

Monthly newspaper covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest

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Children readily spread love

By Mary Stamp

Parental involvement in programs for children at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Family Outreach Center spills into homes, just as cross-racial friendships among children who go there spill into schools.

“Love goes a long way, as part of our plan for relating with each child,” said Freda Gandy, director for children’s and youth programs.

“Love is part of our day-to-day work with children. We know it makes a difference. At first, some children are shy and distrustful, but over time they open up to interact when they feel safe,” she said.

Programs for children and youth help break through fear that can lead to the type of racism Freda knew growing up in Mississippi. She grew up in integrated schools with segregated high school proms and limited education and job opportunities for African Americans.

She left after high school and moved to Spokane in 1991 to go to college, drawn by relatives who live here.

About six years ago, as a single mother seeking a preschool for her four-year-old son, Freda began to volunteer with the preschool at the center.

Three years ago, she became
Continued on page 12



Freda Gandy hugs Shayla Rogers, Summer Miller and Kylaurea Austin.

Donations to The Fig Tree

promote understanding

encourage dialogue

uncover concerns

empower women and men

create community

enhance human dignity

invite involvement

SEE PAGE 2
to give a year-end or early 2005 gift

Rural clergy and laity learn to set boundaries

On the verge of burnout as an urban pastor trying to fit into rural shoes, the Rev. Nell Taboloff of the Chewelah United Church of Christ found renewal in connecting with other rural pastors at a Rural Pastors Institute program.

Their common experience of “always being on call” meant many worked too hard. Everywhere they go in town, they meet people in the church, making it hard to distinguish between work and life.

The program offered boundary training, which Nell finds relevant to share with her congregation as they seek to be a safe space, welcoming the people God is sending them.

Since the church became an “Open and Affirming” United Church of Christ congregation, some of those drawn by the welcome are mentally ill or disabled.

Nell joined 50 pastors for two weeks in each of the last two years for an intensive encounter and went to four regional meetings through a project of the Center for New Community in Chicago, an ecumenical, grassroots organization, which seeks to keep pastors committed to rural ministry.

Chewelah is Nell’s first rural pastorate. She considered herself a city minister, as do many rural pastors. She had served churches in Kentucky and Louisiana after graduating from the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Six years ago, she decided to go to Chewelah, even though she had no training in rural ministry in seminary.

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Natural outgrowth of upbringing

Green Building fosters sustainability

For construction project manager and educator Steve George, “green building” incorporates economic and ecological sustainability, as well as social equity.

It’s a natural outgrowth of his upbringing. His father, a biologist, instilled in him an understanding of the web of life and a love of the outdoors.

“I learned from my conservative conservationist father that if you move one strand in the web of life, every strand moves,” Steve said.

While many ecologically minded people wonder about choices of building materials—resources depleted, toxins emitted in manufacture and cost effectiveness—he said sustainability and equity criteria are the most important factors, because other choices are about weighing trade-offs.

“Green building expects people to choose construction and energy use that makes sense financially,”

said Steve, a member of St. Augustine Catholic Parish in Spokane, through which he is active in the Spokane Alliance.

Through the alliance’s Sustainable Living Wage Jobs Research and Action Team, this contractor, who moved to Spokane five years ago to be near family, is now making a living by training builders in green construction.

In energy use, he is optimistic about the market-based concept of trading “carbon credits.”

When a plant burns coal to make electricity, it pumps carbon into the environment. If other companies grow trees or reduce carbon production through solar energy or wind power, they produce carbon credits.

For example, Avista’s buck-a-block program for consumers to purchase wind power encourages construction of more wind-generating farms, he explained.

Construction is a growth area.

“Progressive companies should be able to sell carbon credits to encourage replacing power produced by coal,” he said, noting that the credits are part of the Kyoto Global Warming Treaty.

“Institutions can buy power futures from wind-generating farms. The cost of generating wind power is fixed—building towers, distribution lines and substations. It’s possible to sell future power contracts, which cannot happen with commodity sources such as natural gas, oil or coal. The more demand there is on commodities, the higher the price,” he said.

Steve grew up in Eastern Oregon, graduated from high school in Pullman and from the University of Washington in 1972.

He started his career in the purchasing department for the Children’s Orthopedic Hospital in Seattle in 1976, when it was building a new hospital. His connection with the construction

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Religion News Briefs Around the World

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Presbyterian group opposes divestment plan

Oxford, Ohio (ENI). A group in the Presbyterian Church (USA) is asking its denomination to halt plans adopted at its June 2004 General Assembly to divest from Israeli companies to influence stalled Middle East negotiations between Jews and Palestinians.

Churches say death penalty does not deter

Baguio City, Philippines (ENI). Philippine Roman Catholic and Protestant churches have joined a campaign to abolish the death penalty, arguing it does not deter violent crime. They are lobbying the government to institute "restorative justice." "Each of us, despite our frailties, is created in God's image and is important to God," said the Rev. Abraham Luis, a United Church of Christ in the Philippines pastor.

'Mr. Bean' and allies combat religious law

London (ENI). Spreading the word to other faith groups, criticizing other religions or joking about ayatollahs could end in England if new legislation passes. An alliance of evangelical Christians, militant secularists and professional comedians opposes the measure outlawing "incitement to religious hatred." They think it will stifle legitimate religious activity and comment. "The right to offend is more important than the right not to be offended," said comedian Rowan Atkinson—Mr. Bean.

Islamic influence increases in Zambia

Lusaka (ENI). Some church leaders in Zambia are concerned at increasing Islamic influence. Muslim groups are providing food, clothes and basic needs in poverty-stricken rural areas. "People flock to them because of their generosity in their almsgiving practice, as Christians are also expected to do," said the Rev. Baldwin Kandinda of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, noting that Christians are lagging in giving.

Jewish woman joins ecumenical accompaniers

Jerusalem (ENI). Joining the latest group of 15 ecumenical accompaniers sent to Israel and Palestine by the World Council of Churches is a British Jewish woman. Accompaniers spend three months working with Palestinian communities and Israeli organizations aiding Palestinians. The Lutheran bishop in Jerusalem, Munib Younan, was pleased to have a Jewish participant join those working for peace and justice in the Holy Land.

Churches in Ukraine swirl in political turmoil

Warsaw (ENI). Political turmoil in Ukraine has both driven the masses to the streets and mobilized the country's religious communities. Many churches criticize how the elections were conducted. Foreign ministers from NATO and Russia have jointly called for a free and fair election in Ukraine, after weeks of tension about the vote that has polarized the country.

Taipei seminar addresses water resources

Bangkok (ENI). Three-quarters of the world's landmass will have water resource problems by the year 2025, according to United Nations statistics. The Museum of World Religions brought together religious leaders to reflect on the issue. The fall seminar in Taipei on "Spiritual and Ecological Significance of Water" was the first time religious groups held an interfaith meeting on a focused issue in Taiwan.

Churches look to an ethical bottom line

London (ENI). Ethical investing may seem a contradiction to those wanting a world without profit, but 11 British and Irish churches and associated bodies, concerned about workers' welfare and the environment, have teamed up to expand principled use of assets. Launched Jan. 1, the Church Investors Group, which includes Roman Catholics to Quakers, speaks for more than \$13.7 billion in assets.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Advocacy event theme is 'Valuing Families'

The Rev. Flora Wilson Bridges, pastoral theology professor at Seattle University, will speak on "Valuing Families" for the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 22, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Fort George Wright Dr.

Local Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim leaders will lead an opening reflection on "Justice Teachings of the Children of Abraham." In addition, there will be policy briefings, workshops and advocacy training.

Flora is an ordained minister in the National Baptist Convention USA and author of *Resurrection Song: African-American Spirituality*, an original contribution to the theological and political dialogue about black spirituality and race in America.

Her ministry has been centered on spirituality and on issues of racial and gender justice.

She is pastor of Madrona Presbyterian Church in Seattle.

The opening reflection will be led by Elliot Fabric of Congregation Beth Haverim, Rita Amberg-Waldref of St. Aloysius Catholic Church in Spokane, the Rev. Bill Peterson of Pullman Presbyterian Church and Mamdouh El-Araag of the Spokane Islamic Center.

Legislative advocates from the Washington Association of Churches (WAC), Lutheran Public Policy Office (LPPO) and Washington State Catholic Conference (WACC) will present policy briefings on state and federal legislation impacting low-income and vulnerable communities.

Workshops will present concerns on such issues as hunger, health care, living wages, tax fairness, mental health, housing, domestic violence, the Sudan and environmental justice.

