

36TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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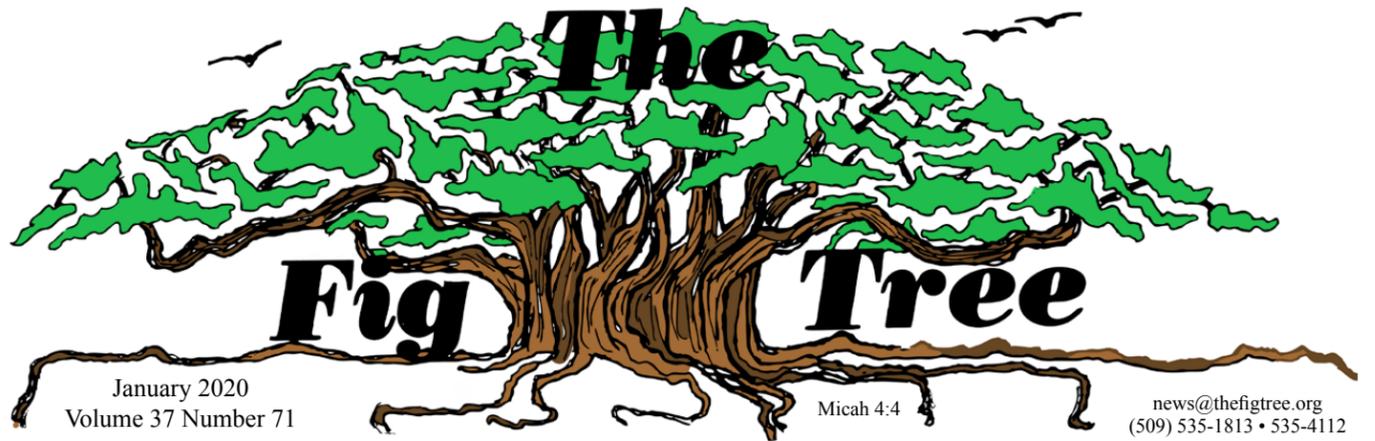
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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest online at www.thefigtree.org • check The Fig Tree Facebook page daily for news and links

Movement empowers women leaders

By Mary Stamp

Women and men are murdered and go missing, but indigenous mothers, sisters, daughters, aunties and nieces experience a higher rate of violence than other ethnicities.

Stereotypes that blame victims, the lack of reporting and investigation, and overlapping jurisdiction of tribes, law enforcement and courts stymie action.

To break the silence, indigenous women and allies are organizing to bring awareness to the suffering. They are calling attention to the violence, trafficking and inadequate response.

Indigenous women have been raising visibility by wearing red ribbon skirts to symbolize their sacredness and resilience, and by painting red handprints over their mouths to symbolize the blood shed by lost, stolen and murdered sisters.

They are increasingly visible at the Women's March, Martin Luther King Jr. Day March, Indigenous People's March, and other marches and events.

"Women are reclaiming their role as leaders in tribal communities," said Margo Hill, a leader in the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement. "When Europeans came, they did



Margo Hill educates community on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. A photograph of her three children in regalia is on her office wall.

not understand that women held the land, and women were our leaders, healers, medicine people and food gatherers."

Speaking up as an attorney, educator, researcher, mother and aunty, she understands the intersection of family life, legal processes and urban/rural planning.

As a former attorney for the Spokane Tribe, she is now associate professor in urban and regional planning, public and health administration for Eastern Washington University (EWU) at Riverpoint Campus. She teaches and organizes people on tribal planning, federal Indian law, community development and policies.

"When I give presentations to tribal and community groups, I do not start with numbers and data but with honoring the murdered and missing people," she said.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People recognizes that indigenous people suffer from a history of injustices, colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources. The declaration also recognizes that indigenous people are entitled without discrimination to all human rights and that they possess

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'My Road Leads Home' series features Homeless Connect, 'Hidden Homeless'

To inform the community of the hidden homelessness of families, Maurice Smith, executive director of Rising River Media and member of the Spokane Homeless Connect Committee, is producing a second documentary on homelessness in Spokane.

The first documentary in the "My Road Leads Home" series of documentaries on homelessness in Spokane covered the 2019 Spokane Homeless Connect, an annual one-day, one-stop resource event bringing together resource providers under one roof to serve people either experiencing home-

lessness or living "on the bubble" or edge—one missed paycheck, rent payment or auto repair—of being forced into homelessness.

"We have, however, more struggling families than homeless individuals living on the streets," said Maurice, who recently compiled statistics from the State Department of Education and local shelters.

The 2019 Point in Time survey found 1,309 homeless people on the streets, but schools have reported in 2016, 2017 and 2018 an average of 3,353 homeless children, who with their parents

and siblings make up more than 4,800 family members who are experiencing homelessness.

The new documentary is "My Road Leads Home: The Hidden Homeless." It focuses on families experiencing homelessness.

In June 2019, Maurice interviewed City of Spokane homeless service managers and shelter operators at the House of Charity, Union Gospel Mission, Family Promise, the Salvation Army, St. Margaret's, YFA Connections, and Volunteers of America's Crosswalk and Hope House to determine the number of non-duplicated homeless people.

When he combined shelter numbers with school students and families, he discovered that the total number of people experiencing homelessness in Greater Spokane averaged 11,541 over the past three years.

Reflecting the increasing need for services, the 2020 Spokane Homeless Connect, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 30, will be held at the Spokane Convention Center rather than at the Salvation

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Conference opens with briefing on state issues

The 2020 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference will open with a briefing about priorities among the issues coming before the State Legislature, led by the Paul Benz of the Faith Action Network, and Donna Christensen and Mario Villanueva of the Washington State Catholic Conference. They will present priorities they have established related to the issues.

"Making It Happen" is the theme for the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 25, at Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, 115 N. Raymond Rd. Registration and viewing displays with resources by local agencies begin at 8:30 a.m.

The event, organized by The Fig Tree, Catholic Charities Eastern Washington, the Faith Action Network, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and other partners, will also feature a plenary on tenants' rights with Terri Anderson of the Washington State's Union and an afternoon panel discussion on gun violence with Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich, Episcopal Bishop Gretchen Rehberg and speakers from Students Demand Action and Mothers Demand Action.

There will be a choice of six workshops repeated at 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.

- "Shareholder Advocacy" will be addressed by Mark Kinney of Numerica Credit Union and Pat Millen OSF of the Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment.

- "Homelessness Communication" will be led by Joe Ader of Family Promise, Alan Eschenbacher of All Saints Lutheran, and Renee Norris and Megan Chandler of Catholic Charities.

- Discussing "Climate Change" issues are Tom Soeldner

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WCC urges end to people being stateless

The World Council of Churches Executive Committee recently met and made statements on several issues.

One statement urges an end to statelessness so people will no longer live in a situation of legal limbo. "Children constitute over a third of the global stateless population, and in the countries with the 20 largest stateless populations, approximately 70,000 stateless children are born each year," reads the statement. "Risks of statelessness are often increased in the context of forced displacement and migration." The WCC expresses concern over an increase in ethno-nationalist, racist and xenophobic narratives and policies globally. "History has shown several times and places that states have used access to citizenship and deprivation of nationality as a discriminatory tool to oppress entire communities based on their descent, color, ethnicity or religion."

WCC comments on crises in Latin America

Another statement expresses concern over exceptional concurrent crises in Latin America. "Brazil is facing a complex crisis of political and social polarization, affecting the rule of law, human rights and environmental protection, and diminishing civil society space, while Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Paraguay, Peru and Argentina have all experienced mass protests and political crises that have shaken their governments, economies and societies," it reads. "In some cases, such as in Chile, Bolivia, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Colombia, popular protests have resulted in violent clashes and deaths." The WCC calls on Latin American nations to "support and strengthen institutions of democracy and the rule of law, to protect the political space for civil society" and to "listen to the voices of the people."

WCC calls for peace in Syria

A third statement raised prayers to end conflict and for peace in Syria, after more than eight years of death, destruction and displacement. "The WCC is gravely concerned about the continuing humanitarian impact on all people of the region," it says. "In this context of fresh violence and upheaval, along with other area communities, Christian communities are also suffering." It affirmed the WCC's work "to promote and facilitate dialogue and solidarity between representatives of disparate sectors of Syrian society, and to promote peace, justice and equal rights for all Syrians."

