

STORIES INSIDE

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Collaboration is key at St. Vincent de Paul - p. 9



Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest

online in color at www.thefigtree.org

Peacebuilders incorporate traditions

By Mary Stamp

From a coffee-drinking ritual to hugging Jerusalem, a network of grassroots peacebuilders employ common, ancient religious and cultural traditions to draw people of Abrahamic religions into their efforts to build peace in the Holy Land.

While most media reports on the Middle East make peace seem impossible, Rabbi Eliyahu McLean and Sheikh Ghassan Manasra put their hope for peace into practical actions.

They told people gathered Nov. 28 at Country Homes Christian Church in Spokane of their work as Jerusalem Peacemakers, a network of religious leaders using Middle Eastern traditions to bring people together. They were here as part of a two-and-a-half-month tour of North America.

"It's immoral that people are kept apart to sell news," Eliyahu said.

While "peace" is a dirty word in the political spheres of the Holy Land, they reminded people—by doing a closing song and circle dance—that "shalom" in Hebrew



Rabbi Eliyahu McLean and Sheikh Ghassan Manasra visit with Thomas Schmidt, of the Baraka Sufi Community in Spokane, one of the groups that invited the speakers.

and "salaam" in Islam not only mean "peace" but also are names for God.

"We came to share positive stories of hope you do not read about in the *New York Times* or local daily. We came to tell you of our hope that the children of Abraham and the wider human family of God will bring peace and reconciliation to the Holy Land," Eliyahu said.

Most efforts to negotiate a Middle East peace settlement using western means fall short because they ignore Eastern spiritual and prophetic tools for forgiving and reconciling, he said.

Groups making their Spokane visit possible included Baraka Sufi Group, Spiritus at the Cathedral of St. John, Unity Church South, the Center for Spiritual Living, the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, One Peace Many Paths and the Interfaith Council.

Spokane was also part of the tour because Venerable Geshe Thubten Phelgye, a Tibetan Buddhist monk who is teaching as a 2011-2012 global scholar at Gonzaga Uni-

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Martin Luther King, Jr., Day 2012 march is 'a time to stand up and make a statement'

"This is a time to stand up and make a statement," said Ivan Bush, co-chair of the Martin Luther King, Jr., planning committee for 2012 in Spokane.

It's "a statement year" because of the bombing attempted last year to thwart the values of Martin Luther King, Jr., to build racial equality, respect and understanding, he asserted.

Organizers of Spokane's 2012 Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Rally and March anticipate that there will be a larger crowd than usual as an expression of solidarity.

The Rev. Happy Watkins, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, is co-chair of the planning committee with Ivan, who is equal

opportunity officer for Spokane Public Schools. They hope people will gather from Canada and surrounding communities, as well as Spokane, as in the past. They also expect people to come from Portland, Seattle and Washington, D.C.

The local Carpenters' Union is providing placards so people can write their home towns or their church/faith affiliations on them, and hold them up during the rally and march. The rally begins at 10 a.m., Monday, Jan. 16, at the old Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., across from the traditional meeting space in the Opera House.

That facility has space for more

than 2,000, he said.

Ivan said that the crowd of marchers has grown from 49 the first year, 1984, to thousands, so many that more and more people have had to stand outside the Opera House entry.

With more people and some dignitaries, he said there will be more security.

Happy hopes that people will come out—as people of Superior, Mont., did when he went there in the 1980s to speak after a right wing, white supremacist group moved there from Chicago—to say "we will not tolerate this behavior and we value all our citizens."

Ivan hopes more people will come to "celebrate the life and work of Dr. King, and rededicate their lives to carry out the principles for which he lived."

The Rev. Stephen Thurston, pastor of New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago and president of the National Baptist Convention of America, will be the featured speaker for the community celebration and rally.

Several events are being planned.

At 6 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 14,
Continued on page 3

Legislative Conference focuses on economic justice

"Render Unto Caesar: Reclaiming Our Prophetic Voice" is the theme for the 2012 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, which will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 21, at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave.

The keynote speaker, Julia Stronks, Lindaman Chair and professor of political science, gender and law at Whitworth University, will address "The Global Economy and Us."

A panel of leaders discussing their denomination's recent statements on economic justice will include the Rev. Dale Cockrum, United Methodist District Superintendent; the Rev. Pat Hartin, ecumenical officer of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane; the Rev. Jimmie Pierce, president of the Spokane Ministers' Fellowship, and the Right Rev. James Waggoner, Jr., bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane.

The Rev. Paul Benz, co-director of the Faith Action Network of Washington, and Scott Cooper, director of Parish Social Services of Catholic Charities Spokane, will present summaries of issues before the state legislature at 1 p.m.

There will be workshops at 9:30 a.m. and at 1:30 p.m.

Both sessions will include workshops on state budget and revenue issues, and on environmental stewardship.

Workshop leaders on the budget are Marilee Roloff, director of Volunteers of America of the Inland Northwest; the Rev. Kris Christensen, urban missionary at Holy Trinity Episcopal in West Central Spokane, and Dan Morrissey of Gonzaga University School of Law.

The environmental workshops will focus on water and toxics in the morning and on transportation of waste and products related to coal, nuclear and oil sands energy in the afternoon. Leaders include Rachael Paschal Osborn of the Center for Environmental Law and Policy in Spokane, Jesse Dye of Earth Ministry in Seattle and Crystal Gartner, associate

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A Circle of Protection Statement
www.circleofprotection.us

Wide range of Christian leaders sign statement, "A Circle of Protection"

In April, more than 50 national Evangelical, Roman Catholic, mainline Protestants, African-American, and Latino Christian leaders joined together to defend the lives and dignity of poor and vulnerable people in the current budget debate.

Their release of a joint statement, "A Circle of Protection: A Statement on Why We Need to Protect Programs for the Poor," gave a strong, unified Christian voice in the U.S. budget debate.

The document states:
"As Christian leaders, we are committed to fiscal responsibility and shared sacrifice. We are also committed to resist budget cuts that undermine the lives, dignity, and rights of poor and vulnerable people. Therefore, we join with others to form a Circle of Protection around programs that meet the essential needs of hungry and poor people at home and abroad."

Heads of diverse Christian organizations said that politicians in both parties have failed to bring moral leadership to the budget debate.

In the words of the Christian leaders:
"These choices are economic, political—and moral. As Christians, we believe the moral measure of the debate is how the most poor and vulnerable people fare. We look at every budget proposal from the bottom up—how it treats those Jesus called 'the least of these' (Matthew 25:45). They do not have powerful lobbies, but they have the most compelling claim on our consciences and common resources. The Christian community has an obligation to help them be heard, to join with others to insist that programs that serve the most vulnerable in our nation and around the world are protected."

Congress has been sparring over the 2012 budget and raising the ceiling on the national debt much of 2011.

According to the Christian leaders' statement:
"Budgets are moral documents, and how we reduce future deficits are historic and defining moral choices. As Christian leaders, we urge Congress and the administration to give moral priority to programs that protect the life and dignity of poor and vulnerable people in these difficult times, our broken economy, and our wounded world."

The leaders outlined eight principles for ethical decision-making that must be considered in a moral budget. These include protecting and improving "poverty-focused development and humanitarian assistance to promote a better, safer world" and ensuring that budget discussions "review and consider tax revenues, military spending, and entitlements in the search for ways to share sacrifice and cut deficits."

They also call for a focus on creating jobs because "decent jobs at decent wages are the best path out of poverty, and restoring growth is a powerful way to reduce deficits."

The leaders said that it is the "vocation and obligation of the church to speak and act on behalf of those Jesus called 'the least of these.'"

This basic principle has provided a unifying point for Christians that gets past the partisan politics dominating Capitol Hill.

The leaders have since then sought to find ways to hold political leaders accountable for protecting programs that serve poor and vulnerable people and for using moral principles to make budget decisions.

Among the contacts and organizers are Bread for the World, Sojourners, the National Council of Churches and the Alliance to End Hunger.

For information and a list of the signers, visit www.circleofprotection.org.

Faith and nonprofit leaders address issues

Continued from page 1
field organizer for the Sierra Club. A morning workshop on "Advocating Congregations" will be led by Lynda Maraby, urban missionary and Eastern Washington representative on the Faith Action Network Board.

Afternoon workshops will also

include time for questions with the keynote speaker and panelists, plus a workshop on "What Does It Mean to Be a Prophetic Pastor in These Times?" led by the Protest Chaplains of Spokane.

Planning opening and closing worship experiences are the Rev. Nick Block of Spokane Friends

Church and the Rev. Deb Conklin of Liberty Park and St. Paul United Methodist churches.

Organizers for the event are the Faith Action Network of Washington and The Fig Tree.

For information, call 535-4112 or 206-625-9790 or email malcolm@thefigtree.org.

Yakima Briefing asks: Who is my neighbor?

The 2012 Yakima Legislative Briefing on the theme "Who Is My Neighbor? Faithful Responses to State Budget Cuts" will be held from 8:30 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Jan. 21, at Central Lutheran Church, 1604 W. Yakima Ave.

Eric Anderson of United Christian Church in Yakima will lead a reflection on the parable of the Good Samaritan related to the

workshop theme. He will look at the role of individuals, institutions, government, businesses, private charities and churches in serving vulnerable people.

David Hacker, congregational relations director with the Faith Action Network (FAN), and Alice Woldt, co-director of FAN, will present updates on issues before the state legislative session.

Steve Hill, of the Yakima County Department of Human Services and panelists from Yakima Valley social service agencies will discuss the impacts of proposed state budget cuts on their programs.

The Yakima Association of Churches and Faith Communities is sponsoring the event.

For information, call 509-995-4692 or email hacker@fanwa.org.

