

STORIES INSIDE

Holocaust memories awakens voice - p. 6

Community plays a role in healing - p. 7

Hospitality is integral to faith life - p. 8, 9

Pilgrims face vocational questions - p. 12



Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest
online in color at www.thefigtree.org

Network inspires care for creation

By Mary Stamp

A three-week Whitworth January term in Kenya in 2002 and two weeks working at a Ghanaian school during graduate studies at the University of Southern California introduced Felicia Reilly to simple living, a key element in environmental education.

She knows she could live better in her car, which has a CD player and air conditioning, than many rural African families do in their one-room houses with no electricity.

Felicia now works through the Faith and Environment Network (FEN) in Spokane to engage congregations to care about creation by dealing with lifestyles, recycling, conservation and environmental stewardship.

She invites congregations to recycle, do energy audits and educate members about the environment.

Working with the Faith and Environment Network, she is one of 20 AmeriCorps members serving in Eastern Washington and Idaho through the Palouse Clearwater Environmental Institute. One is with The Lands Council in Spokane, and others are working on watershed preservation and outdoor education in Moscow, Sun Valley



Felicia Reilly works with AmeriCorps through the Palouse Clearwater Environmental Institute.

and McCall, Idaho.

Felicia is also gathering resources for partnership packets for congregations about how to develop creation care committees to educate their congregations, engaging the congregations in recycling, composting and fair-trade coffee and developing education for members to conserve energy and resources in their daily living.

The network is also promoting World Water Week by showing the film, "Flow," at 6:30 p.m., Monday, April 20, at Salem Lutheran Church, 1428 W. Broadway, where the Faith and Environment Network has its offices.

"Flow" highlights problems regarding the world's dwindling water supply and the far reaching effects that corporate privatization of this resource is having on pollution and human rights, said Felicia.

Kathy Cousins from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game will also speak about her work with the restoration of the Pack River Delta on Lake Pend Oreille, an area devastated by erosion caused by the Albeni Falls Dam.

In addition, the network will
Continued on page 4

Agency addresses stereotypes, policies to develop affordable rural housing

Developing affordable rural and farm worker housing involves more than building with wood and nails.

Marty Miller, director of the Office for Rural and Farm Worker Housing (ORFH) in Yakima, knows that from growing up on a 20-acre apple orchard near Selah.

He educates the public to overcome stereotypes, influence public policies, and form partnerships of bankers, landowners, contractors and agencies to create new housing projects.

After completing studies in political science at Whitworth University in 1989, he worked

with Habitat for Humanity in Americus, Ga., and Portland, Ore., served on the staff of former Senator Brock Adams in Washington, D.C., and completed master's studies at Eastern University at Philadelphia in 1993.

Marty came back to the Northwest 15 years ago as housing developer at ORFH. He became executive director in 2004.

Nudged by Whitworth professors, he considered how his faith, nurtured growing up in First Presbyterian Church in Yakima and being involved in Young Life, influenced his political beliefs and vocational choices.

Although his motivation is faith-based, the Office for Rural and Farm Worker Housing is an "eclectic group" of people with different motivations. Some have a secular desire for social justice for fairness and equality. Others just support affordable housing.

As a statewide, nonprofit developer, ORFH has worked behind-the-scenes for 30 years to create partnerships, acquire land, deal with zoning issues, secure public and private funding, select contractors and oversee construction.

It has facilitated building more than 1,100 units serving more than 5,500 people throughout the state—mostly in Central Washington from the Tri Cities to the Okanogan and in Skagit County, where agriculture is strong.

While Marty believes those units contribute, he knows how modest the number is in the face of the overall demand for farm-worker housing.

He estimates that more than 40,000 units are needed because of the size of Washington's \$8 billion agricultural industry with
Continued on page 4

Holy Names associate stirs awareness of water issues

By Yvonne Lopez-Morton

Experiencing spirituality as a process of discernment rather than rote answers, Sally Duffy said her pilgrimage as an associate of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary has led to a commitment to draw others into evaluating at a personal level the connection between spirituality and issues about sharing the earth's water resources.

She agrees with actor and environmental activist Robert Redford that "water is the sleeping giant of the 21st century and we all need to wake up."

Along with friends at Sabbath Space, a center for Holy Names Sisters dedicated to offer education on global environmental priorities, she is taking on the challenge of waking up the Spokane community to the global water crisis in conjunction with Earth Day activities this month.

Committed to educate and work collaboratively with others, such as Spokane's Faith and Environment Network, the Earth Ministry in Seattle and local environmental organizations, Sabbath Space is distributing and presenting showings of the award-winning documentary, "Flow," which investigates the world water crisis and the growing privatization of the world's dwindling fresh water supply. "Flow" was shown last December at the United Nations as part of the 60th Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights.

Sally said that the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM) are providing the documentary to local organizations and asking them to share it with their members and the community to begin dialogue. The film will also be shown at 6:30 p.m., Monday, April 20, at Salem Lutheran Church,
Continued on page 5

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Religion News Briefs

Around the World

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UN, world religions propose a Decade for Inter-religious and Intercultural Peace

Forty-five religious, interfaith, and value-based organizations from five continents agreed in March to form a coalition to advance a "United Nations Decade for Inter-religious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding, and Cooperation for Peace."

Coalition members hope the UN's 64th General Assembly, which begins in September 2009, will approve a resolution establishing such a decade from 2011-2020.

The March meeting at Maryknoll, N.Y., included representatives from Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Shinto, Sikh, Zoroastrian and indigenous traditions.

The UN General Assembly voted in November 2008 to explore the feasibility of such a decade.

Recently, the president of the UN General Assembly, Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, repeated his previous call for a "new spirit of solidarity and an injection of moral and ethical values into our business and political lives." He urged religious leaders to work with the United Nations because these concerns require "life-long commitment" and religious institutions have the "staying power in the face of these challenges."

The coalition elected a steering committee to promote the decade. Stein Villumstad, deputy secretary general of Religions for Peace, the world's most representative multi-religious organization, will chair the committee.

"This is a unique opportunity for religious traditions, so easily hijacked for destructive purposes, to work with the United Nations and jointly mobilize their communities and organizations for urgent and compelling actions for peace," he said. "Time and space created by the decade should make a difference for the poor, marginalized and oppressed peoples."

The World Council of Churches hosted the first gathering of the coalition in January 2008 in Switzerland. Shanta Premawardhana, director for Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation, said: "Our churches have a long history of working with the UN on projects that contribute to sustainable peace."

The coalition meets next during the Parliament of the World's Religions in December at Melbourne, Australia. The coalition hope the UN decade will be launched on Sept. 21, 2010, the International Day of Peace. It would follow the 2001-2010 International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World and the 2010 International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

Water Forum's declaration falls short

Governments, civil society organizations and Christian agencies are disappointed that the declaration adopted at the World Water Forum in March at Istanbul does not reaffirm water as a human right.

"It is difficult to understand that the Forum has produced such a text while the consensus of the international community is more advanced," said Michael Windfuhr, human rights director of Bread for the World of the Evangelical Church in Germany.

At the forum, representatives of governments and civil society repeatedly demanded the declaration recognize water as a right, not just as a basic human need.

"Many United Nations member states already recognize the right to water," said Michael, chair of the Ecumenical Water Network. Last year, members of the UN Human Rights Council unanimously adopted a resolution recognizing "human rights obligations with regard to access to water and sanitation."

Churches and Christian organizations formed the Ecumenical Water Network to raise awareness among Christians worldwide about the global water crisis, unjust distribution of the resource and the needs of affected communities. One example is the EWN campaign Seven Weeks for Water, offering weekly meditations for the time before Easter.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Fig Tree, KYRS receive media awards

The Fig Tree and KYRS Thin Air Community Radio received the 2009 Excellence in Media Literacy Awards from Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media (NW-ARM) as models of responsible media, creating a culture of peace and justice.

The awards were presented by NW-ARM director John Caputo during The Fig Tree's annual breakfast at Gonzaga University.

John said The Fig Tree is committed to "stretching people's thinking to a wider world by creating a culture of peace, justice, stewardship and respect that em-

powers congregations, nonprofits, businesses and communities of the region to address issues in new ways and to see creative, nonviolent solutions."

"It shows that media can reinforce human rights, dignity, diversity and respect through building understanding of the context of people's lives and their perspectives beneath surface differences, beliefs and opinions," Caputo said.

Since 2003, KYRS, a low-power station at 92.3 and 89.9 FM, has provided a forum for neglected perspectives and dis-

cussions on local, national and global issues, reflecting values of peace, social, economic and environmental justice, human rights, democracy, multiculturalism, freedom of expression and social change, he said.

The NW Alliance for Responsible Media is committed to monitoring the influence of media on society, educating the community about this influence, and working with professionals to influence the media to act responsibly in helping create a healthy environment for all.

For information, call 313-6566.