The event is a project of the Interfaith Council in collaboration

with co-sponsors: Catholic Charities, the WAC, LPPO, WACC, Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, V.O.I.C.E.S., Senior Legislative Coalition of Eastern Washington, Bread for the World, Health Improvement Partnership of Spokane, Children's Alliance, Spokane Citizens for a Living Wage, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, YWCA/Alternatives to Domestic Violence, Council on Aging and Long-term Care of Eastern Washington and the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

In addition to collaborating on the event in Spokane, the Interfaith Council for the Inland Northwest will also hold legislative briefings in Pullman, Colville and Spokane, focusing on the state issues and on advocacy training.

The Interfaith Council will plan a Lobby Day in February.

For information, call 329-1410.

WAC selects nine priorities for 2005 session

The Washington Association of Churches (WAC) will advocate for nine legislative priorities for the 2005 legislative session in Olympia.

They are 1) a fair and equitable tax system, 2) human services in the budget, 3) welfare policies that lift families out of poverty, 4) economic justice, 5) access to health care, 6) gun control, 7) ending the death penalty, 8) fair and effective environmental politics and 9) clergy as mandatory reporters of child abuse.

Washington State Legislators will hear from communities of faith through the WAC's internet-based Faith Advocacy Network, using computer software for political action in collaboration with the National Council of Churches' FaithfulAmerica.org advocacy network.

"People of faith who believe in social and economic justice can make their views known to their elected representatives with just a few keystrokes," said Lindsay Daehlin, public policy intern.

"With an expected state budget deficit of \$1 billion this year, we can expect efforts to cut social services again. The unified voice of faith communities allows us to connect with decision makers more effectively," she said.

Faith Advocacy Network members will receive action alerts for writing letters to legislators and

an analysis of issues to help them write letters to the editor.

In January and February, the WAC and related faith organizations are presenting four Legislative Conferences: Saturday, Jan. 22, in Spokane; Thursday, Jan. 27, in Tacoma; Saturday, Feb. 5, in Seattle, and Saturday, Feb. 12 in Yakima.

The Yakima Association of Churches' Legislative Conference will be held from 9 a.m. to noon, Feb. 12, at the United Christian Church, 317 S. 41st St, said Eric Anderson, president of the association.

The annual Washington Association of Churches' Advocacy Day in Olympia will be on Feb. 24.

The WAC is an association of

10 Christian denominations and 11 ecumenical organizations in the state.

Since 1975, the WAC has served as a focal point for dialogue, advocacy, action and reflection.

"Our work is rooted in the conviction that our Christian faith calls us to act with compassion for people and to respect the sacredness of lifesaid executive minister, the Rev. John Boonstra.

"We feel called to the challenge of unity in our society by addressing the needs of community in our world," he added.

For information, call (206) 625-9790 ext. 17, 329-1410 in Spokane or 248-6104 in Yakima or visit www.thewac.org.



Church Night

Saturday, Feb. 5, 2005

Spokane Chiefs v. Tri-City Americans

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Game starts at 7 p.m.

Church program with a guest speaker

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Women's Justice Circles gather women to begin action

As winter Women's Justice Circles are scheduled for January and February, fall circles are engaging in action, said Rosalinda Aguirre, justice for women coordinator at the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center in Seattle.

An eight-week circle at 5:30 p.m., Thursdays, begins Jan. 20, at Guse Summit View Apartments, 820 N. Summit Blvd. in Spokane. Circles will also start in February in Royal City and Yakima.

Justice circles gather women to build relationships and collaborate with others to seek change, claim power and understand issues that make life difficult for low-income women.

Rosalinda said participants gain skills in grassroots organizing and leadership so they can take action.

"In the Spokane area, we have held circles since 2000," she said.

Last fall, there were circles in Seattle, Wapato, Mattawa, Spokane and Everett. The Wapato and Mattawa circles were with Spanish-speaking women.

The Mattawa group recently met with the mayor, police chief and county sheriff about police response to domestic violence calls when only one police officer in town and one sheriff's officer speak Spanish. They plan to keep in contact with the women about translation and a safe shelter, which the group is following up on, said Rosalinda.

A Spokane circle that met at the Women's Hearth talked with State Senator Lisa Brown about funding for a weekend

shelter at the Women's Hearth.

Winter circles will be in Spokane, Bellingham, Everett, Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia, Royal City and Yakima.

The Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center is a systemic change organization that does education, advocacy, workshops and summer immersions with students. It has also organized the Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment.

The Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center, which is sponsored by 16 religious communities, promotes just structures in the church and in the world with a focus on the Pacific Northwest. It collaborates with Catholic, ecumenical, interfaith and other organizations.

Founded in 1991, the sponsoring communities include Adrian Dominican Sisters, Oregon Province Jesuits, Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary Washington Province, Sisters of Providence Mother Joseph Province, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace Western Province, Tacoma Dominicans, Benedictine Sisters of Cottonwood, Idaho, Benedictine Sisters of Lacey, Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel, Religious of the Sacred Heart, Sinsinawa Dominicans, Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary of Oregon, Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon and Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union.

For information, call (206) 223-1138.

Study strengthens leadership skills

Prayer Summit set for Jan. 24-26

"A Concert of Prayer, Praise, and Worship" is the theme for the Prayer Summit Monday to Wednesday, Jan. 24 to 26, at Riverview Bible Camp on the Pend Oreille River.

The theme comes from the idea that a symphony concert is a group of musicians playing various and diverse instruments, said Rodney McAuley of the Mission Spokane Team organizing the annual event. A symphony orchestra comes together as one under the direction of a conductor, to produce beautiful music.

"Similarly, when area pastors gather each year to praise God or pray for transformation, they combine their gifts, callings, passions and perspectives into a single voice through worship, prayer, meals and fellowship," he said.

For information, call 468-4855.

Urban Plunge introduces students to lives of people who live downtown

In December and January, students from Gonzaga University, Whitworth College and Eastern Washington University are participating in weekend "Urban Plunge" experiences to learn about the lives of people who live downtown.

The plunges, which are sponsored by Catholic Charities, the Interfaith Council and Bethany Presbyterian Church, were started with the goal of introducing people in the pews to the realities of homelessness, gentrification,

single-room occupancy, camps and housing options, as well as the social isolation of many people.

Participants usually gather on a Friday evening at the House of Charity for an introduction, meet some patrons, sleep there, hear a panel discussion and tour agencies and buildings on Saturday, ending about 2:30 p.m.

Gonzaga students went in December. The Whitworth plunge will be Jan. 7 and 8, and the EWU plunge will be Jan. 28 and 29.

For information, call 358-4273.

PAX Christi studies 'Peace on Earth'

PAX Christi will continue its interfaith study series on encyclicals with a study of Pope John XXIII's encyclical, "Pacem in Terris," or "Peace on Earth."

The sessions will be held at 2 p.m., beginning Sunday, Jan. 9,

at Bea House on the campus of Gonzaga University.

The interfaith study will be held every two weeks until the study is completed, so the second session will be on Jan. 23.

For information, call 358-4273.

Five performances set

Bach Festival presents concerts

Connoisseur Concerts' annual Northwest Bach Festival from Jan 29 to Feb. 6 in Spokane will be led by Gunther Schuller, Pulitzer Prize winner for music, artistic director of the festival and former conductor of the Spokane Symphony. He now lives in Boston.

The opening concert features Boston-based organist James David Christie in a recital, "Music from the Churches and Cathedrals of France," at 2 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 29, at St. John's Cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave.

Gunther will conduct the Bach Festival Orchestra in "Hits of the 1700s: Opera Arias of Handel and Rameau," at 3 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 30, at The Metropolitan Performing Arts Center, 901 W. Sprague.

Showcasing solo instrumentalists, "An Intimate Evening with J.S. and his French Colleague Rameau," will be held at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 1, at the Davenport Hotel, 10 S. Post.

"Bach Lives Forever: His Imperishable Cantatas" is the 8 p.m., Friday, Feb. 4, concert at St. John's Cathedral, 127 E. 12th.

At 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 6, the festival concludes with "Super Bach XXVII: Bach for Everybody - A Community Concert" at Mary Queen Catholic Church, 3423 E. Carlisle.

Gunther will give a pre-concert talk Jan. 30; Verne Windham, KPBX Public Radio music and arts program director, before the Feb. 1 and 4 concerts, and James David for the Jan. 29 concert.

For information, call 325-SEAT or 744-3838 or visit nwbachfest.com.