Homeless Connect day offers one-stop shop

Offering people one-stop access to resources as they seek permanent or emergency housing, the Spokane Homeless Connect scheduled for 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 26, at the Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., will bring many services together in one place at one time.

People can connect to many resources and have results that day instead of going on waiting lists, running around, working around office hours and phone calls, said James Fulwider, SNAP's family development coach.

For people without housing or transportation, going many places for resources is a challenge, James

said, because systems are not set up to respond to needs quickly.

Homeless Connect includes medical and dental screenings, the DSHS mobile office, housing resource providers, information on permanent and emergency housing and a free lunch.

He said that at SNAP they see more homeless people doubling up in response to the high unemployment and underemployment and a soft economy.

"They are bearing the brunt of a weak economy and reduced funding for programs," said James

For information, call 228-3200.

host Project Homeless Connect from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 26, at the American Legion at 1138 E. Poleline Ave.

Three elements of the event, said Matt Hutchinson at St. Vincent de Paul in Coeur d'Alene, are: 1) 20 interviewers will conduct a Point-in-Time Survey; 2) homeless individuals will receive vouchers for clothing, food, haircuts and medical attention, and 3) legal and housing service providers, a veterinarian and someone to repair bikes will be available.

There will be pick-up points at the Kroc Center and at the H.E.L.P. Center in Coeur d'Alene.

For information, call 208-664-3095.

Homeless count informs program decisions

The seventh annual count of Spokane's homeless community the week of Jan. 30 will provide information to develop and fund programs to reduce homelessness. Formerly known as the One Day Count, the Point in Time Count is a community initiative to ensure a comprehensive, unduplicated count of area homeless people.

Representatives from city, county and state agencies and nonprofits serving low-income and homeless people will work together to collect data to ensure resources are properly directed to needs, said Samantha Luceford, of the City of Spokane's Human Services Department.

By asking people at count sta-

tions where they stayed the night of Jan. 26, the homeless census counts homeless people living outdoors, in shelters and other housing. It coordinates with census projects of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The count is required to access state funding. Providers participating are emergency shelters, transitional housing, permanent

supportive housing, homeless resource and outreach centers, feeding programs and food banks.

Because count stations may not reach people living with friends or family, people in that situation are encouraged to be part of the count.

Samantha said agencies use the information to understand changing community needs.

For information, call 625-6062.

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Long-time organizers seek to pass on role to leaders in younger generations

Continued from page 1
there will be a musical celebration, "Hear the Dream, Feel the Hope," with male vocalists and musicians at Calvary Baptist Church, 508 E. Third.

The Commemorative Celebration at 4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 15, is at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana.

Thurston, who will preach on "His Hope, His Dream: Our Responsibility," is active in the Chicago chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He was the youngest president in the National Baptist Convention's history when he was elected in 2003.

Civic leaders and clergy will also give presentations.

On Monday after the rally, marchers will walk to Riverpark Square for the Community Resource Fair and to the STA Plaza for the Children's Resource Fair,



Ivan Bush

both from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Last year, rally participants heard about plans for Martin Luther King, Jr., Way through the education district of Spokane. This year, construction is nearly



The Rev. Happy Watkins

complete on the street, which runs from Division to Hamilton.

Happy also reported that the Martin Luther King, Jr., Family Outreach Center on Sherman St. is seeking a larger facility.

"We need more space, because there are more families wanting their children to be in the programs," he said.

"The center provides parents a safe place to bring their children

for early childhood learning and development, after-school programs and the summer program," he said. "We have operated 23 years, leasing a former firehouse, which has no sprinkler system, from the City of Spokane. In our new location, our plans for remodeling include a sprinkler system."

Happy and Ivan also announced that they will turn over responsibility for planning the Martin Luther King, Jr., Day events to younger leaders. They will step down as co-chairs of the planning committee after this year.

"We will mentor, but will let younger leaders take the mantle to the next level," Ivan said.

Their next focus will be to help young men and women of color apply for and secure jobs, so they are not incarcerated in the numbers Happy sees at Airway Heights Correction Center.

For information, call 455-8722.

Many Inland Northwest communities plan Martin Luther King, Jr., Day events

In Yakima, the Martin Luther King, Jr., Community Worship Service will be held at 3 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 15, at Greater Faith Baptist Church.

The community Martin Luther King Walk will begin at noon, starting at MLK Blvd and 5th Ave. and proceeding toward the Yakima Convention Center.

In Ellensburg, Central Washington University students are hosting a Martin Luther King, Jr., event at 8 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 12, for fifth grade students at Mt. Stuart Elementary School to highlight King's leadership and impact on the United States. Fifth graders will rotate in small groups through multiple mini-centers to learn about Martin Luther King, Jr., and to create takeaway resources to convey his civil rights work with others.

In Pullman and Moscow, the Center for Civic Engagement has scheduled a Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service for Washington State University students, faculty and staff, and for people in the community from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., Monday, Jan. 16, said Erin

McIlraith, event coordinator.

There are opportunities for grooming animals at the Whitman County Humane Society, sorting food at the Community Action Center, caring for neglected horses and wildlife at Orphan Acres, socializing at Whitman Senior Living and cleaning at the Palouse Discovery Science Center.

More opportunities will be posted at <http://cce.wsu.edu/mlkday>.

Other events for Martin Luther King, Jr., Day 2012, "Making the Dream a Reality," include:

- A Celebration Opening Event will be at noon, Wednesday, Jan. 11, at the WSU CUB Concourse F.

- A Community Celebration with Aaron Oforlea, of WSU's English Department, is at 4 p.m., Thursday, at the CUB Jr. Ballroom.

- Freedom Riders Helen and Bob Singleton will speak at the Moscow Community Breakfast at 9 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 14, at Moscow Junior High.

- A Service of Remembrance will be offered by Emmanuel Christian Life Center at 4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 15, at the Community Congregational United

Church of Christ in Pullman.

- The YWCA will hold a program on "Women and the Civil Rights Movement," at noon, Tuesday, Jan. 17, at the Women's Resource Center.

- University Singers plan a program on "Singing for Justice" on Saturday, Jan. 14, at the WSU School of Music.

- Jeff Guillory, of the WSU diversity education program, and Barbara Ward of the College of Education will speak on "Teaching for Justice" from 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Jan. 21, at Freedom School at the Talmadge Anderson Heritage House, 935 B St. For information, call 335-7707 or call 339-6172 or email fgaskins@wsu.edu or emcilraith@wsu.edu

In Lewiston, Lewis and Clark State College will host a luncheon and cultural celebration at 11:45 a.m., Monday, Jan. 16, at the Williams Conference Center, followed by a day of service from 1 to 3:30 p.m., in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., Day and Idaho Human Rights Day. Volunteers

will be randomly assigned to a team and be challenged to complete a community service project.

For information, call 208-792-2740 or email lldavies@lsc.edu.

In Coeur d'Alene, the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations will hold its Martin Luther King, Jr. Gala Event from 5 to 8 p.m., Monday, Jan. 16, at Parkside Tower Event Center at 601 E. Front St.

Entitled "Every Human Has Rights," the event will feature a variety of food, wine, music, silent and live auctions.

For information, call Michelle Find, chair, at 208-765-3333.

The Human Rights Education Institute (HREI) in Coeur d'Alene is co-sponsoring presentations in the Living Voices program, "The Right to Dream," for fifth graders in Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls school districts.

In addition it will offer a showing for parents and fifth graders at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 18, at the institute.

The HREI is also planning activities for families on Martin

Luther King, Jr., and the civil rights movement on Mondays, Jan. 16 and 23.

- On Jan. 16, the focus is on talking about historical and community heroes, and making "Hero Cereal Boxes."

- On Jan. 23, participants will create kindness chains and discuss the strength and courage it took for past leaders to create a kinder world, and how they can continue the chain in the community.

There will be family nights from 3 to 7 p.m., Mondays for stories, crafts and activities.

Other new events include:

- A book club at 7 p.m., Thursday, beginning Jan. 26.

- A monthly women's program, "Girls' Night Out," begins at 6 p.m., Friday, Jan. 27.

The Human Rights Education Institute is holding a Values Project Contest for area high school juniors and seniors, launching on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, Monday, Jan. 16, with opportunities for participants to share ideas to make the community stronger.

For information, call 208-292-2359 or visit hrei.org.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., DAY CELEBRATION 2012 - SPOKANE

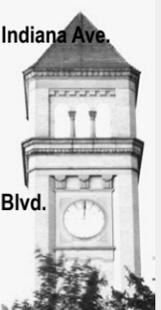
His Hope, His Dream
Our Responsibility

Saturday, January 14
Hear the Dream, Feel the Hope: A Musical Celebration
6-8 p.m. Calvary Baptist Church, 203 E. Third Ave.
Scholarship Fundraiser for the Martin Luther King, Jr., Family Outreach Center

Sunday, January 15
Commemorative Celebration
4-6 p.m. Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana Ave.
The Rev. Dr. Stephen J. Thurston
Pastor, New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church of Chicago
President, National Baptist Convention of America, Inc., International

Monday, January 16
Annual Unity March
10 a.m. Old Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.
Community Resource Fair, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
1st & 2nd Floors, Riverpark Square, 808 W. Main Ave.
Children's Activity Fair, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
2nd Floor, STA Bus Plaza, 701 W. Riverside Ave.

Questions? Call 509-455-8722
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FAITH ACTION NETWORK
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Jerusalem Peacemakers incorporate Middle Eastern traditions to connect

Continued from page 1
 iversity, spent four years with the Jerusalem Peacemakers, beginning in 2004.