Area groups schedule Earth Day events

Spokane will celebrate Earth Day, which is on Wednesday April 22, from noon to 5 p.m., Sunday, April 26, at the Gondola Meadows of Riverfront Park.

The activities will include displays by earth friendly organizations, the Procession of the Species at 2 p.m., music, speakers and food. For information, call 838-4912.

Spokane Valley Earth Day, "Spring into Action," will be from

10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, April 18, at Mirabeau Point Park.

Environmental awareness activities will include an Arbor Day tree planting, seedlings to take home, "green" information and a Spring into Action pledge. For information, call 688-0300.

The Lands Council's third annual Earth Day Tree Planting will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, April 25, at Campion Park.

Volunteers will plant along the shores of Hangman Creek. For information, call 209-2852.

In Coeur d'Alene, Earth Day will be celebrated from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday, April 19, at the Harding Family Center.

Jane Cantwell will give a presentation on her raptor program.

There will be face painting, eco-art projects, a tree climber, story telling and vendors. For information, call 208-659-4213.

Oikocredit head speaks on micro-credit

Terry Provance, the director of Oikocredit, which provides micro-credit loans around the world, will speak on "The Power of Micro-credit to Overcome Global Poverty" at 7 p.m., Thursday, April 23, at Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, 411 S. Washington in Spokane.

Oikocredit is an international community development financial institution that makes low-interest loans to poor people through cooperatives and micro-credit banks.

The credit helps people overcome poverty and restore dignity.

Oikocredit also offers socially responsible investment, primar-

ily for religious communities to promote global justice through sustainable development and solidarity, Terry said. Investors receive interest and full principal on redemption. In 1975, the World Council of Churches started the Oikocredit Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society.

For information, call 535-1813.

World Fair Trade Day Celebration is May 9

The 2009 World Fair Trade Day Celebration, "Spokane Takes a Fair Trade Break," will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, May 9, at the Community Building, 35 W. Main.

There will be eight vendors, including Singing Shaman's Mexi-

can products, ConoSur Chilean items, Moonflower's Guatemalan gifts, Far East Trader Nepalese items, Ganesh Himal Nepalese textiles, Lost Horse Press books by local authors, Kizuri merchandise from various sources and Kristine Holbert and Pamela

Vail with Catholic Relief Services gifts.

The day will include fair trade films shown at the Magic Lantern, a live broadcast on KYRS Thin Air Radio and international food.

For information, call 448-6561.

Auntie's offers discussion on faith, atheism

Todd Cioffi, assistant professor of theology at Whitworth University, will lead a panel discussion with local ministers on "The New Atheism - a Christian Response"

at 7 p.m., Tuesday, April 7, at Auntie's Bookstore auditorium, 402 W. Main.

Lois Hughes, events coordinator, said Auntie's Bookstore, is hosting the discussion of 21st-

century-style atheism, sponsored by Manito Presbyterian Church, as an opportunity to question and engage in a respectful exchange of ideas.

For information, call 838-0206.

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The Fig Tree is published 10 months each year, September through June.

Deadlines:
COPY - 3rd Fridays ADS - 4th Tuesdays
It is published by The Fig Tree, 1323 S. Perry St., Spokane, WA 99202, a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization.

Editorial Team
Editor/Publisher/Photos - Mary Stamp
Associate Editor - Yvonne Lopez-Morton
Mary Mackay, Nancy Minard, Sara Weaver

Coordinators & Contract
Malcolm Haworth - Directory Editor
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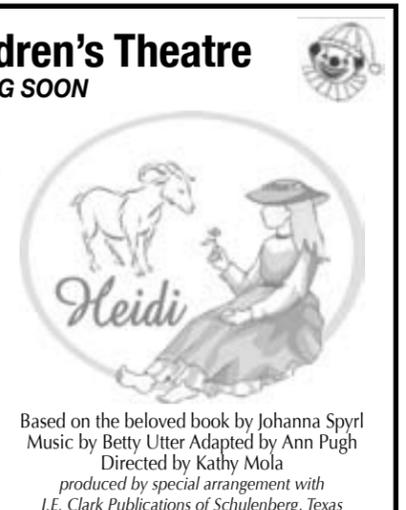
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Easter Sunrise Service uses Iona liturgy

The Interfaith Council's Easter Sunrise Service will use a liturgy from the Iona Community in Scotland at 6 a.m., Sunday, April 12, at Greenwood Memorial Terrace, 211 N. Government Way. The Rev. Andy CastroLang of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ will preach on "Urgent, Action Required, Reply All! For information, call 216-6090.

Bonner County Task Force raises funds

The Bonner County Human Rights Task Force will hold its Annual Meeting at 6 p.m. and Spring Forum benefit at 7 p.m., Friday, April 17, at the Panhandle State Bank in Sandpoint. The fund raiser, which supports the Model United Nations Class at Sandpoint High School, features a home-cooked, Ethiopian/Djibouti buffet dinner. For information, call 208- 255-4410.

Orthodox Easter is on Sunday, April 19

Orthodox Christians will celebrate Easter, which they call Pascha, on Sunday, April 19 this year. The date of Orthodox Easter is calculated using an ancient formula relating to the cycles of the moon, the vernal equinox and the Jewish Passover.

Network plans open house in new location

The Interfaith Hospitality Network will hold an open house from 4 to 7 p.m., Friday, April 24, in its day center, which moved in August from East Sprague to 508 S. Richard Allen Ct., #5. The program housing homeless families in 12 churches is on the campus of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, in a building with a playground, kitchen, more restrooms, office space, a quiet room, a dining-living room and laundry facilities. When Emmanuel Family Life Center opens next door, it will provide services for the families. For information, call 747- 5487.

Benedictine Sisters mark monastery's 100th

The 61 Benedictine Sisters at the Monastery of St. Gertrude mark a century of presence in Cottonwood, Idaho, from April 26 to August 16. In 1882, the foundresses, Mother Johanna Zumstein and Sisters Rosalia Ruebli and Magdalene Suter, came to the United States from Sarnen, Switzerland. They worked at Gervais, Ore., before moving to Uniontown, Wash., in 1884, and then to Colton in 1894. In 1907, Mother Hildegard Vogler brought sisters to Idaho. St. Gertrudes was declared the mother-house April 26, 1909. For information, call 208-962-3224 or visit www.StGertrudes.org

Hospice hosts end-of-life teleconference

Hospice of Spokane will host a "Living with Grief: Diversity and End-of-Life Care" Conference from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Wednesday, April 29, at The Lincoln Center, 1316 N. Lincoln.

The program is a nationally broadcast conference followed by a local panel of speakers on how cultural histories, traditions and beliefs can affect end-of-life care and bereavement. Participants will discuss challenges when cultural considerations cause ethical concerns or moral distress. For information, call 456-0438.

SNAP energy assistance still available

In Spokane County, the Spokane Neighborhood Action Program (SNAP) distributed a record amount of energy assistance this winter and continues assistance through May. Many households face the challenge of higher utility bills, said Margaret Belote, director of the energy assistance program. SNAP received more federal funds than previous years and will continue distributing the funds until they are spent. For information, call 242-2376.

Food competitions generate food donations

Several Spokane churches have "food fight" competitions as ways to inspire donation to food programs to help feed the community's hungry people.

The annual "food fight" competition between women and men took place during February at Country Homes Christian Church. The "losing" group treats the "winning" group to a dinner.

The amount of food has increased each year with the number of pounds of canned food given in 2009 nearly tripling the pounds in 2005—3,151 pounds compared to 1,298.

"Caritas Center, an ecumenical neighborhood outreach center serving Northwest Spokane, is the real winner, because the donated food helps fill shelves of their

food pantry to share with people in need," said the Rev. John Temple Bristow, pastor. "At Country Homes, the battle of the sexes leads to something good: food for the hungry and laughter."

For information, call 466-3414.

Among United Methodists, March was a South vs. North Food Fight with Covenant United Methodist challenging its sister

church, Manito United Methodist, to see which could bring in the most food for Shalom Ministries, which serves meals at Central United Methodist in downtown Spokane.

This contest was based on the number of items. Cash counted as two \$1 items. Donations were brought Sundays in March.

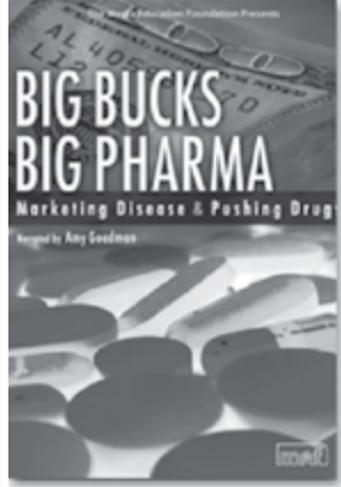
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Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media and KYRS present Democracy Now! host



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Yakima-based agency creates new models for migrant and rural housing

Continued from page 1

a workforce of hundreds of thousands of people who are paid low wages for seasonal employment.

"The economic incentive drawing farm workers to the agricultural industry creates a significant demand for affordable housing," he said.

