

CELEBRATING  
OUR 30TH YEAR

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

# Justice is center's 'bottom line'

By Mary Stamp

Rooted in the belief that when one person experiences injustice, everyone experiences injustice, the "bottom line" for the 15-year-old Center for Justice is assuring justice for people and also to entities like the Spokane River that lack financial or political resources.

Founder Jim Sheehen who has sought to model his law practice on Martin Luther King Jr., cited a quote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

For the center, justice is about more than winning legal cases and lawsuits. It's about "empowering people and communities."

It is about helping people released from prison with re-entry; helping people facing job discrimination; advocating for police accountability in courts, ballots and community action; protecting the Spokane River and the land, and providing low-income people with legal advice or referrals.

Jim is retiring as board president, but will continue on the board. Elsa Distelhorst, who retired from 25 years at Whitworth University and is active in community efforts for racial justice, has been elected president. The center's board will grow from nine to 12 or more



Rich Eichstaedt appreciates how nimble the Center for Justice is.

members with the passion and community connections to promote the mission and seek new funding sources.

"It is time for the center to move beyond my role and financial support," he said.

Jim, who grew up in Seattle, graduated from college in California and served two years in the army, entered Gonzaga University's Law School in 1969. He practiced law 10 years in Seattle and returned to Spokane in the 1980s to practice law and raise his family. He started the nonprofit Center for Justice in 1999 to protect human rights, preserve the Earth and hold government accountable to principles of democracy.

His vision has driven the center, said Rick Eichstaedt, who has been executive director of the Center for Justice since 2011.

Jim bought, renovated and opened the Community Building in 2001, as a home for offices of nonprofits. In 2002, he opened the day care center next door. He bought and renovated the Saranac as a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) building in 2008 and the Main Market Coop in 2010. He owns the PUB

*Continued on page 4*

## 'Dismantling Culture of Violence' is theme for 2014 Legislative Conference

"Dismantling the Culture of Violence" is the theme of the 2014 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, featuring a panel discussion on gun violence, police accountability, smart justice and the death penalty. The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 25, at St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th Ave.

The Fig Tree, Faith Action Network, Catholic Charities and Fellowship of Reconciliation Foundation are among the organizers for this event, which is drawing in partners to inform participants on issues.

The day will include morning workshops on wage theft, led by the Rev. Paul Benz of the Faith Action Network; on poverty, hunger and homelessness issues by Scott Cooper of Catholic Charities Spokane; on immigration reform led by Greg Cunningham of Catholic Charities Immigration and Refugee Services; on environmental issues led by Tom Soeldner of the Faith and Environment Network, and Kitty Klitzke of Futurewise; and on Middle East peace led by the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane.

During lunch, State Senator

Marcus Ricelli will speak on budget issues and the current session, and a chance to share positive developments over the past year.

Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp will offer insights from the recent 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea, relating the assembly theme, "God of life, lead us to justice and peace," with the legislative conference theme, "Dismantling the Culture of Violence."

There will be a panel discussion focusing on various aspects of criminal justice, with Episcopal Bishop Jim Waggoner, Jr., and Louise Chadez discussing gun violence; speakers on Smart Justice and police oversight, and Victoria Thorpe of the Fellowship of Reconciliation Foundation speaking on the death penalty.

In a legislative briefing, Paul will present an overview of issues coming before the 2014 session that are priority concerns of the faith community, and Scott will discuss strategy.

For information, call 535-1813 or email [info@thefigtree.org](mailto:info@thefigtree.org).

## 'Inequality for All' showing will benefit Second Harvest

The documentary, "Inequality for All," will be screened at 6 p.m., Monday, Jan. 20 at Spokane's Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague Ave., as a benefit for Second Harvest Food Bank to feed the hungry in the region.

The Smith-Barbieri Progressive Fund, A Charitable Foundation, and Ron and Debbie Reed are hosting the screening. All proceeds will be donated to Second Harvest and the Smith-Barbieri Progressive Fund will match the proceeds.

The screening is also being held on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in honor of his work for equality.

A discussion about action to resolve inequality issues will follow the film.

"Our community is no exception when it comes to stagnant wages and economic inequality," said Ron, one of the organizers.

The documentary film directed by Jacob Kornbluth, examines widening income inequality in the United States. American economist, author and professor Robert Reich is the presenter.

The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in the documentary competition section, and won a U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award for Achievement in Filmmaking. It also won the Audience Award Winner, Best Documentary Film Traverse City Film Festival 2013.

"Inequality for All" allows viewers to start with little or no understanding of what it means for the U.S. to be economically imbalanced, and walk away with a comprehensive and significantly deeper sense of the issue and what can be done about it.

For information, call 326-8683 or visit [www.brownpaper-tickets.com](http://www.brownpaper-tickets.com).

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## Religion News Briefs

### Around the World

World Council of Churches News, PO Box 2100  
CH - 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland Tel: +41-22 791 6111  
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#### WCC renews call to prayer for peace in Syria

The World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary calls the council's 345 member churches and churches around the world to continue to pray for the safe return of the 12 nuns abducted from the Monastery of St Thecla on Dec. 2 in Maaloula and for the two Archbishops of Aleppo in Syria—Mar Yohanna Gregorios Ibrahim from the Syriac Orthodox Church and Archbishop Paul Yazigi from the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch—kidnapped in April 2013 near Aleppo, Syria, on their way back from a humanitarian mission.

"The pain of this separation has added to the ongoing suffering inflicted upon all people of Syria because of the conflict. It is sad and tragic that thousands of Syrian peoples have disappeared in prisons," said Olav.

The WCC calls on all the actors in the Syrian conflict to spare all civilians including religious people and not take them as human shields. It also calls the international community to stand in solidarity with all victims of kidnapping and forced disappearances and mobilize all their efforts to release them and prevent such events.

"We continue to pray that God will bring peace to Syria and an end to the suffering of millions of people throughout Syria who have lost their beloved ones, who have been disabled and injured, who have been internally displaced or have become refugees, who have lost their homes, their properties and their places of worship," Olav said.

#### South Sudan church leaders speak on violence

Church leaders from various denominations in South Sudan issued a recent letter expressing sadness and condemnation on the violence in the country and calling on the government to "take control of the situation and protect its citizens."

The letter expresses concern that the violence is being characterized as a conflict between the Dinka and Nuer tribes and asked the members of these groups not to accept this characterization.

"These are political differences among the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Party and political leaders of the Republic of South Sudan," the letter said.

#### WCC calls for 'Mandela moment' in South Sudan

The new moderator of the WCC Central Committee has called on the government of South Sudan to have a "Mandela moment" as it confronts the aftermath of violence.

Speaking from Geneva where she was at the WCC headquarters for recent meetings and to attend a Mandela memorial, Agnes Abuom, a Kenyan, said "this is a Mandela moment" for South Sudan.

"Just when we have laid Mandela to rest and we are celebrating his life of forgiveness and reconciliation, of justice, of freedom, of the capacity to be content and to be inclusive: this is a lesson for South Sudan," she said.

**Agnes stressed concern for churches in South Sudan**, which through the Sudan Council of Churches and the WCC were involved in reaching a peace agreement between Sudan and South Sudan, and in helping to facilitate the formation of South Sudan as the youngest nation in the world.

She said the churches there have already responded and called for calm, adding that South Sudan "needs a lot of latitude for different voices given its multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious composition.

"It is unfortunate that there has been an attempted coup, and we would want to say to those people that there is no space again in Africa for armed rebellion," she said. "We continue to believe in dialogue, in the power of the vote and elections to change leadership peacefully and to transition from one leader to another."

## REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

### The Fig Tree plans benefits and dinner

Plans are underway for 30th anniversary celebrations in spring 2014 for The Fig Tree, which was founded in 1984.

The two annual benefit events, a breakfast at 7:15 a.m., Wednesday, March 12, and a lunch at 11:45 a.m., Friday, March 14, both at Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University, will share how The Fig Tree is "Empowering People: Through Hope, Action and Justice." New fliers will be printed with these correct dates.

Organizers are recruiting table hosts who will invite guests. They

are also recruiting local speakers.

"We will share about origins of the logo, the emerging mission, our role in the region and how unique our media are," said editor Mary Stamp.

The Fig Tree also plans a 30th Anniversary Dinner at Whitworth University, featuring Michael Kinnamon, an internationally recognized scholar and leader in the ecumenical movement. He is visiting professor of ecumenical collaboration in interreligious dialogue at Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry.

He is the immediate past general secretary of the National Council of Churches in Christ in the USA and has also served as general secretary of the Consultation on Church Union and as executive secretary of the World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order.

During the recent World Council of Churches Assembly in Busan, South Korea, he was a keynote lecturer for the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute.

For information, call 535-1813 or email [mary@thefigtree.org](mailto:mary@thefigtree.org).

### Holy Names Sisters give Fig Tree a grant

In their 2013-14 cycle of ministry grants, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary U.S.-Ontario Administrative Centre awarded The Fig Tree \$3,000 of \$104,422 they distributed.

Sisters of the Holy Names have been actively involved since co-founder and co-editor Bernadine Casey, SNJM, was with The Fig Tree. Mary Ann Farley, SNJM, is now board moderator, and Rose Theresa Costello, SNJM, assists with mailings and the benefit.

"Over our 30 years, we have had a close relationship with the charism of the Holy Names Sisters to 'develop people by educating them'," said editor and co-founder Mary Stamp. "We educate people as our media tell stories of people involved in community outreach, social justice and peace action.

We encourage people to reflect on their faith and connect it with their actions. We also educate by being a model of justice, peace and solutions-oriented journalism.