As director of the Islamic Cultural Center in Nazareth, Ghassan promotes tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

Born in Nazareth, he studied in a Catholic high school, earned a master's degree in Arabic literature from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and taught about Islam as a Fulbright scholar at the Catholic University in Washington, D.C., in 2008.

One night when he was a child and sleeping with cousins on the balcony of his grandfather's home, his grandfather woke him and told him, "Meet yourself." After his grandfather died, Ghassan went to a sheikh, who told him his grandfather meant that he wanted him to know himself.

The Koran says God created all people and all nations to be different but to know one another, Ghassan said. He now realizes that knowing other people helps him know himself.

"Now when I meet Christians and Jews, I understand," he said. "To know God, we need to know ourselves. We cannot know ourselves alone. Only the other can complete me, as a mirror, reflecting me in his or her eyes."

"Others are also my bridge to God. We need to change our individual ways and be part of activities and movements that bring us into connection," he said.

The Islamic Cultural Center brings people together to create alternatives to the stalemate among political leaders.

One way is to influence the next generation of educators, politicians and religious leaders by offering training in tolerance to Jewish, Christian and Muslim high school teachers and principals.

Ghassan said they were at first hesitant. Jews believe Muslims and Christians want to push them into the sea. Muslims and Christians believe Jews want to push them into the sea.

Overcoming their hesitation, the educators developed projects and created an informal education program to help people overcome prejudice and stereotypes.

Next Ghassan reached out to train parents of different faiths, so they can model for their children. He helps parents connect and share meals to come to know each other.

In addition, through the center's leadership project, he invited 12 imams and sheiks to teach an introduction to their faith and to learn from leaders of the other religion. After a year, they felt



Venerable Geshe Thubten Phleyge introduces Eliyahu McLean and Ghassan Manasra.

the experience had "cleaned their minds of stereotypes," he said.

One rabbi who came was Eliyahu.

"I realize I needed him to complete myself. I am not right wing or left wing. If I am to fly, I need both wings, both Muslims and Jews. I also hope to have Christians, Buddhists and Druse be partners in our project."

In coming to Spokane, Ghassan hopes "I will be part of you, so we are one. We all have part of the story and only together can we discover truth. With truth we can have reconciliation. We ask for your prayers every day," he said.

Eliyahu, who is director of the Jerusalem Peacemakers, was born in 1967 in California to a Christian father and Jewish mother, and grew up in Hawaii. He found his identity and home in a synagogue.

A pro-Israeli activist as a teen, he went to Israel and fell in love with it. As a student at the University of California at Berkeley, he met a pro-Palestinian activist, studied Islam and decided to dedicate his life to peacemaking in the Holy Land, where he moved 13 years ago.

Active in the interfaith world, he has sought to build bridges for the Abrahamic religions. One way was to help found the Jerusalem Peacemakers in 2004.

"We seek to bring peace to the Middle East through using prophetic and spiritual wisdom, such as through the Middle Eastern sulha ritual," he said, explaining that it's like the suha process in the Jewish tradition.

"Part of my duty at Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, is to search for someone I have wronged and ask three times for the person to forgive me. If someone asks me three times for forgiveness, I am to forgive that person," the rabbi said. "It's not just for forgiving neighbors and people in my religion, but for

forgiving people of other religions and cultures."

The sulha Arabic reconciliation ritual is built around strong, rich, black coffee, Eliyahu said.

"If an enemy invites you to coffee, you must accept. It's based on an honor code to bring two tribes together. The head of one tribe invites the head of another. If a cup of coffee is offered, the head of the other tribe must drink it in order not to humiliate the host," Eliyahu explained. "If the guest accepts a second cup, it's a double honor."

"In the religious tradition of forgiving three times, if the third cup is offered and accepted, it says the people are ready to forgive and negotiate a resolution," he said.

When the second Intifada was beginning in 2000, an informal network of peacemakers who later formed the Jerusalem Peacemakers organized a Hanukkah, Christmas and Ramadan Sulha that became an annual event. It grew to 4,000 people in the fourth year, with guests from many cultures where there are conflicts.

The Sulha is now a monthly gathering of 200 people who sit together, share, listen and open their hearts to hear each other's experiences.

The Abrahamic Reunion, another Jerusalem Peacemakers' project, brings together the family of Abraham—Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Druse—who share belief in the one God. Participants learn about each other's religious customs, practices, prayers and values as a way to turn the religions into a force for peace, he said.

Participants help each other communicate to their faith communities in order to dispel fear and prejudice arising from incidents of violence.

"We need to waken from the illusion of separation," he said.

When rockets flew into Gaza,

and disproportionate power with open hearts and minds, he said.

Five years ago, Eliyahu brought lovers of Jerusalem together to "hug" Jerusalem. At first, there were just 20 Israelis and Palestinians. Slowly, Arab shopkeepers, and Israeli settlers and soldiers walking by felt something powerful was happening and wanted to be part of it. They joined hands as lovers of Jerusalem in the first annual Jerusalem Hug.

Chanting "Shalom" and "Salaam," they prayed for unity and peace in Abraham's family.

At the fifth Jerusalem Hug in July, 400 people gathered, Eliyahu said.

"The Hebrew word for Jerusalem means, "you will be Shalom" and the Arabic word means "the holy," he explained.

"When you open the newspaper, you read of the earthly Jerusalem. We seek to be a bridge between the heavenly and earthly Jerusalem," said Eliyahu, inviting people to come for an interfaith peace tour of Jerusalem.

For information, visit <http://www.jerusalempeacemakers.org>.



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January Programs

<p>Thomas Merton's Bridges to Contemplative Living Series</p> <p>First of Eight Series begins January 10, 2012</p> <p>Facilitator: Patricia Novak, OSF</p> <p>Journey toward personal spiritual transformation and a more contemplative and peace-filled life. Each series offers an introduction to Merton and contemplative living through prayers, readings from Merton and other spiritual masters as well as questions for small group dialogue. Each series is four sessions.</p>	<p>Engaging the Artist Way</p> <p>First Session of Three Classes begins January 14, 2012</p> <p>Facilitator: Barbara Burkart, LMP</p> <p>Work your way through this provocative and inspiring book. Take the opportunity to grow as a spiritual and creative individual.</p>
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Pastor's restaurant reviews lead to outreach to the industry through meals

By Josiah Brown

Obsessed with food, Kevin Finch learned to cook in high school and started to collect restaurant reviews in graduate school even though he couldn't afford to eat at the places he read about.

In January 2009, he found a way to combine his training as a pastor and food: Big Table, a nonprofit organization that seeks to transform lives "by creating community around meals for people working in the restaurant and hotel industry, and providing practical support for the many in crisis, transition or falling through the cracks," he said.

For 15 years before Big Table, he served in more traditional pastoral roles as interim chaplain at Whitworth University and as a pastor in Seattle and Spokane.

During 10 years on staff at Spokane's First Presbyterian Church, food turned into more than a hobby. Kevin was in a group with the editor of *Spokane Coeur d'Alene Living Magazine*. When they lost their food critic, the editor, knowing Kevin loved food and had majored in English in college, asked if he would write restaurant reviews.

On days off from the church, Kevin was paid—a meal and a small stipend—to write reviews. After several years, he also started writing reviews for the *Spokesman-Review* and the *Inlander*.

As he became more involved in the restaurant industry, he noticed that the people were isolated. They work when everyone else is off—nights, weekends and holidays. So they rarely show up in churches or other community support groups simply because of the hours they work, he said.

Kevin also discovered that the food service industry alone is the largest employment group in the country. He was shocked at how many people worked in many of the restaurants. For example, when the Northside Red Lobster opened they hired 200 people.

He also learned how tough the industry is: "To be successful, you have to put on a smile and act like everything is good when it isn't. That's how you earn tips and avoid being fired.

In addition, he pointed out, government statistics indicate that the restaurant industry has one of the highest rates of illegal drug use and alcohol abuse "of any defined work group in the nation. The divorce rate is extremely high, and daily stress levels are off the charts for everyone from owners to dishwashers.

"Everyone is struggling to make ends meet. Most in the industry have no medical insurance or retirement benefits. Few have any safety net," he said.

"I began to wonder if anyone was doing anything to help this tough, isolated, large community," he said. "I found no one had connected the dots like I had, but then few restaurant critics have a



Kevin Finch speaks at a Big Table dinner.

background as a pastor."

Usually when he said he was a pastor to people in the industry that ended the conversation.

In the middle of one night in fall of 2006, he woke up and clearly heard, "Kevin, I need a pastor for the restaurant industry. Are you interested?" he said.

Kevin believes it was God. There was a pause, and he responded, "Yeah I am interested, but you know they don't want a pastor. What would it look like?"

He said it was like a light turned on in the room, and a Bible opened to the end of Acts 2, where Luke describes the formation of the early church. Two things jumped out at him. They ate together and, if anyone had a need, they took care of each other. "Looking back, I think Big Table is exactly that idea," he said.

It consists of sharing a meal together and taking care of each others' needs.

Big Table holds free, six-course dinners, prepared by top local chefs every other month. The meals are served around a table that seats 44 people. The table, built specifically for this purpose, moves from location to location. Anyone in the restaurant business,

wait staff to owners, is eligible for an invitation.

For the first few dinners, Kevin invited people he knew as a food critic. As Big Table's name spread, more have become interested. At the end of each dinner, guests suggest people to invite. Now many of the guests are people Kevin never met before.

For the last dinner, there was a list of 150 people who could be invited for the 44 seats.

Big Table, which is financed by donations, pays for the dinners. All the chefs but the first one were guests at a dinner and then volunteered to cook one. Each time about 20 volunteers serve.

To care for needs of people in the restaurant industry, Kevin asks guests for names of people in need in the industry.

While some needs are too large for Big Table to tackle alone, Big Table is committed to doing something in every situation.

