

35TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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Micah 4:4

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

Environmentalists use range of tactics

By Mary Stamp

In its efforts to protect and restore the Inland Northwest's forests, water and wildlife, the Lands Council uses a range of tactics—educating, advocating, protesting, planting, researching, collaborating and sometimes filing lawsuits.

"Different approaches are useful in different times. That requires being thoughtful about how and when to use them," said Mike Petersen, executive director of the Lands Council.

He summed up recent efforts:

To stop three dam projects, it relocates beavers to build wetlands.

To restore land and protect rivers, it plants thousands of trees.

To involve children, it teaches environmental education in schools.

To protest the oil and coal terminals, it activates people to go to hearings.

To protect gray wolves, it suggests opening more meadow space for cattle.

To protect forests, it collaborates with interested parties to find mutual solutions.

To clean up PCBs, it conducts research on using fungi to eat PCBs.

"Collaboration is possible if we are on a level playing field," Mike



Art in Mike Petersen's office depicts the beaver project.

said. "With oil pipelines or coal plants, collaboration is not possible, so we activate the public and even litigate to shut down efforts. We need to problem solve for every situation to decide which tactic is right."

Environmentalist John Osborn and other physicians at Sacred Heart and Deaconess Medical centers started the Lands Council in 1983 to protect wildlands, forest ecosystems, rivers and lakes in North Idaho and Eastern Washington through citizen action. Its Get the Lead Out Campaign helped influence the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to designate the Silver Valley Superfund Site to reduce or eliminate lead and toxins from mining.

To protect forests by decreasing or ending road building and clear-cutting in the Coeur d'Alene Basin, the council challenged the U.S. Forest Service, Mike said.

Because the 1974 National Environmental Policy Act established a process for citizens to challenge timber sales, The Lands Council appealed timber sales in court. It also helped start one of the first Forest Watch programs in the U.S., training citizens to call for

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Lutheran Community Services guides people from trauma to healing, justice

Along with guiding people who have experienced trauma to healing, safety, hope and justice, Lutheran Community Services (LCS) Northwest has started two new programs for elders in the Spokane area and is now implementing Washington State's Integrated Managed Care (IMC).

As executive director of the Inland Northwest districts of LCS since July, Erin Williams Hueter coordinates the work of 90 staff who, she said, "plant seeds to help people grow."

LCS offers behavioral health and community support services

primarily for troubled youth, struggling families, unaccompanied minor refugees and victims of sexual assault and other crimes.

Now it is also addressing elder health care and elder abuse in partnership with the Community Health Association of Spokane (CHAS), which has opened the North Central Clinic, and through the Elder Justice Project, which has started the Elder Abuse Task Force.

LCS is involved with the clinic because Christ Clinic donated its facilities at 914 W. Carlisle Ave. to LCS when it closed in 2017 after 25 years of serving low-income

people. The CHAS clinic opened Dec. 10 to provide coordinated primary care—with physicians, nurses, nutritionists, social workers and a pharmacy—for people 60 years and older.

Erin said that for people experiencing elder abuse, such as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles or others, it's hard to find help, because they often are not legally considered victims of domestic violence and frequently do not qualify as disabled for Adult Protective Services.

Elder abuse includes interpersonal intimidation, financial control or theft, or physical violence.

"Elders can be overwhelmed by being referred to places that can't help them," Erin said.

The Elder Abuse Task Force hopes to identify people when they first seek help, such as through the North Central Clinic and senior centers.

Another new dynamic for LCS staff is implementing Integrated Managed Care. It began Jan. 1 for people who have Medicaid health insurance in Spokane County.

Continued on page 6

Regional, local leaders link faith and advocacy

Sixteen regional and local faith and advocacy leaders will speak and lead workshops for the 2019 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 26, 2019, at Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, 115 N. Raymond.

Focusing discussion on the theme for the gathering, "Inform, Inspire, Involve," the Rev. Jim CastroLang, Eastern Washington representative on the Faith Action Network (FAN) Board and member of the planning committee, will moderate a panel discussion on how religious grounding helps generate policies that improve lives and society.

Panelists are Bishop Gretchen Rehberg of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane since March 2017, the Rev. Walter Kendricks, pastor of Morningstar Baptist Church since 2013 and president of the Spokane Ministers' Fellowship, DR Michel, a member of the Colville Confederated Tribes who is executive director of the Upper Columbia United Tribes, and Bishop Emeritus William Skylstad of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane.

Workshops will deal with issues of health care, the environment, gun safety, immigration, taxes and homelessness.

• Paul Benz, co-director of the Faith Action Network, will discuss health care and nutrition.

• Jessica Zimmerle, program and outreach director of Earth Ministry Washington Interfaith Power and Light, will offer insights on environmental issues coming before the Washington State Legislature. She supports the Greening Congregations and Colleague Connection programs, engaging the

Continued on page 2

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Faith communities challenge leaders on climate

Faith communities challenged world leaders at the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24).

“At COP24, there is a great responsibility for politicians to get the necessary agreements to save the planet. This is a political and moral task that goes far beyond any national border,” said Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), on Dec. 14, eve of the closure of the United Nations climate conference in Katowice, Poland. “We know what we need to do and how to do it. Now is the time to do it,” he said.

On Dec 13, the Rev. Henrik Grape, coordinator of the WCC’s Working Group on Climate Change, read a statement of faith communities: “Humanity stands today in front of the largest global challenge we ever have seen, and a huge transition must be made if we want to overcome it. We come together from different faith communities at COP24 to underline that climate change cannot be met if it does not involve justice,” he said.

The faith communities said the urgency of the situation gives humanity only a decade to turn emissions down to keep the temperature rise under 1.5°C, but that requires a huge, fast transition as a matter of justice and human rights.

“Many communities are at the forefront of destructive climate change impacts—losing livelihoods, homes, lands, identities, cultures and lives. Our faiths demand that we act to protect the vulnerable and as caretakers of Mother Earth,” says the statement.

The document also urges “radical mitigation and adaptation measures, technological innovations, profound lifestyle changes, supportive and well-coordinated national and global policies and institutional arrangements, as well as deep transformations in the way we invest, produce and consume.”

In Katowice, the WCC Working Group on Climate Change worked with ecumenical and interfaith partners to stress the moral and ethical dimension of climate change.

Respect is key to peace education

Respect for the other lies at the heart of peace education and was a key thread through a debate entitled “Education for Peace in a multi-religious world” held Dec. 10, the 2018 World Human Rights Day at the United Nations Office in Geneva.

The Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue and the WCC held the debate on the impact of peace education to promote mutual understanding and cooperative relations between people and societies. The event focused on how education for peace can engage different stakeholders to counter violent, extremist narratives, build peaceful and inclusive societies and promote universally shared values.

WCC and UN human rights declaration both 70

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the WCC and of the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR).

Recalling its historic role in formulating the “foundational instrument of international human rights law,” the WCC reasserts its crucial character, especially today as human rights are increasingly in jeopardy. The WCC reaffirms its commitment to human rights law codified in the UDHR and other human rights treaties.

Communicators seek to counter hate speech

The European Region of the World Association for Christian Communication is embarking on a one-year project to identify and promote strategies to counter online hate speech focused on refugees and migrants. The project, entitled “Communication Rights and Refugees in Europe: Breaking Down the Social Media Divides,” will explore existing attempts to address hate speech, cultural division and political differences online. It will also assess approaches and tools that are most effective. The project seeks to identify good practices and effective tools and strategies for individuals and organizations to promote ethical journalism and inclusive approaches.”

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Legislative conference gives briefings

Continued from page 1
religious community in advocacy on chemical safety, fossil fuels, public lands and more.

- Judy Byron, OP, who is program director with the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center and the Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment, will lead a session on gun safety.

- Ryan Murphy, from Save the Children Action Network, will discuss immigration and family separations. He spent two years volunteering at an orphanage in rural Honduras and teaching second grade at the community school. He experienced an escalation of violence and poverty there.

- Jim Dawson, program director of Fuse Washington’s statewide organizing efforts and leadership development, will address tax and revenue issues.

- Homelessness engagement

and advocacy is the theme for the workshop led by Lyn Vital, an alumna of Myriam’s House, and Liv Larson Andrews, pastor of Salem Lutheran Church, which recently opened its gym as a warming shelter for 60 people.

After lunch will be a briefing on issues coming before the 2019 Washington State Legislature with Paul Benz, co-director of the Faith Action Network (FAN), and Donna Christensen of the Washington State Catholic Conference.

Ryan of Save the Children Network will also give a presentation on tools for effective advocacy.

Miriam Berkman, former president of Congregation Emmanuel, will offer the invocation.

Happy Watkins, pastor emeritus of New Hope Baptist, will give the blessing at lunch.

Mike Denton, conference minister of the Pacific Northwest

United Church of Christ, will lead the closing reflection and prayer.

The event will also include a resource fair with displays brought by various community agencies.

The Fig Tree partners with Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington, Faith Action Network of Washington, Spokane District of the Pacific Northwest United Methodist Conference, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, NAACP Spokane and Earth Ministries to plan the event.

To RSVP, send \$20 (\$15 each for a group of five or more) to The Fig Tree, 1323 S. Perry St., Spokane, WA 99202, or call and pay at the door. For an extra donation, community agencies may bring displays to share in a resource fair.

For information, call 535-1813, email event@thefigtree.org or share the flier at thefigtree.org/FigTreeEvent.pdf.

Temple hosts ‘Meet the Neighbors’ film

Temple Beth Shalom is partnering with the Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience to hold Meet the Neighbors at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 21, at Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th.

Because 2018 is the 800th anniversary of the meeting between the Sultan of Egypt and St. Francis of Assisi in the midst of the Crusades, the program will be a showing of the documentary,

“The Sultan and the Saint,” said Pam Silverstein, who is helping coordinate the event. A panel with Christian, Jewish and Muslim speakers will discuss the film.

For information, call 747-3304.

Two groups plan ‘Why Race Matters’ workshop

Families against Bigotry and the Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience are planning a workshop on “Why Race Matters” from 1 to 8 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 10, at Veradale United Church of Christ, 611 N. Progress Rd.

The event is designed for parents, teens and teachers.

A multi-racial team facilitating the “Why Race Matters” workshop uses the three-part documentary, “Race: The Power of an Illusion” to frame discussion.