"We inform, inspire and involve people in congregations and non-profits, empowering them through stories of hope," she said.

When media and the internet are filled with hate, fear and division, they deflect people from concern about suffering and poverty. We inform people to inspire action," Mary explained.

As The Fig Tree embarks on its 30th year in 2014, it seeks funds to build its capacity to serve into the future by training communication students and by establishing a new, sustainable staff position.

In 2014, it plans to publish an online database-driven searchable

directory to will help people find resources to meet specific needs.

Sister Mary Ann comments: "I was and am in awe of such a small operation, the dream of two people, having become one of the most respected and widely read good-newspapers in our area."

She finds that The Fig Tree inspires hope and action for justice.

"I see this work as a fulfillment of our charism to educate for the full development of the human person," she said. "Unlike some other publications available to us, this resource features people in our community, people we know and see in action, people who can inspire us and help to build a community of fully developing human persons!"

For information, call 535-1813 or email [mary@thefigtree.org](mailto:mary@thefigtree.org).

### Homeless Connect will be held Jan. 28

The Spokane Homeless Coalition's third annual one-day, one-stop opportunity for homeless people to access services will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 28, at the Salvation Army, 221 E. Nora.

Spokane Homeless Connect brings together about 40 services in one location, expecting to draw about 300 people, said Kari Chapman of the House of Charity.

"It removes the time and transportation barriers that can keep people on the streets longer than necessary," she said.

This event facilitates immediate action by agencies so homeless people can avoid waiting lists, phone calls, long lines and office hours. Homeless Connect will offer medical and dental screening, haircuts, access to the mobile application services of the Depart-

ment of Social and Health Services, information on permanent and temporary housing, food from the Salvation Army food bank and a free lunch.

The Fig Tree's annual Resource Directory will be available.

The Spokane Homeless Coalition includes many nonprofits and organizations serving the homeless in the Spokane area.

For information, call 228-3200.

### Lutheran Community Services helps vets' children

Children of veterans affected by military-related stress can now receive help at Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW) through its Our Veterans, Their Kids program.

Empire Health Foundation and Inland Northwest Community Foundation, two Spokane-based charitable foundations, have awarded LCSNW grants to support young people with little or no insurance.

Empire Health Foundation awarded \$12,430 through the Responsive Grants program, and Inland Northwest Community Foundation awarded \$8,000 through the Florence Wasmer Fund for Children and Families.

The Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) explains that "adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic events in childhood that can have an impact an adult's health."

Research shows that those who experience multiple ACEs are more likely to have social, behavioral and health problems later in life, said Heike Lake, associate director of Lutheran Community Services.

Children of veterans are at risk for multiple ACEs, she said.

"Veterans today face a range of

challenges, including multiple deployments, military sexual trauma and high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder. The military suicide rate recently reached an all-time high. Statistics show military-related stress and trauma can affect any veteran, regardless of age, race or education," Heike explained.

Research suggests parental struggles cause significant suffering for their children.

While several local programs serve veterans, none is designed specifically to address military-related trauma in children, she said.

Heike said that because Lutheran Community Services specializes in child trauma and offers counseling for veterans with experienced military veterans as therapists, they are able to combine the two areas of expertise so they can provide help for children struggling with military-related trauma at home.

For information, call 747-8224 or email [hlake@lcsnw.org](mailto:hlake@lcsnw.org).

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## Events honor work of King

Many events are being planned in the region to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

**Carolyn Gordon, associate professor of communication** at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., will speak at the Commemorative Celebration from 4 to 6 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 19, at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana.

In 2007, she began as chair of Fuller's department of preaching and communication after teaching five years at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Ordained in the Southern and National Baptist Conventions, she served 10 years as a pastor and preacher.

**The Annual Unity March and Community Resource Fairs** are on Monday, Jan. 20. The march begins with a rally at 10 a.m., at the Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd. The resource fairs are from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Riverpark Square. The Community Resource Fair on the first and second floors and The Children's Learning Resource Fair, on the second and third floors.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center in Spokane also plans a Gospel Concert at 6 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 11, at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 645 S. Richard Allen Ct., and the King Day Youth Empowerment Luncheon and Silent Auction from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 18, at Shadle Park High School, 4327 N. Ash St. For information, call 455-8722 ext. 202 or email [jmeyers@mlkspokane.org](mailto:jmeyers@mlkspokane.org)

**Eastern Washington University plans a volunteer event** from 1 to 3 p.m., Monday, Jan. 20. Its Office of Community Engagement has planned service projects in the community in recognition of Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy. Molly Ayers, coordinator, said they hope for at least 250 volunteers. Interested individuals, groups and companies may register for projects at United Way's new Volunteer Spokane site: <http://tiny.cc/MLKDay2014>. For information, call 359-2792 or email [mayers1@ewu.edu](mailto:mayers1@ewu.edu).

**Providence Spokane Hospitals will honor Martin Luther King, Jr.** on Monday, Jan. 20, with recitations of King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech given by the Rev. Percy "Happy" Watkins at noon in the Health Education Center lower level at Providence Holy Family Hospital and at 3 p.m. at the Mother Joseph Room, level 3, at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center. The events are sponsored by Providence Health Care Mission Services.

**"Marching On: The Next 50 Years" is the theme** for Washington State University's 2014 two MLK speakers. Civil rights leader Diane Nash will speak about her life as an activist and in the civil rights movement in the 1960s at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 22, and sociology professor Michael Eric Dyson on "Dr. King in the 21st Century" at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 29. Both will be in the CUB Senior Ballroom at Washington State University in Pullman.

At noon on Thursday, Jan. 23 at Butch's Den in Pullman, there will be a "March on Washington Forum," featuring former WSU faculty and staff who attended the 1963 march. For information, call 339-6172 or email [marc\\_robinson@wsu.edu](mailto:marc_robinson@wsu.edu).

**To celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day** and the beginning of Black History Month, Les Purce, Idaho's first elected African-American legislator and Mayor of Pocatello, will speak at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 16, at the University of Idaho Administration Building Auditorium. Les, who has been vice president of Extended University Affairs at WSU and president of Evergreen College since 2000, will discuss courage, speaking out against bias and hate, how the work of King relates to today's society.

**The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations** is sponsoring its annual Martin Luther King Jr. Gala from 5 to 8 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 18, at the Human Rights Education Institute, 414 Mullan Rd. in Coeur d'Alene. It is also planning a Children's Program on Thursday, Jan. 17 at North Idaho College. For information, call 208-765-3932 or visit [www.idahohumanrights.org](http://www.idahohumanrights.org).

## Whitworth starts program to assist churches

Whitworth University has been awarded a \$1 million grant from the Lilly Endowment to fund a new comprehensive church engagement initiative called The Ekklesia Project to connect Whitworth to needs of congregations and Christian organizations throughout the western United States.

A new Office for Church Engagement will administer the project, and Terry McGonigal, dean of spiritual life, will be the first director. A search for a new dean of spiritual life begins in January.

The Ekklesia Project's goal is to develop Whitworth's ability to

be a catalyst, center and resource for conversation, vision-casting, planning and programming, Terry said, to help churches and other organizations discern how to do ministry in the 21st-century and the region's cultural setting.

The office will also seek to develop and deepen partnerships with Presbyterian churches, with expressions of the global church, and other local and regional ministries.

It will help churches assess community needs and develop strategies to meet those needs.

The grant will help the university cover costs for the Office for

Church Engagement as it develops revenue to be a self-funding effort.

Planning for the office will begin in the spring, and Terry expects it will be launched by summer.

"Whitworth was founded by the church and for the church," said Beck Taylor, president, pointing out that the university's connections to its founding denomination (the Presbyterian Church) and other local churches have been an important part of its identity since its founding in 1890.

For information, call 777-4238 or email [rrhodes@whitworth.edu](mailto:rrhodes@whitworth.edu).

## SAFE supplements funding for in-home services

Started in 1995 after a study showed insufficient funding for in-home services for seniors and people with disabilities, the Senior Assistance Fund of Eastern Washington (SAFE) continues to be relevant with federal cuts to programs that promote keeping elderly people in their homes.

Pam Almeida, executive director of Greater Spokane County Meals on Wheels, said SAFE was started to draw private donations and grants to supplement inadequate public funding.

Funds are distributed annually to community programs and services through this nonprofit fundraising arm of Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington.

Initial funding came from an award given by the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government to the Area Agency on Aging (Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington) and Elder Services, Pam said.

"Dollars for elder services are being cut while more people are aging," she pointed out. "Aging of the population is not just a local issue. It is a global issue."

"The U.S. population is younger than most of the world. The median age for Europeans, Asians and South Americans is in the 30's. The oldest is Japan, whose median age is 45. The median age for Central Africans is 15 to 20," she said.

While more people in the baby boom generation are aging, people are living longer and fewer babies are being born.

"The population of people over 60 in the United States is growing exponentially," said Pam. "Every day, 10,000 Americans turn 60. About 13 percent of people are over 60. By 2030, the number of seniors is expected to be more than 72 million, about 20 percent of the population."

The aging population will affect

society and economics in terms of housing, transportation, health care and values. Pam expects a shift from car-based suburban life to other types of communities where essential services are in walking or bicycling distance.

"One of the most worrisome issues is how financially unprepared many people are for their older years," she said.

In the next 30 years, she expects the senior population in Spokane, Whitman, Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties to be the fastest growing segment of the population while public funding for seniors' needs and long-term care will not keep pace with population growth or inflation, she anticipates.

So she said SAFE will be more important for promoting independence for seniors.

For information, call 924-6976 or visit [www.GSCMealsOnWheels.org](http://www.GSCMealsOnWheels.org).