"We have replaced stolen computers, fixed cars, given cars, paid bills and done simple things like sending flowers on a hard day, like the anniversary of a death," Kevin said.

One recent care project was raising tuition money for a woman

server, who is going to school to be a dental assistant. She was in a car accident this fall. With medical bills and missing time at work, she lacked funds for winter tuition. Big Table raised \$700 for her tuition and books.

"Whether the care is big or small the reaction is the same," Kevin said. "People are blown away. Many start to cry and are speechless. I think it is because so rarely do we have instances where someone cares for us before we ask."

For Kevin, Big Table is an experiment in finding a way to let God be God, rather than trying to do God's job. In the church, he felt it was his job to save people.

"It's God's job to save people, not mine," he said.

In the Bible, he sees a stream of blessing starting with God blessing Abraham so, according to Genesis 12, everyone—not just spiritual insiders—would be blessed.

"I felt God was saying 'Kevin, your job is to bless people in such unreserved ways without any strings attached that their cynical

view of life falls apart in the face of grace and then they have to deal with me, in a good way,'" he said.

At dinners, he talks about the challenges of working in the industry and about the vision of Big Table. He also shares that he was a pastor for 15 years. In that context of blessing, people no longer react negatively.

"I am not forcing myself or Christianity on people. I hope if they are interested, I can be a resource," he said. "I have fun seeing people come alive spiritually, not because I preached a good sermon or taught a good class, but because we loved them."

So many people in the industry live close to the edge.

His dream is for Big Table to become a support network and community for people.

He will speak on "The Restaurant Industry: Life Behind The Kitchen Doors and a Big Table" at the Spokane City Forum at 11:45 a.m., Wednesday, Jan. 18, at First Presbyterian Church.

For information, call 999-7429, email kevin@big-table.com or visit big-table.com.

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Hosting changes attitudes and puts faces on homeless people

Hosting homeless families overnight in their church buildings and sitting down to meals with them has changed mindsets of people in Spokane congregations about who is homeless and why.

"While some in the general population may wonder why people would let themselves become homeless, that attitude is minimal among the helpers," said Madelyn Bafus, Family Promise director.

Churches transform Sunday school rooms into bedrooms after church Sunday to transform lives of homeless families. The next Sunday after families leave, the rooms are made ready for Christian education, and members take home laundry after church.

Through Family Promise of Spokane, formerly the Interfaith Hospitality Network, members of 12 host churches and 17 support churches gain insight into how people caught in a web of circumstances can become homeless.

Volunteers' perspectives change

Pam Emery, coordinator of the hosting at Spokane Friends Church, which she has attended for 30 years, said that when she first became involved, she thought homeless people were lazy.

"Now I realize each family has a different story about the situations that happened in their lives," she said. "I have respect for families in Family Promise,



Cheri Olsen of Westminster United Church of Christ and Pam Emery set up buffet dinner.

because they are coping and trying to hold their families together."

After retiring 12 years ago from 30 years of working with the phone company, the Spokane native was looking for ways to volunteer to help children.

Spokane Friends Church became a support church about 10 years ago, and seven years ago, they became a host church.

Pam, who was drawn to the church because it embraces people and helps them grow into faith without judgment, believes her calling and passion to assist with Family Promise comes from God.

Her pastor, the Rev. Nick Block, said the church's involvement has

helped many members develop compassion and understand that "these are good people, not second class, and it takes courage to enter this program."

It's important to help the poor

Barbara Lund, a retired nurse, and a few other members of the Manito Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints provide a meal every three months as a support church for the Cathedral of St. John.

"It's important for the faith community to support good causes regardless of beliefs so we can help good people who, because of circumstances, are homeless and need help," she said.

Since childhood when her mother gave food to people and had people over to dinner, Barbara has invited strangers to dinner, believing it's important to help the poor.

It's the fabric of church mission

The Rev. Gregg Sealey, pastor of Covenant United Methodist Church, said that the ministry of opening church doors to let people stay in the building involves vulnerability.

"It is now part of the fabric of our mission. It's not just opening our doors, but staying overnight and cooking meals," he said.

He said the experience has significant impact on families. For one family, Covenant was their first host church. They continued coming to worship after they moved to other host churches and are now in housing. Last summer, on a church campout,

they were baptized and now are among the servants helping with the program.

They told Gregg that they had not been exposed to a faith community before, and they felt so warmly welcomed and their eyes were opened to what a faith community could mean.

"I encourage people to put their faith into action, because people can share the stories of transformation that interest people in being involved," Gregg said. "Stories touch people's hearts and minds more than talk of religious platitudes."

It's a tangible way to help

The Rev. Craig Goodwin said that in the five years Millwood Community Presbyterian Church has hosted, people in the congregation have appreciated having a tangible way to help people struggling with homelessness.

"It's an overwhelming issue that Family Promise brings down to earth," he said. "As we provide a meal and sit down to get to know people, it's a powerful experience."

"There's something about welcoming people into our space, rather than going to help in a shelter," he said. "The act of hospitality is a good challenge."

Millwood has no support churches, so it involves more than 50 volunteers. Craig joins in, taking one overnight, driving the van or unloading beds.

He also pointed out that it's more than coordinating volunteers to fill slots. Each volunteer needs to be flexible and patient, because the lives of the families are unstable.

Michael Gurian conveys Eva Lassman's wisdom in poem

Poet, consultant, author Michael Gurian's oratorical poem on Eva Lassman ingrained in him anew his sense of service in all he does.

A lay-led Shabbat Shira—Sabbath of Song—service at 7:30 p.m., Friday, Feb. 3, at Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave., features the world premiere of "Eva's Song," his poem sharing the story and wisdom of Holocaust survivor and educator Eva Lassman, who died Feb. 10, 2011.

After giving the keynote for the 2005 Yom Hashoah at Temple Beth Shalom, also a lyrical poem, Michael said that he and Eva talked in 2006 about him writing her life as a lyrical oratory to be read on a public occasion.

To set the mood, he met with her, and she also gave him her written materials. He met with her son, Joel Lassman, and did other research. Eva, who worked tirelessly to combat hatred and intolerance, reviewed his draft in 2009. She asked him not to talk of Holocaust survivors dying.

In the final poem, however, Michael speaks with her voice today, looking back at her life after her death.

"I wanted to immortalize her voice," he said. "Others had done film and written about her, but a poem is unique."

In his poem, Michael captures her sense of purpose, her dedication to faith in God where others may have succumbed to hate. It is written in her voice of her experiences and reflections before, during and since the Holocaust.

The poem's third verse begins: "My friends, did you know: everything can be taken from you? The world can hate itself with the fury of love, while you wander in the thick of it." In the 11th verse, she implores: "No matter your creed or color, promise you will never let the ash of hate cover our human footprints!"

Ben Vogel, a music composition major at the University of the Pacific, has set the first four lines to music, as the "Prelude to Eva's Song." His composition will be performed on flute, cello and bass,

with Sara Kayne, soprano soloist.

Michael, a consultant to families, corporations, therapists, schools, criminal justice, agencies and churches, has traveled to 20 cities a year for 20 years giving keynote addresses to conferences to help boys and girls reach their potential. The *New York Times* bestselling author of 26 books, including two poetry books, co-founded the Gurian Institute in 1996 in Spokane. The institute does research on gender effectiveness and diversity.

Michael came to Spokane in 1977 to study at Gonzaga University. He earned a bachelor's in philosophy and English in 1980 and in 1985 at Eastern Washington University earned a master's in fine arts. He has taught at both schools and at Ankara University.

For information on Michael, visit www.michaelgurian.com, and for information on the service, call 747-3304 or email emacap@comcast.net.

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Interfaith Hospitality Network changes name to Family Promise

Interfaith Hospitality Network in Spokane recently changed its name to Family Promise to reflect the national program's name, which changed in 2003, and because the local program now includes more than giving short-term shelter for homeless families.

Of the 16 families served in 2011, 11 have found housing, three are in transitional housing and two are still housed in churches.

Nationally, Family Promise has 172 affiliates and includes several programs: Interfaith Hospitality Network, housing families in churches; Family Mentoring; the Just Neighbors Program, which helps people in congregations understand why people are homeless, and Community Initiatives, which mobilize clergy and volunteers to advocate for public policies to improve economic stability for low-income families.

Spokane's Interfaith Hospitality Network, which started in 1996 as the 49th affiliate, changed its name to reflect that it provides other parts of the program. There are also Family Promise programs in North Idaho, Lewiston, Bozeman, Seattle and Portland.

"We are broadening what we are doing," said Madelyn Bafus, executive director. "We grew but lost grants for transitional housing rent subsidies, so we scaled back to churches housing families."

Facing cuts, she reduced her hours from 40 to 16 hours a week. Case manager Renee Norris went from 36 to 26 hours. Secretary Susan Heitstuman is at 40 hours.

"Unlike businesses that cut from the bottom up, we cut from the top," Madelyn said. "While we have made cuts, we are maintaining our basic program of bringing homeless families into churches, which house them a week at a time."



Renee Norris and Madelyn Bafus in the Family Promise of Spokane supply room.

The goal of Family Promise is to help homeless and low-income families achieve sustainable independence by providing multifaceted response to poverty.

The number of clients represents people helped once. After a family decides to leave, Family Promise of Spokane does not take them back, but will continue to help them. Other programs' statistics include repeat clients.

"Our goal is to help people make good choices," she said. "We have strict rules, because families are housed in churches and served by volunteers. Acceptance is based on readiness to make changes."

Ten families typically apply each month, but 20 applied in November, because homelessness is growing.

Recognizing that it's harder to help people today because it's harder to find affordable housing, some families have stayed longer than the average of 60 days.