Participants will look at the common beliefs about race, advantage and justice; define ex-

plicit and implicit biases, uncover the roots of the race concept in North America and discuss local examples of institutional racism.

The workshop addresses how racial inequities are built into U.S. institutions and structures, why it is important to use a racial equity lens, and what people can do to advance racial equity in their organizations and communities.

The interactive workshop offers participants a collective understanding of the difference between structural, institutional and individual racism. It discusses the difference between equity and

equality, shares examples of institutional racism in the Spokane Region, and suggests solutions and next steps.

The “Why Race Matters” workshops are facilitated through Greater Spokane Progress for regional organizations to develop collective understanding and common language around institutional and structural racism.

Greater Spokane Progress’ Racial Equity Committee offers eight-hour trainings and two-day, four-hour trainings.

For information, call 624-5657 or email anne@spokaneprogress.org.

The Fig Tree is recruiting hosts for benefit tables

The Fig Tree is signing up volunteers to host tables with eight guests each for the annual Benefit Lunch and Benefit Breakfast. It is also seeking event sponsors to help cover costs.

The goal is to have 35 tables, because this year is the 35th anniversary of The Fig Tree newspaper—founded in the spring of 1984 under the former Spokane

Christian Coalition.

“35 Years of Informing, Inspiring and Involving” is the 2019

theme for the video and speakers.

For information, call 535-1813 or email mary@thefigtree.org.

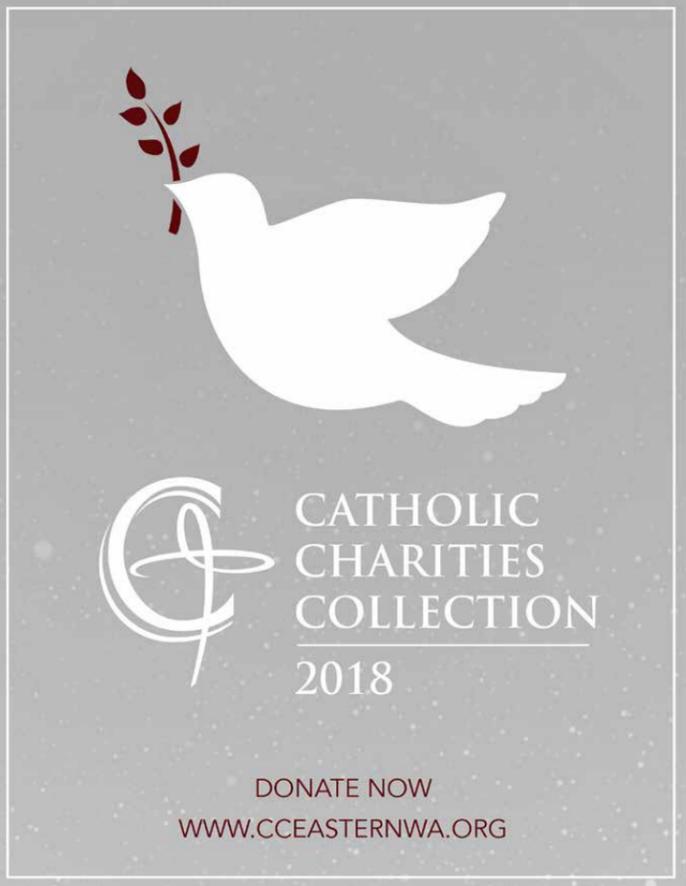
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Editor/Publisher/Photos - Mary Stamp
Directory Editor - Malcolm Haworth
Website Developer - Lorna Kropp
Volunteer Coordinator - Kaye Hult
Editing - Carol Bellinger, Kaye Hult, Inga Jablonsky, Mary Mackay, Dru Powers, Sara Weaver
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Area communities teach, remember, march, share resources for MLK Day

Spokane plans service, rally, march, resource fair

Spokane's Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Service, Rally, March and Resource Fair are planned for Sunday and Monday, Jan. 20 and 21.

Joe Wittwer, who has been lead pastor at Life Center Foursquare Church in Spokane since 1978, will speak at the Commemoration Service at 4 p.m., Sunday, at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana, said the Rev. James Watkins of the Spokane Ministers' Fellowship, which plans that event. The offering from the service will go to the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center.

The Rally and March begin at 10 a.m., and the Resource Fair runs from noon to 2 p.m., on Monday, at the Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.

For information, call 868-0856 or visit mlkspokane.org.

Events commemorate MLK in Moscow

The University of Idaho and the Office of Multicultural Affairs celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and legacy through several events commemorating the values of courage, truth, justice, compassion, dignity, humility and service that defined his character and empowered his leadership, along with the values of universal, unconditional love, forgiveness and nonviolence that empowered his revolutionary spirit.

For information, call 208-885-7716 or email oma@uidaho.edu.

North Idaho 5th graders attend MLK program

The 34th annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 5th Grade Children's Program sponsored by the Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls school districts, the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations

and North Idaho College will be held at 9:30 a.m. and at 11 a.m., Tuesday, Jan. 15, at the North Idaho College Schuler Performing Arts Center.

Nationally recognized educator and actor Stu Cabe will entertain the students with his performance of the story, "Big Elephant and Little Elephant," to teach the principles of kindness, inclusion and care for others. The children will present essays, dance and music.

For information, call 208-765-3932.

Ibram Kendi speaks at WSU in Pullman

New York Times bestselling author and history professor Ibram X. Kendi is the keynote speaker for the 32nd annual Martin Luther King Jr. Program at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 17, at the CUB Senior Ballroom at Washington State University in Pullman.

Ibram, 36, founding director of the Antiracist Research and Policy Center at American University, seeks to reveal the root of racism, which he says is not hate or ignorance, but policies people are not aware are discriminatory.

Born in Queens, New York, he attended Florida A & M and then Temple University in Philadelphia, earning a doctoral degree in African-American studies. Before entering research and academia, he embarked on his journey to address racism.

He is the author of *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* and will publish his third book in 2019.

He has also been the post doctorate fellow at the National Academy of Education, the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis and the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress.

Ibram has taught at Brown University, the University of Chicago, Princeton, Duke, UCLA, SUNY New York, the University of



Church carries sign in 2018 Martin Luther King Jr. Day march.

Florida and currently American University.

In addition to the speaker, WSU's MLK Art for Social Change Competition recognizes the role of art in advancing social justice.

The competition seeks artistic submissions that provoke, challenge and inspire to call attention to the need to recognize the inequality that persists in the world today and the necessity to envision and build a new world. Creative works and submission forms are due Friday, Jan. 11.

For information, call 339-6172 or visit mlk.wsu.edu.

Kazi Joshua presents Walla Walla event

Guest speaker Kazi Joshua will present a community event, "It Is Not Clear What We Shall

Become," in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day at 11 a.m., Monday, Jan. 21, at Walla Walla University Church, 212 SW 4th St. in College Place.

For information, call 527-2273 or email emily.tillotson@wallawalla.edu.

Yakima pastor leads city-wide service, march

The city-wide Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Service will be held at 3 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 20, at Central Lutheran Church, 1602 W. Yakima Ave. in Yakima.

The 34th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Peace March begins at 11:45 a.m., Monday, Jan. 21, at Fifth Ave. and Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Yakima.

The Rev. Robert Trimble, who is helping organize the events,

said that King's birthday should be honored in a special way, because he was more than a great black leader.

"He was a great American leader whose human rights victories have directly benefited millions of women, other people of color, the aged and the handicapped across the country," he said. "His prophetic life should not be dishonored with a weekend of frivolity and good times.

"It should be a day of study, reflection and learning about our historical struggles against racism in this country," he said.

Robert believes that's important in order to confront the growing devastation of the black community and to remember that massive unemployment, segregated housing, separate education, increased militarism and cooperation with the former racist South Africa were issues King addressed.

"The legacy of King isn't just the work he did, but what he left for others to carry on to build on his dream and create the beloved community," he said.

He urges people to honor King's life and work by pledging to do all they can to "make America and the world a place where equality, justice, freedom and peace flourish."

For information, email rtrimble51@gmail.com.

New 24/7 crisis line was activated on January 1

A new 24/7 Regional Behavioral Health Crisis Line was activated on Jan. 1 at the toll free number of (877) 266-1818. It replaces First Call for Help, which was deactivated the same date.

Callers who dial First Call for Help will hear a message that allows them to select the new crisis line for immediate assistance or

the Eastern Washington 2-1-1 resource line for information on community resources.

Frontier Behavioral Health will operate the enhanced 24/7 crisis line to serve Spokane, Adams, Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille and Stevens counties. Mental health clinicians will provide telephone triage and crisis intervention and

make direct referrals to mobile crisis outreach teams including Designated Crisis Responders.

They will also connect people to outpatient behavioral health services. The new crisis line is part of the state's plan to transform publicly-funded healthcare.

For information, call 838-4651 or visit fbhwa.org.

SAVE THE DATES



2019 Deepening Our Roots

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Lands Council's collaboration elicits mutual solutions for interest groups

Continued from page 1
the Forest Service to increase its oversight of the timber industry.

"We told agencies that sediment in creeks increased costs for fisheries and that old-growth-dependent species, such as the fisher, goshawk and spotted owls, were important," he added.

"Because of challenges in the 1980s, timber cuts dropped 80 percent in the region by the late 1990s. In court, we won some and lost some," said Mike, who joined the staff in 1991.

After earning a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering in 1980 at Colorado State University, Mike worked from 1981 to 1983 with Boeing, but he knew that was not for him. He wanted to live in the woods with back-to-the-landers. He found land near Republic, where he and his former wife settled with Tim and Sue Coleman. Tim now heads the Kettle Range Conservation Group.

Mike completed a master's in 1987 in Colorado, but came back to Republic. He was involved with Earth First, a national environmental group engaged in protests, tree sits and road blockades.

Mike, who became director of the Lands Council in 2002, described their different projects and approaches.

• **Restoration ecologist** Joe Cannon works on the beaver dam project.

The Department of Ecology (DOE) planned to build three dams to store water from the Columbia River.

"Concerned about the impact on climate change and losing several beautiful waterfalls and canyons, we suggested the 'beaver solution' to store water in hundreds of places, by relocating 125 beavers to build dozens of beaver dams," he said.