WCC uplifts UN Convention on Rights of Child

A fourth statement observed the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). "By adopting the CRC on Nov. 20, 1989, world leaders made a promise to all children, to respect, protect and fulfil their rights," the statement reads. "The CRC has gone on to achieve almost universal consensus, with only one country—the United States—having refrained from ratifying it. The Churches' Commitments to Children provide the ecumenical movement with a new framework for churches' own action for the rights and wellbeing of children," the WCC says, inviting churches to "ensure the full range of obligations in the CRC and the 'Churches' Commitments to Children' are fulfilled for children around the world."

WCC says climate crisis is imminent

A fifth statement says the climate crisis is imminent, not a distant prospect: "Children, young people and ordinary citizens have made public demonstration of their outrage at the lack of any adequate response by governments to the gravity of this global crisis, and against backsliding by some governments," it reads. "The time for debate and disputation of established scientific facts is long over." Time for action is swiftly passing, the statement says. "We will all be held to account for our inaction and our disastrous stewardship of this precious and unique planet." The WCC says the climate emergency is the result of ecological sins, and urges wealthy nations to increase commitments to provide sufficient climate finance to low-income nations.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Six workshops will be repeated on Jan. 25

Continued from page 1
of the Sierra Club, Maggie Gates of the Lands Council and Sunrise Movement, and Brian Henning of 350 Spokane and Gonzaga University.

A workshop on "Faithfully Facing Racism: Confronting White Supremacy" will be led by Gen Heywood of Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience and

the Veradale United Church of Christ, former state senator John Smith and Walter Kendricks, pastor of Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church.

"The Census and Justice Work" will be led by Jim Castro-Lang of the Faith Action Network Board, Alex Panagatacos of In-novia and Denise Guerrero of the Census Alliance.

Addressing "Refugees and the Numbers Cap" are Samuel Smith of World Relief and Luisa Orellana, who teaches English to refugees at Spokane Community College.

Volunteers are needed to help with arrangements.

For information and to RSVP, call 535-4112, 535-1813 or email kaye@thefigtree.org.

Retired therapist says 'Everyone Has a Story'

Author and retired child and family therapist Chris Crutcher will lead a public forum on "Everyone Has a Story" at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 14, at Weyerhaeuser Hall at Whitworth University.

People for Effective Government is sponsoring this event, in which Chris will discuss his experiences with children and families in crisis, focusing on situations leading to fractured family relationships and children living on the street.

He believes that communities relying only on tax dollars to solve complex problems will fall short. He believes community involvement requires people to stop calling community ills "problems" or "issues," and become acquainted with stories of people.

"We don't have a homeless problem. We have homeless people with problems," said Chris, who has written nine novels, an autobiography and two collections of short stories about issues

facing teens.

A graduate of Eastern Washington University with degrees in psychology and sociology, and a teaching certificate, he taught at primary and secondary schools in California and Washington before beginning to write.

Thirty-two years ago, he joined Spokane's Child Protection Team and began practicing as a child and family therapist.

For information, visit pegnow.org.

Women+s March plans two local events

The Women+s March Spokane will hold two events—a Resource Fair and Auction for Action from 1 to 4 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 11, and a Rally and March from 12:30 to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 18, in Riverfront Park and downtown.

"What's your Vision for 2020?" is the theme for both events.

At the Resource Fair and Auction for Action for donors and marchers at the West Central Community Center, 1603 W. Belt, people will make signs, do

networking, seek volunteers and share information on their services, said Nola Hansen, coordinator.

The Women's March on Jan. 18 begins and ends at the Red Wagon in Riverfront Park. The focus will be on music, art, drama, laughter, good spirits, and concern for the planet and society, said Cynthia Hamilton, one of the organizers.

Women, men, and children who come will be able to share their visions for 2020, she said.

Event organizers are planning a week of activities. Details will be announced on their Facebook page,

"Women+s March on Spokane."

The Women+s March Spokane unites women to engage in collective action for equity, freedom, inclusion and justice.

For information, call 993-3051 for the auction and 879-4752 for the march or email womensmarchspokane@gmail.com.

Café relocates

Transitions' New Leaf Bakery and Café has outgrown its space at Catholic Charities at 12 E. 5th and moved into the YWCA lobby at 930 N. Monroe St.

It is holding a Grand Opening with a complimentary lunch at 11:30 a.m. and a program at noon, Wednesday, Jan. 8, at the YWCA lobby.

New Leaf Café is a free eight-week job training program in a coffee shop setting for women with barriers to traditional employment.

For information and to RSVP, call 328-6702 or email slickfold@help4women.org.

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Questions? Contact enrollment@spokaneschools.org or 509.354.7393.

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GU hosts Jewish Interfaith Musical Event

The Religious Studies Department at Gonzaga University presenting "SING: A Jewish Interfaith Musical Event" with Jessi Roemer at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 16, at the Hemmingson North Ballroom. Shabbat Services at 5:30 p.m., Friday, Jan. 17, at Hemmingson Center 201 will also feature Jessi.

Her spiritual, rhythmic, soulful music brings ancient and modern texts to life. Based in Philadelphia, she performs, teaches and leads prayers in the U.S. and Israel. Her latest album, "Praise," is a collection of new Jewish songs for communal settings. She grew up in the Washington, D.C. area surrounded by Yiddish, Hebrew and American folk music, cantorial melodies and bluegrass klezmer music.

For information, call 313-6782 or email goldstein@gonzaga.edu.

Flannery Lecture addresses clergy abuse crisis

Jennifer Beste will discuss "Envisioning a Just Response to the Catholic Clergy Abuse Crisis" for the Flannery Lecture at 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 25, at the Hemmingson Center at Gonzaga.

Jennifer, who is professor of theology at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in St. Joseph and Collegeville, Minn., believes Catholic communities seeking justice and healing must prioritize action on three issues:

- 1) Churches need to understand and acknowledged the traumatic effects of clergy sexual abuse on youths' sense of self and capacity for freedom and to relate to God, others and themselves.
- 2) Churches need to recognize how survivors continue to suffer, be in solidarity with them, and support healing and justice for them.
- 3) Churches need to examine how Catholic assumptions about children, and norms for passivity and obedience contributed.

Jennifer earned a master's in divinity from Vanderbilt Divinity School and a doctorate in religious ethics from Yale University.

For information, call 313-6782 or visit gonzaga.edu/religious-studies.

Census Complete Count funding is available

The Spokane County Census Complete Count is moving into outreach for an awareness phase. There are several funding opportunities: 1) Innovia Foundation for Census outreach in Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Lincoln, Adams, Spokane, Whitman, Columbia, Garfield and Asotin counties; 2) Na'ah Illahee Fund for Native-led organizations, and 3) OFM funding for county and city governments, council of governments and libraries.

For PowerPoints, translated materials, toolkits and more, visit spokanecensus.org/resources. For information, call 624-2606.

Human Trafficking Vigil is on Jan. 14

Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW) will hold the 2020 Human Trafficking Awareness Month Reception from 4 to 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 14, on the third floor of the Downtown Spokane Public Library, 906 W. Main Ave. There will be a candlelight vigil a for victims of human trafficking.

LCSNW and others will celebrate recent successes in addressing human trafficking in the region with networking, visual storytelling with LCSNW's Silhouette Project and Survivor Art created by foster children who have experienced human trafficking in the U.S. and other nations.

For information, email ewilliams@lcsnw.org or visit https://bit.ly/2nyxrzb.

Homeless Connect grows into Convention Center

The 2020 Homeless Connect will take place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 30, at its new location, the Spokane Convention Center, at 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd. in Spokane.

Previous Homeless Connect events have been held at the Salvation Army facility on E. Nora.

With more attendees and service providers there was need for a larger facility, said Kari Chapman, chair of the organizing committee for the Homeless Connect.

Because of its convenient location downtown on a bus line and near many service agencies, the Spokane Convention Center was chosen as the 2020 site.

In 2019, the Spokane Homeless Connect had 541 attendees and 65 service providers.

Based on the previous year's Point-In-Time Count, the 2019 Spokane Homeless Connect served 41 percent of those experiencing homelessness in Spokane.

The planning committee for the ninth annual Homeless Connect, which has met since July, expects a larger attendance in 2020, along with more service providers.