"We will not put people back into homelessness," she said. "While most programs limited

families to staying 90 days because of government grants, we have allowed some people to stay longer, because we want to be sure they will find housing."

The number of people a church can house up to a maximum of 14—to fit in the 15-passenger van—determines how many families are served at a given time.

"It's also hard to manage more, because we provide more than shelter. We work with the families daily to find housing, employment and the services they need," she said. "Our case manager makes sure the children go to school, have clean clothes, and see dentists and doctors."

Churches open their doors, move families in and provide a holistic experience. It's more than housing. They have provided camperships and furniture. Members have helped parents find jobs and a few have donated cars.

Families are not like the Cleavers on TV, said Madelyn, because so much has happened to them.

"Church members can model good parenting, sitting at the

dinner table together and passing food—meals the church and support churches have provided with meat and vegetables, not just pizza and hamburgers."

Madelyn likes the words of the pastor at First Free Evangelical, the Rev. Lee Kisman, whose theory is that when families come, "We just love them."

Five years ago, a family wanted to get married, so the church did their wedding complete with flowers, reception and clothes. They still attend the church.

"We make it clear that we are there to love the families, be servants and answer questions, not preach to them," Madelyn said.

Some churches give families \$10 to \$25 gift cards for gas or food. A supply room in the office at 608 S. Richard Allen Ct., is full

of hygiene items.

With recent funding cuts, Family Promise thought it would have to move, but the New Bryant South Corporation of Richard Allen Apartments adjusted the rent. Also, with a grant, they are buying a washer and dryer, so they will save the \$1,800 they budget each year for quarters to give to families to do their laundry.

"God is in charge and takes care of us, especially in our most difficult times," said Madelyn, first helped the program when Spokane Valley United Methodist was a support church.

She joined the board in 2002, became case manager in 2006 and director in 2008.

She values the interconnection of the host and support churches.

Because church members sit down to have meals with homeless family members, when someone talks of homelessness, a face comes to mind.

"That's the way Jesus was—in one-to-one relationships," she said.

Some former families are now helping current families.

Madelyn challenges the state's cutting its budget on the backs of the poor and voiceless.

"We are a safety net," she said. "We invest money now so children will not be homeless as adults. We hope to stop homelessness in the next generation."

"We are all children of God. The families have something to contribute, too," she said.

For information, call 747-5487 or email maddyb47@msn.com.

Toastmasters Clubs teach skills through workshops

From Jan. 23 to 27, Spokane, Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls Toastmaster Clubs will lead a series of workshops on coaching, team-building, delegating, resolving conflict, motivating employees and setting goals.

Members will teach skills to succeed and thrive in today's business and education environments, said Nancy Shatto, organizer.

• The first workshop is at 6:15 a.m., Monday, at Perkins on Division and Trent in Spokane;

• Tuesday's sessions are 6:30 a.m. at Something Else Deli, 152 S. Sherman; 12:05 p.m., on "Servant Leadership" at the Downtown Public Library, and 6:30 p.m., on "Values and Leadership" at the Monastery of St.

Clare, 4419 N. Hawthorne.

• Wednesday's are at 11:30 a.m., on "Leader as a Coach" at Inland Lighthouse for the Blind, 6405 N. Addison, and 12:05 a.m., on "Values and Leadership" at Faith Bible Church, 600 W Cora Ave.

• Thursday's are 6:30 a.m., on "World Class Goal Setting" at the Paulson Building, 421 W. Riverside #805, and 5:30 p.m., on "Giving Effective Feedback" at the Corbin Senior Center 827 W. Cleveland.

• Coeur d'Alene workshops are

at 7 a.m., Thursday, on "Characteristics of Effective Leadership" at Fire Station #3, 1500 N. 15th, and noon, Friday, on "Effective Feedback" at Lake City Club, 125 Ironwood Dr.

• A Post Falls session is 6:30 a.m., Thursday, on "Service and Leadership," at Templins Red Lion Hotel at 414 E. First Ave.

Toastmasters is an educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills.

For information, visit <http://d9.toastmastersdistricts.org>.



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- June 22-29, Come to the Quiet**

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"A tradition of welcoming people of ALL beliefs."

Labyrinth walkers follow path on a journey toward spiritual growth

By Yvonne Lopez-Morton

The Rev. Roger Lynn sees the twists and turns of the new labyrinth at Country Homes Christian Church as an active experience to give each walker a path on their journey toward spiritual growth.

"One thing I appreciate about a labyrinth is that it is open ended and allows people to be physically involved in their spiritual practice," he said. "Something happens when we pray and move."

The church's outdoor labyrinth, one of several in the area modeled after the medieval Chartres Cathedral labyrinth in northern France, was built with rocks in less than three hours on a Sunday afternoon in October.

"Last spring we held a labyrinth event at the church, and I laid down a masking tape labyrinth," Roger said. "Our youth group was inspired by the event to build a permanent labyrinth."

The labyrinth was constructed in a forested area near the church's parking lot at 8415 N. Wall, by a team that included the youth.

Roger said the labyrinth provides a spiritual tool for a variety of spiritual perspectives.

"You don't need to be a Christian to benefit from the labyrinth experience," he said. "It is a welcoming, inclusive experience."

"In a labyrinth, you can feel you are a long way from the center and then two turns later find you are there," he said.

Roger enjoys walking alone, but when walking with others, there's recognition that "we are on a spiritual journey together."

"Walking with others, we may feel we are going opposite directions when we are, in fact, all heading the same place," he said.

When it is warmer, the church will schedule labyrinth events, provide informational materials for the congregation and feature articles in the church newsletter.

According to the National Labyrinth Society, the earliest labyrinths were in Greece about 2,500 to 2000 B.C. Labyrinths have been used in many cultures and civilizations. They are carved in rock or made with ceramics, mosaics, stones, hedges or pavements, according to the society.

Compared to a maze, the labyrinth is "unicursal," meaning it uses one path. There is one entrance with no dead ends or crossing paths. The path leads the walker to the center and back out.

Use as a spiritual tool in the Christian tradition dates back to about the fourth century, with labyrinths widely used by French Christians in the late 12th century, the society reports.

Christian artists and thinkers in early medieval times developed early Roman patterns in medieval cathedrals. The most famous is the 42-foot-wide labyrinth in Chartres, created in the 13th century.

Experts agree labyrinths were a Christian symbol representing



Members formed Chartres labyrinth on Country Homes Christian Church property with stones. Photo courtesy of Roger Lynn

the path of the soul through life.

Early Christians often followed the path on their knees while praying or to symbolize a journey to Jerusalem.

After medieval times, the use of labyrinths faded. Many were destroyed between the 1600s and 1800s, according to the National Labyrinth Society.

Today Christians in North America, Europe, Africa and in other regions use labyrinths in therapeutic, devotional, pragmatic, mystical and intuitive ways.

As a spiritual practice, the society says, walking a labyrinth can be a tool to develop a greater intimacy with God, with one's self and also the wider human community, the society said.

"We're all wanderers and life is a path with many twists and turns," said the Very Reverend Bill Ellis, dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, 127 E. 12th.

"A labyrinth has spiritual significance for those who seek their true center and where they do find God," Bill said.

While its original outdoor grass labyrinth is no longer maintained, St. John has a painted canvas Chartres-style labyrinth bought from San Francisco's Grace Cathedral labyrinth ministry.

St. John's places that labyrinth in the northern end of the cathedral through the summer and in the early spring during Lent.

The International Labyrinth Society says a church labyrinth can support and enhance the life of a congregation as an outreach and hospitality tool, expressing the congregation's interest in the spiritual health of its members and neighbors.

Trinity Lutheran in Pullman, at 1300 NW Lybecker Rd., offers access to both an indoor canvas labyrinth and its classical outdoor labyrinth to community groups. The canvas one is also used for special events at the church.

"Anyone can use our outdoor labyrinth during daylight hours. It is used frequently," said Trinity office manager Megan Brannan.

"Our outdoor labyrinth was installed 10 years ago and while the church does not have a labyrinth coordinator at this time, we offer

an annual labyrinth workshop each June," she said.

In North Spokane County, Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church's Chartres-style labyrinth, built by parishioners in the summer of 2003, is open during daylight hours.

The labyrinth, which took more than 300 volunteer hours and includes 4,000 hand-placed pavers, is across from Lakeside Middle School on Highway 291 in Suncrest on 12 acres, where a new church will be built in the future.

"Father Tim Clancy envisioned a place of worship and reflection among the basalt outcroppings and trees," said Lucille Simmons, religious education coordinator.

The parish now worships in the Tum Tum Community Center. During the summer, a large event tent on the labyrinth site is used for Sunday Mass. The site also features a grotto.

In May, the labyrinth is the site of a rosary honoring the Virgin Mary. Lucille said individuals also use the labyrinth for personal reflection.

Our Lady of the Lake follows the classic three stages of walking the labyrinth used by Grace Cathedral and other Christian churches. Its flier on the labyrinth describes those stages as: 1) purgation, a form of releasing, letting go and shedding thoughts and emotions to quiet the mind; 2) illumination, finding clarity when the walker reaches the center, stays as long as necessary for meditation or prayer, and 3) union, walking out and integrating what has been received in order to return to life with a renewed vision and refreshed spirit.

A meditation labyrinth on the campus of Spokane Community College, 1810 N. Greene St., was dedicated in the fall of 2004. Students in the horticulture and landscape design program built it.

Using 4,000-year-old design principles, SCC students put in about 350 hours of work. Funds for the labyrinth near the Environmental Sciences building came from the SCC Horticulture Club's campus beautification fund.