Valuing Families

Interfaith Council invites you to the

Eastern Washington Legislative Conference

Saturday, Jan. 22
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Unitarian Universalist Church
4340 W. Fort Wright Dr. - Spokane

Keynote Speaker

Rev. Dr. Flora Wilson Bridges

theology professor, - Seattle University
ordained minister, National Baptist Convention, USA

The conference includes:

- **Justice Teachings of the Children of Abraham'** led by local Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders
- **Policy Briefings** on state & federal legislation impacting low-income and vulnerable communities
- **Workshops** on issues such as hunger, health care, living wages, mental health, tax fairness, domestic violence, Darfur, & environmental justice
- **Advocacy Training**

For more information,

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Military service leads to concern about Christians living in Iraq

By Deidre Jacobson

Having served in the Air Force in the early 1990s in Iraq and returned after the initial offensive ended in 2003, Jenifer Carter Johnson prays for Christians in Iraq as they struggle to survive in their war-torn country.

She served as a crew chief or flight mechanic on KC-135 air refueling tankers, maintaining planes on the ground and as part of the air crew in flight while in Turkey and Northern Iraq in the early 1990s in Operation Provide Comfort.

Her ministry to Iraqi Christians began after she experienced unusual symptoms following her return to England from her last deployment in 1993.

Later diagnosed with Gulf War Syndrome—then changed to Gulf War Disease—she was among one-third of returning Gulf War veterans facing neurological and endocrine symptoms, gastro-intestinal bleeding, severe muscle and joint pain, mysterious hair loss and weakness in the limbs. “About 15,000 Gulf War vets have died since returning home as of 2002, and of the 700,000 who served—one million by the mid 1990s in the Gulf theater of operations—200,000 have applied for disability,” said Jenifer, who lives with her husband and two children in Coeur d’Alene.

In her research to learn about her illness, she found information about the suffering in Iraq. Using the internet to research U.S. government documents, scientific papers, newspaper archives, and British, German and French reports, and through short-wave radio news, she came to understand not only the illness she and other veterans had, but also the fate of Iraqis.

Depleted uranium ammunition was used in the Gulf War contaminated the environment. Plutonium and uranium oxide dust from these weapons settled in sand, clothing



Iraqi mother with her baby, who was dying of dehydration and diarrhea at Baghdad hospital.

and equipment, she said.

Children in Southern Iraq picking up scrap metal developed unusual and deadly cancers. Women gave birth to children with grotesque deformities. Leukemia rates skyrocketed in the area.

Adding to the toxic environment were chemical weapons—sarin and mustard agents—Saddam used in the North, she said.

Compounding the misery of the Iraqi people were the sanctions after the Gulf war. Massive numbers of deaths occurred, Jenifer learned.

“More than 1.5 million Iraqi civilians died following the Gulf War. Half a million were children under the age of five. Even when the oil-for-food program was implemented, many medications were not allowed into the country because of the potential for possible military use,” she said.

Through her research, Jenifer also discovered Iraq’s small community of Christians, struggling to survive amidst the misery.

Prior to the Gulf War, there were more than one million

Christians in Iraq. Six to seven hundred thousand remain.

“Despite the brutality of Saddam Hussein’s rule, it is not commonly known that he protected Christians while he was in power,” she said. “He sent armored cars to take them to church when Muslim neighbors harassed them.

“Now the Christians are between a rock and a hard place. Muslims distrust them and feel they receive favor from the Americans. Some Americans see them as no different from Iraqis we consider our enemies.”

In May 2003 after the initial offensive, Jenifer traveled to Iraq to spend nine days with the Christian community in Baghdad, listening to their hopes and fears.

She arranged the trip with the help of her pastor, the Rev. Bob Cordes of First Christian Church in Coeur d’Alene. He connected her with Vickie Robb, a Muslim-American woman working for Life for Relief and Development.

Jenifer’s goal was to write articles about Iraqi Christians’ con-

ditions and needs and to spread the word to American churches. She financed her trip with her family’s 2003 tax refund.

Jenifer flew to Jordan and met Vickie. Peter Tokarczyk of AmeriCares joined them as they

traveled by car on one of the most dangerous routes in the world, the 12-hour journey from Amman, Jordan, to Baghdad.

Baghdad was in chaos when the team arrived. Cars were driving in every direction, intersections were jammed, and drivers honked their horns in angry frustration. There was no police protection. Armed bandits were shooting and robbing.

“The city was in shock” she said, “after somewhat recovered from initial Gulf War bombings of and experiencing economic sanctions. The invasion returned the population to chaos and deprivation without basic utilities or public services.

“Large open markets selling stolen goods from looting—called Lootervilles—were located throughout the city. Weapons of all kinds were for sale.

“I could buy an automatic weapon for five dollars if I wanted to,” Jenifer said. “We had to take great care as we traveled. Kidnappings were common. I was fortunate to have four Christian

Continued on next page

Alliance members decide priorities

Proposals related to jobs and health care will be the focus of action at the Spokane Alliance’s Action Assembly at 2 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 16, at the Spokane Ag Trade Center.

The Sustainable Jobs and Environment Research and Action Team will present five priorities for consideration, and the Health Care Research and Action Teams will present seven priorities.

The 34 member institutions selected the priorities during the Learning Seasons in the fall.

The health care priorities are Project Access, mental health,

Medicaid reimbursement rates for hospitals, expanding the prescription drug pool, requiring large employers to pay 80 percent of health insurance for employees, health insurance for children, and restructuring the Premera Board which sought to go for-profit rather than represent the interests of policy holders.

The jobs priorities are expanding the green building and

learning program, recruiting apprentices and construction companies, exploring alternative energy possibilities, enhancing water quality of the aquifer and assisting sustainable business reclamation and development.

Co-organizer Wim Mauldin reported that four churches are among 12 institutions currently considering membership.

For information, call 532-1688.

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Iraqis delighted a U.S. Christian would visit

Continued from previous page
men as my guides and bodyguards. They knew where there was relative safety and avoided dangerous areas."

She discovered three Christian groups in Baghdad: 1) the Chaldeans, who use a liturgy similar to a Roman Catholic Mass; 2) Evangelicals, with a Presbyterian-style service, and 3) Assyrians, a congregation with which she was unable to meet.

Jenifer attended worship services in which men, women and children sat together, an uncommon occurrence in Iraq.

Through a Christian woman who volunteered to translate for her, Jenifer listened to stories of Iraqi Christians.

"They described huddling together and praying as American bombs dropped. Many asked me if I could help them with food or water. They were delighted that an American Christian would come to see them," she said.

At the Holy Family Chaldean Church, she said, she heard accounts of "incredible suffering."

A woman sobbed as she told Jenifer: "My son was captured in 1982 during the war with Iran, and I haven't heard anything about him since. My other son was taken by Saddam in 1984, and I never heard from him again. My husband has died, and now I have no food or money and no one to take care of me. Please have the Americans find my sons. Please."

Jenifer also visited a hospital where burn victims received nothing for pain, not even an aspirin. Because of poor water quality and dysentery were rampant.

The pastor of the Evangelical church said the physical problems the Christians were enduring were eroding the faith of some and strengthening the faith of others.

"The sanctions and the war have strengthened some of the people spiritually," he told her. "Their prayer life and level of



Rumail Yousef presiding at a Presbyterian Evangelical church service in Baghdad.

Photos provided by Jenifer Carter Johnson

trust in God have broadened and deepened tremendously.

"Others' faith, however, has weakened. Fear overwhelms them. The physical problems we face are so immediately pressing that it's difficult to keep a true perspective," the pastor said.

"We trust in God to protect us, but sometimes God allows things we don't understand," he continued. "We are surrounded by Muslims who want to enforce Islam on us, forcing women to wear head scarves and shooting Christians who violate their tenets."

Through maintaining contact with friends she made on the trip, Jenifer knows conditions have not improved since she was there and the Christian community continues to suffer.

"I have learned that some American Christians find this information difficult to hear," she said. "Some think American troops are the only people who are *our own* in Iraq, but I believe one

day we will kneel before Christ in heaven beside Iraqi believers as the whole family of God."

Grateful to be American, she also believes Christians have "a higher citizenship."

She is also aware that some patriotic Americans, who display yellow ribbons and support the troops, forget the troops once they come home, are disabled and need help after the parades end.

Along with seeking opportunities to share with churches and rally support, Jenifer plans to travel again to Iraq with other Christians "to bring a sliver of hope to Christians there."

In the meantime she prays for the safety and healing of Iraqi Christians, asking anyone who will listen to keep them in their prayers—along with their prayers for Americans who are there.