Each year, Homeless Connect offers many services under one roof for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. It brings together volunteers and caseworkers from

nonprofits and service providers whose common goal is ending homelessness.

The timing is coordinated to coincide with the City of Spokane's Community Housing and Human Services (CHHS) Office's annual "Point-In-Time" (PIT) count of the county's homeless population.

The Homeless Connect is a subcommittee of the Spokane Homeless Coalition, comprised of more than 1,000 individuals and more than 100 agencies, ministries and churches serving the homeless and marginalized throughout Spokane County.

For information, call 342-8322 or email kari.chapman@uhc.com.

MLK Day events planned in the region

In the Inland Northwest, several worship services, rallies and marches are planned in recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Monday, Jan. 20.

In Spokane, there will be a Prayer Breakfast Saturday, Jan. 18, at the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, 500 S. Stone in Spokane. Proceeds go to the MLK Center.

The annual MLK Commemoration Service is at 4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 19. The location and speaker will be announced.

Rally and March and Resource Fair begin at 10 a.m., Monday, Jan. 20. The location and details will be announced.

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

The Whitworth University community will celebrate and pray for "Glimpses of the Kingdom" at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 21, at the Beeksma Family Theology Center Sanctuary. For information, call 777-4345.

The Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls school districts and the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations will sponsor the 35th annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Fifth Graders Program on Thursday, Jan. 16, at North Idaho College, Schuler Perform-

ing Arts Center in Boswell Hall, 880 W. Garden Ave. in Coeur d'Alene. At 9:30 a.m., Coeur d'Alene classes will come. At 11:30 a.m., Post Falls schools will come. More than 37,000 fifth grade students have participated in the series since the beginning of the program. For information, call 208-765-3932 or visit idaho-humanrights.org.

In Pullman, Washington State University will feature W. Kamau Bell, a sociopolitical comedian, is the keynote speaker for the MLK Community Celebration at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 23, at the CUB Senior and Junior Ballrooms. Kamau produces a

CNN docu-series "United States of America with W. Kamau Bell" and is the American Civil Liberties Union Celebrity Ambassador for Racial Justice.

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

In Yakima, the Rev. Robert Trimble said the Citywide Martin Luther King Commemoration Service will be at 3 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 19, at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 5 S. Naches Ave.

The 35th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Peace march begins at noon, Monday, Jan. 20, at 5th and MLK Jr. Blvd.

For information, email rtrimble51@gmail.com.

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Eastern Washington Legislative Conference

'Making It Happen'

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8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

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MMIW challenges policies, stereotypes that result in violence, silence

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collective rights indispensable to their existence, wellbeing and development as peoples.

They have rights to life, liberty, security, freedom and peace, and tribes have a unique legal relationship with the U.S.

Aware that statistics also motivate, she shared numbers from different sources. The National Crime Information Center reports 5,712 cases of MMIW in 2016 in the U.S. The U.S. Department of Justice's missing person's database lists only 116 cases. The Center for Disease Control reports that indigenous women face murder rates 10 times the national average. Rates of domestic violence are more than 50 percent.

"Every time I talk, I learn of more women," she said.

Margo said studies often blame victims, saying native women use drugs, are in the sex trade, are trafficked by people they know and suffer high rates of domestic violence.

Beyond statistics, she has observed other dynamics from her experience.

After growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation and graduating from Wellpinit High School, she experienced cultural shock when she left a 96-percent Native community to attend the Community College in urban, predominantly white Edmonds.

She chose to expand her horizons on a three-week exchange to Russia and during a semester at the American Institute for Foreign Study in London, before earning an associate degree in 1986.

In 1990, she earned a bachelor's in political science at the University of Washington. Wanting to be a lawyer to fight for tribal sovereignty, she attended a pre-law program at the University of New Mexico for Indian students, gaining connections with Indian lawyers across the nation.

She left studies at the University of California Los Angeles Law School to work with Spokane Urban Indian Health, now the NATIVE Project.

While attending Gonzaga University Law School, Margo worked with the Spokane Tribal Gaming Commission and commuted from Wellpinit. She was pregnant with her first child in 1998, when she earned her juris doctorate. She has two other children, 19 and 16.

"The tribe supported my law studies," said Margo, who helped the tribal attorney while studying.

Prejudice she met spurred her on. One professor said treaties

with tribes were scraps of paper, and Indians "are what the government says they are."

She was tribal attorney for more than 10 years before she began studies at EWU to earn a master's in urban and regional planning in 2008. Her work with EWU's Tribal Planning Program includes doing research with and for tribes.

Margo is concerned that jurisdiction slows action on cases of murdered and missing indigenous women.

"If we call the Stevens County sheriff in Colville, he usually does not come. We can't prosecute without a police report," she said.

The FBI can investigate and the U.S. attorney can prosecute a major crime—murder, rape or assault—on a reservation, but they decline most cases. Tribes lack jurisdiction in major crimes by non-Indians on reservations.

Many non-Indians live within reservation areas, because some land was sold. The 1887 Dawes Act opened reservation lands to non-Indians, she said. When police are called to respond to a crime, they first have to know the status of the land

The kind of crime also matters. Minor crimes are tried in tribal, non-tribal or state courts. Tribal courts can give only limited jail time or fines.

Along with taking lands and setting up reservations, Margo said, the U.S. and state governments took children to boarding schools to force assimilation.

Forced relocation in the 1950s from reservations to cities ended government recognition of some tribes as a way to take Indian lands and again force assimilation, she said.

About 71 percent of native people live in urban areas, where there has been no research on rates of violence against native women. From 2000 to 2010, Margo was on the board of the American Indian Community Center, which serves urban Indians in Spokane.

Vulnerable in cities, some Indians have migrated back to reservations, staying with their grandmothers, Margo said. Some reservation-to-city mobility is for family and ceremonies.

The government does not respect the Indian extended family system, she said. After the boarding school era, social services removed tens of thousands of children from families and placed many in white foster families from the 1950s to the 1970s. Parents couldn't navigate courts to get children back. When children aged out of foster care, many

became homeless. Taken from their tribal communities, most lost family and tribal connections, she said.

Other factors created vulnerabilities.

- Media perpetuate stereotypes and blame victims, said Margo, who grew up seeing John Wayne shoot Indians, Indians as team mascots or a sexy Pocahontas in a one-strap dress.

"In regalia, women are covered from their necks to their ankles," she said.

When a woman goes missing, media do not report it, assuming she's a druggie or a prostitute.

- "Our history of trauma makes women susceptible to human trafficking," she said. "If a woman is on the street 72 hours, traffickers will likely offer her a place to stay, food, drugs, 'love' and a way to earn money.

- Vulnerability also arises from using cash because of having no banks on reservations, and having tribal IDs, not state IDs, said Margo, telling a story:

One day at the bus terminal parking lot, Margo saw a young Sioux woman from South Dakota. She had visited the Kalispel Reservation, and her boyfriend's family had dropped her off there. She was distraught, having only a tribal ID but no state ID required for a ticket, unable to use her mother's credit card by phone and having her phone die.

Margo knew the woman might soon be on the street with no place to go, so she invited her to her home and bought her a ticket back to her reservation.

"It's an example of how easy it is for a woman to be lost," she said. "Women are vulnerable to trafficking here, drugged in a Spokane bar or abducted from a discount store parking lot.

Margo summarized risk factors:

- With loss of land, culture, language and identity, tribal communities face limited opportunities for education, jobs and housing, and struggle with poverty, violence and addiction.

- Structural discrimination comes in legal processes, institutional policies, cultural misrepresentations, lax enforcement and limited resources. For example, with limited funds, tribal law enforcement has few officers, losing many to better-paying county law offices.

- Individual factors include poverty, addiction, unstable housing, unreliable transportation, poor education, and exposure to physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

She said reforms are needed to improve the safety of women and to hold perpetrators accountable.

Solutions include collaborating across jurisdictions, standardizing protocols for MMIW cases, increasing law enforcement resources and prosecutions, developing tribal policies to address sexual harassment and assault, protecting young girls from social media, and overcoming racial bias that slows response to disappearances.