"For eight years, we have trapped beaver families and relocated them, rather than having the Washington State Fish and Wildlife kill them as pests. The legislature passed a law to make it easier to relocate beavers," Mike said.

Beaver dams restore watersheds, which hold water more evenly than large dams, filtering toxins and mitigating floods and fires, he explained. They also increase flood plains, raise the water table and bring back natural vegetation, amphibians and birds.

• **Amanda Parrish oversees** river restoration along with Joe, Kat Hall and Jeff Johnson.

For 12 years, the Lands Council has worked to restore the Spokane River watershed by planting trees and native vegetation along Hangman Creek and the Little Spokane

River, using funds from the DOE and members.

Each year, volunteers plant thousands of Ponderosa pine trees and hardwood trees next to creeks, putting cones around them to protect them from rodents and deer. Volunteers water them every two weeks in the summer.

Amanda has started the River Restoration Project with the Colville National Forest, placing 400 big trees to put meanders back in Le Clerk Creek, which had been straightened when a mill drove logs down it.

• **Through Project Sustain**, Kat teaches environmental education in four middle and high schools each year. The Lands Council rents a bus to take students outdoors to teach about water quality, trees and plants.

• **Laura Ackerman uses** activism to address climate change. Over the last four years, she has involved people in challenging oil and coal terminals in Western Washington. In Spokane, she has organized hearings, meetings and visits to Olympia to stop the terminals.

"Every oil and coal terminal has been stopped. Only one is pending," Mike said.

With 350 Spokane, Laura promoted the Clean Energy Resolution that the Spokane City Council passed this year.

Recently, she organized people to go to Olympia to advocate for restoring the solar rebate, which is about to expire. Meanwhile, she urges people to use it before it expires.

• **In its wildlife protection** program, Chris Bachman seeks alternatives for wolves and cattle. Once killed off, gray wolves returned naturally to Washington 12 years ago. Cattle wandered everywhere, from meadows into forests where wolves killed them.

Chris proposed a solution, recognizing open plains were the native environment for cows.

To create more open areas for cattle to graze and more fire breaks, Chris suggested logging trees growing into meadows and in forest areas near communities, power lines and roads. One rancher is doing a pilot project.

• **To protect wilderness** and old growth, Mike has worked with local environmentalists, including Tim Coleman, to collaborate with the timber industry by forming the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition in 2002.

For 16 years, the Colville, Idaho Panhandle and Kootenai National Forests stopped logging old growth and roadless areas. In exchange, loggers retooled mills and gained access to a steady supply of small-diameter trees, giving

communities stability.

However, the recent draft plan of the Colville National Forest, which had proposed setting aside 200,000 acres for wilderness, set aside just 60,000 acres for wilderness and omitted recommendations made in years of give-and-take by environmental, industrial and recreation interests, Mike said.

• **To reduce PCBs** in the Spokane River, Mike works with the Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force, a collaboration of conservationists, cities, the county, industries, the DOE, Fish and Wildlife and the fish hatchery on the Little Spokane River.

PCBs, once used by utilities and industry, are persistent and toxic in small amounts. They accumulate in fish, wildlife and people, causing health problems, Mike said.

Although PCBs were banned above 50 parts per million (ppm) in 1984, there is a legacy of PCBs in soil that leech into water and volatilize into the air. PCBs are in paint for homes and yellow stripes on roads—produced inadvertently in making pigment at a high temperature, he said. Now the Department of Transportation uses yellow paint with less PCBs.

The Lands Council has learned that fungi that break down dead trees can break down PCBs. So it supports two students and a teacher at North Central High School's science lab testing if the fungi can break down PCBs in sludge.

"It's fascinating to be part of a science project that could clean contaminated sites," said Mike.

The Lands Council continues to be called on to offer its insights and advice on environmental concerns as they emerge, such as on the stormwater drainage in Spokane and on the proposed

silicon plant in Newport.

"We recognize that environmental issues are multifaceted," he said, "and it's possible to find innovative solutions to protect the health of people and nature."

For information, call 838-4912, email mpetersen@landscouncil.org or visit landscouncil.org.

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Dr. David Tauben, M.D., is a board-certified physician at the Center for Pain Relief at UWMC-Roosevelt and chief of pain medicine for UW Medicine. He is a UW professor of anesthesiology and pain medicine. He is also director of medical student education in pain medicine and medical director for UW TelePain.



Elementary school teacher volunteers to make soup for Soup Kitchen

Two weeks after Calvary Baptist Church started a Soup Kitchen on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2009, in the former parsonage beside the church, Betty Dumas, a church member and elementary school teacher, asked its founder Peggie Troutt, "How can you call it a soup kitchen if you don't make soup?"

By the next month, Betty was making the soup and then became assistant manager. She continued teaching full time.

"I decided to be the soup lady, but I didn't know how to make soup," she said. "I went home and looked in some cookbooks to learn how to make it."

The Soup Kitchen started with six guests, but now an average of 130 are served from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays.

That means there is need for more soup, especially given that some guests may eat six bowls.

Betty is continually learning and finding recipes based on the food they have or ingredients she buys.

"Sometimes I make medley soup from whatever is left over. I put it in a blender," she said. "It's different all the time. It may be potato soup, corn soup, bean soup, chicken rice or chicken noodle soup. If they like it and rave, I make it again."

"It also depends what food we have in storage. We have plenty of beans. Sometimes I go to the store and buy some cream of chicken soup to add to what I make," she said.

When she goes on a one-week vacation, she makes soup ahead.

Both Betty and her late husband had worked in restaurants when they were younger. At one point, she suggested they open a



Betty Dumas sets out her soup serving station in a doorway.

restaurant. He said no, so "this is my restaurant, working as a volunteer."

Betty comes at 7:30 a.m., to have the soup ready when the other cooks come at 8 a.m. to prepare home-cooked meals.

"We pray before we open the doors," said Peggie, telling that the idea for the soup kitchen came to her as a vision. When she shared it with her pastor, the Rev. C. W. Andrews, he said he had had a similar vision for 16 years.

She did research and wrote up a proposal she took to the church's quarterly meeting.

"It's amazing what God has

helped us do with Second Harvest food and donations from people in the church and community," Peggie said.

"We serve thousands of meals quarterly to our honored guests," she said. "We would not be able to do this without the support of the church, community, family and friends."

Betty added that "the Lord said, 'When I was hungry, you fed me. When I was in jail, you visited me.' Everyone who comes appreciates the meal. Some give \$1 to \$20, some thank us. Preparing the meal is what God wants us to do."

"God says we are all the same."

worked at school part of the day while attending college. After graduating, she worked a year at Sheridan Elementary School and then was offered a position at Finch.

Now as a volunteer who is working one-on-one in an office with children teachers send, Betty continues her love of teaching and passion for children

Recently, she helped a kindergarten child who did not want to come to school. After she met with him a while, he said he loved school.

"Some students need attention they do not get in the classroom as teachers move the classes along to keep up with the curriculum," said Betty, recalling that she used to work with children in small groups. Some who were more able could do assignments on their own. She worked with low-performing children until they were at grade level.

"Now teachers send children to me for 'the Dumas touch.' The students are grateful. I work for them, not the district, the teachers or their parents," she said.

She meets with about 16 children a week.

"I want to be a light for the Lord, to let people see Jesus through me. Jesus' light shines through me and leads me to people I need to be with. I feel in my spirit what God wants me to do and say," said Betty, who previously directed Calvary's youth, young adult and men's choirs, and the main choir, which is now called The Voices of Calvary.

"If we can help a brother or sister, we are to do it," she said, whether it's with hungry people at the soup kitchen, with children needing help to improve learning skills or anywhere in the community.

For information, call 747-8793.

Whitworth, Diocese receive Thriving in Ministry Initiative grants

Whitworth University and the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane each recently received Thriving in Ministry Initiative grants from the Lilly Endowment.

Whitworth's \$1 million grant will help establish a new program called Third Way Ministry: How Church Planters Thrive in Ministry in a Post-Christendom/Post-Christian Context.

The Episcopal Diocese's grant of \$876,000 over five years will be used to develop training for clergy and congregations in the area, where many congregations are small and many clergy are raised up within congregations and trained locally.

Lilly's Thriving in Ministry initiative has provided \$70 million in grants to U.S. religious organizations as they create or strengthen programs to help new pastors be trained in leadership by experienced clergy as mentors.

Whitworth's grant focuses on training church planters—people who start new congregations. Four pastors experienced in church planting and Whitworth's

Office of Church Engagement will recruit future church planters and embed them in congregations.

Whitworth expects to have 20 churches and church planters the first year, 30 more the second year, 40 the third year and 60 the final year. It will begin in Spokane County and expand throughout the Inland Northwest.

Whitworth's program will be for churches of many denominations. Usually church planting is done by megachurches or national organizations that launch new churches without consulting other groups doing the same thing, said Terry McGonigal, director of the Office for Church Engagement.

"New churches are the most effective in reaching unchurched people," he said.

Bishop Gretchen Rehberg of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane said that part of the training will be through the annual College of Congregational Development, which has been held for the last five years for one week in August for two summers at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John in Spokane.

It is open to all denominations.

The training draws teams of pastors and lay leaders from congregations to gain self-awareness skills, small-group skills and whole-system understandings. Between summers, the teams do readings and work on projects, she said.

Whitworth and the Episcopal

Diocese are among 78 organizations in 29 states from mainline and evangelical Protestants, Roman Catholics and Orthodox churches taking part in the initiative.

For information, call 777-4547 or 624-3191, or email tmcgonigal@whitworth.edu or gretchenr@spokanediocese.org.

FAITH ACTION NETWORK
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Interfaith Advocacy Days

Jan 26 - Spokane Legislative Conference
9 am-3 pm Spokane Valley UMC

Feb 9 - Yakima Advocacy Day
10 am-2 pm, Wesley UMC

Feb 14 - Interfaith Advocacy Day in Olympia
9 am-3 pm, The United Churches of Olympia and Capitol campus

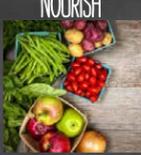


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Friday to Sunday, Feb. 1-3, 2019

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author of

- *The Essential Kabbalah*
- *Zohar: Annotated & Explained*
- *God and the Big Bang: Discovering Harmony between Science and Spirituality*

Introduces some central themes of the Jewish mystical tradition in an age of extremism.