## SFCC brings rapper Chuck D

To celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Spokane Falls Community College's Black Student Union is bringing Chuck D, a rapper, author and producer, to speak at 10 a.m., Wednesday, Jan. 15, at the SFCC Music/Performing Arts Building auditorium Building 15.

Chuck D is known as the leader and co-founder of the rap group, Public Enemy. In 2013, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

For information, call 624-1341.

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## Dismantling the Culture of Violence

**2014 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference**

**Saturday, Jan. 25**

**9 a.m.-2 p.m. - St Mark's Lutheran Church**  
316 E. 24th Ave. - Spokane

*Presentations will be on wage theft, hunger-poverty-homelessness, criminal justice: police accountability, gun violence, and the death penalty, environmental priorities, the state budget immigration reform and global perspectives*

**For information, contact**

Malcolm Haworth - The Fig Tree - (509) 535-1813  
The Rev. Paul Benz - Faith Action Network (206) 625-9790

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# Center for Justice enters time of transition as it celebrates its 15th year

*Continued from page 1*

building and is renovating the building next to that at 17 W. Main for a commercial retail space.

Community Building and Saranac offices include elected officials, tribal groups and 15 peace, justice and environmental nonprofits.

**Sharing the building creates synergy, collaboration and partnership,** said Rick, who was drawn to the Center for Justice, because he saw it was about the health of the community.

"We can't have a healthy, vibrant community if people are denied opportunities or if the river is unhealthy," he said.

**One new, three-year funding source** is a \$350,000 grant from the Washington Legal Foundation to assist people released from prison with re-entry and support civil rights of people in prisons.

The center will address legal issues people face on release, such as getting a driver's license, facing housing and employment discrimination, and gaining access to social services. The center will challenge denial of medical care or religious freedom to prisoners.

The funds come from a settlement with AT&T, which overcharged prisoners, families and attorneys for phone calls.

Other grant sources include Catholic Charities and environmental foundations that support Riverkeeper and land use cases.

To celebrate its 15th anniversary, the Neighborhood Alliance is helping the center raise \$15,000 by providing a matching grant for donations given by Jan. 19, up to \$7,500.

**Police accountability has been** a concern of the center on many levels. It helped mediate a settlement in a case for the estate of Otto Zehm, who died after being beaten by a police officer in 2006.

Rick said that case is an example of how nimble the center's mission is. Not only did it successfully mediate a resolution, but it also realized the need to change the police policies and culture. That has led to ongoing efforts to call for police accountability.

"Traditionally a law firm litigates one case and goes on to the next, concerned about its financial bottom line," Rick said. "The center, however, went on to educate the community and help pass a city proposition.

"We took that tragedy and, driven by a grassroots effort of concerned people, we turned around



**Martin Luther King Jr. has been an inspiration for Jim Sheehan.**

policies," said Rick. "While some in city government may want to settle for less, we want the best for the community.

"Recently, we stopped the Spokane City Council from adopting a tentative agreement with the Police Guild that would undo police oversight through an ombudsman, which was approved when 70 percent of voters passed Proposition 1 in February 2013," said Rick.

**Jim said the center's driving force** is justice, not financial gain. "We have a bevy of dedicated people on staff and as volunteers who have a passion for justice," he said.

The center promotes the Smart Justice Campaign, which urges the city and county to create a Criminal Justice Commission. The campaign will report in January what is working, what is not and what is needed in the criminal justice system to have programs rather than incarceration.

**Rick said that programs** to prevent incarceration can reduce recidivism and saves government funds.

"Of Spokane County's budget, 74 percent is for the criminal justice system," he said.

Some Smart Justice recommendations are being implemented. The Community Court has started with Judge Mary Logan hearing cases in the downtown library, beginning in mid-December.

The Center for Justice is sending a community advocate and staff attorney to help the Community Court find solutions as it identifies issues for persons coming before the court and identifies services to alleviate those issues,

such as housing, health care, food, legal and other services.

**The Riverkeeper program** has been dealing with coal train issues, helping public voices be heard, and helping draw 100,000 public comments on the coal and oil trains.

Of the center's 12 staff, there are four attorneys, an environmental advocate, two community advocates, plus front desk staff, paralegals and fund raisers. Its work is supplemented by assistance from volunteer attorneys and students.

Rick left Minnesota to study environmental law and its intersection with social justice at Lewis and Clark College in Portland. After graduating in 1997, he served seven years as an attorney for the Nez Perce, handling cases on salmon recovery, water quality and cultural resources.

When he learned the Center for Justice needed an environmental attorney, Rick was impressed with the variety of issues the firm addresses and its ability to affect change.

He started nine years ago and two years ago became executive director. He continues to do legal work with Riverkeeper and on land use, along with being executive director.

**The center's former** summer Street Law program is now Justice Nights, from 5 to 6 p.m., first Tuesdays, when six to 10 volunteer lawyers meet with two

to 36 drop-in clients to help them sort out non-criminal legal issues.

**Another ongoing program** is the Drivers Relicensing Program, recognizing that people in Spokane need a car to go to work, day care, shopping, medical care and more. People who lose their licenses face thousands of dollars of fines. They are pulled into collections, leading them into a legal and financial pit, said Rick.

"We help them establish payment plans for as low as \$25 a month and restore their licenses by taking courses on rules of the road and financial management," he said.

The program has helped more than 300 people a year restore their licenses and regain their lives.

**"Justice is an experience,** not a concept or idea," Jim said. "We are connected. When we see a person or entity abused, we're being abused. To experience justice, we need to be equal."

Rick's commitment is to service.

"I tell my nine-year-old son, 'No matter what you do, try to make the world a better place.' That's why I work here," he said.

For Rick, justice is about being a voice for the voiceless, and doing what is right for the homeless and the environment.

For information, call 838-5211 or email [ricke@cfjustice.org](mailto:ricke@cfjustice.org) or visit [www.cfjustice.org](http://www.cfjustice.org).

**The Center for Justice will have a 15th Anniversary Party at 5:30 p.m., Friday, Jan. 17, in the lobby of Community Building, 35 W. Main.**

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# New CEO says YMCA Spokane offers much more than gym and swim

Steve Tamaro, who has been president/chief executive officer of the YMCA Spokane since June 2012, brings 40 years of experience with the YMCA, beginning as a part-time camp counselor, moving through the front desk into membership marketing, branch executive director and chief operating officer to CEO.

Dispelling the common view that the YMCA is "a gym and swim place," he highlighted its array of services as a charitable nonprofit.

"We do so much for so many people on a given day, serving various communities and answering their needs," Steve said. "It's why I stay with the YMCA."

**Programs include** day care, teen intervention, a summer camp, after-school and sports programs, diabetes prevention and support for cancer survivors.

• YMCAs are the leading providers of childcare nationally. In Spokane, 104 children from six weeks to four years old come to the Central building at 920 N. Monroe. The Y also manages the childcare center on the Eastern Washington University campus, serving 50 to 60 children of students and staff each day.

• For teens through people in their 20s, the YMCA offers mentoring through the Youth Investment Program. At the Spokane Valley branch, staff members and volunteers work with teens referred by the courts, school counselors, social workers and others.

In the summer, they run a lawn care business. Year round, they grow vegetables in the Y's greenhouse. The vegetables are used in the childcare program.

At North Central High School, the Y staff work through the Outside the Box program to help 9th graders transition into high school, providing homework assistance and helping students connect with teachers.

• Camp Reed is the YMCA's residential camp north of Deer Park, where it has been in business nearly 100 years.

It serves 250 children in residential weeks of summer camp on 555 acres at Fan Lake. Campers swim, hike, learn arts, crafts and more.

"When I introduce myself to people, often they say that they went to Camp Reed or were counselors there," Steve said.

• The YMCA offers after-school programs at Mead and Spokane



Steve Tamaro describes changes at YMCA over 40 years.

Valley schools, involving hundreds of youth ages three to 12 and volunteer coaches in non-competitive football, basketball, T-ball or baseball.

• Participants in YMCA sports learn sports skills, teamwork and values. Many go on to play in junior high and high school sports, Steve said.

Most of the Y's youth sports programs rent gyms and field space in the community.

The YMCA also manages the swimming pools for the City of Spokane Valley.

• In health and wellness, the Y's Diabetes Prevention Programs works with pre-diabetic people referred by their insurance companies to lose weight and attend classes on nutrition. The one-year program seeks to prevent diabetes through good nutrition, exercise and small group meetings. Then people enter a program to maintain their exercise and nutrition.

The YMCA partners with the LIVESTRONG program to help cancer survivors return to normalcy, as they work out and bond with others. That program is at the North, Valley and Central locations.

**There are three centers.** The Spokane Valley center is 14 years old. In 2009, two centers opened in Central and North Spokane.

"We partner with the YWCA, sharing the building in Central Spokane," he said. "We are two separate organizations, but try to partner to help serve the YWCA's clientele, too."

**Membership based** on household income makes access to the YMCA's three Spokane facilities—Central, North and Valley—accessible, he said.

"Through providing membership fees based on need, the

YMCA Spokane gave \$1.7 million in financial assistance last year," Steve said.

**When he was growing up** Catholic in Boston, he said the prevailing attitude among Catholics was not to go to the YMCA but to a Catholic youth organization. The attitude was a carryover from the YMCA's history.

When the Y started in 1844 in London, for the first 90 years it did not let Catholics in. It was an Evangelical movement. So Catholics thought the Y was for Protestants.

"Today, the CEO of the YMCA Spokane is Catholic," said Steve,

who attends local parishes.