The labyrinth at the Unitarian Universalist Church in west Spokane, 4340 W. Ft. George Wright Dr., is a Celtic triple spiral design, an ancient symbol found in cultures as early as the Neolithic and Bronze ages.

Triple spirals are symbolic, based on the number three, which is sacred in many ancient cultures. It is different from a classical labyrinth in that the walker can step in and exit anywhere.

"Our labyrinth is a way to rearrange one's energy and open up to the new perspectives," said Elaine Stevens, the labyrinth team leader. She worked with consultants Kevin and Jolie Hagan during the design and construction process.

Elaine said the labyrinth means different things to different people. For example, one woman worked through her grief by visiting the labyrinth.

"It is not unusual for people to be surrounded by wildlife like deer and elk while visiting the labyrinth," she said.

The outdoor labyrinth, open daylight hours, was constructed in 2006 and was a key centerpiece last September during the 11 Days of Peace Celebration.

Built in 1999 by church vol-

unteers, the Chartres-style labyrinth on the grounds of the Unity Church of North Idaho is the centerpiece of the church's meditation garden and a spiritual pathway for people in North Idaho said Jerilyn Whitaker, office manager.

Made of brick and pavers, the North Idaho labyrinth in Coeur d'Alene is always open for walking at 4465 N. 15th St.

The outdoor Santa Rosa labyrinth at Veradale United Church of Christ, 611 N. Progress, was an Eagle Scout project cut into the sod and laid with bricks.

"I love labyrinths. They are an amazing experience with a group," said Veradale's pastor, the Rev. Linda Crowe.

She has a long interest in labyrinths and leads studies on their history and patterns. She has walked many—from ones Grace Cathedral to Chartres. At a rest stop on the Columbia River, she accidentally discovered a labyrinth at Chief Joseph Dam.

Over the years, Linda has helped campers at N-Sid-Sen, the Pacific Northwest United Church of Christ camp and conference center on Lake Coeur d'Alene spray paint labyrinths on a meadow. Several years ago, a youth camp installed a rock labyrinth. Stillwater Lodge has a labyrinth painted on the wood floor.

"I value creating and using labyrinths, from designing them on paper to going into meadows and blessing the ground where a labyrinth will be built," Linda said.

For more information, visit www.labyrinthociety.org or the World-Wide Labyrinth Locator at <http://labyrinthlocator.com>.

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St. Vincent de Paul in Coeur d'Alene draws agencies into collaboration

By Kaye Hult

"Community Collaborates" was the heading to an email Jeff Conroy sent on Nov. 22 to announce the opening of a new warming center for the homeless in Post Falls.

Jeff, who is executive director of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Coeur d'Alene, referred readers to an article in the *Coeur d'Alene Press* announcing that Ground Force Manufacturing turned one warehouse into a shelter to be open every night through February.

Although it already has a shelter in Post Falls, St. Vincent De Paul helped Dirne Community Health Center create the new shelter.

In an age of divisiveness, Jeff seeks to enhance collaboration and celebrate it when he sees it, because he knows that "family homelessness is brutal."

At St. Vincent's, he has made collaboration among social service agencies that aid the poor and under-served as easy as possible.

"As director of a nonprofit, I believe nonprofits need to help each other," he said. "Nonprofits working together provide more complete services to people needing help. The value of a strong nonprofit community is a healthy community overall. Collaboration is the most effective way to serve a community."

He also alerted others to the need for donations for a Rathdrum soup kitchen, which is part of St. Vincent's collaborative ministry.

St. Vincent de Paul North Idaho has served Coeur d'Alene for 65 years. It opened its doors in 1946 as an outreach of St. Thomas Catholic Church, but set up as an autonomous organization.

With its mission to help the poor and homeless, it began a clothes closet for anyone in need, regardless of religion, race, personal background or gender.

Over time, the closet grew into a store that sold donated merchandise and used earnings to help the less fortunate.

In 1988, St. Vincent's expanded by opening a social service office to give away vouchers for food, rent, store merchandise, medical help and other emergencies encountered by their clientele.

St. Vincent's now includes two thrift stores, emergency shelters in Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls, transitional housing and affordable housing.

Before Jeff came on board, St. Vincent's collaborated with other agencies to serve the lost and the least. When he became director, he sought to discern overlapping services in the community and helped eliminate those overlaps and streamline the ability of each to carry out its mandate.

Through collaboration with other people and agencies, he said St. Vincent's has become the largest nonprofit center for homeless assistance, social services, information and referrals, and



Jeff Conroy guides St. Vincent de Paul in collaboration.

Photo courtesy of Jeff Conroy

empowerment for low-income people in North Idaho.

In 2009, the H.E.L.P. Center (Helping Empower Local People) opened its doors as a one-stop shop, bringing many nonprofits under one roof in the former library at 201 E. Harrison. The City of Coeur d'Alene helped St. Vincent's purchase the building. He said the center has become a model for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and for the state of Idaho.

In the building, 19 agencies administer 24 programs.

- Homeless Prevention/Rapid Rehousing moves people out of shelters, off the street, and into decent housing, he said.

- ICARE of St. Vincent's, a parent information resource center, offers parenting classes to prevent child abuse and neglect.

- The Child and Adult Care Food Program, administered by St. Vincent's, provides children in day care with nutritious food.

- The Fashions for Your Future program helps those looking for work to look their best.

- St. Vincent's runs the only men's shelter in North Idaho. It also provides a women's shelter and a shelter for families. In addition, the Mary House shelter

offers a place for women with children to find refuge.

To stay in any of these emergency shelters, residents must receive counseling on handling money and training in life skills so they can live more independently.

- Art on the Edge engages youth through after-school classes, public art projects and festivals. It offers an environment for youth to use art as a tool for problem-solving, goal-setting, community values and self esteem.

- Through the Legal Link clinic, local attorneys volunteer free legal consultations.

- Other agencies in the center are: Project Safe Place, which works with children and youth at risk and runaway children, plus Social Security Disability, the Idaho Department of Labor and Commerce, Idaho Department of Veteran's Services, the Dirne Community Health Clinic, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the Panhandle Health District, Community Partnerships and Family Promise.

People who need clothing, blankets, household goods, a motel or gas voucher, hygiene products, a bus ticket or a hot meal can come to the H.E.L.P. Center for assistance. Other services include

representative payees, rent and utility assistance, career counseling and resume building.

Jeff said the St. Vincent de Paul "campus" includes: a warehouse, where donated items are sorted and stored before being distributed to the thrift stores; a Community Dining Hall that serves meals to hungry people five days a week, and housing in Coeur d'Alene, Post Falls, Clark Fork, Plummer and Tensed.

He said the Vincentians live by a rule not to spread faith with words but with works as they seek to live their motto is "to help others help themselves."

A member of St. Thomas Catholic Church, he takes that rule seriously.

"My work at St. Vincent's is part of how I live out my faith. I'm a religious person, but you'll never know it. I'm also apolitical on the job. I believe charity needs to be done that way," he said.

Jeff's parents were involved in serving less fortunate people in the community. Even now everyone in his family works with people. Before he came to St. Vincent's, he worked with the Boy Scouts for 16 years.

"I believe people need to be safe, warm and fed," he said. "I believe spirituality is important in recovery, but a person's physical needs must be met first."

"We seek to provide 1) supportive services, 2) safe and sanitary emergency shelter and 3) a continuum of care that helps end the cycle of homelessness in the Panhandle area. We believe every human being should be treated

in a loving, respectful manner," he said.

"Spirituality is the fourth leg," he said, pointing out that St. Vincent's works ecumenically, involving area church members to work with people in transitional housing. "Our Spirituality Committee members make home visits to clients and host a help line."

In the last year, Jeff said, there has been a 160 percent increase in homelessness. Since 2008, the number of people running out of resources has increased by 375 percent.

While some in the community think people come to the area because there are many readily available social services, he said, "80 percent of the homeless are from here, second and third generation in this community. They are our friends and neighbors."

"The expenses and the needs are up, but the donations are the same as or less than last year, so we'll need to find more avenues of collaboration," he said.

For information, call (208) 664-3095 or visit www.stvincent-depaulcda.org.



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Just peace, prayer and common witness keep the church relevant

It's the time for the "Top 10" news lists in secular media, giving a spin on what "news" they spun or overspun during the year.

We were prepared to write some editorial commentary on that theme, but instead found inspiration in the year-end/new year message of the Rev. Olav Fyske Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches.

We share a press release from the WCC:

2011 increases focus on just peace

The events of 2011 have brought an increased focus on the relevance of the church in pursuing just peace, said Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) during December in Geneva.

The freedom movements of the Arab Spring, the continued financial crisis, heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula and a rash of natural disasters have made a tumultuous year.

"Many things have changed, such as with the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa, which led to strong rising up of ordinary people and their request for justice and peace," said Olav during an interview in which he reflected on the past year and role of the church in just peace. "They also ask for democracy, protection of human dignity, human rights and human values, so they can live together with justice and peace."

Peace and security issues

"I think it is now important that we as churches, including churches in the Middle East give a common witness to what just peace means," he said. "To provide just peace is the responsibility of the civil authorities of any state. They must provide the framework for living together with justice and peace. Otherwise, ordinary people are in danger.

"The particular uncertainty for the future of the churches should be addressed by all, who have responsibility for security and peace in this region. Their future presence is an important contribution to peace, as well," he said.

Part of the common witness of the church emerged in May at the WCC-sponsored International Ecumenical Peace Convoca-

tion (IEPC) in Kingston, Jamaica, where more than one thousand church leaders and church peace activists gathered.

The outcome of the weeklong event was the recognition that peace and peacemaking are indispensable parts "of our common faith." In a closing statement, the gathering said, "Peace is inextricably related to love, justice and freedom that God has granted to all human beings through Christ, and to the work of the Holy Spirit as a gift and vocation. It constitutes a pattern of life that reflects human participation in God's love for the world."