7:15 p.m. Friday
Catered dinner followed by discussion on Shekhinah (the feminine aspect of God) in the context of Shabbat.

7 p.m. Saturday
"Raising the Sparks: Finding God in the Material World"

10 a.m. Sunday
"God and the Big Bang: Discovering Harmony between Science and Spirituality"

\$54 non-member fee

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www.spokanetbs.org

Hearing and sharing stories of trauma and healing builds hope

Continued from page 1

In addition to using digital records to help therapists and physicians communicate, physical and mental health care bills will be submitted through managed care contracts with Molina, CHAS, Amerigroup and Coordinated Care.

“The goal is to link physical and behavioral health care and have electronic health records rather than paper charts,” said Erin.

Computer records put a person’s treatment—such as for depression or diabetes—on one form so doctors and therapists will know about each other’s prescriptions and treatment plans.

“Depression links to physical health, so this moves from isolating care for each condition in separate silos to help a person be healthy overall,” she said.

Better Health Together with Empire Health Foundation is coordinating regional managed care.

For LCS, it has meant reorganizing internal records so computers, databases and financial staff were ready. LCS is also adding a care coordinator to connect therapists with physical health providers, Erin said.

“We are in the first group in Eastern Washington for the transition. The next group is in August,” she said. “However, we are not the first region to adopt Integrated Managed Care. Early adopters were Southwest and North Central Washington, so we can learn from the experiences of those regions,” she said.

Erin said LCS’ ongoing programs provide people in crisis means to restore their hope, health and safety.

“Hope comes as LCS embraces people in the midst of their adversity, hears their stories and helps them find healing on the individual level, and then on the community level through seeking justice, educating others and giving back,” she said.

“People come to us during what may be the worst days of their lives. They wonder if they can ever be safe. Our victim advocates help them stay safe and move into the long healing journey,” Erin said.

That journey may involve a weekly commitment to counseling to talk through difficult things.

Clients inspire Erin as they move through the healing process.

“As healing begins, we look at safety, justice and community issues for children, youth and adults. Some want to heal quietly on their own. For others, societal problems that led to their trauma may mean they want to heal through justice in court.



Erin Williams Hueter promoted to executive director of Lutheran Community Services

Some want to make an impact in schools, family, the community or society, such as by joining in a women’s march, nonprofit fundraiser or political action, or by creating art or sharing their stories to educate others,” she added.

Erin described the programs.

• **Child Welfare** includes Family Outreach Crisis Intervention Services—with a 30-day diversion program to prevent teen suicides—and Wraparound Intensive Services for youth with behavioral or mental health challenges. In wraparound services, teams of care coordinators, therapists, parent and peer supporters work with youth in their homes, schools or jobs. There are three teams. Each serves 10 youth. Domestic foster care is offered through foster homes licensed and supported by LCS.

• **Unaccompanied Minor** Refugee Foster Care is for children separated from families because of war, terrorism or natural disasters. LCS just welcomed the 26th child since it began. Before changes to federal immigration policies after the 2016 election, LCS had expected to serve 60 children.

• **The Sexual Assault** and Family Trauma Response Center offers behavioral health care. Therapists see clients at the LCS building at 210 W. Sprague, at the Green House in Deer Park, at Cheney schools and the Episcopal Church in Cheney.

• **Outpatient Mental Health** Care focuses on trauma recovery.

• **Victim Advocacy** and Education programs serve crime victims, 60 percent of whom are children; adult refugees, who were subject to torture; victims of sexual assault, and families experiencing abuse.

Erin started work with Lutheran Community Services 17 years ago as an intake therapist with the outpatient mental health

program. In 2012, she began working with the Victim Advocacy and Education program.

For sexual assault victims help is free. They may call the 24-hour sexual assault hotline. Advocates go to be with them when they check in at the hospital, file police reports, meet with detectives, go to trial and make victim impact statements.

“At the macro level, we help the system better respond to victims through advocacy to change policies and public education to increase awareness,” said Erin, who meets with the Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council, which includes the YWCA, prosecutors, victims and witnesses. “We urge the criminal justice system to hear victims’ voices.

Growing up in the Mead area of Spokane, Erin had “a social-justice oriented childhood” with both parents being social workers—her father for Partners with Families with Children, Goodwill and the state, and her mother, now at Community-Minded Enterprises, with St. Anne’s Child and Family Center, the North Wall Child Development Center and the state child-care licensing department.

Erin studied social work at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Ore., graduating in 1998. She worked with a domestic violence organization in Oregon before moving back to Spokane in 1999 to be a domestic violence advocate with the YWCA and then with the Spokane Domestic Violence Consortium.

“Victim advocacy is grassroots, meeting with people where they are and helping them grow and flower,” she said. “Human services in Spokane have many loving people who want to make Spokane better.”

Although now in administra-

tion, she stays connected to work with clients by attending team meetings so she can share their stories as she connects with politicians, donors and survivors to help “make the community a more loving, healthy and safe place.”

In her work, Erin visits many Lutheran churches. She likes experiencing their different styles of community and their approaches to mission as she seeks to build strong connections with them.

Hundreds of volunteers help make LCS work happen—from the crisis line to organizing benefits, she said.

“It’s exciting that so many people come together to help each other out,” Erin said.

For information, call 747-8224 or email ewilliams@lcsnw.org.

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We welcome you to join us for reflection and contemplation.

All events held at The Ministry Institute (TMI) Chapel
405 E Sinto, 2 blocks north of St. Aloysius Church

Three Providence Health Care staff take medical services to Guatemala

Three Providence Health Care staff from Spokane joined 44 other Providence staff to provide health care to poor people in Guatemala from Sept. 21 to 29.

They came from around the United States to provide services through a Faith in Practice short-term medical mission.

Oscar Haupt, business manager of the Providence Adult Day Center near Holy Family Hospital, Annalee Goetzman, a surgical nurse, and Darryl Duvall, a certified registered nurse anesthetist, volunteered at Hospital Hilario Galindo in Retalhuleu, Guatemala.

In 2019, Faith in Practice is offering 40 short-term mission trips to Guatemala. Each year, 1,300 medical professionals and support personnel from across the United States and the world pay their own expenses to travel to Guatemala.

Teams work beside 1,000 Guatemalan volunteers and treat more than 25,000 patients a year, people who would otherwise have no access to medical care.

Oscar, who went to translate, grew up and earned a degree in marketing in Santiago, Chile, came to the United States for further studies, including a bachelor's in psychology from Weber State University and master's in social work from the University of Utah in 1990.

He moved to Spokane in 1992, worked for seven years with Spokane Mental Health and was a social worker several years with the Providence Visiting Nurses Association, before starting as manager at the Adult Day Health Center in 2012.

Annalee, who grew up in Coeur d'Alene, went to nursing school at Boise State University and was a nurse for 13 years in Boise. She then joined a travel nurse company for a couple of assignments, spent two years at Kootenai Health in Coeur d'Alene and one year at Bonner General in Sandpoint. For the past three years, she has been a circulating nurse at the Sacred Heart Doctors Building day surgery area in Spokane.

Previously, she has helped build a Habitat for Humanity house in Tijuana with a church team and one in Coeur d'Alene during her high school years.

Darryl, who grew up in Wisconsin, trained and worked in New York City and Boston before moving to Spokane in 2014.

Providence has worked with the Faith in Practice program in Guatemala for 23 years. Retalhuleu is one of several places medical teams go. It's a remote village 120 miles southwest of Antigua, Guatemala.

"Providence encourages caregivers to participate in mission trips," said Oscar. "It also has programs in Mexico, where people go to build homes."

He said Providence facilitates these missions because of its ties to the Sisters of Providence. A group of sisters left Montreal 175 years ago on a mission to serve in Vancouver. They wound up serving in Valparaiso, Chile. Later, five sisters came on a mission to the Washington Territories and founded the Mother Joseph Province.

Annalee, who attends Community United Methodist Church in Coeur d'Alene, said that as staff of Providence Health Services, she tries to follow the mission state-



Annalee Goetzman, right, escorts patient carrying linens into the operating room.
Photo courtesy of Annalee Goetzman



By translating, Oscar Haupt, left, facilitated medical care.
Photo courtesy of Oscar Haupt

ment, which is "to reveal God's love for all, especially the poor and vulnerable, through compassionate service."

"The mission of the Sisters of Providence was to serve where there was a need," said Oscar. "It is to serve in ministry where the need is, especially among the poor and vulnerable."

Both Oscar and Annalee learned about the opportunity on the Providence website and applied. They did not know each other previously, but met at the airport, identifying each other because they wore blue "Faith in Practice" T-shirts.

Oscar said they were on a team with physicians, nurses, nurse

anesthetists, anesthesiologists, lab technicians, physical and occupational therapists, pharmacists and translators from Alaska, Washington, Oregon and California. Ten volunteers went to do wheelchair assembly.

Darryl screened patients prior to administering anesthesia in the operating room—asking about smoking history, body weight and allergies, and verifying any underlying conditions such as diabetes, lung or heart disease—to be certain they would do well in the surgery and have a safe recovery. He then administered anesthesia to the screened patients.

"Everyone on the team was essential to be sure the patient

would be safe," Oscar said.

One young man came in confident. When he saw the IV needle, he stiffened. Oscar helped him do breathing and self-hypnosis to relax.

Some nurses prepared patients for surgery, some were with them in surgery, and some were with them afterwards.

"In translating for the team, I saw the continuum of care," he said.

Annalee was impressed with how grateful patients and their families were.

They came at 6 a.m. and waited all day in a cold room in paper-thin nightgowns to be seen by the doctor and have their surgeries. They had no food or drink all day while they waited, but did not complain.

Annalee said operating rooms are cold in the U.S. and in Guatemala because the big operating room lights get hot to prevent bacterial growth.

"It is so comforting to be able to offer a warm blanket here, but this wasn't available in Guatemala," she said.

"Patients carried their own linens from the pre-op holding area to the operating room. They would lay on a cold bed with no warm blanket, and still remained grateful. No one complained," she said.

Darryl added, "I will never forget how appreciative the patients in Guatemala were for the care we were administering to them in the OR. They put their utmost trust in our hands, quite a different perspective than what we as caregivers experience in the U.S."