She mentioned some recent bills:

- Savanna's Act, or the #MMIW Act or U.S. Senate Bill #227, sets law enforcement and justice protocols to address MMIW, increasing interagency cooperation, training and funding and requiring the Attorney General to report data on missing and murdered indigenous people annually to Congress. It is named for Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind of Fargo, N.D., who was murdered in 2017.

- Washington State Patrol Missing and Murdered Native American Women Report addresses missteps in reporting and tracking MMIW.

- The Violence Against Women

Act (VAWA) expired in December 2018. A temporary reauthorization expired Feb. 15, 2019. Its reauthorization is uncertain. It includes jurisdiction enhancement for tribal courts dealing with non-native men. One version, sponsored by Sen. Joni Ernst, restricts jurisdiction of tribal courts.

- On Nov. 26, the President established the interagency Operation Lady Justice Task Force to develop protocols for new and unsolved cases, and a multi-jurisdictional team to review cases.

- A Washington state law signed by the governor in April calls for increased reporting and investigation of missing native women.

- The Washington State Patrol is hiring a liaison in Western Washington and one in Eastern Washington to build trust with tribal communities and improve response when someone goes missing.

"Tribal communities are rising up to be heard and make national and state leaders and law enforcement respond," Margo said.

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Financial advisor appreciated opportunity to give through Rotary 21

Paul Viren, a financial planner, finds involvement with Spokane's Rotary Club 21 is a way to express his belief in giving philanthropically to invest in improving lives locally and globally.

"We raise about \$125,000 each year from members and use about \$100,000 from our foundation," said Paul, who is currently the president. "With those funds, we hope to move the needle a bit for the community and world."

Invited by a friend to a Rotary 21 meeting 18 years ago, Paul became a Rotarian, drawn by the group's civic mindedness and desire to give back to the community.

"It's important to be involved, to learn about local programs, to be better citizens and to raise funds to share with nonprofits," he said. "We are altruistic, which means we think outside ourselves and put service above self. We see disadvantaged people and help."

There are 250 in our club, and 21 clubs within 100 miles of Spokane. Rotary 21 is one of 100 large clubs among the 35,000 clubs around the world.

"We help nonprofits provide social services, which can be hard in this polarized world," he said, explaining Rotary 21 is diverse on the liberal-conservative spectrum, but members set that aside to focus on local projects.

In collaboration with Rotary International, the club's mission is to champion "health, education and peace through fellowship and services, using our resources to make our community and world a better place," according to its annual report.

"We have programs to help support people with disabilities, veterans, vaccines and scholarships," he said.

Rotary's international scope makes it possible to send and receive exchange students for summer and year-long experiences living with host families. Recently they received a student from Japan, and sponsored students to go to Chile, Brazil and Germany.

They partner with Rotary Seattle Club 4 on water and sanitation projects to eradicate malaria in Kenya and with the Castlegar, B.C., Rotary on an education project. Spokane members have vis-



Paul Viren values giving that 'moves the needle' to improve lives.

ited projects in Central America, Kenya and Ecuador.

"We find a Rotary in another country that announces a project. Their members host members who visit to help out," he said.

Paul, who owns Viren and Associates, an independent financial planning firm, with his wife, Beth, advises clients both on making investments to earn more income and on giving philanthropic gifts.

Paul grew up in Spokane and graduated in 1978 from Whitworth University in religion and psychology, thinking he would go into ministry.

He and Beth moved to Seattle where he was in youth ministry a few years, but he returned to Spokane to work with the development staff at Whitworth University helping raise funds.

"I loved talking with people about the mission of the University," he said of his six years at Whitworth. "In the process of helping people manage funds so they could give some away, I became aware of the importance of financial services and helping people plan for charitable giving."

Many in financial services, he said, know how to help people make more money, but do not

understand philanthropy to be part of their services.

"Giving people information on charitable causes and faithful ministry helps them give back to the community, so as they are blessed, they bless others," Paul said. "If a client realizes they have social capital, they can make an impact on the world."

While a few clients seek to do socially responsible investment, it's a matter of how deep that filter is—such as whether a company uses cheap foreign labor or how green they want their investments to be, he said.

Only a small percentage of his 500 clients try to be green. Some are sensitive about women's rights, ownership and leadership, said Paul, who is active in Covenant United Methodist Church, where the pastor "loves the earth and promotes social responsibility."

Paul appreciates Rotary's focus on networking and building friendships, organizing individuals around common interests to build synergy. He also appreciates that members avoid promoting partisan or religious stands.

Rotary members become friends and may refer people to their businesses because they know and trust them, but members are not there to "hand out business cards or pitch products."

Paul told of some of the many ways the Rotary Club gives back to the community. He is on the Civic Affairs Committee, which gave out \$48,000 in 2017-18 in grants in response to 18 requests.

- In November 2019, that committee granted \$2,500 to The Fig Tree to purchase a new computer.

- At the same meeting, they funded 66 cell phones for The Bail Project, a nonprofit challenging mass incarceration, and the economic and racial disparities in the bail system. The project pays bail for people in need, keeping families together and keeping people in their jobs. Bail is returned at the end of a case and can be reused for others.

- In 2018, the volunteer-run Souls to Soles received \$3,000 for 150 pairs of shoes and socks for four-to-five-year-olds in low-income families. In Spokane, shoes go to children in Head Start and ECEAP (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program) centers.

- Previously, they funded a coffee maker for Shalom Ministries, which serves Dining with Dignity meals to poor and homeless people in downtown Spokane. It serves breakfasts Mondays through Thursdays, and dinners Mondays and Tuesdays, at New Community Center, 518 W. Third.

- Each year, Rotary 21 hosts an annual Partners for Work Interview Event in April for 12

businesses hiring people from Artisans, The Arc of Spokane, Goodwill, PACE and Skills'kin.

- The club's Vaccinations Committee supports six four-hour Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) vaccination clinics, giving vaccinations to about 100 each time. Rotary 21 members volunteer to provide activities for children with music and snacks.

- "Faced with the challenges from the anti-vaccine movement, we help the SRHD provide a spectrum of vaccinations for measles to polio," said Paul, noting that Salk Middle School is named for the developer of the polio vaccination.

- The Disability Service Committee used \$30,000 to fund 21 requests, partnering with Embrace Washington, Inland Northwest Adaptive and Shriners Hospital for Children in Spokane.

- The Support Our Veterans Committee contributed \$8,000 to organizations that assist veterans in Eastern Washington and North Idaho, including purchasing guitars for veterans suffering Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and funding guitar lessons at Holy Names Music Center. Members also support a Veterans Day meal, an ice cream social, a picnic and a holiday meal for veterans who might be overlooked.

- The Youth Services Committee gave \$53,500 to organizations serving youth in the community, including Action for Youth, Generation Alive, Ryan's Case for Smiles, Spokane Jazz Orchestra and Union Gospel Mission. It spent \$3,500 to host two Foster Kid Fest parties with fun activities with Rotary volunteers at the Mobius Science Center and Salvation Army.

- The club also distributes some of its annual endowment income as scholarships to high school students.

For information, call 462-0747 or email info@virenandassociates.com.

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Maurice Smith invites community to come together around homelessness

Continued from page 1

Army. With 15,000 square feet, that location will give 75 service providers space to meet the needs of the larger number of people who are expected to come. Last January's Connect drew 541 attendees seeking services.

The Spokane Valley Homeless Connect, which was held for the second year in September, is geared more for homeless families, he said.

"Homelessness is a subterranean river running through our community," Maurice said. "Families need to know we care. As Christians, we are responsible to act."

Maurice "has skin" in homeless concerns. He knows about homelessness from his own experience.

He grew up in North Carolina and graduated with a degree in classics—Greek—in 1976 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Planning to go to seminary, he worked two years on the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ in San Bernadino, Calif., where he met his wife, Gale. She was born in Sandpoint and grew up in Sprague, graduating from high school in Spokane.

They married and moved to Colorado, where Maurice graduated from Denver Baptist Seminary with a master's in systematic theology and philosophy of religion in 1982. They settled in Spokane to be near her parents. Maurice worked in the financial services business for 15 years, until he went bankrupt in 2000 and they lost their home.

Friends Dean and Cordelia Barber invited them to stay at the Living Springs Ranch, a Christian guest ranch near Deer Park.

Six months after they went there, Dean had heart issues and needed to move into Spokane, so Maurice and Gale managed the ranch for five years.

For 15 years, Maurice has been involved in several organic house churches and in outreach.