"We operate based on Christian principles of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility, four core values that evolved out of our Christian heritage," he said.

**"Our programs have evolved** from being a Christian evangelical organization to an ecumenical organization that welcomes everybody. The Christian piece is our heritage. In the past, YMCA offered Bible studies," Steve explained.

Steve became involved with the YMCA just out of high school when he accepted a part-time camp counselor job at the neighborhood Y in Somerville, Mass., a suburb of Boston.

After he earned a bachelor's degree in journalism and marketing at Suffolk University in Boston in 1976, his first full-time job with the Y was in membership and marketing in the Newton branch.

The YMCA in Spokane is the community's oldest nonprofit, chartered in 1884, Steve said. The first YMCA in the U.S. was chartered in 1861 in Boston.

**"Over the years, the YMCA** has become a fluid organization answering community needs," he said. "Its evolution is driven by community need. It has built the infrastructure, staff and volunteer support to meet needs."

Before coming to Spokane, Steve was COO in Denver, not looking to move, but he felt that Spokane was the right opportunity for him because of the strong board of directors, the new facilities, the staff's engagement with members and the community reception.

**"In Spokane, I find that people** come together to solve community problems," he said. "Of all the places I have lived—Boston, Rochester, N.Y., St. Louis and Denver—this is the most collaborative community for the nonprofits."

"Despite whatever may be wrong here, there's a sense of hope in this community that is energizing," Steve said.

"We want to expand our footprint and are looking to bring Y services where there are none, such as in Sandpoint, Airway Heights and Pullman. We are also looking to expand opportunities to bring our programs to groups."

"We have expertise, staff and infrastructure to offer as a service," Steve said. "We are looking to expand services, not build buildings. We are looking at what programs are needed for youth, health and wellness."

For information, call 777-9622 ext 420, 720-5620 or email stammaro@ymcaspokane.org.

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# Coeur d'Alene woman starts North Idaho anti-human trafficking coalition

By Kaye Hult

Even though Jessica Tschida knew how overwhelming it can be to be involved in efforts to end human trafficking and educate others about it, she formed a North Idaho chapter of the Coalition to Abolish Human Trafficking in the Inland Northwest after moving two years ago from Moscow to Coeur d'Alene, where there was no group.

Believing everyone needs to know about the existence and dangers of human trafficking in the region, she sees her anti-trafficking work as a passion that God laid upon her heart.

"Human trafficking is not something that just happens somewhere else," she said.

Jessica acknowledged that her involvement is in stages. She becomes fired up and then has to put it aside because it becomes so overwhelming.

"Just because it's overwhelming doesn't mean we shouldn't learn more or be involved," she said.

"I don't always feel the passion, but God often calls us to do things we don't feel like doing. Helping people who are oppressed is one of those things to which we are called.

"It's hard to think we are making a difference, because it's a huge monster. If each of us can help just one person, it's huge to that person. That person might affect yet another. Small steps have to be okay. That's where you have to start," Jessica said.

At a Hands That Heal Conference in Spokane in the spring of 2012, Jessica learned from Mark Kadel of World Relief Spokane about the Coalition to Abolish Human Trafficking there that gathers local organizations concerned about the issue, meeting to spur each other on.

Jessica contacted people in Idaho who attended the meeting to see if any were interested in forming a similar group in Coeur d'Alene.

They met that fall at the Human Rights Education Institute, created the coalition and have met monthly since.

The Spokane and Coeur d'Alene chapters' mission is "to abolish slavery by collaborating with local organizations and individuals, educating our community, addressing the demand, and providing services to victims of human trafficking."

Jessica finds it a "hard sell" to urge organizations and individuals to take this issue seriously. The coalition had to cancel a Coeur d'Alene seminar it planned this fall for law enforcement and service providers because too few signed up.

There is little data on human trafficking locally, but Jessica has spoken to someone who was trafficked and to several service providers who know of trafficking.



Jessica Tschida has passion to fight this form of slavery.

She notes that North Idaho may attract "criminals who deal in human slavery," because, unlike Washington, which has laws on trafficking, Idaho's laws are lax.

Two major highways, I-90 and State Route 95, serve as corridors to and from Canada to other parts of the United States.

Jessica's passion about human trafficking began when she was in high school near Boise and learned about injustices against women.

At the University of Idaho in Moscow, her studies and involvement with a campus ministry group, Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship, sharpened her understanding of human slavery.

In Chi Alpha, pastor Jason Kelly shared the story of Asha, whose parents in India had seven children. They sold her to a strange woman to raise money to care for the other children. The woman took her to Mumbai, saying she would be in service to a family.

Instead, she took Asha to a brothel where she was beaten until she complied with the demands made on her. She stayed there for seven years until she heard that "some friends" could buy her freedom. She moved into a House of Hope.

In a course on gender and communication, Jessica learned about the war against women in Africa, where groups raid villages and homes, gang rape women and force husbands and sons to participate. They thus broke up communities and families to gain

control politically.

In a class on chocolate, she wrote a report on how chocolate was procured through slave labor, where children are forced to work ridiculous hours, sleep on the ground and live without proper clothing or food.

She came to realize that human trafficking is "in our country and in our neighborhoods." She believes "sexual assault is the worst thing that could happen to a person.

"To have it repeated and repeated is unspeakable," she said.

Jessica feels called to work to restore people "to have hope and to have relationships again."

She said traffickers know people can get fired up to fight human trafficking, but become overwhelmed because justice takes time.

"Trafficking has been happening since the beginning of time," she said. "It is based on greed.

"Sex trafficking may begin with pornography, desensitizing people to the cruelty foisted upon those being prostituted," she said. "The goal is to convince people to cease prostituting men, women and children."

She said social media make it easier to entice young people into dangerous situations with individuals who pretend to be someone other than who they are.

The 2013 goals for the Coalition to Abolish Human Trafficking in Coeur d'Alene are:

- To set up a website and keep a Facebook page updated;
- To become more aware of

current Idaho laws and how to change them;

- To have the coalition listed on other websites that give resources;
- To do awareness events at middle and high schools;

• To create cards telling how to recognize trafficking and listing available resources;

• To train North Idaho service providers to raise the awareness in the general population about trafficking in the Inland Northwest.

From talking with people who have been trafficked in Sandpoint, Coeur d'Alene and Spokane, Jessica suggests the following ways to recognize if someone may be enslaved:

• They may always be accompanied by a controlling person or boss who does not let them speak on their own behalf.

• They do not have control over their personal schedule, money, travel documents and ID.

• They are transported to and from work, or live and work in the same place.

• They have a debt to their

employer or crew leader that is so great they are unable to leave their work.

• They display bruises, depression or fear, and may appear overly submissive.

Jessica encourages people to look beneath the surface and if they think someone is a victim of human trafficking to call the National Human Trafficking Resource center at 888-373-7888 or contact the Rescue and Restore Campaign at [www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking).

"Trafficking doesn't always look like we expect," she said.

Other resources are at: World Relief Spokane, 509-484-9829, <http://worldreliefsokane.org> or World Hope: Lisa Thompson@worldhope.net.

The Coalition to Abolish Human Trafficking meets at noon on second Tuesdays at the North Idaho Violence Prevention Center, 850 N. 4th St. in Coeur d'Alene.

For information, call 208-664-9303 or email [loosethechains586@gmail.com](mailto:loosethechains586@gmail.com).



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# Couple attribute their long marriage to mutual respect, collaboration

Ezra and Eleise Kinlow attribute their reaching the milestone of 51 years of marriage in January 2014 to their mutual respect.

Who they are in public ministry and serving the community is who they are at home.

"We always felt it was important to show respect to each other, because in raising children, what they see at home is what they will portray in their lives," Eleise said. "We tried to create a Christian atmosphere, so our children have had something to fall back on."

They had six children. One died in a car accident. They have 11 grandchildren.

"Fifty years looks like a milestone," said Ezra, "but being part of those 50 years one day at a time and growing through them, it does not seem possible. We still have dreams to accomplish," said Ezra, senior pastor at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ (COGIC).

Along with their respect, he said, they work collaboratively.

**Eleise takes her role** as a pastor's wife in stride. For her, it means "being a servant through counseling people in the congregation and community about their lives and relationships."

She responds to phone calls from people with marital and life struggles, sharing insights from her life, faith and marriage. She also leads the church's women's group and for 20 years led a women's retreat.

"I hope our witness in the community and church influences others that marriage is great, good and fun," Ezra said. "We have fun in our house. What people see in public about our relationship is real. We seek to be examples, to be living epistles."

**Both were born in Arkansas**, but Eleise grew up in Seattle, where she graduated from an integrated high school in 1961. As a girl, she would go from her home only to school or to her church.

"We did not go any place alone," she said.

Eleise said in her early years, she did not experience victimization because of her race.

Ezra's father was a prominent pastor whose father owned a plantation in Dumas, Ark. He experienced respect, recognition and appreciation in that community.



Eleise and Ezra Kinlow reflect on their more than 50 years of marriage.

Ezra remembered when his father drove a new car to Louisiana. A gas station attendant was suspicious and would not serve them when his father said it was his car.

When Ezra graduated from high school in 1956, he did not join a class outing to Greenville, Miss., because 14-year-old Emmett Till had been lynched that year. Ezra was aware of racial incidents, but they were not part of his daily life.

**Eleise and Ezra met** at a Mother's Day church dinner in 1961.

After graduating from high school, Ezra went to Los Angeles to live with an uncle, then to Fresno until 1960 when he came to live with his brother in Tacoma.

His brother was a deacon at New Jerusalem Church of God in Christ, so Ezra went to church and came to know the Lord.