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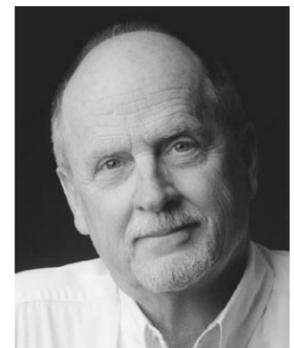
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Contractor finds green building a way to practice his faith

Continued from page 1

work led him into contracting.

Because his wife's family is in Spokane and his parents are still in Pullman, he decided to do subcontracting in Spokane. After Sept. 11, the construction industry declined, and he was laid off.

The common interest revealed during a jobs team meeting spurred him to enter into partnership with Jim Wavada, executive director of the Resource Efficient Building and Remodeling (REBAR) Council, a nonprofit organization that developed the concept and provides the content for "Build Green: 360-degree Training" through Community Colleges of Spokane for architects, general contractors, people in other building trades and building owners.

"We teach building technologies to train new professionals and trades people," he said.

In winter and spring classes on "How Green Is My Building?" owners and operators of buildings learn about basic building science and sick-building syndrome related to heat and air conditioning systems, efficiency principles, energy audits, mold and mildew prevention, and resource conservation.

Along with his upbringing, Steve said, the Pacific Northwest Catholic bishops' "Pastoral Letter on the Columbia River Watershed" has influenced his environmental perspectives.

That document informed testimony at the Spokane Alliance's assembly four years ago when the Bonneville Power Administration agreed to use local suppliers and hire local workers in building the Bell-Coulee transmission line, which was just finished. Of the 110 workers hired, 90 percent were local, Steve said.

"The bishops' letter was key to winning Bonneville's support," he said.

Led by research for the jobs team into promoting green building and sustainable, living-wage jobs related to new school buildings, Steve is now working to assist nonprofits in economically feasible energy-conserving projects that lower both energy use and costs of operation.

Because energy rates in the region are low, compared with rates in other areas of the country, it's harder to make environmentally sustainable changes meet the economic bar, Steve noted.

"New sustainably built buildings, however, consume 20 to 40 percent less energy and 20 percent less water. They have a better indoor environmental quality," he said. "Early studies show that



Steve George

they last 50 percent longer and productivity inside is enhanced."

For example, in new school buildings with windows to let daylight in, students have 20 to 25 percent better scores in reading and math tests, in contrast with students in schools built in the 1970s and 1980s with few or no windows, he reported.

"Daylight reduces the electricity load, provides the full spectrum of light and engages students with the outside world—giving a change of focal length that makes students more alert," Steve explained.

"Carbon dioxide monitors and ventilation of heavily used areas reduce sick-building syndrome, by allowing conditioned—heated or cooled—air to flow out rather than accumulate."

Steve told of teaching 11 people for two hours in the upstairs hall at Liberty Park United Methodist Church in Spokane. At 90 minutes, the carbon dioxide level reached the point that people were drowsy.

Sometimes it's just a matter of opening a window or door to allow fresh air to circulate in and out, he said.

When the sky is bright, electric

lights dim and electric meters slow down in new buildings.

Architects, contractors, estimators and project managers will face increased demand to produce buildings that deliver these kinds of productivity and water/energy conservation, Steve said. In Washington state, the superintendent of public instruction has proposed green-building sustainable schools standards. The Spokane School District's Lincoln Heights Elementary replacement project has just received a \$300,000 grant—supported by the Spokane Alliance—to evaluate those standards.

The U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program has certified 118 buildings as green. Another 1,100 buildings are registered for certification.

Along with promoting energy efficiency, fresh air, quality construction and green building, Steve said the alliance's jobs team seeks to create construction jobs, so it negotiated the school district's commitment to hire 15 percent of the workers as apprentices and train them in construction jobs.

"Construction is a growth

area. It uses materials that need to be manufactured, creating more jobs," he said. "Many people in such building trades as carpentry, sheet metal and electricity are retiring, so there is space to bring in new people as apprentices.

"In addition, green projects use as many materials as possible from within the region to reduce pollution and transportation costs," he added.

Steve feels his faith community has provided inspiration, enthusiasm, support, ideas and creativity as it connects faith to this work.

"In this work, we collaborate

with people with whom we may differ politically. There is a groundswell of people from diverse backgrounds with a common interest in making the world better for their children and grandchildren in tangible, concrete ways.

"This work is more than talking faith. It is a practice. People working together are more spiritually grounded," he said. "The practice requires us to chop wood and carry water, with an attention and focus on faith. If we do that, it's prayer."

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Lost package leads to unseen 'miracle gift' that inspires vision for shelter

As a result of losing a package from a Japanese tea shop in Claremont, Calif., the Rev. Maggie McNett thought she gained a \$1 million gift to set up an endowment for the Okanogan United Methodist Church to use in sheltering homeless people.

Although the promised funds have not yet come, her excitement telling people of the miracle gift raised awareness of needs and stirred others in the community to dream.

The second week of July, while studying at Claremont School of Theology, Maggie had walked to the nearby village and purchased some tea and wasabi bowls as gifts for family. She called a cab and waited an hour on a bench. When the cab came, she hurried to catch it and left the package. It was gone when the cab drove around the block to pick it up.

Two days later, the man who found the package left a note on the campus bulletin board, saying he wanted to return it. She called, and he brought the package to the college, offering to take her to the village. She joined him and his friends at a coffee shop for conversation. The next evening, she joined them again and they had a lively discussion of philosophical, social, economic and political issues.

When they said there was no homeless shelter in Claremont, Maggie said she had opened empty Sunday school rooms to homeless people and had to turn people away on a regular basis.

Shelter residents are a cross section of young people out of work or working part time, people waiting for social security and people needing temporary shelter while passing through town, she said.

The next evening, the man offered to assist in funding the shelter by establishing a million-dollar foundation and using profits to help the shelter.

When she returned to Okanogan, she shared the story, heartened by the generous offer.

The idea of some of Maggie's friends, who want to build an eco-village with people living off the grid, using solar energy, recycling, doing organic gardening and sharing tasks in a self-sustaining community, meshed with her desire to build a village for homeless people. It seemed funds would soon be available for a collaborative effort. She believes the eco-village would provide a long-term solution.

During the fall, Maggie set up an account under the church's nonprofit status and sent the in-



The Rev. Maggie McNett and a shelter resident pet dogs of another shelter dweller.

formation to the benefactor, who has moved twice. She lost contact with him.

Whether those funds ever come, Maggie believes God is still at work.

The man set in motion dreams in a small community, a persistent pastor and friends who hope to build a homeless shelter.

"Homeless shelters often bring people in, feed them and send them out the next day, rather than giving people a place to stay a bit while they sort out their lives," she said, turning to tell about the shelter she and her parishioners are determined to continue despite obstacles.

The church received a grant from the United Methodist Church to put in new bathrooms and a shower. In the summer, some old pipes broke and had to be replaced. A unit in the oil furnace failed in the fall and had to be replaced, too. The bills are slowly being paid.

About the same time, the Tonasket United Church of Christ's sewing group brought 16 quilts.

The shelter residents cook and clean up after themselves. They do yard and janitorial work for the church. There is no paid staff, so when someone new comes, those in the shelter tell the newcomer about nearby agencies, the food bank across the street, the clinic and dentist two blocks away, where to apply for GAU or look for jobs.

At some points last winter, up to 18 people were sheltered there.

One woman came on a freezing night. Maggie knew she was on drugs and in trouble with the law. She had been sleeping in her truck and had first stages of frostbite on her hands and feet. Maggie gave her a place to sleep.

"Half of the residents eventually find their own apartments and jobs, or begin to receive SSI," Maggie said.

One woman, who had a car, a driver's license and insurance, drove other residents to their various appointments, which Maggie usually has done.

Both the city and the United Methodist district superintendent urged Maggie to limit the number of people sheltered to eight, but normal occupancy is 10. The average stay is four months, but the shelter does take in people for overnight, especially in the winter.

At the request of the city, the church has applied for a conditional use permit.

There are rules, but the city and superintendent want tighter rules. The rules are: Shelter residents are to keep clean. They may not smoke, drink or use drugs. They must watch their conduct: They are living in a church. They must also be looking for a job or applying for assistance. Residents share the cost of a phone.

"There is much poverty, drugs, spousal abuse and joblessness in this area," said Maggie.

The congregation, which has 10 tithing units and 20 in worship on Sundays, integrates with shelter

residents, eating lunch with them after church.

The homeless feel at home, and some attend worship and Bible studies, Maggie said. Five were baptized and became members in January 2004.