"Having seen the terrible and devastating effects of terror and violence close hand and in a longer perspective in my home country Norway this past summer, I see that the agenda of churches to overcome violence as initiated through the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence, which was celebrated at the convocation, must be high on the agenda of every peace lover and peacemaker in the world," he said.

At the convocation, being peacemakers was viewed as integral to nearly all aspects of life and something the church must show leadership in.

Financial crisis, Occupy Movement

"For example, I think we see now a need for a new financial architecture that takes into account how to bring not only stability but also justice, not only for Europe but for the entire world, where political rulings must reflect the interests of all and not just the interests of a few," Olav said. "The markets are not able to solve the issues of injustice in the world. I think we see that more clearly than ever."

The financial crises that started in 2008 and continue today became the rallying cry of thousands of protestors of the Occupy Movement in late December 2011. The movement did not go unnoticed by the church and in fact challenged the church on economic issues.

"I think this movement rightly says that the first of January 2012 should be a day of repentance," said Olav, who in early December visited the Occupy group camped at St. Paul's Church in London. "The church has always called people to repent, to reflect basically on your own lives and what you contribute to the wholeness of life by

what you do and what you don't do."

"The beginning of the next year could be a good occasion for us, particularly also in our churches, to ask for repentance for how we steward our financial resources or how we are not stewards in a proper way, praying for ourselves and also praying on behalf of our nations and on behalf of those empowered to steer our financial resources, whether they are politicians or in the finance system," Olav said.

Geopolitical struggles

The recent deaths of the former president of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel, and North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, reflect both the hope and challenge of advocating for justice and peace.

"Vaclav Havel showed that it is possible to develop justice in a peaceful way, to develop democracy, a life together between nations and to develop the values we want to share as human beings," Olav said.

At the same time the heightened uncertainty on the Korean peninsula because of the North Korean head of state's death, signals the potential for more suffering on the divided peninsula and the possibility of a missed opportunity for peace.

"Together with the National Council of Churches in Korea, we want to express concern about the situation. We also pray for the people of North Korea and encourage the international community not to use this as an opportunity to break the security for ordinary people in these countries," he said.

"The Korean people should not be the battlefield of geopolitical struggles with their security and their future as the price to be paid," he added.

The relevance of prayer

"At all times we encourage churches to pray together for those who are particularly affected by changes or different types of crises," Olav said.

Praying together shows "the deepest level of solidarity we can show one another as human beings. I think this solidarity of sharing the burden for others is a way of expressing the deep meaning of the ecumenical movement and the willingness to carry the burdens of others, to carry the cross together.

"To carry the cross together also means

we are willing to give a common witness in situations about God's will for justice and God's grace," he said. "We witness that in any situation God can create something new. Even in the situation of death, God can create new life."

"This is what we as Christians are called to say through our words and deeds and particularly we are called to do this together as a common witness through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has come as the Savior of the world that Christians around the whole world celebrate at Christmas."

More information in the work of the World Council of Churches and its coverage of news behind the news in headlines and stories of struggles and responses of people who do not make the headlines is at www.oikoumene.org.

Our comments at The Fig Tree on this report begin with a reminder that "oikoumene" refers to the whole inhabited earth as the focus of the caring and love people of faith put into action.

As we look to the coming year:

How are we called anew to serve, as Michael Gurian did with his oratorical poem?

What do we learn in the process of sitting beside our neighbors who are excluded from the housing market, as people in Family Promise host and support churches do?

What does a call to just peace require of us as individuals, as the faith community in this place?

Do we allow prayer, conversation with God, to intersect our decisions as Kevin Finch did?

How do we take the time to be still and walk with God, as people walking on labyrinths do?

How do we allow our understanding of faith to influence our concern about what is happening at all levels of political life, as Julia Stronks does in teaching and will raise at the upcoming Legislative Conference?

Will we join in just peace action, making a statement against hate and for equal rights and interracial relations by participating in the 2012 Martin Luther King, Jr., rally, march and other events?

As you engage your faith, we invite you to share your stories with us in The Fig Tree during the coming year.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Summary of Speech

Sounding Board

at Whitworth University

Bishop Blase Cupich asks: 'What does it mean to be Church today?'

Speaking recently at Whitworth University about what it means to be church today, Bishop Blase Cupich of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane said the question is not new. The following is a summary he offered of his presentation.

The disciples of Jesus needed to respond to that question when they were forced out of synagogues.

In time, they forged an identity and reputation, which others expressed in the simple phrase: "See how they love one another." The message was clear: Early Christians put their effort into living right relationships with each other.

Christians in the 20th century were forced to face this question in a new context. After the carnage of two World Wars between Christian nations, people asked, "What does it mean to be Church today? What does it mean to be a Christian today?" These questions need to be answered, because the world today is not saying, "See how they love one another." It is saying, "See what they are doing to one another."

The scandal of not witnessing to Christ's command to love one another should leave us wondering why our faith did not pull us back from the brink of so much destruction. It is a legitimate question

to ask: Why did faith not have more of an impact on the lives of Christian nations?

The result is that many people today have grown suspicious of religion to the point that they are saying they can be spiritual without being religious.

However, there are other factors to consider. We are living in a time when materialism has captured the imagination of people. We also live in an age when authority and traditions are considered options for one's self-identity.

These strains in the culture are having an impact on believers. Christians easily embrace the consumer society and culture of choice. People of faith consider it quite acceptable to pick and choose what they believe as long as it satisfies their present needs.

Having recently returned from a trip to the Ukraine, I was impressed by how Christians who have suffered from 45 years of repression under communism are now rekindling their faith. They are keeping fresh the memories of the past and passing on a faith forged in suffering and sacrifice to the next generation.

There was an impressive example of this in a small town, where the local Catholic community received property from the

government to compensate partially for the confiscation of buildings and land during the communist era. The local bishop was given a building with the government's intention that he use it for a school. The bishop preferred to use it as the central office for the entire local church for one particular reason. It was once the headquarters of the KGB, the secret police, where people were imprisoned and tortured in the basement.

While the bishop decided to renovate the first and second floor, he decided to keep the basement as is. As he told me, "I want future generations to come here, the central offices of the church, and be reminded that we can do what we are doing upstairs because of the sacrifices of those who were tortured downstairs."

One of the best ways for us to keep fresh the demands of the Gospel and answer the question, "What does it mean to be Church today?" is to be constantly in touch with the voices of the past, those who have handed on the faith to us.

When we do that, we are reminded of the legacy that we have been given and we need to become more humble in recognizing that we do not have all the answers and that we need to listen attentively to the

wisdom of the ages.

Recalling our connection with the past is not just a trip down memory lane. Rather, Christians remember as those who believe that Christ not only rose from the dead 2000 years ago, but is alive and active in the Church today.

Our recalling of the past then becomes a real encounter with the risen Christ.

Pope Benedict XVI has said that the center of Christianity is not an ideology, a philosophy, a thought, but first of all an "encounter with the person of Christ." Believing is an event of connecting with a person who gives life a new horizon and decisive direction as we ask what it means to be the body of Christ who is present in our midst, calling us to change.

Just as the early Christians responded to the question, "What does it mean to be Church today?" we need to look at the great testimony they gave us and answer it with authenticity and boldness, hoping that people will once again look at us and say, "See how they love one another."

The promise in doing that will be that we will see rebirth of a Church not seen since those first disciples of Jesus went to the ends of the earth with the Gospel and changed the course of history.

Monastery offers 'Come to the Quiet' retreat options

In the stillness of winter, the spiritual directors at Spirit Center at the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood prepare the "Come to the Quiet" retreat.

"It is a quiet place in a noisy world," said Sister Lillian Englert, retreat facilitator and certified spiritual director, who helped create the retreat for individually-directed retreat experiences.

"Everybody is scared of quiet," explained Sister Lillian. "That's why this retreat is in a group, so there is support for one another."

Each person, however, chooses an individual theme and goes at her own pace with a spiritual director. A retreat may also include faith sharing, creative expression, body prayer and ritual.

The Monastery of St. Gertrude is offering two options for the

retreat. One is a week-long retreat from 7:30 p.m., Friday, Jan. 27, to 1:30 p.m., Friday, Feb. 3. The weekend-only option runs from 7:30 p.m., Friday, Jan. 27, to 1:30 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 29.

This retreat is also offered June 22 to 29, 2012.

For information visit www.Spirit-Center.org, call 208-962-2000 or email retreat@stgertrudes.org.

Suicide bereavement sessions scheduled

Immaculate Heart Retreat Center has scheduled a weekend retreat and weekday workshop to help grieving families and those in ministry face the loss of a loved one through suicide. They are scheduled to replace events originally set in September.

"Beauty from Ashes: Transforming Loss," a suicide bereavement retreat, will be Friday through Sunday, Jan. 13 to 15.

Led by Anne Cronin Tyson and C. Karen Covey Moore, the retreat focuses on using prayer, reflection, journaling and sharing to help participants remember their loved ones, reframe their experiences to move forward with courage, confidence and faith.

From 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 18, they will present a workshop, "Suicide Bereavement: What Do I Say?" for pastors, ministers, counselors, youth leaders, spiritual directors, teachers and others who minister to families during times of loss.

For information, call 448-1224 or on-line at www.ihrc.net.

Nonprofit training planned for Feb. 16

The second annual Inland Northwest Nonprofit Conference will be from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 16, at the Spokane Masonic Center, 1108 W. Riverside.

There will be opportunities for networking and exhibits, in addition to the keynote lunch speaker, local author, consultant and motivational speaker Deanna Davis.