After Eleise and Ezra met, they dated, and then she went to California to spend a year with her sister. They corresponded and reconnected when he went to his grandfather's funeral in Los Angeles and invited her to come back, and they married in 1963.

Ezra worked at Boeing until 1969. Then he became a customer service technician with IBM until he retired in 1985. He moved to Spokane with IBM in 1981.

In 1972, he had decided to enter ministry. While working, he earned a college degree through correspondence courses and on-line studies.

**Ezra went to seminary** in Seattle, earning a master of divinity degree at A. L. Hardy Academy after his move to Spokane, where he began serving Holy Temple Church of God in Christ.

The church, which was established in 1948, was then located at 312 E. Third Ave. In 2004, the church moved to 806 W. Indiana.

"The church struggled my first few years there, but then I reached out to the community to bring people to knowledge of Christ and reality of life," Ezra said.

**Both said that in 1963** when they married, they did not fully realize the importance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.

They found the speech moving, but had not felt personally victimized as others were. However, when they moved to Spokane where there were few blacks, it took on new meaning.

"Often we are the only African Americans in a room here," said Ezra, who goes into the wider community to reach out and try to help white people feel comfortable around black people.

His goal in the community has been to bring cohesiveness to the work of different organizations and to advance the life of African Americans in the area, where most people have little exposure to people of different races.

**"It's hard to gain respect** in a community that is predominantly white and feels no need to reach out to African Americans. Many were comfortable where they were," he said.

However, Ezra found allies in other churches involved in the Spokane Christian Coalition/Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries. He helped them establish Churches Against Racism.

"I was in the community so people would know who I was and seek to enhance their lives," he said, "but race relations happen slowly. We still have a ways to go."

Ezra worked with the police department to include African Americans on the police force. Once they agreed to do so, he helped recruit people.

He has also interacted with the school board to bring visibility

in schools, so African-American children would see an African-American adult involved in their education. Most teachers and administrators in Spokane School District #81 are white.

"African-American teachers and counselors who would advocate for African-American students have been sparse," he said.

**While gaining some visibility** for African Americans in schools and police force, Ezra sees need to make more inroads in those settings and in employment.

"It's still hard for African Americans to find jobs that pay enough to support their families. Most earn minimum wage and lack opportunity for advancement," said Ezra, uplifting the recent news about \$15/hour wages in Seattle.

At schools, he said, African-American children have some problems being bullied and being bullies, especially when some students flaunt the "N" word.

"African-American children receive the brunt of exclusion," Ezra said. "Some want to be active in sports, but end up on the sidelines."

Eleise said their sons were often bench warmers on school basketball, football and wrestling teams. "They had to excel to be seen," Ezra said. "Plus, their counselor would not direct them to courses they needed to advance themselves in the world."

One daughter in Georgia, however, has earned a master's degree in business, and another daughter in Arkansas, who has four children, is going to school part time.

Ezra has been less visible in the community in the last three years because of health challenges, but he has rebounded.

The church's six associate ministers and an administrator have lightened his load and run the church. He remains senior pastor.

For information, call 534-7565 or email [mrrev@comcast.net](mailto:mrrev@comcast.net).

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# Speakers call for solidarity among Pacific islands on impact of military

In a workshop on Inter-Island Solidarity for Justice and Peace at the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly in Busan, Korea, Hawaii's United Church of Christ Conference Minister Charles Buck was one of five people discussing the impact of military bases on their peoples, lands and seas.

The others were from the Philippines, Taiwan, Okinawa and Jeju Island off the Korean Coast.

Expansion of militarism since World War II has led to suffering and conflicts on many islands in the Pacific. Some have removed bases by developing solidarity among indigenous people to protect their cultures and traditions.

Song Kong Ho, who was to have moderated the workshop was in prison for protesting environmental destruction on the Border Islands.

Charles, a Korean American who lived in the San Francisco area before moving to Hawaii 16 years ago, said there is renewed concern with the United States pivoting its military attention to the Pacific.

**The eight Hawaiian islands** are home to the largest Pacific naval base at Pearl Harbor, located and developed since the late 1800s as a strategic point.

In 1893, U.S. military troops helped overthrow the Hawaiian monarchy, Buck said. Marines put Queen Lili'oukalani under house arrest. Later Hawaii was annexed to the U.S. and military bases were established. The main buildup was after 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

"Camp Smith near Pearl Harbor is headquarters to the U.S. Pacific Command, which covers more than half of the globe. The military has a major impact on Hawaii with bases on all islands, occupying 207,000 acres with 22 installations, and providing 18,000 jobs," he said.

"Military and civilian lives are interconnected and cannot be easily separated," Charles said. "It's not easy to ask the military to leave. Native Hawaiians protest use of their sacred lands, but the military is the second largest employer next to tourism."

**Concerns include damage** to the land, sea and air. Kahoolawe, an island near Maui, is uninhabited because the U.S. used it for bombing practice. Unexploded ordnance remains. The navy has done some clean up, and native Hawaiians have planted plants.

While some native Hawaiians want to live as a sovereign state and have the military out, Charles says the military has a symbiotic relationship with the society, providing jobs, taxes and people.



**The Rev. Charles Buck of Hawaii**

Many retire there.

Kenneth Makuakāne, program associate for church vitality with the Hawaii Conference, said the U.S. was the third empire to take over Hawaii after France and England. Native Hawaiians consider the U.S. to be leasing Pearl Harbor.

"We believe it is ours to be held in common, not for individual ownership," he said. "We cannot own what was there before we were born and after we die. We are stewards of the land."

Charles said in 1993, the 100th anniversary of the overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom, the United Church of Christ passed a resolution of apology and provided redress of more than \$2 million to create Hawaiian organizations to bring healing.

**Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza** of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines likened U.S. military presence there to a person owning land being told a friend would throw out a bully, but the friend became a bully who left guards to protect the people from other bullies. When the owner said to leave the land, the bully did temporarily, then sent guards who rotate in and out every six months.

"We have lost our freedom to use the land," the bishop said.

The Spanish were present for 333 years until the Philippines became independent. Then the U.S. put military bases on prime lands.

In 1991, Filipinos voted to keep out U.S. bases. Mt. Pinatubo exploded and Clark Air Force Base was inoperable, but came back as

"visiting forces." U.S. President Barack Obama is now using threats from China to persuade the Philippines to let the U.S. open some former bases for rotating military personnel.

"We have to buy military hardware and provide a market for arms from the #1 arms trader, the U.S.," he said. "It puts us at risk as a target and through the prostitution of our women."

"We are joining hands with neighbors to send out the friend who is not a friend," he said.

**Sinan Mavivo of the Tao tribe**, one of Taiwan's 30 indigenous tribes, spoke of efforts to protect Lanyu, a small volcanic island off Taiwan, also known as Orchid Island. Colonized in 1903 by Japan, it was closed off until Taiwan took over in the 1950s and made the island a prison.

In the 1960s, it was opened to others. An outsider built a hotel. Tao people did not benefit. Compulsory education began, teaching children to speak Chinese, not Tao language. Traditional housing was removed, she said.

It is not a strategic location, but nuclear waste and bombs have been sent to a base there. For 30 years, the Tao have sought to have the waste removed.

**The Rev. Takehiro Kamiya** of the Okinawa Baptist Convention, said a U.S. military base has used most of the land since 1945 on this small island where .6 percent are Japanese, 7.6 percent are U.S. military and the rest are indigenous. Even though the base brought medical care, houses, a hospital and a school, 80 percent of the people want the land back.

A plane crash, a container falling on a girl, murder, rape and theft have stirred protests and calls to remove the base and its accident-prone osprey planes, Takahiro said. When three soldiers raped a 13-year-old girl in 2012, 85,000 Okinawans protested. Japanese and U.S. governments, trying to silence the rage, promised to move the base, he said.

**Gi-Ryong Hong**, co-convenor of the Jeju Pan-Island Committee for Stopping the Military Base and for Realization of Peace Island, told of efforts to stop construction of a base at Gangjeong village, a UNESCO protection area and home to 1,900 people.

Islanders were silenced after an uprising and massacre of 30,000 Jeju islanders by the Korean government and American military,



**Sinan Mavivo of the Tao tribe**

65 years ago.

In 2003, the South Korean president apologized and, in 2004, announced he would make Jeju a place of peace and human rights. In 2005, it was declared an island of international peace.

Despite that, Gi-Ryong said war-loving people want to use the island. In 1937, Japan and in 1948, Chiang Kai-shek used it to attack China. In 1949, the Korean government used it for military purposes. In 1988, South Korea tried to build a military base, but aborted it after an uprising. An attempt to build a base in 1989 was also stopped, but South Korea has not given up. From 2002, there were attempts in Hasun and then Wemi.

**The South Korean navy** has moved to Gangejung where peace activists fight construction of a base by lying in front of construction vehicles. They want to make Jeju an island of peace, he said.

"Our government has sent 660 people to jail without a trial for protesting. It spends billions to build a base that will take land and destroy the soft coral forest and 70 endangered species,"



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Gi-Ryong said. "Pacific islands should be windows to culture and history. We should not fall for talk of needing military bases to keep us safe. When we stop one base, others are started on other islands, so we need solidarity among the islands."

The World Council of Churches Assembly considered a public issue statement on nuclear issues and Asia-Pacific maritime militarization.

**That statement recognized** a rise of militarism in the name of peace and prosperity, related to tension between the economic and military expansion of China and the U.S. "Asian Pivot" strategy that "has sparked an escalation in the war-profit industry and an arms race for global military dominance."

The statement says that the U.S. strategy has brought conflict and suffering, destroying land, cultures and traditions.