Other area pastors help lead Bible studies, so they share in the ministry.

"One woman, who had been addicted to cocaine when she came to the shelter, is now off cocaine and reaching out to God. She is a strong witness to others. The shelter answered her prayers for housing and comfort. She was baptized and is active in the congregation," Maggie said.

Her story is common.

When new people come to the shelter, Maggie tells them: "You prayed, 'Oh my God, what can I do? I have nothing and no place to stay,' and now God answered your prayers."

With that, she expects responsibility and community: "They are family when they are here," she said.

As part of the thinking about an eco-village, Maggie envisions housing 20 homeless people and having them help with the construction, landscaping and maintenance.

Knowing that homeless people have skills, she asks what they did before they became homeless.

Current shelter residents include an accountant, a contractor, an artist and a cartoonist.

Alcohol, drugs, mental breakdowns and economic hardships led them to set aside their talents, said Maggie, who seeks to reawaken those talents and put them back into use.

In planning for the endowment and applying for grants, the program has been established under the name Okanogan United Methodist Sanctuary Program.

Without the funds that seemed like a dream, Maggie has begun the usual route nonprofits take to seek funds. During November, she began preparing three grant requests.

More people in the community and the wider church are now aware of the efforts of the congregation in the "Old Rock Church"—built in 1909 of cobblestones—to shelter those living in the community and those passing through.

With food cards, the food bank and the generosity of the local farmers' market, residents are fed. There are so many donations of clothing that Maggie sends much on to other organizations.

Cash donations help provide personal items, cleaning products and other needs. The shelter also uses donations to help defray the costs of heating, electricity and garbage disposal.

"We go on faith," Maggie said. "The Lord provides. We receive no government funds."

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Chewelah church's open welcome opens members' hearts

Continued from page 1

"I worked too hard and ignored signs of burnout. It was hard to set boundaries," Nell said.

The Rural Institute helps pastors deal with such isolation and learn self-care, so they stay in rural communities longer.

From other pastors, she learned about common issues in small communities: Many people are in grief about changes. Children leave. Schools close. Farms close. Population drops. People move in and out. Wal-Mart stores come and small stores close. People drive through a small town's downtown to shop at a mall in the nearby city, she said.

With other rural pastors, Nell discussed church growth, spirituality, rural sociology and worship life—even what to do about music when no one can play the organ or piano.

"We shared practical, creative solutions to everyday problems," said Nell. "Rural ministries are worth the investment of our time and energy."

"Problems in rural America seem overwhelming, but recognizing that faith is built on sharing stories, naming problems and talking about them in church helps us handle them," she said. "We considered how we can be neighbors to each other."

Nell gained language to address theological issues of rural life in general and for the specific context in Chewelah.

"Usually ministers start in rural churches, prove themselves and go some place else. Rural churches train pastors for suburbs and cities. That disheartens rural people. They need pastors to come and stay, valuing their community and ministry with them," she said.

In the valley around Chewelah, there are some farms, but only seven percent of the county's economy is in agriculture. The main employers are the school district, the hospital, the long-term-care home and clinics.

The population of about 2,000 rises and falls with the availability of employment. Changes in public assistance also affect the local economy. Poor people moved to rural communities for lower-cost housing and then moved back to cities to meet job requirements.

"Chewelah is becoming a retirement community and a bedroom community for Spokane," Nell said. "Our days as a true rural community are numbered. Our growth relates to the ski hill, the casino, the golf course, and hunting and fishing."

Many people have also come to Chewelah because it's a quieter,



The Rev. Nell Taboloff

safer place, where they feel less judged. Some suffer mental illnesses.

In that context, Nell helps her church develop an intentional ministry as a sanctuary, a safe place for people to be—emotionally, psychologically, physically and theologically.

"If people feel safe in church, they take hope into the community. That helps counteract fears that arise from so many losses," said Nell, who preaches about domestic violence, justice and other issues affecting people's lives. "We have information in the narthex, and we have trained ushers and greeters to respect people's privacy and to welcome high-needs people."

The 125-year-old church with 125 members is a community church. Some think that means it is nondenominational, but the Chewelah church belongs to the United Church of Christ (UCC).

Chewelah UCC is one of a few rural UCC churches that has voted to be an "Open and Affirming" congregation.

The church began the study under an interim minister, because many applicants were gay or lesbian. Members discovered that the training was about being

welcoming in its broadest sense.

"We are open to everyone who comes from the area's subculture of marginalized and mentally ill people," she said.

Welcoming people who have a hard time each day has created awareness among members about how to be helpful, yet remember the need for boundaries in ministry with mentally ill people.

When a rural church ministers to people with special needs, the pastor and the members can easily overwork.

Nell led boundary training for the congregation, so members can help without being overwhelmed someone needs more help than they can give.

"Older church women who want to help everyone need to set boundaries. There is no cure for the mentally ill, and no end to their needs," said Nell, noting that people coming have about 19 different diagnoses related to addiction, depression, anxiety, phobias and multiple personalities—many requiring medication.

"You can't hide from your neighbor here," she said. "Needs are evident. In suburbs, needs are social, but here, it's about the need of neighbors because of proximity. We know the people

in need. We know what children are in trouble. We know the man who thinks he will win big at the casino. They are our neighbors.

"Although people come and go, we see quickly who needs ministry, and we try to incorporate them into the community," said Nell, who believes everyone needs somebody, and the church can "provide that somebody."

From people suffering mental illness, church members learn about generosity, compassion, excitement, courage and faith that God will provide for each day.

"They teach us to be patient with the speed of their lives," she said. "The friendships and compassion make a difference."

"When the church voted five years ago to be open and affirming, we chose to leave no one out. Members saw it as a justice issue," Nell said.

"Having made a public statement, the church is living it out," she said. "When we voted to be open and affirming, it was a beginning. We always need to talk about what it means."

Although not everyone agrees, Nell believes all need to feel safe and to have a right to be at church, free from judgment.

"We continue to challenge ourselves about what separates people, welcoming those who disagree with our being open and affirming," she said. "They also have part of the truth, and we should not say, 'This is our stand and you are either with us or must leave.' Being open and affirming is a call to constant evaluation, listening and discerning."

Affirming her denomination's promotional slogan, Nell said that "God is still speaking" through everyone, especially through people who see things in different ways.

Because the church accepts those who disagree as brothers and sisters, and welcomes their stories, many who disagreed have stayed. They speak out, open their Bibles and share.

"We encourage dialogue, not debate with winning or losing," Nell clarified.

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Economist and activist agree living wage reduces poverty

From economic theory and social justice understandings, regulations to assure that people who work earn a living wage help prevent the greed of a few people from impoverishing others.

In a recent forum on "Who's Afraid of a Living Wage," Doug Orr, professor of economics at Eastern Washington University, and Scott Cooper of the Catholic Charities Parish Social Ministries office discussed economics rationale and church teachings on social justice.

Opening the discussion, Kelly Masjoan, economic justice coordinator for the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, which sponsored the event, said many companies come to Spokane "to take advantage of the relatively low wages paid here."

Because companies receive tax breaks to create jobs, Kelly said, wages should allow people to meet their basic monthly expenses of about \$2,500 for a family of four.

A full-time minimum-wage worker makes \$1,141 a month, which is below the federal poverty line, she said, leaving them "making dangerous choices" between groceries and rent, between child care and utilities, and leaving health care out of the picture.

The living wage campaign across the United States urges cities to adopt an ordinance to mandate a living wage for city employees and employees of companies with which the city contracts. Kelly said 123 U.S. cities have passed such ordinances.

Doug said that the 1995 Pace Group report on what helps and what hinders Spokane's economic development said poverty hinders growth. It found that 45 percent of people employed in Spokane earn incomes too low to lift them out of poverty.

"We need to attract jobs that pay more than poverty-level wages," he said, adding that income inequality inhibits growth and hurts everyone, because it limits demand for goods and services produced in the region.

Before the federal government implemented the first minimum wage law in 1938, Henry Ford recognized in the 1920s that he had to pay workers wages high enough so they could buy cars.

Doug outlined an economic theory: If a firm enters a region where companies pay adequate wages and it pays lower wages, that firm's costs are lower, its profits are higher, and it can sell products at a lower price. When firms with higher prices begin to lose customers, they lower wages. Regional incomes fall until people cannot afford to buy the region's



Scott Cooper

output and the regional economy stagnates.

"What is profitable for one firm to do is not profitable if all firms do it at the same time," he said.