"I have worked in a number of different health care settings as a nurse anesthetist, but this was the most challenging and rewarding," he said.

Two girls who waited much of the day were happy after the chaplain gave them stuffed animals, said Oscar, who also translated the chaplain's prayers and blessings.

The team did 89 surgeries—such as laparoscopic hernia repairs, gall bladder removals, lipoma removals, adenoids, tonsillectomies, facial mass removals, nasal reconstructions, hysterectomies, ovarian cyst removals and bladder repairs.

They did 92 other procedures, such as wound care, physical therapy and providing much needed wheelchairs.

They also did assessments to prepare other patients for another team that would be coming two weeks later.

"We are each a piece in a chain of medical care that continues," said Oscar, who sees such mission service as a part of his faith.

He had not done such volunteer service previously, but was glad to help by translating.

"It changed my life. It really seemed to be about health care," he said.

Oscar was surprised that he was not the only one on the team who was born outside the U.S.

One surgeon, who was born in Kashmir and practices in California, spoke with families in a caring, compassionate way, giving them hope," Oscar said.

On Sunday, when they were not to do surgeries, a Korean-born surgeon saw a woman who needed surgery right away and took her into the operating room.

Others on the team were born in South Africa, Iraq, Ecuador, Uruguay and Guatemala.

"All were willing to give of their time. Each paid \$1,000 for air fare and raised \$1,000 for supplies needed for the surgeries," Oscar said.

"I always wanted to be involved in a medical mission, so I'm glad to be working for a hospital that supports these teams," said Annalee.

Neither Annalee nor Oscar had been on a medical mission before. Both would like to go again.

For information, visit faithinpractice.org.

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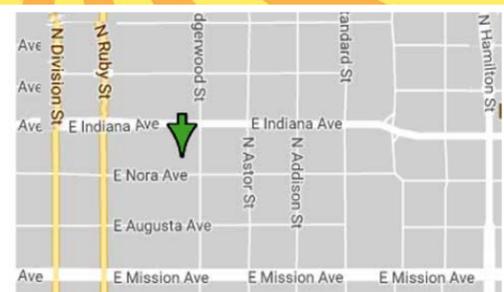


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A community's art events is good for culture and for business

By Kaye Hult

Because art can bring “vibrancy and coolness” to a community, Ali Shute, executive director of the Coeur d’Alene Arts and Culture Alliance since August 2015, said that art can generate good for the community and the economy.

“Art means business,” she said as she promotes to the business community how art has an impact on the greater Coeur d’Alene community.

Based on using the calculator of Americans for the Arts, it generates \$1 million for the local business community, including through partnerships the alliance has with 25 nonprofits, she said.

“The little things fill me up and keep me going,” she said, “things like seeing children flourish on Kids Draw Day, the pride of those who created the Art Walk Bags, or the response of the elders to the Music for the Wise programs.”

Ali said the alliance seeks to promote and establish visual, performing, written and cultural arts and education for the arts in the Coeur d’Alene area. It also provides networking opportunities for those involved and seeking to be involved in the arts.

Most events the alliance offers are free, with support coming from membership, sponsorships and grants.

Ali listed programs of the Arts and Culture Alliance: Music for the Wise, ArtWalk, Music Walk, the Riverstone Concert series, Artist Studio Tour, Art from the Heart, Arts Buzz and Kids Draw Architecture.

She discussed how the events have an impact on the community.

• From January through April, Music for the Wise brings local musicians to retirement centers, nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Kootenai County.

“We pay the musicians to perform with funding from Rotary and the Post Falls Kiwanis and an anonymous donor,” she said.

Ali said music is important for older people, touching them in ways nothing else can.

“Music is more than intellectual. It’s physical and intuitive,” she said. “For example, an elderly person who has serious dementia will suddenly begin dancing and singing to a song he or she remembers. Music triggers deep memories inside of us. It’s powerful.”

“We scheduled 20 concerts a year ago. This year, we hope to do two more,” she said.



Ali Shute shows student art note cards and an ArtWalk bag.

• The alliance is known for its family-friendly ArtWalk, which takes place from 5 to 8 p.m., on second Fridays, April through December. There are displays of local and nationally acclaimed artists in participating galleries, shops, restaurants and businesses.

• Music Walk is newer. It is at 5 p.m., on second Fridays from January through March. Local musicians and singers/songwriters perform in various venues. In 2017, Expedia picked up on it and began publicizing Music Walk. Ali, the alliance’s sole staff person, and the 17-member board scrambled to build it up.

“Last year, we held Music Walk at 13 venues,” she said. “This year, we hope for 15 or 16, from restaurants to galleries to coffee shops to retail stores.”

• The Riverstone Concert series draws a crowd that is growing each year, with up to 500 attending some of the 2018 concerts. It is held from 6 to 8 p.m., Thursdays in July and August at Riverstone Park.

“We schedule various music genres,” she said. The series has highlighted Coeur d’Alene Summer Theater show tunes, rhythm and blues, reggae and big band. The Coeur d’Alene Symphony has played. Mandy Fer and the Dave McGraw Band from the Puget Sound area have shared their music. They recorded an

album off the grid, using solar and wind power.

• The Artist Studio Tour last year included 15 studios and featured 34 artists.

• During October, which is National Arts and Humanities Month, the alliance helps Coeur d’Alene celebrate Art from the Heart, which raises community awareness of local opportunities.

One such event, Art in the Making, brings in a live model, along with 12 or 13 artists using a variety of mediums. The public watches them work.

The Arts and Culture Alliance provides other educational opportunities.

• Arts Buzz is from 9 to 10 a.m., first Fridays in the Chamber of Commerce conference room. Arts organizations, musicians, artists, performers and others participate.

“It provides a place for people and organizations to share events and talents, to seek and give advice,” said Ali.

• Through Kids Draw Architecture, young artists work with architects and landscape designers. They learn the cultural and historic significance of what they are drawing, she said.

In 2017, students created a 2018 calendar using drawings from the Fort Ground area of Coeur d’Alene. This year, they traveled to Cataldo Mission and used their

drawings to create note cards.

“This past Kids Draw Day, I watched 36 children board shuttle buses at the Human Rights Education Institute to travel to the Cataldo Mission,” Ali said. “Afterwards, parents said it made a difference to their children.”

• Twelve young adults with physical and/or mental challenges learned life skills through a project put on by Idaho Parents Unlimited (IPUL) in conjunction with Idaho Vocational Rehabilitation. Every year, they create an ArtWalk carry-all canvas bag with two handles. She said it went so well that they plan to work together on 2019 bags.

Those participating do their own drawings. They then make block prints and print the bags. Artists sign their designs.

“ArtWalk is sponsored by STCU, which came for an April unveiling of the bags,” she explained. “Some of the young people spoke, including one with a voice box. They were proud of their drawings.”

“It reminded me of what I did when I was working for the Americorps/Vista program at St Vincent de Paul. I developed Art on the Edge, a program for at-risk youth, to help them problem-solve through art. It’s still going on. It reminded me of what art does to people inside.”

Ali said that art “frees our expectations and makes us more flexible in our thinking. It’s a great problem-solving tool. It opens up possibilities.”

At 5:30 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 16, Coeur d’Alene Arts and Culture Alliance has their yearly fundraiser, Mardi Gras Krewe d’Alene.

“It’s about arts, culture and festivities,” she said. “The Coeur d’Alene Plaza Shops are decorated to feel like the streets of New Orleans.”

Activities include a cook-off by up to 10 area restaurants, street entertainment, a drag queen show and a raffle, including tickets for a trip for two to New Orleans.

“One board member grew up in New Orleans,” she said. “She explained that Mardi Gras is not one wild day, but the culmination of the Carnival celebration that begins on Twelfth Night and lasts throughout the Christian season of

Epiphany, ending when Lent begins. The season includes family events, such as picnics and more than 100 parades.

As executive director, Ali brings together her understanding of working with nonprofits and running a small business.

“Art has been part of my life since the beginning,” she said.

She grew up in Virginia with a mother who was an artist and a father who was attending law school. Her mother instilled tidbits of wisdom like: “Good art won’t match your sofa.”

By that she meant that the point of art is to elicit a response, not just be décor for a house.

“The response it elicits may not be the response that is desired, but getting a response means success,” Ali said.

When she was 19, she moved to Coeur d’Alene with \$15 in her pocket. She came because a friend lived here.

Ali attended North Idaho College and received a commercial art degree in 1996. She has been a graphic designer for 25 years.

For information, call 208-292-1629 or email ali@artsandculturecda.org.

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Interfaith ties locally and globally enrich face-to-face and on Internet

Skyler Oberst, who founded the Meet the Neighbors programs for interfaith understanding in Spokane, filled a year off with global travel, interfaith encounters and networking with young people.

He attended the Parliament of World Religions from Nov. 1 to 7 in Toronto. Several others from Spokane also attended—Jane Simmons, Hank and Joan Boeckling of Unity Spiritual Center, and Emily Geddes of Spokane FAVs, which covers religion news online.

With the Next Generation Task Force, he helped plan the 2018 gathering. Three years ago, he recruited, trained and led a group of 200 from Spokane to the Parliament of World Religions in Salt Lake City. About 8,000 attended this year, and 10,000 in 2015.

Skyler found the Parliament of World Religions to be “a beautiful oasis for a week of interfaith cooperation, celebration and learning.”

During this year’s Parliament, he led a workshop on the “Meet the Neighbors” approach to building interfaith understanding by having people visit different faith communities, experience worship rites, learn about the faiths and meet with people. In addition, he led a workshop on use of social media as a tool for interfaith engagement.

Two things stood out to him at the Parliament this year. One was the number of young people attending. Skyler was charged to involve youth. During the Next Generation plenary on the last day, leaders passed the baton to the next generation,” he said.

Second, the Parliament is traditionally a place where people seek like-minded individuals. Interfaith leaders celebrate and network, train to develop sustainable programs and “build a scaffold for interfaith work on the local level,” Skyler said.

Young people attended Parliament sessions during the day and then continued to work by meeting across the street at night to share ideas, connect with people and network on resources.