**"The false idols of security** and economic expansion run counter to the justice, peace and life that are the core values of the WCC and Christians everywhere," the statement said.

Catholics, Protestants, Quakers, Buddhists and Shamanists have come together to resist the base at Gangjeong. Catholic priests hold daily Mass in front of the construction site, Protestants have prayer services, and Shamans perform traditional rituals.

The statement was included in a statement on nuclear power and weapons. Because of concerns raised in the closing plenary about banning nuclear power, consensus was not reached. So the statement was referred to the Central Committee for action at its next meeting in July 2014.

For information, call 808-537-9516 or email [cbuck@hcucc.org](mailto:cbuck@hcucc.org).

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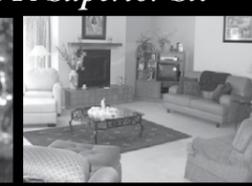


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# Psychologist fulfills his earlier goal of becoming a Catholic priest

Tom Altepeter, who grew up Roman Catholic, began studies for the priesthood but decided celibacy was not for him. He readily would have been a married priest. Now the husband and father of four is a married priest in the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC). He started an Ecumenical Catholic Community, St. Clare, in Spokane in June 2012.

After graduating from a Jesuit high school, he entered seminary at St. Louis Archdiocese. When he left seminary he studied psychology, eventually earning a doctoral degree in clinical psychology from St. Louis University. He taught psychology and had a private practice for 26 years in Oshkosh, Wis.

Tom continued to be involved in the Catholic Church and served on the board for Oshkosh's unified Catholic school system.

In that region, the priest shortage meant churches were consolidating and closing, he said. In six months, six churches consolidated into one in Fond du Lac, Wis. Because no building was big enough for all the parishioners, the bishop raised \$18 million from the laity to build a new building, said Tom, who was frustrated knowing there were women and married men willing to serve.

Then, while searching online for progressive, alternative Catholic churches, he learned of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion. He reconnected with a friend and former mentor, Frank, who had been a Roman Catholic priest for 18 years and was now a pastor of an Ecumenical Catholic Community.

"We chatted for several months. It sounded like what my wife and I wanted," said Tom, who then finished a master's degree in spirituality at Loyola to prepare for ordination in the Ecumenical Catholic Communion.

As a deacon before he was ordained a priest, he started a church in Wisconsin.

When his wife, Carla, had an opportunity to move to Spokane for a job change, he came and started an Ecumenical Catholic Community. They began meeting in homes. They now meet at the SNAP building's conference room, previously the chapel of the former Dominican Convent at 3102 W. Ft. Wright Dr.

Tom offered background on



Tom Altepeter started an Ecumenical Catholic Communion.

the Ecumenical Catholic Communion. Its roots go back to 1870 when Vatican I declared the Pope infallible and with universal jurisdiction.

"Lay people and clergy who considered the Pope fallible were told to leave," Tom said. "A group in Germany, Austria and Spain left the Roman Catholic Church and joined the Union of Utrecht, which formed 200 years before. The Church of Utrecht had started that autonomous diocese over a disagreement with Rome about the election of their bishop.

"They were known as the Old Catholic Tradition, because they did not accept the infallibility of the pope," Tom said, "but they had the same theology and sacraments, and retained apostolic succession."

They believed Jesus was human and divine, and believed in the virgin birth, he said. They also ordained women and married men.

"Before about 1140, priests had married, but canon law preferred that they not marry," he said.

After the Union of Utrecht separated from Rome, participants looked at the disciplines and eventually decided to ordain women and married men.

"We also accept gays and lesbians and do not require an annulment after a divorce for someone

to remarry," said Tom.

Missionaries came to the United States to start the Old Catholic Communion in the early 1900s. There has been one in Wisconsin for 20 years, he said.

In the 1990s, a handful of communities came together to form a larger group to support each other and gain visibility.

In 2003, six communities formed the Ecumenical Catholic Communion. It is part of the extended family of the Old Catholic Church, but not part of the structure, he said. In the U.S. there are also small groups of the Old Catholic Tradition. Given its roots, priests are ordained in apostolic succession, he added.

Now there are 50 communities, with four in Europe. The biggest is in Southern California, a predominantly Hispanic community of 1,500. There are now six in the Denver region, with the largest about 500. Orange, Calif., is home to the presiding bishop.

"We prefer to have a small community over a large one, because it assures more authentic community," Tom said. When a community reaches 200 to 400, we encourage it to split."

In Spokane, 75 people belong to the St. Clare Ecumenical Catholic Community. The average attendance at services is 40, ranging

from age three to 91. Most are in their 50s and 60s. Several have known each other for 30 years, and others just met.

"My goal is to provide a 'homeless shelter' for the spiritually homeless," he said, noting that in Wisconsin half of Catholics do not attend Mass. "Most who attend here are former Roman Catholics, plus some from other churches. Most are progressive Roman Catholics who want the church to be more in line with the vision of Vatican II.

"I was a successful psychologist and now find it a gift to move back into a ministry I thought I would not have the opportunity to do," Tom said. "I was serving people, but felt a call to do this.

"The most important parts of continued spiritual development are for people to be involved in outreach with people around us in need," he said. "We have drawn people who are already involved, have identified community efforts and encourage individual efforts.

"From the start, we have set aside 10 percent of funds that come in to help support local ministries such as Our Place and Transitions," said Tom, who is also involved with the Odyssey Youth Center. "As we grow as a community, we will do more, but will also be careful not to over-extend ourselves."

Tom connects with the Progressive Pastors group that meets to study the weekly liturgical texts. He has also connected with Alan Eschenbacher, pastor of All Saints Lutheran, about starting a mental health chaplaincy.

"Our culture mitigates against health emotionally and spiritually. We emphasize quick and easy solutions to deep and complex problems," Tom said. "The normal range of human experience is broad, but we think in narrow terms—men and women, straight and gay, old and young. We think normal is where we are.

"I have seen diversity in my career and in the church. To me it comes down to compassion for dealing with people who are different," he said.

"There is room here for everyone. We need to learn to accommodate to and accept everyone," he said. "My work with individual adults has many spiritual dimensions. I have helped many identify and deal with anxiety, depression, guilt and shame about what they have done that is not acceptable.

"We invite people to a different frame of reference about life, God and culture. None of us is perfect. One person's approach is not the only way," he said.

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**Gospel Concert**  
**Saturday, Jan. 11**  
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**King Day Youth Empowerment Luncheon & Silent Auction**  
**Saturday, Jan. 18**  
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. - Shadle Park High School - 4327 N. Ash St.

**Commemorative Celebration - Sunday, Jan. 19**  
4-6 p.m. - Holy Temple Church of God in Christ - 806 W. Indiana Ave.  
Carolyn Gordon, associate professor of communication, Fuller Theological Seminary - Pasadena, Ca.

**Annual Unity March & Community Resource Fairs**  
**Monday, Jan. 20**  
10 a.m. - Spokane Convention Center - 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.

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## Assembly speakers, statement on peace, intersect with Pope's call for peace

During a recent World Council of Churches Assembly presentation on "God of life, lead us to build peace in this world," the Most Rev. Thabo Makgoba, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, reminded that while some things may discourage us along the path to making peace, we need to persevere through the "sea of injustices," because "we worship a God of hope."

Leymah Gbowee, peace activist, social worker, women's rights activist and 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate, told of leading a nonviolent movement of Christian and Muslim women to end Liberia's civil war in 2003. The war turned religious and societal values upside down. Women were brutalized, and children became soldiers. God broke her anger and strengthened her to organize others. More and more women sat in the street with her to say, "We don't care about jobs or food, if we don't have peace," Leymah said. The women were afraid, but were also tired of war and running. They wanted a secure future for their children. Their persistence led President Taylor to enter into peace talks.

"If we stand by silent in face of injustices, we might as well join those shooting

people," she said.

For Chang Yoon Jae, theology professor at Ewha Women's University in Seoul, hopes for peace in the divided Korea. It has lived 53 years in an armistice, "filled with anxiety war could break out again any time," he said. Chang reported that a World Council of Churches meeting on the Korean peninsula in 1989 said Korea is a symbolic link for peace and reconciliation in the world, because it has a key role in freeing the world of nuclear weapons.

"All states of Northeast Asia have nuclear weapons or are protected by a nuclear power. Since the 1961 WCC Assembly in New Delhi, India, the number of states that have developed nuclear weapons has doubled and the number of nuclear plants has grown to 117, with 144 under construction," Chang said.

Thabo suggested consciousness about consumption of electricity is one way to move from dependence on nuclear energy: "Turning off lights symbolic challenge."

Stanley Noffsinger, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren based in Elgin, Ill., recognizes that in the midst of war, violence, disagreement and temptation, it is not easy to walk the Brethren walk of

nonviolence and loving neighbors.

"We challenge the sinfulness of war, misuse of the eco-system and use of the market system to sell death," he said. "We speak of the cost to our souls if we rely on tools of violence rather than God's tools. The journey to justice and peace is a movement to engage in radical compassion."

A Brethren bumper sticker says, "When Jesus said for us to love our enemies, he probably meant not to kill them."

A statement the Assembly adopted, "The Way of Just Peace," reminds: "Just peace is a journey into God's purpose for humanity and all creation. It is rooted in the self-understanding of churches, the hope of spiritual transformation and the call to seek justice and peace for all."

• It says the intersection of peace with justice means "social justice confronts privilege, economic justice confronts wealth, ecological justice confronts consumption, and political justice confronts power itself. Mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation become shared experiences. The spirit, vocation and process of peace are transformed."