Marty explained, "The average farm-worker household has four to five people, and their average income is \$17,000. About 70 percent of farm workers are year-round residents and about 30 percent remain migrant.

"To afford housing on that income is a challenge," he said. "Without a group like ours, few organizations can provide housing that is affordable for families with such low incomes. It takes public investment, as well as private loans, to provide affordable rent."

ORFH helps secure public funding from the State Housing Trust Fund, the Federal Department of Agriculture and tax credits that draw private investors to build and rent the housing.

ORFH also uses the Washington Community Reinvestment Association. Participating banks put money into the association, which lends the money. Many banks share the risk, rather than one bank directly underwriting a project on its own.

"When farm workers have an opportunity to settle out of the migrant stream, they take it," Marty said. "Migrant work is a tough life."



Marty Miller develops affordable housing in state.

Research indicates that most migrant families are in farm work just a generation and a half. While parents stay in it, the children may start in farm work, but go to school and seek jobs that are less demanding and better paying.

"The second generation usually leaves farm work, so there is a continual need for new farm workers, generating new waves of migration to fill the needs of agriculture," he said.

Marty knows how hard it was for his father to run a small apple orchard, supplementing his income by selling insurance. In the 1980s, mom-and-pop apple

orchards went through tough times. Many farms consolidated to form bigger, more efficient operations.

His family's orchards started by using conventional farming methods and later organic methods, which was difficult because of the small size of their operation.

Learning of political processes and realities while in Washington, D.C., Marty realized he was drawn to community-based work similar to what he did with Habitat for Humanity.

So he attended Eastern University in Pennsylvania to study economic development with Tony

Campolo, an evangelical Christian focusing on social justice.

"I gained tools and skills to make a difference by incorporating my faith values at the community level," Marty said.

As a graduate assistant helping nonprofits create education and job opportunities for the poor, he realized that to share Christ's love, "we need to help meet the needs of people for daily living, to show Christ's love by making sure people have food, clothing, shelter, education and jobs," he said. "That fit where I felt my faith was leading me: to address the needs of the poor and those typically left out."

From his work, Marty sees need for immigration reform.

"The system is broken. The agricultural industry relies on a migrant work force, but immigration policies do not support legal means to recruit and retain workers. We need immigration reform that welcomes hard-working people who are good members of the community," said Marty, aware of discrimination against farm workers.

"Farm workers are members of the community and deserve housing," he said.

In one community, ORFH identified and purchased property, had it zoned for multi-family housing and had building permits approved, when a residents' group appealed the building permit.

One man said, "It's not the buildings we don't want. It's the people in them."

The people, however, already lived in the community, but in unaffordable, substandard housing, Marty said.

In court, ORFH lost the first hearing, but the Superior Court overturned that decision.

"At the core of the neighbors' reaction is fear of change," he said. "While some opponents are willing to listen and have their fears resolved, a few will not change their views, which are often based on stereotypes. Aside from the few, we have many supporters."

Marty, a member of Wesley United Methodist Church with his wife Amy, said ORFH holds volunteer community meetings early in the process to facilitate education.

"While there is still discrimination, I know there are also many dedicated people who want to see their communities be strong, vibrant and open to people in all walks of life," he said.

Among them are many in churches providing food, clothing and shelter.

"With the state budget deficit and economic climate, the future of affordable housing will be challenging," he said. "As more people lose their jobs and homes, there will be more need for affordable rental housing."

"I am optimistic that we will create new models to provide affordable housing as an economic stimulus in these times," Marty said.

For information, call 248-7014

Programs urge congregations to become 'green'

Continued from page 1

present its second annual, Called to Care Conference from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, May 9, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave., an opportunity for community leaders and people of faith to share ideas on how to become more environmentally sustainable.

A panel with Peter Illyn of Restoring Eden will discuss how faith groups can more actively care for creation.

Workshops on energy retrofits, green cleaning and gardening will provide practical experience on how groups can engage in activities to heal and protect the Earth.

Felicia, who grew up in Lewiston attending the Episcopal Church of the Nativity, said her mother talked with her about protecting wildlife and preserving the environment, along with writing letters to government to influence policies.

After graduating from Whitworth in 2003 in psychology she lived in Bellingham, Los Angeles

and Seattle, including two years of studying occupational therapy at the University of Southern California.

When she, her husband and son moved back to Spokane recently, Evita Krislock, chair of the FEN board, recruited her. Felicia knew her from Camp Cross when Evita was executive director.

Felicia has immersed herself in learning about the community, finding a strong conservation and sustainability movement, meeting with neighborhood councils, learning of people organizing community gardens and green building.

"I'm interested in the connections of creation, seeing, for example, how water works, flowing like the arteries of the earth," she said.

"I'm encouraged to see others who believe and act out of their faith to further the green movement to protect the future of creation for their children."

Felicia, who has started attending Holy Trinity Episcopal

in West Central Spokane where she lives, said that there are already several congregations with Creation Care committees or teams. They include St. Aloysius Catholic, the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John, St. Mark's Lutheran and Salem Lutheran.

Among the FEN partners are Conservation Northwest which schedules family outdoor activities; Restoring Eden, Christians in conversation about restoring creation; Green Spokane, a new website from the City of Spokane, and Earth Ministry, mobilizing the Christian community in

the Northwest for a sustainable future.

Its March its website at www.faithandenvironmentnetwork.org/past.php featured use of yards as "green" landscapes that are self-sustaining with less use of water and chemicals for lawns and gardens. It suggested using unused lawn areas for community gardens, landscaping with native plants, waste-free lawns and gardens.

For information, email faithandenvironment@gmail.com or call 294-3944.

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Place of solitude immerses people in issues of the day, like water

Continued from page 1
1428 W. Broadway.

From 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Wednesday, April 22 the Holy Names Sisters will convene a community dialogue at the Convent of the Holy Names for a response to the film and discussions about accountability, responsibility and opportunities to explore local water issues and how the community can help solve the global water crisis.

While reinforcing the message that water rights are a broader issue, Sally acknowledges that it's a challenge in a region that has a current abundance of water.

According to statistics reported in the film, of the six billion people on earth, 1.1 billion do not have access to safe, clean drinking water; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency does not regulate 51 known water contaminants; the water and sanitation crisis claims more lives through disease than war, and water is a \$400 billion global industry, third behind electricity and oil.

Some experts warn that the water crisis will be the most significant political and environmental issue of the 21st century with the potential of inciting "water wars" throughout the world, Sally explained.

"Many developing countries are already experiencing life-threatening water shortages and subsequent violent outbreaks," she said.

Sally was drawn to Sabbath Space because it not only provides solitude and prayer, but also advocates for awareness about the issues of humanity, especially those affecting women and children. She is impressed by how the international Holy Names congregation evaluates social issues.

"When we took on the issue of water we went through a long process of discernment and wanted to educate ourselves on how we could increase awareness and advocate locally, nationally and internationally," she said.

The nurturing and welcoming



Sally Duffy addresses global water crisis.

environment at SNJM's Sabbath Space in North Spokane, a gathering space and private retreat center for prayerful reflection and education, has been a second home for Sally for the past five years as a SNJM associate and a member of the ministry team.

Sabbath Space's serene, modest rooms create a haven for those seeking to renew and confirm their spirituality, she said. In that context, Sally and all at Sabbath Space have made a commitment to address critical social issues like the global water crisis.

Sally is a voice for the SNJM commitment to social issues and particularly to water issues.

Her dedication to SNJM started when she was a child growing up near Gonzaga University and a student at St. Aloysius Catholic School. Her mother developed a relationship with the SNJM's through the Parent Teacher Association. Sally has carried on that family connection as an SNJM associate for more than 20 years.

While her life experience has included working in both the corporate and nonprofit worlds, her transition to a broader and personal commitment to her spirituality guided her to Sabbath Space.

"Life is in being around people who are deep in both their commitment to their faith, but also to issues that impact the world," said Sally, who has her bachelor's and master's degrees in language and literature at Eastern Washington University.

She taught at the college level for five years including Gonzaga University where she became re-acquainted with SNJM. She also worked for Washington Mutual as a member of the management team and as the development director at the Cheney Cowles Museum, now the Northwest Mu-

seum of Arts and Culture.

Globally, the SNJM congregation is affiliated with the nongovernmental organization (NGO) UNANIMA International, a coalition of 16 congregations of women religious and their partners in missions on all continents that work with the United Nations on behalf of welfare of the planet to ensure that people care for and safeguard the planet.

"Internationally water access is a huge issue, but we need to step up the visibility of this issue locally and educate people, especially younger people, about water rights, access and risk," Sally said. "Water is the essence of life."

Her commitment to global water and social issues has personal, as well as international implications.

In March her granddaughter made a presentation to her seventh grade class on the impact of bottled water on the environment, complete with distributing book-marks focusing on alternatives.

In May Sally will join Jo Ann Showalter, a member of the Sisters of Providence, as part of a delegation attending the Commission on Sustainable Development at the United Nations.