“Young people use technology and opportunities to be in a room together to discuss issues,” he said. “I also look forward to connecting with them between Parliaments, which are held every few years,” said Skyler, who now describes himself as an “older millennial.”

“**Interfaith work sets the table for honoring neighbors and exploring compassion.** The Gospel



Skyler Oberst settles into new job at Excelsior after global travel.

is to be lived. I try and fail every day,” said Skyler, who attends the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John.

At the Parliament, people of faith across the range of world religions come—not only the major world religions, but also Pantheons—who worship Egyptian gods—and Zoroastrians, one of the world’s first monotheistic religions. Many share their worship rites and invite others to observe or participate, he said.

“The Parliament is not only an academic gathering. It’s also a place of worship and resources, devotionals, observing and participation,” said Skyler.

“**While it’s in vogue** for young people to do interfaith work and while young people are ready to do it, the Parliament of World Religions is also a place for intergenerational encounters,” he said. “We do not want to miss the wisdom of true interfaith work that is intergenerational.”

In 1893 at the Chicago World’s Fair, the first Parliament of World Religions was held to create global dialogue among faiths. A featured speaker and organizer was Swami Vivekananda, a Hindu monk.

The next one was not until 1993, also in Chicago, followed by a Parliament of World Religions in 1999 at Capetown, South Africa, led by Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. It has been held every few years

since—2004 in Barcelona, 2009 in Melbourne, 2015 in Salt Lake City and 2018 in Toronto.

While it is called Parliament, it’s not about delegates but is open to everyone, Skyler said.

“At plenaries, there may be a few resolutions or position papers that go to the board to be read and approved to be taken as living breathing challenges for people to discern and affirm in their lives and actions,” he said.

One 2018 resolution was on the environment and one, directed at divisive leadership, called for civility in honoring the stranger, he said.

“We are to understand our obligations as people together so we ensure all have access to resources,” said Skyler. “The faith community can’t defer its obligation and sacred duty to be responsible.”

Skyler has spent the last several years working as the assistant to City Council member Karen Stratton. In December, he began as director of development at Excelsior.

With the success of the Meet the Neighbors program he began traveling extensively on invitation to speak internationally about using technology and social media to bring people of faith together.

He began his year off spending June 15 to 17 at the 2017 Group of 20 (G20) Interfaith Summit in Potsdam, Germany, on “Religion, Sustainable Development and the Refugee Crisis.”

In September, he participated

in the 2018 G20 Interfaith Summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on “Building Consensus for Fair and Sustainable Development: Religious Contributions for a Dignified Future.”

Related to the Potsdam G20, he visited Sweden, Iceland and the Netherlands, celebrating his 30th birthday at the Amsterdam airport. Enroute to the Buenos Aires G20, he visited Istanbul and Santiago.

To keep him traveling and connecting online, Skyler received a 2018-19 State of Formation Voices of Renewal Fellowship from Boston University School of Theology and Hebrew College, a program to empower young faith leaders to develop new ideas for interfaith conversations using technology.

On contract with the Tony Blair Institute for Interfaith Dialogue, he will work with the Generation Global Project to facilitate conversations among middle school, high school and college students on contemporary faith and life issues.

Skyler is assigned to student cohorts with schools in Pacific Rim countries. He will facilitate monthly online conversations on technology and education.

In February, he will visit Jordan, and Israel-Palestine.

“Global travel is an important way to meet people and see the world from different vantage points. I converse every day online

with friends I make,” he said.

“**Technology at its best** is a tool to bring people together. I like to use the Internet to get people off the Internet. It’s crucial in today’s world and must be applied to faith communities. Most people want to meet, not just sit behind a screen and communicate through a keyboard,” Skyler said. “For some, however, it’s easier to send an idea on the Internet than to take a plate of cookies across the street to a family of another faith or political party. Encountering the other opens new ways of living and calls us to find ways to be involved, breaking down barriers in our corner of the world,” he said.

On interfaith work in Spokane, Skyler said that the Interfaith Council he coordinated is continuing to evolve with the needs of the community, but “interfaith work is not going away.”

As more people are involved, he expects a new model to emerge.

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Festival features Jewish films

The 15th Annual Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival, Jan. 24, 26 and 27 at Wolff Auditorium in Jepson Center at Gonzaga University, gives a glimpse of Jewish experience in three diverse films.

The films, “Heading Home: The Tale of Team Israel,” “Bye Bye Germany” and “Shoelaces” showcase themes of Jewish resilience, perseverance in the face of challenges and overcoming odds.

“Heading Home,” in English, at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 24, is a David-and-Goliath story of Israel’s national baseball team competing in the World Baseball Classic after years of defeat.

“Bye, Bye Germany,” in English and German, at 7 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 26, is the story of David Bermann and his Jewish friends in 1946 in Frankfurt. They have escaped the Nazi regime and

dream of leaving for America but need money and more. It explores wartime trauma and survivor guilt with playfulness and wit.

“Shoelaces,” in Hebrew with English subtitles, at 2 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 27, tells of the complicated relationship between an aging father and the special-needs son he abandoned as a young boy. The father’s kidneys are failing and the son wants to donate one of his. It’s about the importance of human life and human connection.

Since 2005, the Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival has brought international films to Spokane to share Jewish life and culture, said Neil Schindler, director of the Spokane Area Jewish Family Services.

For information, call 747-7394, email director@sajfs.org or visit sajfs.org/ourprograms/sjcff.

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Saying 'yes' to sheltering people and being sheltered is a first step

Opening doors to welcome about 20 young adult men and women from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. on cold nights took the trustees, the church council, volunteer workers and city to say "yes," said the Rev. Andrea CastroLang, pastor of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ.

Those spaces, plus 40 at Cannon St., 60 at Salem Lutheran as emergency warming centers and more at a center the Salvation Army opened in late December, add to 665 permanent shelter beds.

They just needed people of faith and the community to say "yes."

At permanent shelters, Union Gospel Mission, has 255 beds; Family Promise expanding 80 (soon); House of Charity, 174;

St. Margaret's Shelter, 18; Volunteers of America's Crosswalk, 21 for youth; Hope House, 36 for women; Truth Ministries, 65, and YFA Connections, 16 for children.

That's not enough to meet the increasing numbers of homeless people, said Tija Danzig, program manager with the city's Community, Housing and Human Services.

The shelters provide services to help move people from the streets to education, health care, jobs and permanent housing.

The Guardians Foundation, which helps run several warming shelters, provides security and referrals. Frontier Behavioral Health also provides teams to help people find long-term solutions.

"The temporary shelters are at least a

safe, warm place to be and connect with resources," Tija said. "While the City of Spokane is supporting these warming shelters this winter, it seeks long-term solutions, including 100 to 150 more beds in a 24/7 permanent shelter space by summer."

Spokane County's "Point in Time Count" is the last Sunday of January. This year, volunteers will ask about circumstances that led people to be homeless, she said. People interested in volunteering may email everybodycounts@spokanecity.org, or link through Volunteer Spokane online.

In one place, Homeless Connect, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 30, at the Salvation Army, 223 E. Nora, offers free meals, and DSHS, family, veterans, hous-

ing, medical and dental services, clothing and food banks, warrant quashing and more.

Camp Hope, a homeless encampment, was set up outside city hall to challenge the sit-and-lie ordinance that criminalizes homelessness. When more temporary shelters opened in December, it was shut down for violating that law. The effort continues.

Meanwhile, Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington continues its commitment to build 800 permanent housing units for chronically homeless people—with 525 built.

Clearly, the community of faith and wider community can say "yes." We can open our doors to welcome people and open our hearts to advocate as allies.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Child opens door to conversation with, understanding of homeless men

It's funny how life's profound experiences happen when we are busy worrying about the tasks at hand. My task one day was to take a three-year-old boy with Downs Syndrome to downtown Spokane to meet his mom. I was anxious about this. This child is independent and strong willed. I was not sure how I would get him safely from my car into Starbucks where we were meeting. I parked on the street one-and-a-half blocks away, unbuckled his car seat, and braced for the challenge.

Immediately, he showed me my worrying was in vain. As soon as his feet hit the sidewalk, he was smiling and waving to everyone he encountered. The cold walk to Starbucks was full of wonder, warmth and joy. That alone was profound, but that was only the beginning.

We walked into Starbucks and searched for a place to sit. My thoughts were on how I would keep my little friend occupied in the busy coffee shop. We found an empty table between other customers and sat down to wait. He was curious about the man sitting to our left and sat down on the bench next to him. He scooted up close, practically sitting in his lap, began to grab things from his table and "talk" to him.

The man smiled. I apologized. The man

turned to me with joy in his smile and said, "No, it's fine. I have a four-year-old son who I miss very, very much. This is nice."

For a few moments, he told me about his little boy and what he was working on, hoping to be able to see him again someday.

About this time, Mom arrived. We ordered coffee for us and food for her son, then sat back down at the table. The man sitting to our right was captivated by what he had seen and joined our conversation.

Then I noticed the men we were sitting among were homeless. In fact, they had been part of the impromptu tent city that sprang up outside the city hall to protest Spokane's sit-and-lie law. Our conversation then turned to the struggles of living in Spokane without a place to call home.

For 45 minutes, we talked about shelters and showers, staying warm, looking for work, what organizations in Spokane did well and what challenges Spokane created.

The man told me that just a few months ago, he had a house, two cars and a good job. Then things went bad, and here he was. He had friends in the Tri-Cities and wanted to go "home," but had fallen asleep on the sidewalk and was ticketed. He is now stuck in Spokane for six months because he has to go to Community Court every Monday.

He could get a job in the Tri-Cities, he said.

We talked about tent cities. He said he didn't want to stay in the men's shelters because they were full of people who didn't care about making their lives better, and he didn't want to be around that influence.

I asked him about panhandling. He showed me a photo he had sent his mom of the sign he had made. It took him two hours to make it, taking his time to make it pretty. He wrote on it, "I'll pay you back," hoping to make people smile. Instead of people smiling, they looked down at him. "Some people go out of their way not to look at me. I don't care if they don't give me money. I just want them to look at my sign." He wanted to be acknowledged and see joy on faces of those he encountered.

Half way through our conversation, two of his friends joined us. I remembered I had heard the older man play his guitar outside of River Park Square a few months ago. We talked about music and guitars. He said he has a daughter living on the street. He came to Spokane to make sure she was safe.