• It acknowledges that every human being is made "in the image of God," and we are to be stewards of creation so all people

can live into the fullness of life.

• It challenges the WCC to reclaim its relationship with just peace and accompany just peace ministries; encourage member churches to engage interfaith cooperation to address conflicts and develop communication strategies that promote justice and peace; build sustainable communities and promote economies of life for sharing resources, and promote human rights.

• It calls for governments to lower greenhouse gas emissions, ban nuclear weapons, destroy chemical weapons, ban drones and robotic weapons systems, reallocate military budget expenses to humanitarian and developmental needs, conflict prevention and civilian peace building, and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty by 2014.

These ideas coincide with those Pope Francis I expressed in his Christmas message, calling believers of all religions and nonbelievers to engage daily in working for "a homemade peace" that can spread across the world, because war "shatters and hurts so many lives." He said: "God is peace: Let us ask God to help us be peacemakers every day, in our lives, our families, our cities, our nations and the whole world."

Mary Stamp - Editor

## Often we focus on ills of those in poverty and avoid creating a fair society

A book by a medical historian asks the question, "What's wrong with the poor?" I have not read it, but the title started me thinking about how we frame our thinking, and how that affects what we do.

Perhaps that question can help us realize we spend too much time and effort diagnosing the supposed ills of those in poverty instead of finding out what is really needed, like a just, fair society.

We have a moralistic attitude about the poor. Someone coined the phrase, "the deserving poor," which implies that "undeserving" poor people do not deserve tax-funded services.

When we realize we create programs based on how we think things should be, such a question discredits the poor. Why say anything is "wrong" with poor people, other than that they have little money and scant access to support systems money can supply.

Diagnosing the poor is not the problem. The challenge is finding out what poor people need for them to succeed.

The growing income gap in our country and the world has been receiving much attention lately. Income inequality doesn't travel alone. There is inequality in access to education, medical and mental health care, employment opportunities, reliable information and social support services. Plus, they are inter-related.

When those of us who have access to health care face a medical challenge in our family, we learn there are people in the system who can guide us through decisions, appointments, transportation and complications. The process may be time-consuming, but the support is there. Those without it have had to rely on overstressed emergency rooms until now.

A widely held belief that our schools generally are failing and need radical reform

is being pushed by foundations and "think tanks" financed by billionaires pushing pet ideas or ideology rather than education.

One is interested in school vouchers supposedly to "allow" school choice. It may sound good on first hearing, but what good is a voucher for part or all of private school tuition for a family in poverty if it doesn't also include school fees, books and supplies, transportation and school uniforms where required?

Generally, where educators, parents and community groups work together in the real interests of education, schools are performing well. Where the idea prevails that unions are to blame for problems in our schools or where candidates for the school board consider that role a springboard to higher political office or to serve an ideological program, schools have a much rockier path.

Throughout our history, we have had a

myth about "rugged individualism."

This has been true particularly in the western U.S., whether the West was then in Ohio or in the Oregon Territory. The "self-made man" is a modification of the myth. Some aspects of libertarianism follow the pattern today.

These myths may be part of what brings on a question such as, "What's wrong with the poor?"

It may be easier to blame others for their plight, than to explore opportunities to collaborate with them to include them in making decisions that will bring meaningful changes to their lives.

Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. offers a comment that runs counter to 30 years of anti-tax propaganda that relate to this question.

He says: "I like to pay taxes. With them I buy civilization."

Nancy Minard - Contributing Editor

Newsletter Excerpts

## Sounding Board

Letter to the Editor

**I've been mulling this over:** How is it possible to hope against hope? How can one have hope and despair, which is what "against hope" means, at the same time? That's a contradiction, right? One can't be hopeful and hopeless at the same time, but that is the real meaning of hope, says theologian John Caputo. True hope, he says, only shows its strength when all seems hopeless. Actually, hope is hope and gets to be really and truly hope when things are hopeless. It's remarkable to reflect on this, that one doesn't have to "feel" hopeful all the time to still be a person of hope.

**For the Christian, hope is a gift.** It is born in our hearts because of our faith that Christ was born in a manger. Sometimes a hopeless word is an accurate word, it can be an honest word, but it is not the last word. Christmas gets to be the last word, so, people of hope, let us celebrate!

The Rev. Mike Graef  
Spokane Valley United Methodist  
newsletter

**God says to Moses, "I am who I am."** Not, I am who I was or will be. God says, "I am who I am."

You and I are trapped in a linear time frame, we see where we have been, we are concerned about where we are going, and we sometimes forget where we are, but God reminds us, "I am who I am."

Yes, God was with us in the past, God

loved us then. Yes, God will be with us in the future; God will love us then. The most important part, the part that we miss most of the time is that God loves us right here, right now, where we stand or sit or lie, right now.

**When God created us,** when creation happened, our perception as separate happened, not only in our physical perception but in our emotional, cognitive perception as well.

Kurt Vonnegut said, "TIME is God's way of making sure that everything doesn't happen at once and SPACE is God's way of making sure everything doesn't happen to you."

I am grateful for that, but one of the consequences of that happening is that we have difficulty being present.

**Our experience of separation** is one sided. God is not separated from us: "I will always be with you," day by day, minute by minute. Paul in the 8th chapter of his letter to the Romans says, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us. Nothing in all creation separates us from the Love of God.

We are a resurrection people, our God

is the God of second chances, God always gives us one more chance; one more. We go to sleep and awake again, we die and are reborn. We ask forgiveness, we are forgiven. We forget and we remember.

**This moment is the only moment** that you really have.

This moment is the only moment that you can do anything with.

This moment is the only moment in which we are privileged to work in God's kingdom.

This moment is the only moment we can know that nothing separates us from God. This moment God says to us, "I am who I am."

This moment we say to God the same thing. Right here, right now, O God, I am yours and you are mine. Together we will do your work.

The Rev. Greg Skinner  
Country Homes Christian Church  
newsletter

**My wife and I have taken in** a stray kitten. She appeared briefly at our back door on a cold night and quickly disappeared. Over the next several days, we coaxed her to eat some food and left water for her and within a week, she was living in our house.

We don't have a name for her yet. She is just "little kitty." This "little kitty" has forced me into some serious theological

reflections. She was skittish, is skittish and, I am afraid, may be skittish forever. She constantly flees if I get within grasping range of her. I want a pet. She wants to hide under the couch.

She will vamoose even when I am just walking through a room or when I just look like I might.

**That little cat believes** I am obsessed with her with the aim of doing her harm.

There's a theology hiding in there somewhere. God is obsessed with me. God is obsessed with the sin I commit and is looking to do me harm.

I believe I have encountered theological systems that are not far from this. I know I have encountered people who believe something like this.

**All I want to do is create a home** with food, water, toys and a litter box for that little cat. I am not obsessed with her. There are many more interesting things in my life than "little kitty." I certainly mean her no harm.

It would be nice if she could apprehend my love for her and discover that she can rub against my leg, purr and take a nap in my lap. It would be nice if she could understand that inasmuch as I am obsessed with her it is for her welfare.

The Rev. Dan Berg  
The Mustard Seed  
Open Door United Church of Christ  
- Deer Park

## State's bishops support policies on immigration, sales of guns

By Eric Meisfjord

In the fall, the Catholic bishops of Washington urged members of the state's delegation in the U.S. House of Representatives to support comprehensive immigration reform. They also expressed support of a state initiative for limiting the sale of guns.

The bishops are Archbishop J. Peter Sartain of the Archdiocese of Seattle; Bishop Blase Cupich of the Diocese of Spokane; Bishop Joseph Tyson of the Diocese of Yakima, and Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

They favor a measure that promotes a path to citizenship and family unity, reduces the immigration backlog, includes border security, and protects U.S. workers and due process for immigrants.

They are concerned about the human suffering the current "deficient immigration system," causes and urge "comprehensive immigration reform legislation that respects the human dignity of migrants and reflects the unique soul and character of America."

In cooperation with a national effort by U.S. bishops to raise awareness among Catholic people and promote legislative action, the four bishops released a statement in September on immigration for distribution in the state's parishes.

They say the U.S. immigration system is deficient for everyone: taxpayers, employers and immigrants.

It fails to protect national security, is counterproductive to economic development and is unjust.

On gun control, the Washington State Catholic Conference, which represents these bishops, also expressed support this fall for Initiative 594's call for background checks on gun sales given the prevalence of mass shootings across the nation and how they "reflect a devaluing of human life in the nation."

They said that while committed to the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of liberty and legitimate recourse to self defense, they cannot "ignore the threat to public safety that arises when guns are too easily accessible."

For information, call 358-7340.