To encourage firms to do the right thing, government needs to put limits on firms that cut wages and undermine the region's economy, said Doug, who considers competition beneficial in controlling prices but knows that too much competition is destructive.

He challenged myths that raising minimum wages 1) increases unemployment, 2) leads to inflation and 3) reduces profits.

- On unemployment, he said increased wages mean workers have more to spend locally, creating more demand for goods and services, so local firms need more labor.

- On inflation, he said if 30 percent of companies in an area raise wages 20 percent and pass on the cost, which is half of their total costs, the region's average price increase is three percent. He cited Adam Smith, the father of free-market economics, who taught more than 200 years ago that firms always try to raise their prices, but competition deters them.

"Most people benefit by increases in minimum wages, which means fewer people around us live in poverty, welfare caseloads drop and with that the tax burden drops," Doug explained.

- On reducing profits, he said most demand for goods and services increases as regional income rises, so profits increase. Usually

small, locally owned firms with few employees and small profit margins are exempted from living-wage ordinances, he said.

"Franchises of national companies that employ many minimum-wage workers may see profits decline somewhat, but those profits leave the region anyway and thus contribute nothing to the local economy," he explained. "In contrast, every dollar of income received by a low-income worker at a local business creates about \$2.50 in the local economy."

Beyond these perspectives, Doug said, is "the reality that poverty-level wages add to the costs of public assistance and government services."

He opposes a city's subsidizing businesses that create poverty by awarding contracts to them. He urges cities to reward companies that employ people at wages that lift them out of poverty.

"Once cost savings of reduced social services and crime are factored in, it is clear that the livable wage makes sense," Doug said.

Scott discussed moral issues related to the living wage from his religious tradition.

When he started in social services at St. Vincent de Paul in the mid 1990s, two thirds of families served were on welfare. When he left in 1998, two thirds worked.

"The number working rose, but their need did not go down," he said. "We saw a shift of that part of the burden from the public to the private sector."

In the Industrial Revolution in the 1890s, Pope Leo XIII began modern Catholic social teachings. He was troubled by families crowded in tenements in cities of Europe and North America and by children from the age of four working 12 hours a day six days a week in factories. Some were Catholic and part of "his flock."

So he issued an encyclical, "Rerum Novarum"—"On the Condition of Labor." This church doctrine on the working poor was a departure from church practice, Scott said.

The pope said that poor labor conditions, industrialists' greed and high interest rates caused social problems that affected the



Doug Orr

moral life of the church.

Subsequent popes have seen the encyclical as the cornerstone of the church's social teaching, Scott said.

U.S. Catholic bishops, speaking on day-to-day human dignity, have said every individual is "a beloved child of God due dignity" and the measure of every institution is how it upholds the rights and dignity of people, not whether it increases profits, he said.

In the 1990 "A Century of Social Teaching," the bishops wrote: "Work is more than a way to make a living. It is an expression of our dignity and a form of continuing participation in God's creation. People have the right to decent and productive work, to decent and fair wages, to private property and economic initiative."

In the 1980s, U.S. bishops issued "Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy," pointing out that if firms pay low wages, society picks up the tab in social services.

"That means we need more food and coat drives and more affordable housing to make up the difference," said Scott.

Although the church does charity work, he said, it also cares about people's dignity. Too much charity undermines dignity.

"Many of the people who come to Catholic Charities for assistance weep because they have to ask for help and never thought they would," said Scott, describing the

emotional and social cost.

"The church says the issue is dignity, not economics. Money is morally neutral. It's what we do with it. Do we use it to uphold dignity? The economy exists for people, not people for the economy," he said.

Scott said French worker-priests in the 1940s and early 1950s became concerned about working class people estranged from the church. They took off their collars and applied for factory jobs, believing the church should enter into the world of the poor. Many became union leaders.

The Second Vatican Council in the 1960s said the joy and hope, grief and anguish of people who are poor and oppressed are the joys and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of faith, said Scott. It established a sense of solidarity with labor.

This diocese's Campaign for Human Development carries on the church's social teachings by funding low-income groups that empower poor people, who know their needs and what they need to overcome poverty.

"The faith community is to be a moral voice saying unrestrained free market capitalism does not serve the dignity of all people. Any human system has shortcomings, including the market economy," said Scott. The market needs checks and regulations—if it is to benefit people.

"Regulation saves capitalism from abuses that undermine human dignity," he said.

For information, call 838-7870.



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Rejection of ad raises question of access to media by faith groups

To appeal to people in their 20s to 50s through the culture's contemporary communications, several mainline churches have developed national advertising campaigns for TV, radio, newspapers, direct mail, bulletin boards and their websites.

Three denominations alone have budgeted a combined total of \$112 million for advertising—raised by congregations buying “ad kits” to place ads locally or by special donations for the advertising.

The churches seek to clarify their identity and to reach people who are isolated, or seeking spiritual renewal and meaning churches can provide.

For its “God is still speaking” campaign, the United Church of Christ (UCC) met with focus groups. They heard the anger of unchurched people, alienated by previous church experiences. They found that many would come back if they were invited and

made welcome without judgment.

They caught the feelings of exclusion in the image of two bouncers outside a church, turning away people of diverse ability, age, race, status and sexual orientation. Then the ad shows diverse people.

CBS and NBC rejected it as “too controversial.” ABC runs no ads on religion.

The rejection reawakened the UCC to its heritage. In the 1960s, it challenged the license of WLBT-TV in Jackson, Miss., for refusing to broadcast information on African Americans, because networks have free access to the public airwaves.

The National Council of Churches' Communication Commission voiced concern that broadcast media “are increasingly closed to all but the wealthy and well-connected.”

The UCC did not seek free access but is paying for ads. Given that networks give

access to many sexual, violent, greedy, negative, slanderous ads and programs, people of faith should be concerned when access is denied for messages that can point people to find healthier lives and relationships.

“Are only the ideas and attitudes of faith groups off limits?” the NCC communicators wonder.

The UCC submitted a second ad, and it was accepted. It conveys the same welcome, with a little girl reciting: “Here is the church. Here is the steeple. Open the doors and see all the people.” A reprise of “all the people” plays as faces of diverse people are shown.

It closes with the UCC ad slogan, “Jesus didn't turn people away, neither do we. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here.”

Why should the negative, jarring, attention-getting aspect of the one ad related to

faith be rejected and all the negative ads of politics be accepted?

Should media set a standard of truth, investigating before running false slanders in political ads? Why should there be one standard for one segment and another for others? Are political ads *not* “controversial”?

In fact, lack of media access by the varied voices of Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Baha'i, Native Americans and the many other faiths can create an anti-religion environment in society.

Solutions to life problems are not found in pills, sex, violence, consumption and the other antidotes touted on TV.

It's time for media to open access for religion to have a credible presence that reflects the breadth and depth of religious life, perspectives and actions.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Church ad campaign slogans suggest some New Year's resolution ideas

Along with the United Church of Christ, other national denominations have developed ads and slogans, which they present on their websites.

This sampling of messages offers some food for thought for our faith lives.

The following are some of the slogans:

• **The Church of the Brethren** website says: “When you're fed up with doctrine and still hungry, try another way.”

• **The American Baptists'** “Seek It” appeal invites people to find “God's way for a new day...in Christ-centered, biblically grounded, ethnically diverse churches.”

• **The United Methodist Church's** “Igniting Ministry” campaign uses scripturally based ads. One says: “If you're searching for something to believe in or for your children to believe in, our hearts, our minds and our doors are always open—the people of the United Methodist Church.”

Another says “fear is not the only force at work in the world today.”

• **Episcopal Church** ads welcome people “to come and grow in understanding, in gratitude, in service and in peace.” One ad says: “We may not have all the answers,

but we welcome all your questions. That's because we believe we all have something more to learn from one another—and always more to learn about ourselves, our world and God. We do not ask you to check your mind at the door. Our ability to reason is a gift of God.”

• **An Evangelical Lutheran Church** in America's “Sharing Faith for the New Century” ad says, “Asking for guidance is a sign of strength: Whether you're looking for someone to talk to, more meaning in daily life or ways to bring your family closer, the ELCA can help.”

Another suggests: “When you help someone else, you may help yourself as well. We'll help you get started.”

• **The Disciples of Christ** has restated its vision to clarify its identity to members and seekers. Its vision is to “be a faithful, growing church that demonstrates true community, deep Christian spirituality and a passion for justice.”