The younger man just began work on getting housing. "Someone from Catholic Charities was driving by and stopped to talk to me about housing," he said. He was excited. We talked about Sisters' Haven

near SNAP and Pope St. Frances Haven in Spokane Valley. He was beaming with joy over the possibility of having a place to live.

They had experience with Goodwill hiring them off the street to do work like picking up trash. They said they were paid \$50 and given access to their store. They showed me boots, jackets and backpacks they had from Goodwill.

It was time for mom to take her son for a hair cut, so we needed to leave. I asked the men what they saw as their biggest need.

"Not food. You can get that everywhere." Instead, they told me three things: an end to the sit-and-lie law and access to clean showers, "because you've gotta sleep and you gotta be clean to get a job," and Sterno "because it gets really cold at night." I had never thought of Sterno.

My little friend, his mom and I left Starbucks. I was changed and challenged by the encounter with four strangers who in 45 minutes opened my eyes and become my friends. I do not know what I will do with the information I received, but I know this: God calls us to be light and hope and peace and joy in this world to those who are struggling to find their way. And a little child, an *angel*, reminded me of this truth.

Laurie Clark-Strait - Fig Tree Board



Workshop invites people to open conversations, hear each other's stories

Composer, author and cultural consultant Ana Hernández facilitated a Dec. 1 workshop on "Healing Racism: Multicultural Responses in a Local Context" at Spokane's Episcopal Cathedral of St. John. It drew participants from several western states.

Other workshop leaders were Eric Metoyer, associate for congregational ministries and liaison to multicultural ministries with the Episcopal Diocese of California in San Francisco, and Monica Whitaker, rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Sedona, Ariz., and former secretary for the Asian Commission of the Diocese of California.

The workshop was designed to build listening skills to help dismantle racism by inviting people into cross-cultural awareness and conversations.

After leading some group chanting, Ana spoke of the need to resolve dissonances and consonances.

"Beautiful voices are different but better in concert," she said. "When we hit dissonance, something has to move for the sound to become consonant. I have to move."

Ana said four hosting skills help create meaningful conversations

- "We need to be aware of how we converse with ourselves.
- "We need to listen deeply to connect and communicate on the personal level.
- "We need to practice life in common and hear each other's stories to change a community.
- "We need co-creating, not hero-based leadership. Paying attention to the community, we need to work with others to

co-create the future.

Being present, listening, hearing stories and being co-creators are tools to help people overcome racism in one-to-one relationships.

"The amount of energy we put into building relationships influences how sustainable they are," she said. "Institutions do what they are intended to do. If we believe, love and build relationships across all our lines of difference and we open gates to build transformative institutions, another world is possible and on its way."

Participants shared their cultural backgrounds. They self-identified as being Scottish from a multicultural area in Detroit, from an Irish Catholic family in Eastern Washington for 130 years, white from New England, a Polish-Italian-Puerto Rican mix, a British-Scottish-Irish-German-Dutch mix, a British-French-German-Native American mix and more. The lists of cultures showed a variety.

Eric said that just as people come from different cultures and bloodlines, they also come with biases and prejudices, so "intercultural conversation can put us in a vulnerable space about who we are."

Monica's mother who is third-generation Chinese-American, and her Anglo father, who was from Massachusetts, met at the University of Michigan.

"I am hapa—half white and half Chinese," she said, adding that she has learned that some in her family ancestry were probably slave traders, some came on the Mayflower and one baptized Pocahontas.

Recognizing that people are shaped by their national, ethnic and cultural back-

grounds, Eric said: "I'm a child of the South from Northwest Louisiana. My father was French creole. I'm Irish Catholic, Black, with some Cherokee ancestors. I was raised in Northeast Vermont among Yankee dairy farmers. Some in my family were doctors and went to private schools in New England. I came to California and mixed with people from around the world. My son ate breakfast burritos, not oatmeal."

Eric said he has taught in Kenyan, Korean and Mexican cultures.

"We can learn about our cultures, our hopes and our fears," he said. "As we come to know each other, we hear stories about our cross-cultural selves.

Ana said such conversations build understanding, helping people "socialize into love," which, she said, "takes longer than we think. The work of love is painfully, beautifully slow, but we need to keep loving."

"With the rise of white supremacy, we may feel we lose gains made in the 1960s civil rights movement. If we feel that loss, we need to keep working until love grows stronger than hate," she said.

"Even though people in ignorance may hurt others, avoidance is not the option," she said. "We only learn about each other by being with each other.

"The hope is to educate ourselves to love, to continue conversations beyond our comfort zones to attain access to other cultures," Ana said. "Then we can be in solidarity and step back from tribalism to reconcile by participating in learning and healing.

"The more comfortable we are in our own skins, the more open we are to oth-

ers," said Ana, observing that this time of struggle may be a time of transition—a time of birth.

"If we're in childbirth," Eric quoted Sikh activist Valerie Kaur, "Breathe! Push!"

"What we do in our community and in conversing with each other, listening across traditions, faith boundaries and cliques, is walking into Jesus' world," he suggested.

"I work in a diocesan office and know how institutions seek to perpetuate themselves, but I also know that by working together in institutions, we can change the world. We can influence institutions to invite others to change the institution and the world," he said.

That's how people of faith can help heal racism and recognize the "isms" that keep people out of institutions, Eric added.

Monica said church members may need to invite people to go out into the community as well as invite people in.

"We can be allies, acknowledging our privilege and authority, while standing with people who are marginalized and isolated," she said. "Working with institutions on issues, we can stand in solidarity with people. We can welcome people into leadership.

"We need each voice," she said. "We need to go sensitively, gently and humbly to be in solidarity with people without co-opting their cultural practices."

"Listening to stories changes us," said Ana, "so we can connect to the future that is emerging and be open to how we may change for the future."

For information, email ana@hernandez.org.

Calendar of Events

- Jan 3, 17 • Peace and Justice Action Committee**, Community Building, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7970, pials.org
- Spokane Dances of Universal Peace**, Unity Spiritual Center, 2900 S. Bernard, 6:30 p.m., 534-4650, bkfergin@msn.com
- Jan 6 • "Wide Open Panel Conversations about Israel,"** Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave., 10 a.m. to noon, 747-3304, spokanetbs.org
- Jan 9 • Open Door Event and Bake Sale**, Transitions New Leaf Bakery-Café, SNAP Building, 3104 W Fort Wright Dr., 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Hispanic Business / Professional Association Luncheon**, Perkins at Division and Olive, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., hbaspokane@gmail.com, hbaspokane.net
- Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council**, Spokane Regional Health District, 1101 W. College Ave. Room 140, noon, 838-7870
- Jan 10 • Coeur d'Alene Dances of Universal Peace**, Unity Spiritual Center of North Idaho, 4465 N. 15th St., 6:30 p.m., 534-4650, bkfergin@msn.com
- Justice Night: Talk to a Lawyer for Free**, Center for Justice, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 835-5211, cforjustice.org
- Jan 10, 24 • Showing Up for Racial Justice Committee**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 11 • Spokane Nonprofit Network Meeting**, SNAP, noon to 1:30 p.m.
- Jan 11-12 • 24-Hour Retreat**, "Deepening into God's Presence as Tenderness," Kent Hoffman of Circle of Security International, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 4:30 p.m. Friday to 4:30 p.m., Saturday, 448-1224, ihrc.net
- Jan 11-27 • "The Controversy of Valladolid,"** play set in 16th-century Catholic monastery on fate of millions of American natives by Jean Claude Carrière, Stage Left Theater, 108 W. 3rd Ave., Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m., 838-9727, boxoffice@spokanestageleft.org
- Jan 15 • The Black History 101 Mobile Museum**, founded by Khalid el-Hakim, 7,000 artifacts of Black memorabilia from slave trade to hip-hop eras, Hixson Union Building, Whitworth University, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., 777-3583, jroyal@whitworth.edu
- "Big Elephant and Little Elephant,"** educator-actor Stu Cabe, Martin Luther King Jr. Fifth Grade Children's Program, Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls schools, Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, North Idaho College Schuler Performing Arts Center, 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m., 208-765-3932, idahohumanrights.org
- Jan 17 • Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Program** Speaker, New York Times bestselling author and history professor Ibram X. Kendi, CUB Senior Ballroom, Washington State University Pullman, 7 to 9 p.m., 509-339-6172, mlk.wsu.edu
- Jan 17, 24, 31 • Taizé Prayer Service**, The Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, 4:15 to 5 p.m., 313-5765
- Diverse Voices Writing Group**, Spark Central, 1214 W. Summit Parkway, 5:30 p.m., 279-0299, sparkwestcentral.org
- Fireside Discussions on Bahá'í Faith**, Spokane Valley Library, 7 p.m., 599-2411
- Jan 18 • Indigenous Peoples March** for human rights, Spokane Tribal Gathering Place, 347 N. Post St., 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Jan 19 • Women+s March on Spokane**, Convention Center, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., facebook.com/MarchOnSpokane/
- Jan 20 • Martin Luther King Jr. Community Celebration** and Speaker, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana, 4 to 6 p.m., 868-0856
- Yakima's Martin Luther King Jr. Interfaith** Commemoration Service, Central Lutheran, 1602 W. Yakima Ave, Yakima, rtrimble51@gmail.com
- Jan 21 • Martin Luther King Jr Day Celebration 2019:** Annual Unity March and Resource Fair, 10 a.m., Unity Rally and March, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Resource Fair, Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., 868-0856, mlkspokane.org
- Martin Luther King Jr. Peace March**, Fifth Ave. and Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Yakima, begins 11:45 a.m., rtrimble51@gmail.com
- Kazi Joshua, "It Is Not Clear What We Shall Become"**, Martin Luther King Jr. Day speaker, Walla Walla University Church, 212 SW 4th St., College Place, 11 a.m., 509-527-2273, Emily.tillotson@wallawalla.edu
- NAACP Spokane Membership Meeting**, 35 W. Main, 7 to 8:30 p.m., spkncpbr@gmail.com
- Jan 23 • Spokesman Review columnist Shawn Vestal**, "Freedom of the Press," public forum, People for Effective Government, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7 p.m., 777-3270, anitalewis@whitworth.edu
- Jan 24 • Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival**, "Heading Home: The Tale of Team Israel," Wolff Auditorium in Jepson, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., sajfs.org/oru-programs/sjcff
- Jan 25-27 • Weekend Retreat, "Apologetics in an Age of Unbelief,"** Karlo Broussard, IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224, kparker@ihrc.net
- Jan 26 • Eastern Washington Legislative Conference** panel, workshops and briefing, "Inform, Inspire, Involve," Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, 115 N. Raymond, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., 535-1813, 535-4112, event@thefigtree.org
- British Brass Band, KPBX Kids Concert**, St. John's Cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave., 1 p.m., spokanepublicradio.org/topic/spr-events
- Robert Burns Night of Scottish Culture**, Mukogawa Fort Wright Institute, 4000 W. Randolph, program at 5 p.m., dinner 6 p.m., inlandnwscots.org/calendar.html
- Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival**, "Bye, Bye Germany," Wolff Auditorium in Jepson, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., sajfs.org/oru-programs/sjcff
- Daughters of Norway**, 10 a.m., 926.8090, freydaughters@aol.com
- Jan 27 • Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival**, "Shoelaces," Wolff Auditorium in Jepson, Gonzaga, 2 p.m., sajfs.org/oru-programs/sjcff
- Jan 28 • Spirituality 101 Seminars**, Kathy Finley, The Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Mondays, 313-5765, bartletts@gonzaga.edu
- Jan 30 • Spokane Homeless Connect**, multiple services in one location, The Salvation Army, 223 E. Nora, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 710-1471
- Fig Tree Mailing and Delivery**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 24th and Grand, 9 a.m., 535-1813
- Indian Cuisine** and health discussion with Jamie Aquino, The Kitchen Engine, 621 W. Mallon, 5:30 to 7 p.m., 326-3335
- Silent Day of Prayer**, Bishop Emeritus William Skylstad, reflections on "Living Boldly in the Golden Age of Life," IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Bur Rd., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., 448-1224, kparker@ihrc.net
- Jan 31 • Daniel Matt**, "How the Kabbalah Reimagines God," Wolff Auditorium, Jepson Center, Gonzaga University, 5:30 p.m., 313-6788
- Feb 1-3 • Scholar in Residence Weekend**, "From Kabbalah to the Big Bang: Ancient Wisdom and Contemporary Spirituality," author Daniel Matt, Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th, dinner 7:15 p.m. Friday; 7 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m., 747-3304, spokanetbs.org
- Feb 4-8 • "Embracing the Artistic Call,"** a cohort program for Exploring the Mystery of the Creative Experience, Spirit Center, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, ID, 208-965-2000, spirit-center.org
- Feb 5 • African-American Heritage Month Lecture**, Austin Channing Brown, author of *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth 7 p.m., 777-3280, jroyal@whitworth.edu
- Feb 7 • Fig Tree Benefit/Development** and Board Meetings, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., noon - Benefit / Development, and 1 to 3 p.m.- Board, 535-1813, mary@thefigtree.org