Sally pointed out that spiritual journeys are lifelong and com-

plex. She is grateful that her path has come to the door of Sabbath Space and that she is surrounded by women who care for their community and world.

"There are no black-and-white answers any more. Spirituality is always a process of discernment and knowing that if you believe in something it calls you to act."

For information, call 325-8642.

Japan Week set

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Woman recalls her memories of the Holocaust so the world will remember

By Virginia de Leon

Several German families risked their lives and defied Nazis during World War II to help save Miriam Abramowitz-Ferszt.

People in a rural area near Munich took her in with her mother and little sister. They knew her family was Jewish and had false papers but did not turn them in to the Nazis. They helped them by sharing food and supplies.

For their courage and their willingness to risk their lives to save the Jews among them, Miriam will always be grateful.

"I lived from hour to hour," she said of the years in Nazi Germany when she and her family passed as non-Jews. "We were always scared and looked over our shoulders. When there is war all around, you just hope to survive."

Miriam was 19 when the war began in 1939. Now 88 and living in Cheney, Miriam will share her experience in Yom HaShoah, the international day of remembrance of the Holocaust. As part of the ceremony at 7 p.m., Sunday, April 19, at Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th in Spokane, Miriam will present a commemorative keepsake to the winner of the annual creative writing contest.

For three years, Temple Beth Shalom has invited area students to compose an essay or poem on the Holocaust. This year's theme is "Honoring the Rescuers: People Who Saved Jews During the Holocaust." Students are writing on qualities of a rescuer, imagining what they would do if they lived next door to a Jewish family during the Holocaust and what it would take to persuade them to be a rescuer.

Until recently, Miriam talked little about her experience.

Memories still haunt her, but she now realizes the importance of sharing her story. Last year, during a trip to Europe, she visited Auschwitz and was moved by the fact that thousands of people continue to go to the site where 3 million Jews were murdered.

"They want to know and remember," said Miriam, whose late husband, David Ferszt, survived Auschwitz. "What happened should never be forgotten. It must be taught in our schools."

"Jews have always been persecuted and chased out and those who say it didn't happen must be out of their minds," she said.

When Mary Noble, a member of Temple Beth Shalom and an organizer of the local Yom HaShoah observance, asked her to take part this year, Miriam knew she had to accept the invitation.

"It's a way to help others become aware," she said.

Her experience in the war

shaped her life. When she wasn't busy working and raising children, she participated in activities of the Jewish community.

In 1970, she became a member of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, which works to improve the quality of life for all people of Israel and to strengthen Jewish life in the United States. It focuses on health, education, youth, environment and *tikkun olam*—making the world a better place.

Miriam also has been a longtime member of World ORT, a Jewish group that provides education and vocational training. It helps more than 200,000 Jews and non-Jews in 58 countries.

Born in Munich in 1920, she experienced a "wonderful childhood" before the war, living in a rural area outside the Bavarian capital. When she was eight, her family moved back to Munich so she could attend a better school.

Although they had one Jewish neighbor, her family didn't have Jewish friends. Munich didn't have a Jewish neighborhood, and her family was not religiously observant. Like many Jews, they didn't think they were vulnerable because they saw themselves as German and assimilated into the mainstream culture.

In 1933, when her parents became more conscious of the growing prejudice against Jewish people, her father, Joseph Weiglein, made plans to retire from his courthouse job and move his family to Africa. Six months later, he died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of 41. Miriam was 13 and her sister, Gertie, was five.

Just before her father's death, Miriam was kicked out of the private school she attended because she was Jewish. It was the first time she realized she was not safe. At another school, she learned commercial skills and at 14 became an apprentice in a small store selling wools and yarns.

After her apprenticeship, she became a courthouse clerk in 1936, but was fired in early 1937 after someone discovered she was a Jew. In 1938, the synagogue in Munich was burned down.

Among the people who helped save Miriam and her family were Felix and Ida Hensel, whom they called "uncle" and "aunt" even though they were not related. Felix was a regional salesman for an Austrian steel company. He hired Miriam to work in his office. He took care of her family, especially

"Honoring the Rescuers: those who saved Jews during the Holocaust" is the theme for Yom HaShoah, Spokane's observance of the Holocaust, at 7 p.m., Sunday, April 19, at Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave.

The keynote speaker will be the high school student essay-contest winner.

The program includes a children's candle procession, a candle lighting ceremony and music by the Spokane Youth Symphony. For information, call 536-7745.

Gertie, who had a more difficult time passing as a non-Jew. For a while, Gertie lived with the Hensels and worked as a maid. The couple also helped them acquire false papers including passports without the "J," which saved them from concentration camps.

Part of the time, Miriam, Gertie and their mother, Ellie Weiglein, lived with an acquaintance in a rural area outside Munich. Many people, especially families with children, left the city for villages. Air raids bombed Munich and major cities, so people escaped to the countryside.

Another "aunt" who helped shelter Miriam for a while was Mitzi, an actress who lived alone on a farm. Her husband, "Uncle" Walter Margerie, had been a major in World War I and was called back to active duty during the second war. Miriam said Walter was involved in an attempt to assassinate Hitler. Mitzi and Ellie were friends before the war. Miriam was born in Mitzi's house.

Miriam did all she could to prevent her identity from being discovered. She kept her mouth shut and refrained from joining in political discussions. She did, however, become more aware of people who were helping Jews.

One man sold and repaired washing machines. She socialized with him and learned he was part of the underground that provided food and supplies to Jews.

She remembered how Jews were rounded up and taken to a concentration camp, but she didn't know it was Dachau, 10 miles from Munich. When the war ended, the U.S. Army marched Nazis out of Dachau as prisoners.

"At the time, we didn't know what was happening," she said. "I saw people from the concentration camps work on the railroad, but what could we do? Nothing."

After the war, she worked several years at a military PX. She married her first husband in 1947. Their daughter, Gabriel, was born in 1948. From then to 1950, she did clerical work for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration's International Refugee Organization.

In 1948, Miriam applied to emigrate to the United States. Her husband, mother and Gertie came in 1949. In July 1950, Miriam and Gabby joined them. After divorcing, she and Gabby lived in New York. She married again and her son, Armand, was born in 1956.

After her second husband died of a heart attack in 1959, Miriam, her mother and her two children moved to Los Angeles. Disenchanted with the smog and traffic, they moved in 1965 to Pocatello, Idaho, where they had friends, and where there was a Jewish temple.

In 1978, Miriam, Ellie and Armand moved to Cheney, to be with Gabby, who moved there in 1976. Miriam joined Temple Beth Shalom and worked as a travel agent until she retired when she turned 75. Her mother lived to be 98.

In 1990, Miriam met David, the widowed father-in-law of Rabbi Jack Izakson of Temple Beth Shalom. The two married in 1998. David died in 2002.

Like many people who lived through the atrocities of Nazi Germany, she and David didn't talk much about their experiences. David was one of 10 children. Only three survived.

Although it still hurts to remember, Miriam now feels more comfortable discussing her experiences. She wants to tell her story so others will know and the world will not forget.

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Counselor invites community support, accountability for healing

Believing community ties can reduce family violence and help people suffering mental illness, Marian Beaumier has formed All Come Together (ACT) Ministries and Mental Health for All.

The programs train faith community members to support people caught in abuse or isolated by mental illness.

In this individualistic culture, Marian said that people want to keep family violence or mental illness private, but the privacy can hinder healing.

“Experiencing community accountability and support—belonging and being cared for—promotes healing,” she said. “At times, a person needs more than a me-and-my-therapist approach.”

Marian, who opened her counseling practice in August in Barry House at St. Joseph Family Center, 1016 N. Superior, knows individual therapy has a role in individual insight about trauma, in coping skills and in treating mental health issues.

She knows there’s more to healing than individual introspection and reflection. People also need to realize they belong to communities of people who care about them enough to acknowledge their struggles and growth, and affirm them as they journey to greater maturity and wisdom, she said.

“We need to care about each other in community, build bonds and establish healthy relationships,” said Marian.

In her counseling practice, she incorporates narrative therapy to help people build life-affirming stories for themselves, which are sometimes reflected back through the eyes of witnesses who become part of a client’s community.

Marian also invites congregations to recognize their potential as caring communities who can offer healing interpersonal ties.

She combines her background in religious studies, social work, teaching and ministry with her counseling.

Marian came to Spokane from Garden Grove, Calif., to study at Fort Wright College. After graduating in 1976, she was director of religious education at St. Patrick’s Parish in Hillyard.

In 1981, she earned a master’s in religious studies at Gonzaga University. After teaching for a year, she married and returned to Spokane as a consultant at Sacred Heart Catholic Parish, working in adult education and sacramental preparation.

She taught Catholicism at Gonzaga University for 10 years, served as a consultant for the Catholic Diocese, led catechist formation and served as the director of religious education at a



Marian Beaumier seeks to restore individuals and communities.

Spokane Valley parish.