## Calendar of Events

- Jan 9 • **"Making A Difference: You Can Do It Too"** panel on immigration reform, safe schools, smart justice and corporate loopholes, PUB 204-206, EWU, Cheney, 1 p.m., Carol Vines, 359-2898, cvines@ewu.edu
- Jan 10-11 • **"Healing Retreat for Women,"** "Consider Him: Removing Obstacles to God on the Road to Healing and Freedom," Thea Loughery and Sarah Compton, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 6 p.m. Friday to 1 p.m. Sunday, 448-1224, www.ihrc.net
- Jan 11 • **Martin Luther King Jr. Gospel Concert,** Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 645 S. Richard Allen Ct., 6 to 8 p.m., 455-8722
- Jan 14 • **YWCA Racial/Social Justice Book Club,** The Round House: A Novel by Louise Erdrich, YWCA, 930 N. Monroe, 5:30 p.m., www.ywcaspokane.org
- Jan 15 • **Coffee and Contemplation,** "That They May All Be One: The Radical Call and Great Vision," Bishop William Skylstad, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9 to 11 a.m., 448-1224, www.ihrc.net
- Jan 18-19 • **Health and Beauty Spa Show,** Spokane Community Lair, 1810 N Greene St., noon to 6 p.m., Saturday, noon to 5 p.m., Sunday, 509-218-6519, www.healthbeautyspa.com
- Jan 15 • **How Children Grieve: A Case Study of Eleanor Roosevelt and Children Who Lose a Parent,** LaVona Reeves, EWU professor of English and affiliate faculty in women's and gender studies, 207 Monroe Hall, EWU, Cheney, noon, 359-2898, cvines@ewu.edu
- Jan 17 • **Children's Program** "Honoring Martin Luther King Jr.'s Works," Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, North Idaho College, 208-765-3932, www.idahohumanrights.org
- **"A Light for Life,"** Black Student Union violence awareness event, JFK Staircase, EWU, Cheney, 5 p.m., 359-2898, cvines@ewu.edu
- **Center for Justice** 15th Anniversary Party, Community Building lobby, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 835-5211
- Jan 18 • **Martin Luther King Jr. Gala,** Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, Human Rights Education Institute, 414 Mullan Rd., Coeur d'Alene, 5 to 8 p.m., 208-765-3935, www.idahohumanrights.org
- **King Day Youth Empowerment Luncheon and Silent Auction,** Shadle Park High School, 4327 N. Ash St., 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., 455-8722, www.mkspokane.org
- Jan 19 • **Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Celebration,** Carolyn Gordon, associate professor of communication Fuller Seminary, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana, 4 to 6 p.m., 455-8722
- Jan 20 • **Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Unity March & Community Resource Fairs,** Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., 10 a.m., 455-8722, www.mkspokane.org
- **Community Resource Fair,** first and second floors of Riverpark Square, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., 455-8722
- **Children's Learning Resource Fair,** second and third floors of Riverpark Square, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., 455-8722
- **Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration** at Providence Hospitals, the Rev. Percy "Happy" Watkins delivers the "I Have a Dream" speech, Providence Holy Family Hospital lower level Health Education Center, noon; Mother Joseph Room, Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center, 3 p.m., sacredheartpr@providence.org
- **"Inequality for All,"** documentary screening / benefit for Second Harvest, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 6 p.m., inequalityforall.com
- Jan 22 • **Diane Nash,** From Jail in Jackson to the Distinguished American Award: My Life as an Activist, CUB Senior Ballroom, Washington State University, Pullman, 7 p.m., 509-339-6172, marcrobison@wsu.edu
- Jan 23 • **Motivating People to Act -** Activist in Residence Workshop, JFK Staircase, EWU, Cheney, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., 359-2898, cvines@ewu.edu
- Jan 25 • **Eastern Washington Legislative Conference,** "Dismantling the Culture of Violence," St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave., 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 535-1813, mary@thefigtree.org
- Jan 26 • **Annual Iron Chef:** Cultural Cooking Battle, Unity Multicultural Education Center and Sodexo, culinary delights of other cultures, Globe Room, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga, 3 to 4:30 p.m., 313-5838
- Jan 27 • **Meeting to explore forming Rural Roots** chapter for the region, Crys Ostrander, South Hill Branch of the Spokane Public Library, 3324 S. Perry, 5:30 p.m., 509-725-0712, farmrchrys@gmail.com
- Jan 28 • **Film: Wonder Women!** The Untold Story of American Superheroines, 207 Monroe Hall, EWU, Cheney, noon, 359-2898, cvines@ewu.edu
- **Housing and Homeless Advocacy Day,** Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, Olympia, www.wliha.org
- Jan 29 • **Michael Eric Dyson,** "Dr. King for the 21st Century," video, CUB Senior Ballroom, WSU, Pullman, 7 p.m., 358-7554, montoyazamora@wsu.edu
- Jan 31 • **Day of Reflection for Therapists and Caretakers,** "Building a Daily Practice: Spiritual Response to Compassion Fatigue," Kent Hoffman, therapist, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., 448-1224, www.ihrc.net
- Feb 5 • **Fig Tree delivery & mailing,** St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m.
- Feb 6 • **Fig Tree Benefit Planning, noon, Board,** 1 p.m. and Development, 3:15 p.m., Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 535-1813

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# Whitworth is place of ministry for new president of Ministers' Fellowship

Roberta Wilburn, whose primary ministry is as associate dean of graduate studies in education and diversity initiatives at Whitworth University, is the first woman to be elected president of the Spokane Ministers' Fellowship, an organization predominantly made up of African-American clergy—but open to all ministers.



Roberta Wilburn leads clergy group, builds diversity at Whitworth.

She is also the first president not to be senior pastor of a church. Along with Whitworth, she is in ministry with her church, Jesus Is the Answer.

A year after she moved to Spokane in 2007, and soon after her husband James Wilburn came, they were invited to attend the Spokane Ministers' Fellowship. As a woman, she was ushered to join the ministers' wives. When they realized she was a minister, they sent her to join the men.

Over time, one or two other women ministers have been involved. Up to 15 attend at 10 a.m., first Saturdays, at Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct.

"I wondered why God wanted me in a male organization, but over time I was accepted, contributed ideas and was appreciated," Roberta said. "I walk by faith. I follow God's vision and God provides, teaching me about faith as I walk."

Both at the Spokane Ministers' Fellowship and at Whitworth, she promotes appreciation for all God's people.

Starting as secretary, she became the first woman vice president in January 2012. This October, she was elected president for a two-year term beginning January 1, 2014. In November, she was elected to finish the term of Pastor Jimmy Pierce, when he left Unspeakable Joy Church to move to Georgia.

"The Spokane Ministers' Fellowship seeks to unify the body of Christ," said Roberta. "It is a forum for ministers to share concerns and find support that benefits their churches."

They do clothing drives, and hold Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve Watch Night, Holy Week and Easter Sunrise services. Congregations support each other, too. They also promote Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Juneteenth, celebrating the emancipation from slavery on June 19th.

"We are also working to rebuild collaborative relationships with the East Central Community Center. We invite speakers to talk on issues, such as housing, racism and legislation," she said.

Roberta and James, as members of Jesus Is the Answer, have both served in leadership for three

years under the leadership of Pastor Shon Davis. She and James, who is an achievement gap intervention specialist at Lewis and Clark High School and president of the NAACP in Spokane, have been married 16 years.

Key pieces of her ministry at Whitworth are fostering appreciation and respect for cultural differences; advocating for social justice, and understanding the role of spirituality in life. Given changes in societal demographics, she said she prepares teachers, counselors and administrators to be "culturally competent."

"Many Whitworth students had little opportunity to interact with people of other cultures when they first came here," Roberta said.

So Whitworth offers classes on cultural awareness and has an annual International Education Week Forum. Every fall, Japanese students come, so students interact with peers in Japan without going to Japan. Whitworth also requires that the January term includes cultural experiences.

Working with graduate students, Roberta said that because their families can't go abroad, Whitworth provides cultural experiences in the classroom and community.

She believes God led her to Whitworth as the place for her to

serve, because "people at Whitworth love their jobs, love God, and treat people well," she said. "Also its mission to honor God, follow Christ and serve humanity aligns with my core values. Whitworth cares about students personally.

"It encourages me to integrate my faith and teaching," said Roberta, who is a professor as well as an administrator.

After high school in Brooklyn, N.Y., she studied education and art at Mt. Holyoke College, graduating in 1975.

At George Washington University in Washington D.C., she earned a master's in 1976, and a doctoral degree in education in 1982. She also earned a doctor of theology and Christian counseling degree in 2007 at Jacksonville Theological Seminary.

Roberta grew up Methodist. Her first teaching experience was Sunday school. In Memphis, where she lived 15 years before coming to Spokane, she joined Abundant Grace Fellowship, a nondenominational church.

She had a spiritual awakening there through studying the Bible

and realizing the importance of reaching out to the community.

"Christian ministry is not just to be within four walls of a church, but, like Jesus' ministry, it is to meet needs of people," she said.

As an elder at that church, Roberta developed ministries such as one to single parents and one to prevent teen pregnancies. The ordained her, and then she began seminary studies.

"We are to know God's word and apply it to our lives so others apply it to their lives to be all God wants them to be," she said.

In higher education since 1980, she followed God's leading to go to Memphis from Washington, D.C., when she was no longer married and was a single mother with a young daughter.

There, she chaired the education department and directed international programs at Lemoyn-Owen College.

She developed international women's empowerment grants for students to have experiences in Mexico and Africa. She learned of other cultures through Lemoyne projects in Senegal, South Africa and the Dominican Republic.

"I have learned to value people regardless of culture or race, to be sure people are treated with dignity. We need to be sure all

children understand and appreciate diversity. Often in school, children of color feel isolated and alienated," Roberta said.

"If teachers, counselors and administrators are culturally sensitive, appreciate differences and see differences as differences not as deficiencies, they can help people they work with feel comfortable," said Roberta.

"God teaches me more about faith as I walk with God. It has not always been easy," she said.

"Through tough times surviving breast cancer twice, God opened my eyes to ministry to help others walk through challenges," she said. "I look at problems from a Christian perspective."

For a while, Roberta was the only African-American faculty member at Whitworth University. Now the diversity of faculty and students is increasing.

"If there are more faculty of color, more students of color will come," she said.

"At Whitworth, we promote awareness about cultural, ethnic, socio-economic and gender diversity, and appreciation of individual differences regardless. Everyone has worth and value as God sees us," Roberta said.

For information, call 777-4603 or email [rwilburn@whitworth.edu](mailto:rwilburn@whitworth.edu).

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