"House churches, being organic, ebb and flow," he said. "So they are more attractive to many homeless people on the streets than institutional churches with buildings. We take church to people where they live."

In West Central Spokane, he fed people in the front yard of a rental house on W. Gardner, serving barbecues for 150 to 300 every Monday evening from early May through late September.

In 2005, he helped found Feed



Maurice Smith produces documentaries on homelessness.

Spokane and was its executive director for five years, increasing the quality and quantity of food for homeless and food insecure people in the community. Steve Brashears is now the executive director.

Maurice also worked to build discipleship among homeless men during 10 years he served on the Truth Ministries board.

As Gale's parents' health declined, she and Maurice cared for them for five years. During that time, he started Rising River Media, a self-publishing business. In 2014, it incorporated as a nonprofit.

Through Rising River Media, he has written and published 10 books through Amazon, books on discipleship and organic house churches. Gale has published a children's book and is finishing a second one.

They earn a living now by support from people who contribute to Rising River Media.

Maurice, who once ran a regional religion newspaper in Denver, said digital production has changed media. He used to have galleys set, paste them on pages, and photograph them to print.

Now he prepares books on software that lets him publish in print or online—one copy or 1,000 copies. It's print-on-demand.

For the past four years, Maurice has served on the leadership team for the Homeless Coalition, which coordinates individuals and agencies that serve the Spokane homeless. That brings together his volunteer work with homeless on the streets and in shelters, and with service providers.

In recent months, Maurice has been spending time at the studio of Community-Minded TV (Comcast 14), working with D.W. Clark, who spent 40 years in video production in Seattle and is now

the senior videographer and editor for the second documentary.

The first hour-long documentary on Homeless Connect 2019 premiered May 30 on the third floor of the downtown Spokane Public Library with more than 100 people attending.

It was also broadcast for two weeks in June on CMTV-Comcast Channel 14. It is now available online at MyRoadLeadsHome.org, where it has had more than 800 views.

"It shows the community coming together to address homelessness," Maurice said.

Dan Mortimer of Mortimer Productions in Spokane helped Maurice recruit five videographers to film the Connect. Maurice is executive producer of "The Hidden Homeless" with Dan's daughter, Angela Downey, serving as floor producer and director.

"We do not see the vast majority of homeless families on the street corners," Maurice said. "Some are in shelters. Some live in cars. Some stay with family and friends while they try to get back to where they were."

"There are more homeless families because the local housing crisis creates a one percent vacancy rate, three-year waiting lists for one-bedroom apartments, and obstacles to return to stability," he said.

Some homeless families have jobs, but rent has risen 50 percent in seven years and 45 percent in five years. Income has not kept up. People are evicted if they can't pay rent.

"The family members who are homeless today are tomorrow's street homeless if we do not do something," Maurice said. "Do we have the will to do what we need to do?"

Solutions include establishing tenants' rights and requiring

apartment owners to set aside a percentage of apartments for low-income people who could not be required to pay more than 30 percent of their income in rent, deposits and fees.

Bringing the community together with homeless people and providing resources, like the Homeless Connect events, are also part of the impetus for finding solutions.

"It's one of the ways we as Christians can work to promote the shalom of our community," Maurice said.

With expenses for the Convention Center more than double what they were at the Salvation Army, Maurice seeks businesses to help sponsor the event.

He invites members of faith communities to come as volunteers to interact with and guide attendees seeking help to the resources they need.

Under one roof, the 2020 Homeless Connect will include a

"warrant fest" offered by municipal, district and superior courts; veterinarians doing pet care; barbers cutting hair; food services; housing resources; addiction recovery services; information on shelters; DSHS services; health services including foot care, vaccines and wellness checks; free legal services from the Spokane Bar Association; opportunities for employment with the Census Bureau and many more services.

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Missionary Sister gains English skills to serve her global community

In three years studying at Gonzaga University, Sr. Vocata Kim learned that Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is about more than teaching and learning the language.

In a practicum with the English language program for immigrants and refugees at the Adult Education Center on N. Monroe, she discovered that teaching English is also an opportunity to learn about diverse cultures and build relationships by sharing about life stories and cultural values.

“The English classroom is a classroom in global learning to gain cultural competence,” she said.

Sr. Vocata came to Spokane in January 2017 from Busan, South Korea, where she is a member of the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC).

“In Korean public schools, everyone studies English. We learn grammar, reading and listening, but not speaking,” said Sr. Vocata, who could not speak English before she came.

Not only the South Korean government but also the International Congregation of Missionary Sisters want to cultivate English communication and conversation skills.

The MSC has 700 sisters in seven provinces. Being in 15 countries: Namibia, Korea, China and Vietnam, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, Romania, Spain, Germany, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Mexico and the United States, they want more sisters to learn English because it is a global language.

“We need to know English to communicate with sisters in other provinces,” she said.

Although only 11 percent of South Koreans are Catholic, Sr. Vocata grew up in a Catholic family. Her father’s side had been Catholic for many generations, but was not practicing. Her mother’s family was Buddhist, but when she married, she took her husband’s faith and her new beliefs seriously. She raised their two daughters in the Catholic faith and went to Mass regularly.

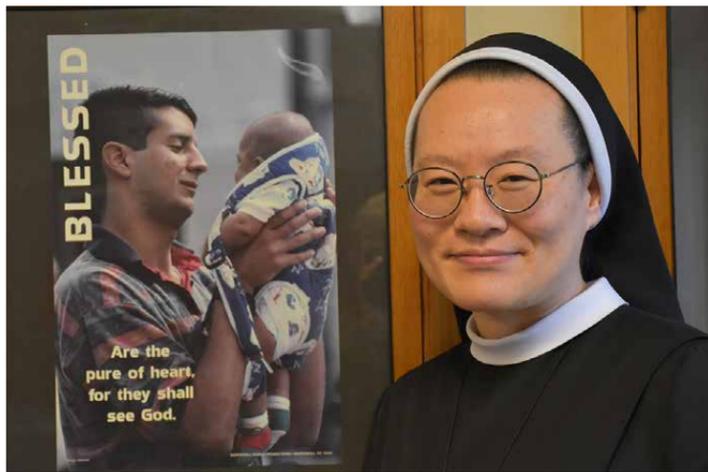
“Her belief, prayer and experience with God are powerful,” Sr. Vocata said. “She influenced me.”

After studying history four years at the university, Sr. Vocata worked two years with the Masan Catholic Diocese near Busan. While there, a Missionary Sister invited her to visit her congregation.

“At that moment, I had a conversion in my faith. So I was looking for a lifelong house for my soul. I wanted to be a Catholic nun. I decided to enter the Missionary Sisters,” she said.

Sr. Vocata joined the sisters in June 2006. Over four years, she moved from being an aspirant to being a postulant, then a novice and taking her first vows in 2010. She worked educating children and adults, leading retreats and taking care of the Sacristy for six years, two years each in three parishes—Gwangju, Seoul and Yangsan near Busan—before she took her final vows in 2016.

“**The Korean Missionary Sisters** province is the biggest—with more than 200 sisters—and youngest community in the congregation. Other provinces, like Germany and America, require young sisters who can support senior sisters,” she said.



Sr. Vocata Kim built relationships while building English skills.

Sr. Vocata came to Spokane to improve her English in Gonzaga’s ESL (English as a Second Language) program. After six months, her provincial leader asked her to enter the master’s program in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MA/TESOL).

Her professors’ support helped her as someone from a different culture,

Beginning in September 2017, Sr. Vocata took classes with 10 others in the program, including students from Japan and around the United States.

She earned her degree and returned to Busan on Dec. 27.

“I’m excited to go back, but sad. In three years, I developed many good relationships and friendships with the professors and the Mater Dei family where I live, including African sisters and priests who were in the Sabbatical Program that ended in May,” she said.

Living at the Ministry Institute at Gonzaga, she was a part of its community for spiritual renewal, praying together regularly and sharing their experiences.

“Before I came, I had no experience in any other country. I had a narrow view of the world. Now my eyes have been opened widely,” she said. “Here I see many cultures, people coming from diverse nations into the U.S. culture. There is also much diversity in gender and religion.”