After completing a master’s in social work at Eastern Washington University in 2005, she worked in clinical counseling at a local mental health agency.

For several years, she has traveled to California to help care for her father, who has Alzheimer’s, and a brother who is developmentally disabled. When her father-in-law became ill, she and her husband supported her in-laws during his final illness.

“It takes a community to address many needs that arise for persons who face multiple or major challenges in life. Within community, we can voice our longings, our fears and our need to give and receive support.

“We do better when we feel we

belong somewhere, to some group of people,” she said.

“Mental illness and domestic violence are isolating and stigmatizing,” she said. “For some, the language and experiences of faith can help break through the isolation.”

To help faith communities share in that process, Marian is offering several programs:

- In March, she led two sessions on “Embracing Hope: Personal Reflections of Faith and Mental Illness” sponsored by St. Aloysius Parish’s social ministry team, designed for family members and friends of people struggling with mental illness. They shared their stories, hopes and strengths, and made commitments to self-care and mutual support.

- On Friday, April 17, she is offering a “Faith Communities and Family Violence” workshop to help congregations develop ministries to families experiencing violence. From 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., at Barry House, she will present information on the prevalence and impact of abuse—from verbal to physical assault—and ways the faith community can recognize abuse and support families who decide to step out of abuse into healthy relationships.

Staff from local agencies will discuss ways faith and faith communities can help and hinder stepping out of violence. Participants will learn how faith communities are addressing family violence.

“Simply hearing the faith community name the chaos family violence creates may help people feel less alone and realize there is help,” she said.

She cautions that when lives are at stake, the faith community needs to know its limits. For example, a pastor counseling a couple needs to know that if there

is violence, it is unsafe to pursue couples’ counseling, because the victim risks injury at home because of what she might say.

Pastors and faith communities can raise general awareness, inform people of agencies that offer safety and help, invite people to become communities dedicated to non-violence, and offer training in healthy marriages, parenting and communication.

- She also plans a five-week series on “Faith, Families and Mental Illness” to help participants share how they see themselves in light of their faith.

- Marian is recruiting volunteers from faith communities and area universities to form intentional communities for people isolated by mental illness.

A team may include three to six family, friends or volunteers who are trained to understand mental illness and a specific person’s needs. They will come together around the person as companions to create a support system.

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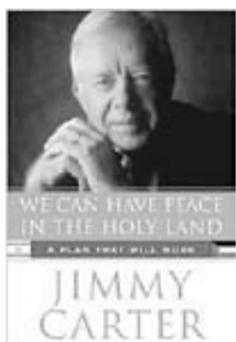
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Food, smiles, buildings and outreach say welcome

By Carol Price Spurling

The spiritual practice of hospitality at the Veradale United Church of Christ in Spokane Valley means sharing God's love with friends and strangers through the building, people, worship, ministries, outreach, advocacy and, of course, food.

It is expressed in everything the church does, said the Rev. Linda Crowe, pastor.

Hospitality often involves food, because food is "the most basic element of hospitality." So as in many churches there is food in a fellowship hour after worship, as well as on special occasions such as the church's annual fund-raising Harvest Dinner, its Plum Pudding Festival and other meals.

The church seeks to express hospitality through the many aspects of its life together, said Linda.

Hospitality may be just in a smile. A poster in the entry says: "We all smile in the same language." It is also about people opening their hearts to each other in times of struggle or any time. It's about building use and maintenance, and church life from worship to outreach.

To facilitate food-related hospitality, when the church remodeled several years ago it built its new kitchen up to health codes.

That was instigated in part so they could continue to prepare and provide meals for Volunteers of America's Crosswalk program for homeless youth on the streets of downtown Spokane.

The remodeling also included adding a fellowship hall, making more space for community groups to use the building.

This winter the church served a Christmas dinner for members and the community.

Scouts and Alcoholics Anonymous use the church during the week for their regular meetings. Progress Elementary School across the street has used the building for programs and has it designated as a place for students to go in an emergency.

Signs inside the door let people know where the meeting rooms and offices are. On tables just inside the door, Linda places invitations to the worship services and fellowship activities, so people who are in the church for AA and scout meetings know they are welcome, too.

"We're trying to break down walls between church members and church users," said Linda, noting that some who come for AA attend services.

Bulletin boards and art in the entry share a welcoming message.

In December, she used a de-



The Rev. Linda Crowe helps cook for a church event.

nominal poster that said, "We don't say 'O Come Some of Ye Faithful.'"

Linda also chooses artwork to reflect the congregation's interest in people other than themselves: Some art is from Guatemala and some from El Salvador.

"We live in an area that is so white. Our ethnic minorities are a tiny minority," she said, "but we've broken the color barrier and have people of different colors in our mix."

Some UCC congregations have officially become "open and affirming," which means they welcome everyone, no matter what their sexual orientation.

"That gives a message of hospitality in a way that really matters," she said. "Our church has not gone through the official process, but in the words and in the visual cues we give, the way we act, that message lets people know."

The UCC's tradition of social justice is founded on the old idea of hospitality, offering others generosity and respect, Linda explained.

"Recently our conference minister had forwarded something to me that was about saying 'no' to torture, so we tucked that concern about justice into our worship bulletin as an insert," she said.

To nurture and love sisters and brothers across the continent, Veradale UCC has for several years participated in mission work camps in cooperation with the Pacific Northwest Conference of the UCC to help Hurricane Katrina victims rebuild their homes and lives in New Orleans.

Building maintenance that makes the church building look loved says, "Welcome."

In the winter, it means keeping the parking lot plowed and sidewalks shoveled so people can safely access the building.

In spring and summer, "the place looks like someone loves it and cares for it," she said. "This spring there will be an amazing welcome, because we

planted hundreds of bulbs. We'll be blooming like crazy."

When members gather, they make sure someone outgoing is there to welcome and greet people. In worship, Linda says out loud the UCC words of welcome that are printed in the bulletin: "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here." She also says it before communion twice a month.

"When we sit down and share a cup of tea or a meal, we learn more about a person," she said. "Sharing happens at a different level around the table."

"For our church, the fellowship time after worship is as important as the worship itself," Linda said. "People stay, visit and eat. Some important nurturing happens during that time."

When fellowship or Bible study groups gather, there is food. "We feed body and soul," said Linda.

Recently, a church member preached on hospitality, saying his mother was his first model for hospitality. When he was growing up, there wasn't always enough food to go around, but there was always enough to share with people in need.

Along with eating food, members also grow vegetables and fruit in the church's garden. The produce they raise—more than a ton in 2008—goes to the Spokane Valley Partners Food Bank.

"During the garden season, people come to care for the garden," Linda explained. "What started as people showing up to weed, turned into people working and then sharing a meal. Hospitality and fellowship happens in hands-on work and around the table."

Recently the church conducted a memorial service for a man who was not in the church, but whose mother helps with the garden.

"I've seen God working because of this group. When I sent out an email to ask if people could provide hospitality and help for the memorial service, the response

was just wonderful. People didn't know him, but his mother and the whole family were nurtured in an important way."

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Noon, St. Joseph's Catholic Church
1503 W. Dean Avenue, Spokane WA
(North on Maple St. Bridge - Right on Gardner
Right on Walnut - Right on Dean)

BISHOP WILLIAM SKYLSTAD,
celebrant

Birth Mothers, Adoptees, Families, anyone else touched by adoption, and the general public are invited to attend.

Birthmother's Luncheon to follow, 1 p.m., St. Joseph's Parish Hall - RSVP to 358-42158

Questions?
Contact Sandy Maher at 358-4258
or Libby Hein at 455-4972

Catholic Charities  Spokane



Food is integral to campus ministry's outreach to students

By Carol Price Spurling

Food and drink have long been part of the Campus Christian Center (CCC) ministries on the University of Idaho campus in Moscow.

The Burning Stake coffee house in the building's basement in the 1960s was a counterpart to the more traditional religious studies and activities on the main floor. It served as a safe haven for students to express radical, counter-cultural political and religious views.

Today's campus ministry programs often center around family-style meals, said Karla Neumann Smiley, Lutheran campus minister.

Through the year, she leads a Wednesday Bible study preceded by a family meal for eight to 16 students who gather to eat, enjoy fellowship and study.

These traditional sit-down meals are something new, maybe even radical, for many students who are not accustomed to sitting around a table at mealtime.

"It's clear from watching the students that they have never set a table before, never experienced taking a break from business just to sit and eat both with people that care about them and people they have just met," said Karla, who has been at Campus Christian Center for nine years. "I've watched it become more prevalent. They are growing up eating on the run."

Her husband Wil often volunteers to cook, and his homemade pizza is popu-

lar. Sometimes students or local church members take turns in the kitchen.

The meal is always a home-style, balanced meal, possibly the only nutritious one the students eat during the week.

"I don't hear any complaints. Many students are amazed at what fresh, healthy food preparation is and how good the food tastes. I always think that food in any monastery setting tastes better than the same meal anywhere else. That is the kind of community aspect that we experience here. The fellowship of the group is a good spice," she said.