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Orellana family has front-row seats for canonization of St. Romero

Three members of the Orellana family, who came to Spokane from El Salvador in 1985 and lived in sanctuary at St. Ann's Catholic Church, sat in the front row for the Oct. 24 ceremony at the Vatican in Rome canonizing the martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero as a saint.

They were Transito, her daughter Ana and son Tanis. For the interview, another daughter, Milagros, translated for Transito, who has 10 children and 30 grandchildren.

"In 1977, I first met the bishop of El Salvador when he visited Ateos, the village where we went to church," Transito said. "My husband, Tanis, was a catechist working with Archbishop Romero there and in the city of Ciudad Arce. Our village, Canton Serro do Plata Province of San Salvador, was between them."

Tanis and his brother, Jose, had a coffee farm. Tanis was a volunteer village pastor because there were too few priests. He led liturgies, Bible studies and music. He and Transito were members of the Third Order of St. Francis. Their children sang in the choir.

Transito helped support the family by selling food. She also took food to hungry people and medicine to sick people.

"Archbishop Romero worked on behalf of the poor. He suffered with them and taught them to live by the gospel," she said. "After he died, soldiers killed and injured many people. Many, like us, had to leave the country."

"I never imagined he would one day be a saint," she said. "Then, we just saw the need and felt responsible to help people."

Sr. Ana entered religious life when she was 15 with the Mother of the Orphans. Because she spent 24 years in Italy, she knew Archbishop Romero only a short time. In 2003, she joined her family in Spokane and became a Sister of Providence in 2005.

Since then, she served a year in El Salvador, three years in Yakima and seven years in Portland before moving to Spokane in 2016.

Tanis, who was eight years old when his family left El Salvador, did not understand then what was happening politically and did not know Archbishop Romero.

He remembers, however, that his father asked him each evening to go to a spot where he had buried a box with a Bible and a Walkman radio, and return it there later.

They would listen to a radio station called, "We Shall Overcome." That was forbidden. In the Bible, his father had a bookmark with a picture of Martin Luther King, Jr.

When Tanis asked who that was, his father said it was "someone who speaks up for people."

In May 2015, Sr. Ana and Transito were at Archbishop Romero's beatification in El Salvador.

At the moment of his beatification, they were among many who saw a rainbow circle in the sky.

"We felt his presence and the presence of the martyrs, and felt empowered to live with God and help people have dignity," said Sr. Ana. "I have a strong passion to follow the way of Archbishop Romero and raise the voices of the poor."

"It was healing to see my father's name on the wall of martyrs," she said. "Our family members had gone twice to El



Transito and her daughter Sr. Ana Orellana said St. Romero's canonization was a sign Rome heard the El Salvadoran people.



Tanis Orellana went to Rome to connect more with St. Romero.

Salvador to find his body, so it was important to know the Vatican considered him a martyr."

Tanis, who went to El Salvador in 2014 and 2016, also found it affirming to see his father's name on the Wall of Martyrs. While visiting, he learned about classmates who died, were recruited into the military or fled.

St. Ann's, which continues their commitment as a sanctuary church, helped provide Transito a ticket to go to the canonization in Rome.

For the canonization, they were to meet someone with tickets. They arrived at 5 a.m., but could not find the person. They stood in line, and when the doors to the plaza opened, they ran and sat in the front row.

After the Mass, the Pope greeted the people in the front row, and they were in pictures with the Pope.

"For me, it's important that Archbishop Romero is a saint because of what he did," said Transito. "El Salvadorans already recognized him as holy. He changed many lives by fighting, not with guns, but with the Word of the Lord. He took risks to preach, as did my husband. Many priests we knew also died."

Sr. Ana said the canonization was a sign that the church in Rome heard the voice of the people of El Salvador.

"In the ceremony, he was recognized, not only as a saint for El Salvador but also as a saint for the universal church," said Sr. Ana, who estimated that about 7,000 were there from El Salvador, among 12,000 from other countries.

"In Rome, I had worked a year with Pope John Paul II. My mother visited in 1999 and met him," Sr. Ana said.

John Paul II was also canonized a saint on the same day as St. Romero.

The Orellanas, who were in Rome seven days, visited many of sights, including the tomb of St. Francis of Assisi in Assisi.

Tanis said he went to the canonization to feel more attached to Archbishop Romero, beyond stories his family told.

"I wanted to connect and thank him for what he did and what he taught us," Tanis said. "I now feel connected to him."

Being there also reconfirmed the importance of social justice to him.

"It's important to share faith with my children. Faith should help us distinguish between right and wrong, and speak against injustice," he said.

"I tell my six children about my experiences as a child in a war zone. I identify with people I see in similar circumstances on TV news. Sometimes I have flashbacks, including images of fleeing from El Salvador, through Guatemala and Mexico."

"I remember telling my younger brother to lay on top of a soccer ball and roll around to reduce hunger pangs. It's a miracle our mother was able to bring us here," Tanis added.

"When I was first here, I was afraid of anyone in a uniform, because I had seen soldiers grab people from their houses and throw them on a truck," said Tanis. "I have experienced PTSD."

What helps him heal is the faith his mother has passed on, the faith he now shares with young people and his children, teaching them to be compassionate, understanding and sympathetic to people, and to challenge injustice.

He does that by singing with his children at St. Ann's and St.

Joseph's parishes. He also writes letters to Congress, engages in dialogue with people of differing political or religious stands, registers young people to vote, and introduces his children to the many cultures in Spokane.

"How can we not be involved if injustice affects the lives of our brothers and sisters. We can't just hide in a room and pray," Tanis said. "Many problems can be prevented if people serve others. If young people feel useless, they can volunteer."

When his family lived in the basement of St. Ann's parish house, they would invite homeless people in the neighborhood to share their food.

We believe what St. Francis taught, "It is by giving that we receive."

Tanis, who graduated from Rogers High School and completed studies at Spokane Community College, worked six years until the 2008 downturn as a loan officer and now works at Pull and Save Auto Parts.

While Transito's participation in St. Ann's in Spokane is limited by her English, she continues to help people in Spokane and in El Salvador, raising funds after church Sundays by selling pupusas (rice flour dough stuffed with pork, cheese, beans and chopped vegetables) and tamales.

One of Milagros' three daughters helps her raise funds to start a medical clinic on land that Tanis had.

The Salvadoran government has sold much of the land to

corporations, because it is rich in gold and diamonds, said Sr. Ana, adding that "companies are glad that people emigrate, so they can take more land."

"Many still suffer and flee from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. Parents do not want their boys taken to be soldiers or gangsters," said Milagros.

"I see the caravan spiritually," said Transito. "They are like the people of Israel fleeing in the exodus because of poverty and persecution."

The Orellanas know about fleeing out of fear of being killed.

"We feel safe here," said Milagros. "We are all citizens. Some of us have depression or PTSD, but it's reassuring now to know Archbishop Romero is a saint."

Sr. Ana said St. Romero "called us to do as he did, to raise our voices for the poor and take risks. We feel his presence. He is living with us and with all who suffer. Where there is injustice, St. Romero is present."

"Our family celebrates Thanksgiving, not one day a year but every day," she said, expressing gratitude to the many people in this community who helped her family come, and provided food and education until they were strong.

"This land is not yours or mine. It's everyone's. Why build a wall? All people need a chance to live in dignity," she said.

"People are not 'the other.' We need to open our hearts and be responsible to take care of each other," Tanis said.

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