“**I learned not to judge** cultures, genders and LGBTQ people,” she added, telling of becoming friends with a lesbian ESL teacher. “I saw how she touches many lives, not only teaching ESL but also helping immigrants and refugees in Spokane. I realize that in God’s eyes, she and her family are beloved children of God.”

From January to March 2019, Sr. Vocata did a practicum at the Spokane Community College Adult Education Center, teaching immigrants and refugees.

“It was amazing listening to the life stories of immigrants and

refugees who left their countries because of so many tragedies,” she said. “Despite their tragedies and loss of family members, they have a positive attitude about life. Listening to their stories, I prayed and prayed and prayed,

“They have dreams about their lives in the U.S.,” she said. “I wanted to help teach them English and soothe their hearts. At break times, not just in class, I smiled and cried with them as they told happy or sad stories.”

Sr. Vocata also did a research project with 19 of them and gave a presentation in October at the Washington Association for the Education of Speakers of Other Languages Conference—an affiliate of TESOL.

Her research related to the students’ being at first unable to understand her accent as a non-native speaker. Later developing positive interactions, they became accustomed to her accent and realized there was no one “right” accent.

“I thought they would prefer

to have a native English speaker so they hear accents they need for living in the U.S.,” she said, “but outside the academic setting they wanted to communicate with teachers and peers. My research project also gives native speaking teachers insight on accents of native and non-native speakers.”

In the U.S., there are different accents in the many regions—Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, South Central, Southwest and Northwest.

“**I learned that accent** is not the main issue in communication,” she said. “Communicating is more important than focusing on every syllable. Good relationships make for practical communication and learning opportunities. If teachers and students have good relationships, students learn more.

“As a Missionary Sister of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have a duty to care about people’s hearts and hardships,” she said. “Often people are too busy to share their inner hearts. My ministry of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is about communicating. We need to take time over a cup of coffee to listen to each other’s stories.

“Living here, I have learned great lessons from God about the world,” she said. “I hope I can be a tool for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a channel for God’s love to

open eyes to see the beauty of all people in God’s heart.”

Sr. Vocata’s personal motto, carved inside the ring she chose when she took her final vows, is I Kings 3:9: “To be a listening heart.” The passage is about Solomon asking God for a listening heart in order to govern well.

She said that a discerning or listening heart is more important for a leader than health, wealth or power.

“I seek to listen to God’s voice in the heart of everyone,” she said. “I have learned not only English but also how to be a listening heart.

“**I have learned to listen** in English. Listening is interaction. If a person speaks fast, I need to ask the person to speak slowly. If a person says a word I don’t understand, I ask what it means so I can understand. Interaction builds relationships,” Sr. Vocata said.

“Listening also requires taking time to fully understand what someone is talking about,” she said. “It’s not about agreeing, but discussing and sharing thoughts on issues.”

She also believes that while immigrants and refugees need to learn English to live in the U.S., it’s important that they and their children keep connection with and knowledge of their own language.

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Downtown 'mission field' is right outside the door of CdA church

By Kaye Hult

First Presbyterian Church in Coeur d'Alene is following their pastor's lead to see the downtown that's right outside their door as their mission field.

When Craig Sumey answered the call to pastor that church in 2011, he was excited that it was downtown. He could walk out the door and begin interacting with all sorts of people—from people in business to people struggling to make it. He wanted engagement with the Coeur d'Alene community to be a focal point of his ministry.

"What I'm doing is done by me along with this church," he said.

"Where we are located, everything is happening in our front yard," he said. "We have to take advantage of it."

First Presbyterian Church had gone through four decades of slow, steady decline. Many members were ready for a change.

"The people in the congregation were open to innovation, to a different kind of leadership," he said. "They were receptive to the leading of the Holy Spirit."

The church had a robust outreach program. They hosted a Thursday ecumenical lunch for those in need. A rotation of churches provided the food.

They had a clothes closet. Their clothing give-away, a back-to-school event, had grown. This past fall, they served about 400 families, he said.

The church partnered with St. Vincent de Paul in outreach to the poor and participated in the ministry of Family Promise.

Craig identified a problem: downtown was changing.

"When I came, I saw there was a different demographic," he said.

Initially, he joined the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Association, allowing him to learn about relationships, context and mission.

"Our task as a church is to learn the lament of the place," he said, meaning the long-term passion, grief or prayer.

Joining a group forming CdA 2030, a visioning endeavor, he learned more about the economic and social needs of Coeur d'Alene.



Craig Sumey stands by the church's coffee bar.

"Participating in the Chamber's Leadership Program 2013 gave me great insight into what makes the community tick," he said.

Joining the United Way board, he learned about an emerging group, ALICE, which stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed."

ALICE people comprise about two-thirds of the middle class. They have homes and jobs and are an active part of the tax-paying community, but they have to make hard choices about how to spend their money.

"Most people looking in from the outside don't see the challenges," Craig said. "A little less than half of the city's population lives month to month."

He began chairing the chamber's ALICE Task Force, which includes nonprofits, education, private and public sectors, health care and child care. It meets to learn the needs and advocate for the ALICE population. They have asked for the CityLink bus routes to provide stops closer to work places.

They set up a program called Bank On to provide personal finance classes—taught by professionals from financial institutions—to help people become "bankable" again.

They created an Early Care and Education Task Force to work on affordable, accessible child care from employers, as well as to provide support and resources for home-based child care.

First Presbyterian Church ran a child-care program, called "Glory Be," but ended it because costs were prohibitive.

"It takes a whole community to figure this out," he said.

After three years of chairing task forces, he is ready for a change.

He is joining a community advisory committee called Envision CdA. They will seek community input on zoning, economic development and city planning to create an updated plan.

"I look forward to bringing what I learned about the ALICE population into the mix," he said.

The focus question for the Envision CdA is: What will the community need for the next 10 to 20 years? They seek to discern how an area can be renewed.

"What do we do about what's happening in already developed areas as they recycle themselves?" he asked. "What about commercial development? What about businesses and industry?"

"These issues affect everybody," he said. "If you force the ALICE population to move from a city, it affects business costs in higher wages. It affects their commuting costs. We want those who work here to live here."

"The opportunity is now to set up a good balance in the future," Craig said.

"The ALICE population doesn't have time. They work a couple of jobs, need to deal with family issues and the stress they experience leads to social problems. They don't have much influence, much 'band width' to involve themselves. It's up to the ALICE Task Force and others to advocate for them," he said.

When Craig began working with the church to determine his role, he asked people around the area for their input. They said, "We want you to be involved, to be a neighbor."

"My community involvement is not extra. It's an essential part of my call," Craig said.

"Within the congregation, we're called to raise up disciples of Jesus, to worship and to care for each other," he said. "However, God is working in the world, and we need to join God there."

People within the church engage in the community in their own ways as they support Craig's engagements.

His passion for the local church began as he was growing up in Kansas City, Kan., in a white middle-class suburban community. He attended Village Presbyterian Church, a congregation of about 7,000. He grew up in its children's and youth ministries.

At Baker University in Baldwin City, Kans., he became involved with youth ministry. In that work, his call came. After he graduated in 1989, he went on to earn a master of divinity degree in 1992 from Princeton Theological Seminary. He was ordained as associate pastor for youth in the Presbyterian church in Atchison, Kan.

From there, he helped start a new Presbyterian church in Lincoln, Neb., and then was associate pastor of a church in Lakeland, Fla., for 12 years. He came to Coeur d'Alene in 2011.

Craig has been married to his wife Lynn for 26 years. They have two young-adult children, who are active at First Presbyterian Church. Lynn is coordinator for Ready! for Kindergarten, run by United Way.

It provides classes to help parents prepare their children for school.

"In Idaho, we are struggling to find resources to create tomorrow's work force," Craig said.

The state does not offer pre-kindergarten or kindergarten. Many children come to first grade without resources to do well.

Such observations help churches find their niche.

"I realize local churches must remake themselves, or they will fade away," he said.

"Churches have been locked into habits that aren't working," he said. "In local, medium-size churches, there's connection. There's great DNA that has grown up over the years. What can we do about this, so the churches continue?"

Craig believes existing churches have much to offer. They need to find ways to evolve so they can continue and be vital parts of the neighborhoods and communities right outside their doors.

For more information, call 208-667-8446 or email craig@1stpresdowntown.org.

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WHO Individuals, non-profits, and businesses for operational costs, projects, and programs can apply.

