reformation I: State of the Church prior to the Reformation, Immediate Causes of the Reformation (Religious and Political)," Fr. Michael Maher, SJ, IHRC, 6913 S. Ben Burr Rd., 5:30 p.m., 448-1224, ihrc.net
- Sept 28 • Day of Prayer on the New Evangelization**, "What Is It and How Do I Do It?" Sr. Mary Eucharista, SMMC, IHRC, 6913 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., 448-1224, ihrc.net
- Young Activist Leaders Program** Open House, 35 W. Main, 6 to 7 p.m.
- Fig Tree Mailing and Delivery**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 24th & Grand, 9 a.m., 535-1813
- Sept 30 • Young Child Conference and Expo**, Grand Hotel in Spokane, 313-6095, youngchildexpo.com/Spokane-confeence
- Oct 2 • YWCA Women of Achievement**, Cheryl Strayed, author of memoir Wild, Convention Center, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., 326-1190
- The Fig Tree Meetings**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., Benefit Planning, noon, Board 1 to 3 p.m., 535-1813
- "The Long Night" documentary** and panel discussion in human trafficking, Inland District United Methodist Women, Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, 1115 N. Raymond Rd., 869-8213, maddyb47@msn.com
- Oct 4-5 • Sr. Simone Campbell** of NETWORK, Roger Williams Symposium of Common Ministry of Washington State University, lecture 6 p.m., Sunday, Gladish Center, 115 NW State, Pullman, 9 a.m., Monday workshop at St. James Episcopal, 1410 NE Stadium Way, Pullman, 509-332-2611, office@interfaith-house.com

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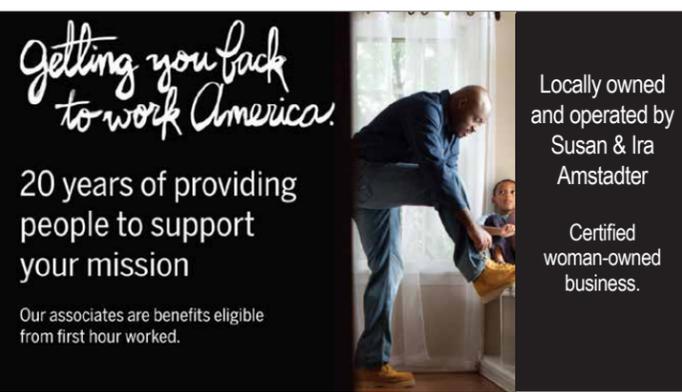
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Jesuit volunteer does not let his blindness inhibit his ability to assist people

Working with Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest (JVCNW) and AmeriCorps as emergency financial assistance coordinator with Catholic Charities Spokane, David Paullin understands the people who come to see him for assistance in paying part of their rent, utilities or transportation.

After graduating from Gonzaga University with a bachelor's degree in history in 2007, he worked on Capitol Hill as a U.S. Senate student intern. From 2009 to 2010, he worked as a National Mall and Memorial Parks guide. While David was growing up, he lived near Sacramento.

David spent four years living with his parents in Sheridan, Wyo., and applying for jobs. He understands desperation, because he experienced it as he received rejection letters or no response.

Because he was born with a genetic syndrome that leads to blindness, few employers wanted to hire him. They were unsure how someone with such a disability could work for them. He uses a cane when walking and has adaptive technology to help him work.

At a 2013 Gonzaga University Day in Billings, he met former Jesuit volunteers who encouraged him to apply for Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest and AmeriCorps. In 2014, he was placed in Spokane at Catholic Charities. He will earn an AmeriCorps education award after completing 1,700 hours and two capacity-building projects.

"The JVC program involves a commitment to simple living, community, work on social and ecological justice, and spiritual reflection," David said.

Rob McCann, executive director of Catholic Charities Spokane (CCS) and Scott Cooper, director of parish social ministries, are his supervisors.

"They figured either it would be a great success story or a failure. They were open to the Holy Spirit," David said. "They give me support and encouragement."

It has gone well, and he is staying for a second year.

David trained with the Washington Department of Services for the Blind and Lilac Services for the Blind, which provided adaptive computer technology, a bluetooth headset, a Braille note taker and a digital tape recorder.

He has access to assistive technology and programs such as screen readers to convert text to speech. He listens to everything on forms being read to him. CCS redesigned its client database with tabs, so he can use keystroke commands to create, delete and search for client files.



Technology makes it possible for David Paullin to serve others.

Catholic Charities can assist someone only once every 12 months, so David needs to look up the clients' records to find out when they last received assistance.

"It's an opportunity to meet people where they are in life, in all conditions," he said.

David sees 10 to 12 walk-ins a day and handles 20 to 80 calls a day for emergency assistance with rent, utilities and transportation.

"I see people with troubles from loss of jobs and income, separation or divorces, and living on fixed incomes. Some are just coming out of the hospital, don't budget well or fall on hard times," he said. "I see a gamut of men and women with or without children, all struggling."

"Stories I hear on the phone or in person are humbling and heart-breaking. It makes me realize things aren't so bad for me. I have a strong sense of gratitude for all life brings me each day," he said.

David is grateful for benefactors and donors in parishes and other Christian churches who give the funds he distributes each month.

"Our job is to be good stewards with limited funds," he said.

Varying each month based on donations, he has \$2,000 to \$4,000 to allocate to clients. He is able to help 175 to 225 people a month. He estimated he served 2,300 people as of July 31.

David believes the community needs more rent assistance, because churches and agencies struggle to offer that service.

"We need to look at root causes for why there are so many homeless youth and families," he said.

With funds limited, he might offer \$100 for rent if the tenant makes financial arrangements for payments with the landlord.

"The goal of rental assistance is to keep people in the rental unit and to prevent homelessness," he said. "The client needs to have a plan in place."

Other local agencies that offer limited rent assistance are the Department of Social and Health Services, St. Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army.

He also disperses partial assistance on utilities or half the cost of a bus or train ticket up to \$75. He must confirm that the client will be met and have a place to stay, so they do not move to be

homeless in another city.

"It's a tough job," David said. "There are hard calls to make. Sometimes the answer is yes and sometimes it is no. If it's no, we refer the person to other funding options among our partners."

From July to October, funds are lean. Charitable giving gears up in November and is strong through April or early May.

Catholic since birth, David said his faith teaches him that "we need to walk with people, lending human dignity, seeing the human condition and treating people with care, concern and respect."

"We walk with people through struggles and allow space for the Holy Spirit," he said. "Even if we do not have funds, we need to care for people, because we are to love our neighbors as ourselves."

David appreciates Catholic Charities' motto: "Need not creed." Scott told him that Catholic Charities does not serve people because they are Catholic but because "we are Catholic."

Some are surprised he is blind. "Many clients, angry about their situations, see me as someone they can relate to, so they don't

yell," he observed. "They see some of their brokenness in me. Many are grateful to be seen by someone who cares, listens and is present."

David hopes he changes people's ideas about what it means to be blind, breaking down expectations about what a blind person can do.

"It's hard for some to think that a blind person can take charge of his life with self reliance," he said.

"This job is an opportunity to learn I can move forward in my life," he said. "It has meant the world to me to help people and have the support of staff. It's a great opportunity after so many said 'no' to me."

After this year, David plans to go to graduate school to earn master's degrees in social work and nonprofit leadership.

In 1956, Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest was founded to serve Native Americans, and poor and marginalized people in Alaska, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Oregon. In the region, 148 volunteers served this year.

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