Sessions will deal with grants, human capital, endowments, succession planning, financial management, marketing in the tech era, board development and more.

For information, call 206-355-7514 or email andrea@aeconsulting.net.



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Calendar of Events

- Jan 4, 18 • **Death Penalty Abolition Committee**, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 5 • **Training on talking to state legislators**, Mariah McKay of Washington CAN, Peace and Justice Action Committee, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 10 • **"Thoman Merton's Bridges to Contemplative Living Series,"** The Franciscan Place, 1016 N. Superior St., 483-6495
- Jan 11 • **Candlelight Vigil** for victims of Human Trafficking, Women's Hearth, 920 W. Second Ave., 6 to 8:30 p.m., 343-5091
- Jan 12 • **Police Accountability Committee**, Peace and Justice Action League, 30 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 12-16 • **Martin Luther King, Jr., Day** celebrations around the Inland Northwest, see p. 3
- Jan 13-15 • **Beauty for Ashes: Transforming Loss, Suicide Bereavement Weekend Retreat**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., 448-1224
- Jan 14 • **First Friday with the Bishop**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., 448-1224
- **Hear the Dream, Feel the Hope: A Musical Celebration**, Scholarship Fund Raiser for the MLK Family Outreach Center, Calvary Baptist Church, 203 E. Third Ave., 6 to 8 p.m., 455-8722
- Jan 14, 21, 28 • **Engaging the Artist Way**, The Franciscan Place, 1016 N. Superior, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., 483-6495
- Jan 15 • **Martin Luther King, Jr., Commemorative Celebration**, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana Ave., 4 to 6 p.m., 455-8722
- **Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Worship Service**, Central Lutheran, Yakima, 3 p.m.
- Jan 16 • **Annual Rally and Unity March**, Old Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., 10 a.m., 455-8722
- **Martin Luther King Walk** from 5th and MLK Blvd. in Yakima to Yakima Convention Center, walk begins at noon
- Jan 18 • **Offering Hope Fostering Healing**, Suicide Bereavement Workshop for Pastoral Ministry, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., 448-1224
- **Spokane City Forum**, The Restaurant Industry: Life Behind the Kitchen Doors and a Big Table, First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar St., 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., 777-1555
- Jan 19 • **All City Prayer Event**, Greater Spokane Association of Evangelicals, New Life Assembly of God, 10920 E. Sprague, 1 p.m., 926-0362 Steve Williams
- Jan 20-22 • **Women's Retreat for Cancer Survivors**, The Franciscan Place, 1016 N. Superior St., 483-6495
- Jan 21 • **"Render Unto Caesar: Reclaiming our Prophetic Voice,"** 2012 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference Episcopal Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave., 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m., 535-4112
- Jan 27-Feb 3 • **"Come to the Quiet,"** Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, ID, 208-962-2000
- Feb 1 • **Fig Tree distribution**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m., 535-1813
- Feb 2 • **Fig Tree Board**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 1 p.m., 535-1813
- Feb 3 • **"Eva's Song,"** Shabbat Shira Service, Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave., 7:30 p.m., 747-3304

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Julia Stronks teaches students to see and move beyond political divisions

Observing groups working on political issues such as immigration, violence, poverty, prison reform or abortion, Julia Stronks sees people of different Christian traditions working together with people of other Christian and other faith traditions to move beneath and beyond the rhetoric and politics played up to divide them.

“Churches are more involved in community support programs now, offering services to people who are poor, struggling and sick locally and internationally,” she said.

Julia said she teaches politics, law, gender and government at Whitworth University in the framework of understanding what it means to do justice in a broken but redeemed world.

“Although we are confident that Christ redeemed the world, the world is not yet reconciled, so we have work to do for justice. We don’t just sit and wait for Christ’s return,” she commented in a recent interview.

In the 1970s, Julia said, the emphasis of the ecumenical movement was on poverty and environment, while the religious right focused on abortion and homosexuality.

During the following two decades, she thinks there was less theological discussion related to public policies.

“In recent years, we have regained attention to building common ground in the faith community, thinking more carefully about the policies and social structures needed to achieve our values,” she said.

In September, Julia began a four-year term as the Lindaman Chair at Whitworth. That means she teaches four, rather than seven courses, so she can work on three projects—immigration, sex trafficking and a book on public interest law practice.

The daughter of educators, she grew up in the suburbs of Chicago. She earned a bachelor’s in political science in 1982 at Dordt College, a Christian Reformed college in Northwest Iowa.

During studies in law school at the University of Iowa, she was convinced that her earlier passion for poverty law was misdirected, so after graduating in 1985, she joined a corporate law firm in Michigan to make money.

She was not happy.

A judge encouraged her to recapture her interest in poverty law, so Julia began teaching at the University of Michigan Law School at Ann Arbor, focusing on



Julia Stronks teaches politics, law, gender and government.

helping women and children who were poor and victims of violence.

Working with 90 law students, she taught law by advising them as they practiced and took cases to court.

Julia found she loved teaching.

About that time she married, started a family and entered graduate studies in political science at the University of Maryland.

Her dissertation on faith, politics and the First Amendment was completed under a Fulbright in the Netherlands, which she chose because of her Dutch heritage.

She examined freedom of religion in the pluralist Dutch society where all schools, whether secular or faith-based, are supported by the government. She found that courts handle cases balancing freedom of religion and human rights the same as U.S. courts do.

“Pluralism does not shield people from discrimination,” she said.

Her work drew interest from Whitworth University, which recruited her in 1993. She came to Spokane in 1994, completing her doctoral degree in political science in 1995.

Julia described her three projects as Lindaman Chair.

First, she is working with students to study options as people of faith call for just immigration policies. They will evaluate five proposals or past policies on immigration from Reformed and Catholic theological understandings of the role of government: 1) the DREAM Act, 2) the U.S.-Mexican border fence, 3) the Arizona laws, 4) the Alabama laws and 5) health care for people who are living in the United States illegally.

The second project will evaluate what works to reduce sex trafficking in the United States and around the world.

Third, she will write a book, *So You want to be a Christian Lawyer*, reflecting on why 75

percent of lawyers are with private firms, rather than in public interest practices.

“I’ll ask if people employed at private firms can work for justice in employment, contract, tort and business law,” said Julia, who is inviting lawyers in Spokane, Seattle, Portland and Los Angeles to submit stories.

Growing up in a Christian Reformed Church home, she said her parents emphasized the connection of faith and justice.

However, even though her parents involved her and her siblings as tutors in poor communities, in her high school years, she thought faith was about “holy behavior.”

Since coming to Whitworth she has learned about different Christian traditions—attending a Lutheran church while her son was at a Lutheran school and now attending Presbyterian churches.

As she teaches classes on gender, Julia said, she is concerned that domestic and sexual violence continue to have impact on employment and family life.

Inequities continue in relationships, homes, politics, law and employment, she said.

“We still do not know what stops sexual predators and sexual violence at a global or local level,” she said. “We need to talk about it more to help demystify it.”

Students are also discussing the impact of race, gender and economic issues, she said.

For example, a black woman is marginalized because most of the research on race is male oriented and most of the research on gender is white oriented, so a black woman falls through the cracks, she said.

To help students connect with people with such multiple identities, Julia helps them work with agencies, such as women’s shelters, retirement homes and the Martin Luther King, Jr., Family Outreach Center, while they do their research projects,” said Julia. “Just as I found in teaching law, experience is a powerful teacher.”

For information, call 777-4577 or email jstronks@whitworth.edu.

Julia Stronks will speak at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 21, at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th.

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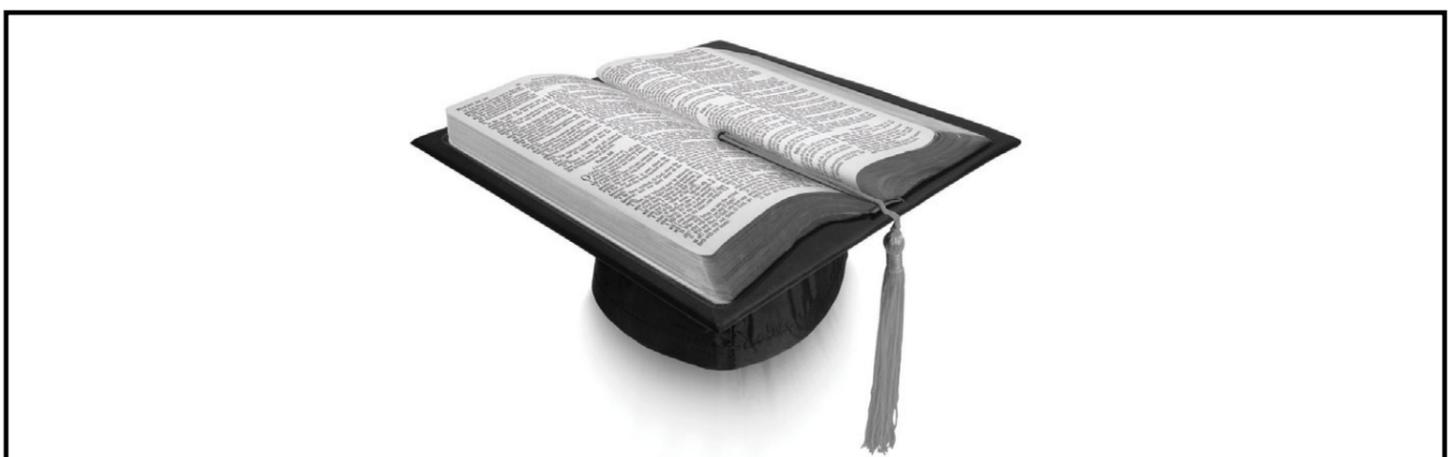
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