WHEN Applications are due online FEBRUARY 1, JUNE 1, and OCTOBER 1 every year.

APPLY NOW!

www.spokanearts.org/grants

Jewish Cultural Film Festival features three films

Three films will be shown for the Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival 2020 on the theme, "Untold Stories," Thursday, Jan. 30, and Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 1 and 2, at Wolff Auditorium in the Jepsen Center at Gonzaga.

"Fiddler: A Miracle of Miracles" in English at 7 p.m., Thursday, is a thought-provoking, joyous documentary exploring the story behind "Fiddler on the Roof," a 1960s beloved Broadway musical about "tradition" being on the wane in gender roles, sexuality, race relations and religion.

The Meshugga Daddies klezmer band will play selections from "Fiddler" at 6:45 p.m., before the show. After the show, there will be a video call with the film's co-writer and co-producer Valerie Thomas and a raffle for "Fiddler" swag.

"The Light of Hope" in Spanish, Catalan and French with English subtitles is at 7 p.m. Saturday. Based on a true story, it presents stories of refugees from Europe seeking shelter in the 1940s in southwest France, escaping persecution from Nazis

and Franco. A Red Cross nurse transforms a villa into a birth clinic, saving lives. Authorities in Nazi-occupied France demand she hand over Jewish refugees.

"The Unorthodox" at 2 p.m. on Sunday in Hebrew and Yiddish with English subtitle tells a 1933 story of the daughter of a printer in Jerusalem. She is expelled from school for ethnic reasons.

Grants from the Innovia Foundation, the Holocaust Center and

the Anti-Defamation League in Seattle support the festival to counter hate and white supremacy, said Neal Schindler, director of the Spokane Area Jewish Family Services, the festival organizer.

Other additions are a 15-panel exhibit on Sephardic Jews from the Washington State Jewish Historical Society, and a raffle.

For information, call 747-7394 or visit sajfs.org/our-program/sjcff/.

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Insights from immersion in Central America influence lives and studies

By Katie Thompson
Whitworth Intern

Since its creation in 1975, Whitworth University's Central America Study and Service Program (CASP) has been taking students to experience an immersive semester abroad.

As the university's oldest and longest-running interdisciplinary, faculty-led and semester long foreign study program, it takes students to different locations in Central America each spring, following cultural and academic learning in the previous semester.

The CASP learning model creates a unique experience with transformative effects on the educational, spiritual and socio-political outlook of not just those who travel, but also on Whitworth and the broader community. It takes students out of their comfort zones.

One of Whitworth's five strategic goals—to create global citizens—doesn't happen sitting at Whitworth, learning from books.

"Whitworth believes students should explore their faith and wrestle with its possible connections to the world around them," said Lindy Scott, a professor, who co-leads CASP with professor Kim Hernandez.

"At Whitworth, students and faculty develop mutual trust and lasting relationships as they explore difficult issues," he added.

The educational principles integral to CASP reflect that education is costly in more ways than money and books.

"It flies in the face of much U.S. education that is a commodity," Lindy said. "It says a small town and indigenous people in Guatemala are important. The students become less selfish, more aware and tuned in to the lives of others."

Lindy and Kim recently co-authored a book: *Challenged and Changed: Living and Learning in Central America*. It follows the life, vision and impact of Ron and Marianne Frase, who founded the program 45 years ago.

"Ron brought up what was a revolutionary, out-of-the-box idea in those days," Lindy said. "At one point his job was on the line, but he was willing to go to the mat for the program because he thought it was important."

The book informs people about the program and features stories from students who experienced it. It also tells the story of Ron and Marianne, and emphasizes the importance of international education, which is underfunded in this era of high political tensions.

Living with host families breaks down negative ideas of Central America, and bridges the gap between North American and Central American Christians.



Lindy Scott and Kim Hernandez co-lead Whitworth's Central America Study and Service Program.

In its first year, students traveled to Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Chile and Argentina. Since then, students have traveled to the Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Honduras.

A few years after the program started, they began "the plunge," an immersive experience. Given maps and some money, students go off in groups of three or four for three days. They go to an assigned town with a list of goals to achieve. They are to find lodging and food, meet with a priest or pastor, and talk with people about the community's history.

They find they can use their Spanish and intercultural skills to converse with people. They become close to people in small towns as they hear their stories.

"Central America is villainized in today's U.S. socio-political climate," said Kim. "The program invites students to shift their assumptions. CASP allows students to examine the current narrative first-hand and discover truth through their own experiences."

"Students meet people who are honored that a group of North Americans came to their community on purpose," said Kim. "Students want to know who they are and what makes their town special."

"People in Central America say, 'Now we're not invisible to the world. Someone knows our story and will tell it in a way that will honor us and represent us to people in the U.S.' The students become their ambassadors. It's a sacred endeavor," she said. "The students realize their power and impact beyond improving Spanish to be bilingual in their careers."

CASP looks outward. Students see the world outside the Whitworth and U.S. bubble, she said.

"Often North Americans and North American Christians feel superior," Lindy said. "Many feel we are 'the first world,' and they are 'the third world,' or we are 'developed,' and they are

'underdeveloped.'

"Usually our interaction with Latin America is to 'help,' so we're the helpers and they need our help," he said. "Students learn that in God's sight, Central Americans are as important as we are. They need respect for their lives, values, struggles and issues."

That has been the program's focus from the beginning, because Ron and Marianne wanted students to see the equality of those they met by living in their homes, learning their language and preparing in advance.

Immersion in these countries, Lindy said, prompts student and faculty conversations, reflection and action during and after the trip—even years later.

"Graduates say how an event or experience in 1975 shaped their lives, marriages, careers and perspectives on life in the 45 years since," he said.

The impact does not stop there. Because most are sophomores and juniors, they bring back their perspectives to share in classes, challenging preconceptions of Central American people, theology and politics. This affects both the individual students and the university culture.

Students in Nicaragua in the 1980s came back with questions when the U.S. government tried to overthrow the Sandinistas. Students saw Sandinistas fighting for their freedom against a dictator the U.S. supported, and asked about U.S. intervention.

"Whitworth has changed," said Lindy. "To be involved in society, meeting people's needs, is no longer a foreign concept. Holistic ministry and social justice are emphases of Latin American Christianity. There's now acceptance at Whitworth that social justice is part of being Christian."

In 2014, the program began a three-month internship, in which both the university students and Central American organizations learn from each other.

"Most students believe in Christ, but are in different places in their walk with God," said Lindy, noting that "many here think U.S. Christianity is what faith should be, but Christians in other countries have much to teach us."

He said students broaden their faith and walk with God, unlearning "bad lessons" and observing "good lessons," like Christian doctors in Nicaragua choosing to serve in poor urban or rural areas, rather than making more money in a government hospital.

University students may put career preparation and academic learning before their relationship with God and call. Seeing how people can use their professions to serve God and neighbors, students reflect on the purpose of their education and careers.

Kim, who attends Life Center and has been with the program 19 years, said leading the program and collecting stories for the book have broadened her understanding of God and inform how she lives her faith.

As one who seeks to follow

Christ, Lindy is both encouraged and distressed by Christians' lives. He invites students to consider their blind spots of arrogance, selfishness or greed as they see a different way of living and encounter "tough truths" about U.S. foreign policy and faith.

Kim hopes her work as a Spanish professor and faculty leader in Central America expresses her walk with God and is "the Gospel in action." CASP teaches Spanish—beyond grammar and vocabulary. Spanish is a tool that contributes to a student's experience, education and family life.

Lindy, who has been with Whitworth for 13 years, enjoys seeing students grow through interactions with people from another language and culture—sharing in weddings, annual celebrations and deaths with their host families.

Kim said research on cognition points to the value of learning through experience, compared with learning from books and lectures. The brain responds to information in a different way. Learning language and cultural immersion bring new ideas and reactions.

"A second language helps us see how language affects how we understand the Bible," Lindy added. "An English translation may say to seek first the kingdom of God and God's 'righteousness.' Spanish versions say 'justice' instead of 'righteousness.' Is God's kingdom just about personal righteousness or also about justice?"

"Central Americans are not better or worse than we are, but they do have insights," he said. "I want students to grow from and through the faith insights of others."

For information, call 777-4837 or email lscott@whitworth.edu. Kim 777-4755 or email khernandez@whitworth.edu.