"Many times in Jesus' ministry food was involved, the feeding of the 5,000 for instance, and the last supper being the big one," Karla noted. "So many times, Jesus and the disciples went away to eat, and then, while they're eating, Jesus gives some sort of message. He does much teaching around the table.

"For me, the image of the table being related to holy communion, of being welcomed at that table, and extending that fellowship and hospitality to all, is connected to spirituality," said Karla, who enjoyed time at the table as a child growing up in a Lutheran family in Wisconsin, attending the same church her father grew up in.

A diaconal minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, she has

degrees in psychology and religion from Wartburg College in Iowa and a master's in theology and art at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago.

An internship at the Grunewald Guild, a center for faith and art near Leavenworth, brought her to the West. Then she served congregations in Janesville and Madison, Wisc. Leading a Grunewald workshop for Lutheran students, she learned of the Campus Christian Center. So when the campus minister position opened she applied.

Although there are many differences between the Vietnam era when the center had the coffee house and the world in which today's students live, the CCC's ministries of food are still important to fulfilling students' spiritual needs.

Most of the programs at the Campus Christian Center have a shared meal connected to them.

In a recent newsletter, Karla said that the food offered "is a gift—the gift of the food prepared, the gift of time shared and the gift of pausing long enough to be fed in body and in spirit."

The events of Sept. 11, 2001, spurred the reopening of the defunct Burning Stake coffeehouse, now named Café de Vida, explained Karla. Sept. 11 also inspired the addition of a weekly SOUP—Sharing Observances, Utterances and Perspectives—program.

The local churches that support the CCC, which are Lutheran, Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, American Baptist, and Disciples of Christ, provide soup. Students gather to eat and talk.

"The SOUP program started as a formal discussion group. It was a safe place for people to talk about their reactions to emerging wars, where they would not be made to feel unpatriotic for their views," explained Karla. "It has become more social now and less formal, but the food part is still important."

The Methodist ministry also sponsors a soup dinner that accompanies the religion and ethics program on Tuesday evenings.

Campus Christian Center churches also provide a free sandwich buffet for students each day during finals week from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Karla said that students come to these programs from different areas of study.

"Some would never have class together, never be friends and never grow to care about each other without this place. Community forms quickly because of the shared meal and study together.

"We have fruitful discussions about what it means to be a person of faith or a person questioning faith. It becomes a faith community exercise instead of an academic exercise," she said.

For information, call 208-882-2536 or email office@ccccenter.org.

Food tastes better in a monastery setting.

New building expands New Hope Resource Center

The new building housing New Hope Resource Center on the campus of Colbert Presbyterian Church opened in March.

It expands services to include a clothing bank and educational and informational opportunities.

Contributions from supporting churches, New Hope's board, volunteers and local businesses—donating money, time and resources to defray construction costs—"exemplifies Christ's love for our neighbors in need," said Linda Rodin of the board.

The Rev. Eric Peterson, pastor of Colbert Presbyterian, said the center is the congregation's "watershed outreach ministry," shared with 12 area churches to serve the poor and elderly.

It is exciting for its mission and its ecumenical nature, he said.

"Paying for it is presenting us with an ironic challenge. With an economic downturn pressing hard upon us, the needs among the poor, the elderly, the unemployed and the uninsured are increasing dramatically," he said. "They need our help. That economic climate creates a challenging climate to fund it. Almost everyone is feeling the pinch."

Eric is confident that by pursuing creative options the church will reach its capital campaign goals for the project. As of early March, \$162,000 toward a total construction cost of \$375,000 was raised.

At the same time, the churches keep up their appeal for funds and items to supply the food, necessities and clothing banks, and for volunteers to help with transportation, utilities, prescriptions, gasoline, rental assistance, carpentry, vehicle repairs, fire wood and chore services for clients in North Spokane County.

Other churches contributing to the center are St. Joseph Catholic-Colbert, Northview Bible, Whitworth Presbyterian, Timberview

Christian Fellowship, Covenant United Methodist, Christian Life Church, Greenbluff United Methodist, Chattaroy Community, Crossover Church, New Creation Fellowship, Mount Spokane Church and Colbert Chapel.

The center began as the North Spokane County Outreach Project in 2002 under Colbert Presbyterian Church, at 4211 E. Colbert Rd.

It is open 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays, plus 6 to 8 p.m., Thursdays.

For information, call 467-2900 or email jlnewhope@yahoo.com.

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Newspapers look at nonprofit status; it works for The Fig Tree

As we complete our 25th year with this issue and begin the 26th year with May—when we published our first issue in 1984—we have taken time to reflect and celebrate what The Fig Tree has grown to be.

In a climate with many newspapers—dailies, weeklies and faith publications—closing, we celebrate that we continue on a path to growth. There are some solid reasons for that.

It's interesting to learn that U.S. Senator Benjamin Cardin (D) of Maryland recently introduced the Newspaper Revitalization Act to allow for-profit newspapers to operate as nonprofit organizations.

"We are losing our newspaper industry. The economy has caused an immediate problem," he said.

It would be a way to offer tax breaks to a struggling industry because the journalistic voice is crucial to democracy.

The senator said the business model for newspapers, based on circulation and advertising revenues, is broken as profits have fallen in recent years. The trade-off would be that newspapers would not make political endorsements, but would be al-

lowed to report freely all issues, including political campaigns.

The status would be like public broadcasting, supported by endowments.

David Swensen, who manages endowments at Yale University, wrote in an opinion column in the New York Times that endowments might "enhance newspapers' autonomy" and protect them "from the economic forces now tearing them down."

By "endowing our most valued sources of news we would free them from the strictures of an obsolete business model and offer them a permanent place in society, like universities," he said.

Would endowments make newspapers beholden to large donors? Would it be possible to raise the millions of dollars for such endowments? Would they be able to offer a fair price to shareholders to make the shift? Would endowments insulate against hard times? Will foundations be interested? What other options are there?

Newspapers are rethinking every aspect of their operations.

Meanwhile at The Fig Tree, we continue to operate as a nonprofit, drawing support

for our unique efforts to provide stories that empower in the newly emerging model of what is being called "peace journalism."

As we shared at the March 11 Benefit Breakfast, The Fig Tree is more than the media—the paper, ink and digital images.

It's about the people we interview, the people who entrust their stories to us to share, the people who read or view the stories, the people who volunteer, and the people who connect with other people to do something to make a difference, inspired and empowered by the stories.

We share stories of everyday people who in everyday ways care about people, justice, relationships, reconciliation, faith, creation and peacemaking.

Lack of awareness keeps people apart, fearful and vulnerable to stereotyping, rather than relishing the joy and richness of diversity and conflicts as gifts given by God to open us to new ways to see life, to learn new approaches and even to love our enemies.

Communication historically empowers social movements to overcome injustices and empowers survivors of genocide, vio-

lence, abuse, crimes, injustices, poverty and war to be resilient, to tell their stories and to act. Resilience means moving from suffering to overcoming, from forgiving to healing.

What a different society and world we would have if more media found nuances of peace and justice as compelling and exciting as war and violence.

With the saturation of news about problems and conflicts, we find people responsive to stories of people stepping out of the usual modes to reconcile differences, to resolve conflicts, to solve problems and to restore relationships.

Yes, some people fail to live their faiths, but in the midst of those who fall short, we tell of people who care and act on their faith and values. In the midst of institutions oppressing, corporations overreaching, countries warring and systems failing, we tell of institutions, corporations, governments and faith groups working for justice, healing and reconciliation.

For us, the nonprofit model works.

Mary Stamp
Editor

Some words have entered the realm of uselessness because of misuse

Language is always changing, despite the best—or curmudgeonly—efforts of those who might like to slow down the process or would simply like the language to facilitate communication rather than muddy or inflame it.

In the process of change, a few words become useless for meaningful communication. Some seem to have drifted gradually, while others have been given an unseemly boot toward uselessness.

Sometimes a word has so many squishy meanings that it is useless. That is what you don't often see in The Fig Tree.

There is always a more precise word available.

Nice is an excellent example of a word that has changed gradually. Over the centuries, a nice person or idea could have been ignorant, foolish, wanton, refined, fastidious, precise, subtle, nit-picking, pleasant,

attractive or courteous.

Today nice is a general term of approval that doesn't mean much of anything in particular. If a person is generally inoffensive and pleasant and you don't have a specific opinion of him or her, you say he/she is nice.

Incidentally, a measure of the uselessness of such words is how much space a dictionary must give to them.

"Get" takes up one-and-a-half columns in the dictionary I use most often, and "nice" takes a quarter of a column.

The more imprecise a word, the more room it takes, spreading like Silly Putty over the page.

Some words have become less useful lately because they are being used as perjoratives, inflaming rather than informing conversation. *Conservative*, *liberal* and *radical* are used to reject both a concept

and its bearer without having to talk about anything of substance.