• **The Presbyterian Church USA's** “Here and Now” campaign appeals to people in transitions—marriage, childbearing, dislocation or career shifts. Challenges

at those times may lead people to re-assess their life priorities. A newspaper ad says: “You take care of your children, your husband, your job. Who's taking care of you?” It continues, “When it's time to find peace in chaos, enrich your spiritual life, share your feelings, turn down the volume of the world or spend quiet time with God...when it's time, we're here.”

• **The Catholic Communication** Campaign has a spot that begins: “Across America, faith is woven into the fabric of everyday life. Faith teaches. Faith heals. It feeds the hungry and brings hope. Faith reaches out. It brings people together and touches the mind. It goes to extraordinary lengths to help others. Faith works across the USA.”

• **The Moravian Church** has long had a motto: “In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty, and in all things, love.”

• **The Assemblies of God's** “People of the Spirit” campaign says: “The Holy Spirit unites believers and mobilizes them to reach a world in need. The Holy Spirit is needed in our culture as never before. Disillusioned by corporate business scan-

dals, politics and false religion, many are searching for something genuine. We must be people of the Spirit.”

• **The Church of the Nazarene** website says too many people lead lives of secret despair, unfulfilled in their professions, families or personal lives. They put on a show for others, but feel alone, trapped or frustrated. It tells of people who found hope through caring Christians.

Ad campaigns, visions, slogans and mottos have results. They talk of faith in today's language. They give members simple concepts to share with friends in word-of-mouth advertising.

People notice and remember the ads. Many have visited churches. Presbyterians report a 12 percent increase in visits.

Denominations also offer resources to prepare congregations to welcome newcomers and live their faith, so the words are not hypocritical.

The New Year's challenge is for people of faith to live up to the messages, so they have positive impact on lives, communities and the world.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Reflections

Sounding Board

Letters

Excerpts from newsletters and a letter to the editor:

Like holding a prism, each year we hold the precious gift of the Christmas story in our hands a bit differently, gently lifting it up to the light of our life experience and the events of the world. We find a new refraction—the same, yet always surprising, always beautiful.

Because of the attention the United Church of Christ has received on our television ads, the image I have seen this year is that of “no room in the inn.”

We know what it is to find the “inns” of our hearts and our spirits shuttered tight for the night. At times, we so value our own safety and security that we shut out anything that may threaten this comfort zone—be it a new idea or a person who is different. It takes plenty of time and presence to provide hospitality to one in need, to welcome a new way of thinking or a new way of acting. Sometimes, it's just easier to protect the status quo, to shut our emotional, intellectual or personal doors and say, “No more room!”

The church has struggled mightily with the question of whether it will be an inn with the doors flung wide open or one that provides a sense of safety for those like-minded individuals who gather within.... Sometimes we quite unconsciously forego hospitality to get business done, we are in too much a hurry to take time to be really present to one another or we find someone who pushes us beyond our comfort zone.

Will we fling wide the doors not only of our churches as we provide an extravagant welcome to any who would join us? Will

we risk opening our hearts and spirits to the newness, the strangeness, the wonder of God's longing to be born in us? Will we walk out the doors of the church and share the good news of God's presence through our engagement in and our caring about our world?

We hold the prism to the light of God's love and we see through the clarity of the sacred vision a rainbow. Each unique color is a precious gift. The colors blend into a whole far more beautiful and harmonious than any individual hue. May we birth a church that welcomes all, that sees in each one the eyes and form of Christ and says to each, “Come inside, you are welcome. You are loved.”

The Rev. Kristine Zakarison
Community Congregational United
Church of Christ – Pullman

We usually equate the rejection of the Holy Travelers in the Christmas story with attributes of gruff selfishness. We picture a crotchety geezer sneering at poor Joseph, hat in hand, pleading for a bed for his pregnant wife.

This aspect of the Christmas story touches us because we know in our hearts that it speaks about us. We, like the innkeeper, are not bad people. Most often we do good things and try to lead decent lives.

A “no vacancy” sign announces the truth in businesslike fashion: There is no room in the inn. Perhaps somewhere else.

There is no malice, but there is a lesson. The only way Joseph—or at least Mary—would have had a room that night would have been for the innkeeper to give up his own room—extending himself beyond the

normal course of business practice and act, not out of profit but out of his heart. Renting rooms is business. Opening up for those in need is genuine hospitality—true love.

The lowly place of Jesus' birth became necessary because of a lack of generosity, a refusal to choose others over self. God adapts, and Jesus is born in less than favorable circumstances.

Too often, “no vacancy” flashes its advisory note about our lives as we find ourselves engulfed in responsibilities and activities we can so readily justify as important and necessary: No time, no money, no care for others.

In the wonder of God's love, we are not shut out in the cold. God continues to knock at the door—not the door of our business, but the door of our hearts. God waits patiently for us to recognize the difference between the just another face taking up our time and the Face of Love who wants a place in our hearts. The choice for hospitality and welcome is ours. Jesus is born with or without us. His coming makes a difference only if we make a deliberate choice to let him in to stay as long as he wants.

Father Michael Savelesky
Assumption Catholic Church
The Inland Register

It has been said that the one who forgets the language of gratitude can never be on speaking terms with happiness.

When we focus on our difficulties, frustrations and disappointments—the things that are going wrong—we seem to find even more of the same. We, like the Grinch, can become overwhelmed with

despair. When we turn our focus to those things that are “right”—our many blessings, both large and small—we begin to feel a sense of gratitude to God. Along with that gratitude comes joy.

A little child touched the Grinch and taught him the language of gratitude. Isaiah 11 reminds us that a little Child touches us.

The Rev. Lauri Clark Strait
Opportunity Christian

Letter to the editor

We enjoyed your article about Daybreak Youth Services in the December issue of The Fig Tree. It is a great organization and has come a long way since we were involved with it.

There is a minor correction that I need to make just to keep the record straight. My wife and I were among five people involved in the original planning. We were all members, at that time, of Whitworth Presbyterian Church.

This group wanted to do something to help the community and we decided to start an organization to treat addicted youth.

Along the way our fledging group acquired the name of Daybreak. Whitworth Church's involvement was minimal, including a few donations and use of the facilities for meetings. It was not a church program.

Sister Marianne Therese, SNJM, was our first director, and was succeeded by Tim Smith.

Thank you for your work on The Fig Tree. It's an excellent publication. It more than fulfills its mission for the Inland Northwest. **Bob Mills - Deer Park**

Events celebrate and pass on King's dream

The Spokane-area will join with people in more than 100 nations worldwide to commemorate the life and legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., on Jan. 16 and 17.

More than 2,000 Inland Northwest residents are expected to attend Spokane's 2005 celebration, which will include a remembrance program, community resource fair, unity march and community service projects.

Event organizers said the Spokane celebration began in 1982 when scores of people from the Martin Luther King, Jr., Family Outreach Center—then the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Center—gathered at the County

Courthouse and marched to the Federal Building.

The celebration became official the next year—1983—when the center filed with the police department for a permit to march.

Representatives of several Spokane African-American churches, non-profit agencies, the United Way and the center help plan this annual event.

The theme is "A Day On, Not A Day Off: Passing the Dream of Martin Luther King, Jr., to Our Youth."

More than 70 non-profit agencies will have booths at River Park Square to give information about community resources and

volunteer opportunities. Several agencies have service projects scheduled for that afternoon.

At 4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 16, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana, will host the remembrance program.

On Monday, the resource fair will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., at River Park Square.

Opening remarks begin at 10 a.m. The Unity March begins at 10:30 a.m. at the corner of Main and Post.

After marchers return from the procession through downtown Spokane, there will be multi-cultural entertainment.

For information, call 838-6581.

Speaker explores connection of values and justice

Author of nine best-selling books, the Rev. Mel White will sign his book, *Stranger at the Gate*, at 6 p.m. and speak at 7 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 23, at Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, 411 S. Washington in Spokane.

He will speak on "Progressive Moral Values, discussing principles of and values related to justice in a modern society.

The former speech writer for Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham and Jim Bakker has been a guest on CNN, Larry King Live and 60 Minutes and has produced 53 films and documentaries.

He is the founder and leader of SoulForce, an organization using nonviolent methods in its work for equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons.

The event is raising funds for

peace and justice projects of the Church Life Service and Action Committee of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ. It is also sponsored by the Kitsap Human Rights Network, PFLAG and other justice organizations.

In addition to the presentation in Spokane, Mel will also speak at 10 a.m., Jan. 22, at the Suquamish UCC and at 6 p.m., Jan. 22, at University Congregational UCC in Seattle.

For information, call (360) 697-3429.

Calendar of Events

- Jan 4, 18** • Fig Tree Show on Daybreak, Comcast Channel 14, 5 p.m.
- Jan 6** • Fig Tree Board of Directors, 1323 S. Perry St., 1 p.m..
- Jan 7** • Artist Linda Spiering, Village Gallery of Sacred Art at the Kaufer Co., 907 W. Boone, 4:30 - 6 p.m.
- Jan 10, 24** • Living Wage Meeting, 35 W. Main, 5 p.m.
- Jan 11** • Weyerhaeuser Center for Faith and Learning Leadership and Church Management program begins, p. 6
- Jan 11, 25** • Fig Tree Show, Shawl Ministries, Comcast Channel 14, 5 p.m.
- Jan 12** • Fig Tree Interactive Website Advisory Team, Weyerhaeuser Hall at Whitworth College, 7 p.m.
- Jan 16** • Spokane Alliance Assembly, Spokane Ag Trade Center, 2 p.m.
- Jan 16-17** • Martin Luther King Celebration, p. 11
- Jan 17** • United Nation Association luncheon, COG, noon
- Jan 19** • Spokane City Forum, Anthony Bonanzino of the Spokane Regional Chamber of Commerce, "Navigating the Collaborative Sea: Enhancing Community Wellness," First Presbyterian, 318 S. Cedar, 11:45 a.m. - call 777-1555
- Jan 20** • VOICES, Salem Lutheran, 1428 W. Broadway, 5:30 p.m.
- Jan 20** • Women's Justice Circle, 820 N. Summit, 5:30 p.m.
- Jan 18-25** • Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - www.wcc-coe.org
- Jan 19** • "The Culture of Peace," series on non-violence, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, 35 W. Main, 6:30 p.m.
- Jan 20** • Spokane CROP Walk Planning Committee, Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 7 p.m.
- Jan 22** • Thin Air Radio Movie Night, "Unconstitutional: The War on our Civil Liberties," the Big Dipper, 17 S. Washington, 8 p.m.
- Jan 24-26** • Prayer Summit, Riverview Bible Camp, p. 3
- Jan 27** • "How the Church Can Work with Business and Media to Impact a Community," Mission Spokane, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana, 9 - 11 a.m.
- Jan 29-F5** • Connoisseur Concert's annual Bach Festival, p. 3
- Feb 2** • Fig Tree distribution, St. Mark Lutheran, 24th & Grand, 9 a.m.
- Feb 3** • Fig Tree Board, 1323 S. Perry St., 1 p.m.
- Mondays** • PEACH Safe Food Orientation - call 455-2552
- Tues-Sats** • Habitat for Humanity work days - call 534-2552
- Fridays** • Peace Vigil at Army Recruiting Office, Colville - call 675-4554
- 1st Sats** • Interdenominational Ministerial Fellowship Union - call 624-0522
- 2nd Sats** • Sacred Harp Shape-Note Singers, 2929 Waterford Dr., 7 p.m.
- Stevens County Fellowship of Reconciliation, First Congregational, Colville, 6:30 p.m. - call 738-4962

Juvenile justice is theme of talk

The 2005 United Nations Association-Spokane annual luncheon meeting at noon, Monday, Jan. 17, at the Gonzaga University COG will feature Katherine Kirking speaking on "The Juvenile Justice System in Spokane."

Katherine, who has worked as juvenile public defender with the Council for Defense in Spokane since March 2003, is a 1999 graduate of Gonzaga University in history and a 2002 graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C., with studies focused on constitutional and health law.

While there, she helped create the Model Emergency Health Powers Act to guide state response to public health threats posed by bioterrorism. It has been adopted in whole or in part by 33 states.

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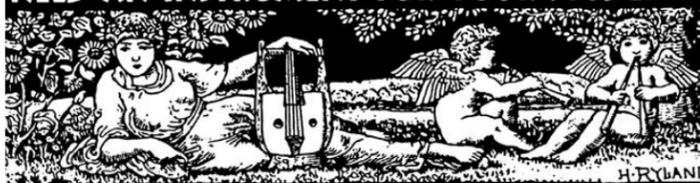


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Center introduces children to diverse languages, cultures, religions, races

Continued from page 1
 program director for the center's children's and youth services, earning along the way a bachelor's degree in developmental psychology at Eastern Washington University and working now to complete a master's in education degree at Gonzaga University. She will graduate in June.

Caring for her son, attending school and working full time has been hard. For a while, she also worked part time at the Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery. She is now raising her eight-year-old niece, as well as her 10-year-old son.

At Holy Temple Church of God in Christ and among staff members, she finds a support community that has given her the love she needs to make it possible for her to carry the load.

Her personal experience, widened by her education, gives her understanding of parents who bring their children to programs she oversees at the center:

- Early Child Educational and Assistance (ECEAP), a family-focused preschool for 31 low-income four-year-olds, builds educational and social proficiency for children and families.

- Child care for 25 children is available in the early morning for children in ECEAP and after-school programs.

- Kindergarten child care is available five mornings a week to low-income kindergarten children.

- Fulfillment Achievement Maturity Enrichment (FAME) is an after-school program for 24 kindergarten through third-grade children. It instills substance-abuse prevention, cross-cultural respect and self-esteem.

- Youth 2000, an after-school program for 13 fourth-to-sixth-grade children, includes substance-abuse prevention, field trips, media literacy, computer labs, community service, group mentoring, cooking classes and family involvement.

- The nine-week Summer Youth Academy for more than 75 children from three to 12 years old promotes self-esteem, diversity, literacy, recreation and service.

- The nine-week summer Teen Leadership Program for 15 youth, who are 13 to 15 years old builds leadership skills through classroom instruction, field trips and mentoring younger children.

Freda oversees a staff of eight people who provide a safe, nurturing environment for children and youth to improve their success at school and their ability to make good choices.

Volunteers from area colleges and the community gain experience working with children from



Self-portraits of children line the wall above computers.

diverse populations.

"Single parents often struggle with work and caring for family. God has blessed me with a good education so I can give back to others based on my experience and the love I receive," Freda said.

Knowing how hugs help her, she gives hugs.

To go to her office, she passes through the classroom. Children run up to her for hugs. Sometimes she stops to read to them.

"I like to read to them because books open windows to new places and build literacy skills," she said.

She also joins them on field trips, such as to a Christmas party at Fairchild Air Force Base or to lunch with the downtown Kiwanis.

"We do not see changes overnight from our actions. It takes time and depends on whether the child has been exposed to violence or abuse," Freda said. "Staff and volunteers are encouraged when parents report changes they see in their children."

The more volunteers she has, the more children will develop one-to-one relationships.

Drawing children from a mix of ethnic backgrounds makes it possible for Freda, staff, volunteers, children, youth and their families to live out the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr., to promote unity among diverse people.

The center's mission statement speaks of equality, respectful

treatment of and accessibility for all people.

"It's easy for the children to accept differences as they interact with each other every day. It may be difficult to connect with and see diversity in much of Spokane, but here we draw diverse people," Freda said.

As children meet children of other races and cultures, they overcome fear that can arise from lack of contact and that can lead to racism, she said.

At the center, diversity is about more than race. It also includes religion, family dynamics and different celebrations in families of similar faiths and cultures.

"By interacting with people of different backgrounds, we gain knowledge of customs and traditions of other people," she said. "Not all Christians, not even all Hispanic Christians, celebrate Christmas in the same way. Similarly Jewish people

celebrate Chanukkah in different ways. There are cultures within cultures."

Because there are some Spanish-speaking children, and some speak Russian, parents have come and taught the children some words in those languages. Children also learn sign language.

"Children can grasp the concept that people do things in different ways," she said.

"I can read about Chanukkah in 50 books, but I understand more when a family comes and tells about their practices. Children learn first hand from families of the other children they see every day."

The program sets expectations for behavior. It does not accept bullying or harassment,

but teaches tolerance through role playing, informal talk and basic rules. The center addresses drug and alcohol abuse as part of character building.

Staff nurture confidence and creativity, preparing children for school and for self-expression.

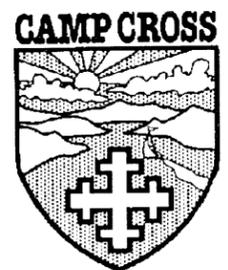
Parents and children learn creative ways to prevent and resolve conflicts at home and in school.

"Parents begin to realize they are the most important teachers as they are involved," Freda said. "They design what happens in the class. Through family services, they also learn about assistance, weatherization, domestic violence programs and parenting skills.

"We believe families love their children and want what's best for them. We respect families' cultural self-definition and include extended families in services we provide," she said.

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