An idea, person or program that is conservative, liberal or radical can be put down automatically as evil, distasteful or dishonest if it is not of the same political persuasion as you are. So what is there to discuss?

Was it the Queen who told Alice that, when she used a word, it meant what she wanted it to mean? That may have worked in Wonderland, but it certainly complicates ordinary life.

One of the most interesting victims of this approach today is *socialism*—the word, not the concept.

Almost anything disliked or mistrusted can be labeled "socialist" today.

The phrase, "slippery slope of socialism," has been repeated so often by one politician and a few commentators that it

is appearing as a dire warning in letters to the editor and online opinion pieces.

The main problem with these dire warnings is the failure to give an accurate explanation of the connection between what is actually socialism and the concept being dismissed.

The terms "socialism" and "socialist" have become all-purpose condemnations for some, taking the place of "communism" and "communist" of an earlier era.

Life could not only be simpler but also more civilized if we talked thoughtfully about what we are really talking about, rather than pushing hot buttons and creating distrust.

Not only in our personal conversations but also in media coverage, more precise use of words will reduce stereotyping, buzz words and their propagandistic effects.

Nancy Minard - Editorial team

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

It is no surprise that we can be caught up in the inertia of entitlement that impacts our society. Even well-meaning Christians may look at being selfless as equivocal to having "less self." What will it cost me in money or time? To be sure, we are a busy, exhausted nation. So many things demand our attention. There seem to be those faithful, loyal followers who embody Jesus' tenacity for service. There is an eagerness to their devotion to serve others because they know and live out God's devotion to the world.

Rick Ferguson, in his book *The Servant Principle*, describes it this way:

"Servant comes from the word *diakonos*, from which the word *deacon* is derived. Originally, the word meant 'kicking up dust.' It came to be associated with a servant so anxious to serve, he kicked up dust running to obey his master. The word means a voluntary offer to serve...genuine love is always active. It is demonstrated in deeds of kindness, in acts of thoughtfulness, in moments of sacrifice, and in times of generosity." (pp. 11, 115)

How are we called to be generous, kind and thoughtful? How can our love be "active" as Rick writes when our daily lives leave us so very lacking in energy? At the crux of this, we genuinely and deeply take to heart what our kids told us on Youth Sunday about the vitality of each fruit of the Spirit in enhancing God's mission and vision for hope in this world. We live confidently yet humbly, knowing that we each are truly "wonderfully and fearfully made"

(Psalm 139:14).

With this awareness that we are all precious to our Creator, we realize that there really are many things we can do to better God's Kingdom. Some of them take place in our very own church home. We may get accustomed to seeing the same people doing various tasks around the church. Hospitality, church grounds, worship leaders, greeters, children's ministry—these are not jobs reserved for a choice few. We all are chosen and we all are capable. The community of faith thrives when we all contribute.

The Rev. Risa Salters
Country Homes Christian - Spokane

One of the elements of this economic challenge is that it is global in scope. All nations are feeling the effect. We are so interconnected now that what happens in one country does dramatically affect countries on the other side of the world. We will need to work together for the survival of all. What this great decline does tell us is that we were living on a very flimsy foundation for some time. Very risky financial practices were taking place and no one was raising important questions. If one piece failed, the whole thing would fall; and that is what has happened.

Jobs have been lost; retirement funds have been decimated; families are losing places to live. So, what do we do? One, let's pray that our leaders will make good decisions. Two, we watch our lifestyle and make changes when necessary. Three, we

care for one another. Four, we recognize that in the midst of all this, we are still blessed with much.

The Rev. David Helseth
Englewood Christian - Yakima

Our faith life is a journey. This journey begins at birth and leads, at least in earthly terms, to death. God never intended for this journey to be merely a series of destinations, but as one of growing trust and faith, a deepening of our relationship with God. God loves us and guides us in this journey. God listens to our grumblings and complaints, hears our cries of pain, disillusionment and anger. God receives our awe-filled praises and thanksgivings. Most of all, God walks with us throughout this life into death and back into eternal life.

The Rev. Ginny Johnson
St. Paul Lutheran - Quincy

A friend is such a rare species that having more than one in a lifetime is phenomenal. Counting the number of friends you have in a lifetime is not the real issue. The proper question is not, "Do you have any friends?" but rather, "Can you be a friend?" Being a friend is more than the ability to make small talk or engage in pursuing a common interest. Being a friend means loving another "at all times." That is a monumental assignment, but it is at the core of what it means to follow Jesus.

The Rev. Wilbur Rees, emeritus
Shalom United Church of Christ - Richland

Connecting happens in many ways today, but there's something about a flesh-and-blood connection, people who will pray for and with you, who will sit with you over a cup of coffee and lift their voices beside you in worship.

In today's frantic lives, how will we find time to connect? We need connections more than ever. God did not intend that we bear what life burdens us with all by ourselves.

The Rev. Ladd Bjorneby
Zion Lutheran - Spokane Valley

In this busy day and age in which we live, quietness is a commodity that is often overlooked, left out or eliminated in order to fill an already crazy schedule. Physicians, doctors and spiritual directors are the first to say that intentional quiet time is not only good for the psyche but also is a crucial "must."

In the gift of silence, I listen for God's voice.

Jesus intentionally went away from the busy crowd to seek silence and listen for God's voice. He continually thanked God for the lavish love and blessings that God showers upon all creation.

Sometimes he struggled with his ministry, as in the story of him praying in the garden of Gethsemane. In being intentional about his relationship with God, he found the courage to live his call and to invite us to minister with him.

The Rev. Anne Barton
St. Paul's Episcopal - Kennewick

Tri-Cities churches combine efforts for ShareFest

In 2009, 32 TriCities churches are joining together for ShareFest Workday on Saturday, March 21, to show, in a tangible way, that they care for the community.

ShareFest includes area churches, working together ecumenically each year to cleanup yards and homes of seniors and disabled people; to collect food for the Tri-City Food Bank, the Columbia Basin Veterans Coalition and the Tri-City Union Gospel Mission; to plant and clean up in many and common areas like streets and streams; to donate to blood drives, and to share in a combined prayer service.

In 2008, 2,200 volunteers from 30 churches worked in 173 ShareFest projects. They donated 2,700 pounds of food and \$54,000 to local agencies.

Over four years, 8,600 volunteers have given an average of six hours of time at more than \$19 an hour, contributing about \$1 million to the community: saving about 1,740 lives with blood donations, collecting nine tons of food, donating \$168,000 to local agencies for services including health care, domestic violence response, crisis nursery, shelter, drug treatment, Young Life, and Boys and Girls Clubs.

ShareFest began among a small group of pastors in Central Arkansas. They wanted to find a way for the church to demonstrate with their actions what they declare with their words.

The idea is to prove, serve, give and love, to put flesh on the Word of God, so it is tangible, observable and undeniable, said organizers.

Participating churches include Assembly of God, Baptist, Christian Reformed, Church of God, non-denominational, inter-denominational, Lutheran, United Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian and Seventh-Day Adventist churches in Benton City, Kennewick, Pasco and Richland.

For information, visit/ww.sharefesttricity.com/index.htm



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Calendar of Events

- April 8** • **Fig Tree Writers Training**, Unity House, 709 E. Desmet, 7 p.m., 535-1813
• **"The New Atheism - A Christian Response,"** Todd Cioffi, Whitworth assistant professor of theology, and panel of clergy, Auntie's Bookstore, 402 W. Main, 7 p.m., 838-0206
- April 10-19** • **11th Annual Get Lit Festival**, <http://outreach.ewu.edu/getlit/>
- April 12** • **Easter Sunday Sunrise Service**, Lofty Cross of Inspiration, Greenwood Memorial Terrace, 211 W. Government Way, 6 a.m., 216-6090
• **Bonner County Human Rights Task Force** Annual Meeting and Spring Forum, Panhandle State Bank, Sandpoint, 6 p.m. 208-255-4410
- April 13** • **"Iran and the United Nations,"** United Nations Association, Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 Fort Wright Dr., 7 p.m.
- April 14** • **"Polluted Waters? Tribal Perspectives** on Lake Coeur d'Alene and the Spokane River," panel discussion, Hagan Center, Spokane Community College, 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
- April 15** • **Get Lit Speaker Paul Roberts**, "The End of Food," Spokane Community College's Lair Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.
- April 15, 29** • **Pax Christi**, St. Joseph's, 1503 W. Dean, noon, 844-4480
- April 16** • **Get Lit Speaker Paul Roberts**, "Sustainability: Living Lightly, Living Well," Hagan Center, Spokane Community College, 10:30 a.m.
- April 17** • **The Lands Council Dinner and Auction**, Northern Quest Casino, 5:30 p.m., 209-2407 or awaldref@landscouncil.org.
- April 18** • **Spokane Valley Earth Day:** Spring into Action, Mirabeau Point Park, Spokane Valley, 10 a.m. to noon, 688-0300.
• **"Unveil the Trail,"** Friends of the Centennial Trail, volunteer clean up, 9 a.m. to noon, 624-7188
• **Arbor Day Tree Planting**, Spokane Valley Parks and Recreation, 688-0300
- April 18-26** • **Japan Week**, www.japanweekspokane.com
- April 18** • **Earth Day Celebration**, Harding Family Center, Coeur d'Alene, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 208-659-4213
- April 19** • **Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure Walk** for breast cancer research, Spokane Convention Center, 5K Run/Walk, 9 a.m., 1 Mile Run/Walk, 9:03 a.m., www.race.komenspokane.org or 363-8188
• **Yom HaShoah Holocaust Observance**, Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th, 7 p.m., 747-3304
- April 20** • **Film "Flow,"** World Water Week, Faith and Environment Network, Salem Lutheran, 1428 W. Broadway, 6 p.m., 244-3944
• **"Standing up to the Madness: Ordinary Heroes in Extraordinary Times,"** Amy Goodman, Democracy Now TV/radio news journalist book tour, KYRS-LP Benefit, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., 747-3012, www.kyrs.org
- April 22** • **Earth Day Wild and Scenic Film Festival**, Student Association for Nature and the Environment, Lair Auditorium, Spokane Community College, 1810 N. Greene St., 6 to 9 p.m.
• **Main Market Co-op Fund-Raising Dinner & Auction:** "At the Table," Glover Mansion, 321 W. 8th Ave., 6 to 8 p.m.
- April 23** • **Terry Provance, Oikocredit**, Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, 411 S. Washington, 7 p.m., 535-1813
- April 24** • **Interfaith Hospitality Open House**, 608 S. Richard Allen Ct., 4 to 7 p.m., 747-5487
- April 24-26** • **Pacific Northwest United Church of Christ Annual Meeting**, "Behold, I/We do a New Thing," Red Lion at the Park, Spokane.
- April 25** • **"Rocks & Ripples,"** United Methodist training event, Simpson UMC, Pullman, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Spokane Valley UMC, 2:30 - 7 p.m.
• **The Lands Council**, Third Annual Earth Day Tree Planting, Campion Park, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., 209-2852.
• **Sustainable September Spokane Straw Bale Home** Open House, 7710 E. Beverly, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 570-4449
- April 26** • **CROP Hunger Walk**, Martin Centre, Gonzaga University, 12:30 p.m. registration, 1 p.m., walk, 891-1045
• **Earth Day Spokane**, Riverfront Park, 12 noon to 5pm. <http://www.earthdayspokane.org>
• **Anuak Meer Ministry Benefit**, Pastor Gilo Gora of Gambella, First Presbyterian, 318 S. Cedar, 3 p.m., 747-1058
- April 29** • **Hospice of Spokane Conference**, "Living with Grief: Diversity and End-of-Life Care, Lincoln Center, 1316 N. Lincoln, 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., 456-0438
- May 1-3** • **Eastern Washington Idaho Synod Assembly**, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Yakima Convention Center, 838-9871
• **Master Composter Compost Fair**, Finch Arboretum, 3404 W. Woodland., 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., 625-6800, www.solidwaste.org
• **Washington State University/Spokane County Master Gardeners** Open House, Plant, Yard & Garden Sale, 222 N. Havana, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 477-2181
• **Concert and Earth Week Pre-Party Benefit**, Pedals2People, Emphyrean Coffee House, 154 S. Madison, 9 p.m.,
- April 28** • **Spokane Youth Environmental Conference**, Spokane Community College, 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., www.syec.org
- April 4-May 2** • **"Grow Your Own Food,"** WSU County Extension Master Gardeners, 222 N Havana, 10 a.m. to noon, 477-2048
- April 29** • **Fig Tree Distribution**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m.
- April 2** • **Fig Tree Board Meeting**, Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 1 p.m.
- Tuesdays** • **"The Magic of Getting Kids to Listen**, classes for parents of children up to 12 years, Spokane Child Abuse Network, Northeast Community Center, 10 a.m. to noon April 7, 14, 28, 1-3 p.m., April 21, 4001 N. Cook, 458-7445

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Global solidarity invites pilgrims to discern their vocational calls

Spokane's ties to El Salvador are part of what Father Dean Brackley, SJ, considers the global solidarity movement that counters economic, political and social globalization.

Those ties include Gonzaga students going to Georgia to protest the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (School of the Americas) that trains Latin American military and police, and St. Aloysius Catholic Parish having a sister church in El Salvador, he said when he spoke recently at Gonzaga University for the last of the Catholicism and the New Millennium lectures.

The solidarity that emerges invites questions about vocation—not just about jobs, professions or earning money to shop and have fun, but about spending one's life in love and service.

In 1980, Maryknoll Sister Ita Ford, who was later raped and murdered, wrote her 16-year-old niece, saying she hoped she would find something worth living and dying for: "Life is short. You can't sleep through it."

Father Dean said U.S. society is "designed for dozing."

"To find oneself by losing oneself is Christ's call," he said.

Father Dean found his vocation after graduates of the School of the Americas killed six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter in 1989 at the University of Central America. He stepped into the martyrs' shoes.

"We commemorate the 30th anniversary of their martyrdom in November 2009. The 40th anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero will be in March 2010," he said.

He said El Salvadoran life is a mix of economic, political, generational, moral and religious "crosses" and "resurrections."

Only 20 percent of Salvadorans have decent jobs. Few have \$7,000 for safe passage through Mexico to the United States. The richest 20 percent hold 60 percent of the wealth. About 40 percent live on less than \$2 a day.

He described conditions:

- The percent of undernourished children has declined in Central America, but has risen 27 percent in El Salvador.
- The average medium or large



Father Dean Brackley, SJ, has served in El Salvador nearly 30 years.

business makes more than 50 percent profit and evades taxes.

- The average Salvadoran has only six years of school, because "an unequal, unfair society is not possible if people are educated."

Father Dean lived in the Bronx in the 1970s, "a time of crumbling communities, crumbling families and crumbling individuals that led to anti-social behavior, gangs, insecurity, delinquency and organized crime." The violence in El Salvador today reminds him of that. It surpasses the violence during its civil war in the 1980s.

He said that the U.S. support of the former government maintained a feudal economic system.

Because inequities are entrenched, people "head North in droves, with migration serving as a safety valve," he said.

The younger, urban generation grew up in front of TV, even though they may not have food, he said. Not feeling fated to follow their parents, they have migrated from rural areas to universities or to the United States.

Father Dean sees moral polarization as people close or open up their hearts in face of cruelty and negligence. While many are kind and grace filled, there are still death squads and martyrs.

"Grace abounds more than sin," Father Dean said. "I have seen those who suffer express

University of Central America teaches that "if we do not walk with the poor, we do not walk with Christ."

The martyrs, he said, make the faith credible for young people as "a legacy of credible love."

As pilgrims from abroad come in solidarity, these visitors are at first apprehensive about how their visit will affect their lifestyles and values. He said their worries dissipate into wondering why people smile and readily share the little they have.

They soon realize their visit says the people they meet matter. Pilgrims listen to stories of massacres and villagers' lives. They return "renewed in hope and ruined for life," Father Dean said.

U.S. young people—exposed to the Gospel of Matthew along with "MTV, the sweet life, Wall Street and Walmart"—rub elbows in El Salvador with people who have suffered. They learn that life is not a spectator sport. For the poor, what is important is to stay alive and experience love and community.

"Pilgrims return asking what they will do with their lives, a question of vocation not asked in the consumer society," he said.

"Pilgrims evoke their call as they find the world is more cruel than they thought, but, in

the midst of cruelty and crosses, they see a revolution in love and kindness.

"It's easy to seek love in one's family and forget about torture, war and hunger," he said. "God's wants us to overcome bad with good. A sign of that overcoming is the international solidarity movement's growth in 30 years, despite media silence."

International solidarity ended use of cluster bombs and spread the Jubilee 2000 movement for debt relief because of internet, email and cheap air fare.

"Warts and all, the church, which has people working among the poor, resisting violence and protecting the environment, is an instrument of change. The church globalizes solidarity," Father Dean said. "To spread solidarity, we need people to know about international trade, finances and law. To be free to love, people need to be freed of idols and fears that hold them back—temptations of wealth, prestige and pride."

He said solidarity with the poor leads to "strategic downward mobility," attending to victims of injustice, "voices within calling us to follow our conscience and God, and community wisdom offering support and challenge.

For information, email brackley@cmr.uca.edu.sv.

profound gratitude and resist inhumanity. Solidarity with the poor is spreading."

While about 45 percent of the people are Catholic, Pentecostal Christians, now 29 percent, made gains as urban society and as mass media grew.

"Many Pentecostals were at first silent in the face of the atrocities," he said. "Now, Pentecostals are helping the poor."

The second Vatican Council's view that God stands with the poor is not the view of the majority, who believe the church's role is salvation of souls, not challenging governmental or institutional injustices, Father Dean said. The

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