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and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

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MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE FAITHFUL: FUNERAL | CREMATION | CEMETERY | FAMILY ESTATES

Act, love, unite to help create the beloved community of justice, peace

As we meander in the holy days in our faith traditions in an impeachment, elections, white-power season of turmoil and division politically, hope seems cold, hollow and impossible! However, there it is each year and all year, springing up and inspiring us to speak out, be resilient, challenge political, economic, racial, gender, age and environmental injustices that seem ever present and ever mounting—as always.

Hope is vigorous.

Hope is sustainable.

Hope is power.

Can injustice, oppression and hate worsen? Of course they *can*.

Can we intervene as the heart, hands and hunger of God to slow or stop the flow toward more autocracy, oligarchy, inequality and destruction of ecosystems? Working together and speaking out with God's help, of course we *can*.

When the celebrations and time out for our annual and seasonal holy days is done, when the worship, prayers and reflections

of our weekly holy days and daily holy times are over, our work with faith renewed and hope refreshed begins.

When we step out of our sanctuaries, singing, silence and stillness, we return as the incarnation of hope in action to restore, renew, reconcile and refresh our communities, regions, states, nations and the world.

We are not alone. People throughout our communities, regions, states, nations and the world are ready to join hands with us to care for the lonely, to find the missing, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to house the homeless, to free prisoners, to welcome strangers, to love neighbors, to rebuild nations, to make peace, to bring justice, to reunite families, to reconcile with enemies, to forgive family, to share stories, to build relationships, to empower people, to love all God's children, to care for creation and to rejoice always.

It's a long list. We don't have to do it all as individuals. We act where we have gifts, trusting that we are part of God's caring community with others who have gifts.

In that note, we celebrate those who support The Fig Tree's sharing stories of people—such as those uplifted in recent issues—and how those people impact lives:

The World Relief community inspires us to welcome refugees.

Presbyterian mission co-workers foster ties with indigenous Guatemalans.

Episcopalians seek to help people find the middle way to carry on conversations.

An African-American classical musician brings cultural diversity to a church.

Environmentalists and civic leaders seek sustainable development in Spokane.

Ecumenical Catholic Communion feels called 'to be Christ for the world.'

Faith leaders challenge white supremacy and environmental injustice.

Church members step just outside their doors into a downtown mission field.

Central America Study and Service Program shatters students' assumptions.

Nun returns to Korea with insights on using English as a global language.

Transitions houses 24 once homeless

families in its Home Yard Cottages.

Homeless Connect draws people for one day to one place to resolve many needs.

Financial advisor and Rotary share income to improve lives.

Indigenous women unite to raise awareness and challenge systems so fewer Native women will go missing or be murdered.

These stories of people making a difference, recorded in two issues, inspire us to keep finding ways to "move the needle" and to overcome the "enemy images" that feed politicians seeking to amass total power.

The questions driving our decisions must not be "What's your net worth?" or "What or who does the latest poll say is popular?"

They must be "How do our vision and faith inform how we invest and share what we have?" and "How do we educate, empower and engage people to overcome hate, greed and violence?"

Love, unite and act as the community of faith with all caring people, persisting to create the beloved community.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Who are migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants?

Migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants: What's the difference?

Which of the four where Mary and Joseph?

Matthew: 2:12-14 provides important details about the reasons Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt: An angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream and told him to take Mary and the newborn infant Jesus out of Judea and into Egypt in order to escape the murderous clutches of Herod.

Today, people around the world make the same difficult decision to leave their countries in search of safety and better lives. There are 68.5 million men, women and children escaping war, persecution and political turbulence. These are refugees and asylum seekers.

This isn't about immigration policy, the economic benefits of immigration or whether immigration is a drain on America. The story of Mary, Joseph and Jesus tells us

about why people are forced to flee.

In the Dec. 28 issue of America Magazine, James Martin, SJ said: "With refugees and migrants in the news, some commentators have sought to draw parallels between their plight and that of the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary and Joseph. How accurate are these comparisons? Were Jesus, Mary and Joseph what we would consider today 'refugees'? The answer is, 'Yes.'"

There's been confusion and debate over the use of these terms to describe the plight of those on the move. What are the differences between a refugee, asylum seeker, immigrant and migrant.

We define a refugee as someone who has been forced to flee his or her home because of war, violence or persecution, often without warning. Mary, Joseph and Jesus were forced to flee, to escape the murderous clutches of Herod.

They were refugees.

Asylum seekers seek international protection from dangers in their home countries, but they may not have legal refugee status. They cross a border to apply in the destination country.

Immigrants chose to come for various reasons, such as to live in freedom, to practice their religion freely, to escape poverty or oppression, and to make better lives for themselves and their children. Immigrants come to live permanently in a country.

Migrants move from place to place for jobs, such as seasonal work, or education. They were not forced to leave.

Last year, the Franciscan Federation approved the Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Resolution for 2019 - 2020 "Welcoming The Refugees, Immigrants, Asylum Seekers."

The resolution recognizes that refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers are being turned away from U.S. borders and held in

detention centers. It holds national leaders "accountable for the reprehensible crime of separating children from their parents and placing them in detention." Franciscans are called to support neighbors in their weakness as they would want to be supported.

The resolution—at franfed.org/franciscan-federation-jpic-resolution-for-2019-2020-welcoming-the-refugees-immigrants-asylum-seekers—urges people to demand the Department of Homeland Security and government leaders reunite children with their families. It urges people to write letters to the editor, to engage in dialogue with people of different opinions and to correct root causes of forced migration. It also invites people to work for comprehensive immigration reform in the U.S.

Pat Millen, OSF

Franciscan Federation - Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation Committee



Letters invite advocacy, carrying on dream, welcoming refugees

For all the stuff getting attention in the state legislature, where is the voice of the faithful? An excellent source for what is up for consideration is the upcoming Eastern Washington Legislative Conference. Issues, such as gun violence, the environment, housing and so much more, are covered. Complete with bill numbers and contact information for who represents you.

How much easier can it get? There will be a lot of information in the break-out sessions, as well as over lunch with some other church folks who care. Participants will leave with their brains full of information about the issues, as well as a full belly from lunch, and ready to do your part to make this democracy work.

It takes involvement from "we the people" for issues to move with our voices heard. "Making it Happen" is 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 25 at Spokane Valley United Methodist Church.

It will be a full day well spent to increase our knowledge of issues in Washington state. It will be my third year. I'm still learning. It takes each of us for TRUE democracy to work.

Cathy Gunderson - Westminster United Church of Christ

The celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday should be honored by all Americans in a special way. King was not simply a great black leader, he was a great American leader whose human rights

victories have directly benefitted millions of women, other people of color, the aged and the handicapped across this country. I am concerned that we do not simply use the holiday as we do most American holidays -partying, relaxing, catching store sales and similar activities.

Dr. King's 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. We study the actions of Dr. King and other leaders in order to confront the growing devastation of the black community.

We must remember that massive unemployment, segregated housing, separate education, increased militarism and cooperation with racism, all issues that Dr. King addressed, have not disappeared. The legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., isn't the work he did, but what he left for others: to carry on his dream and to create the Beloved Community.

The Rev. Robert Trimble Yakima

Since 1992, World Relief has helped more than 10,000 people fleeing violence and persecution abroad to make a new home here in Spokane. These refugees have added great benefit to our community, boosting our economy, diversifying our culture, starting new businesses, restaurants and faith communities, and reminding us of

our essential values as a community and as a nation—liberty and justice for all.

In September, the U.S. President issued an executive order preventing refugees from being resettled into any part of the United States unless written consent was provided by both the state governor and local authorities.

In November, further guidance was released by the State Department clarifying that the local authority needs to be the "county executive."

For this reason, local refugee resettlement agencies World Relief Spokane and Lutheran Community Services Northwest have been in conversation with our county CEO and the board of commissioners for Spokane County for several weeks. We have discussed with them the details of refugee resettlement and its value for our community, as well as for our national interests.

The executive order is unprecedented in several ways.

First, in the 40-year history of the refugee resettlement program there has never been anything like this kind of automatic veto for refugees granted to local communities.

Second, it is extremely unusual to involve county governments in issues related to federal immigration policy.

Third, this creates an enormous potential for chaos and confusion throughout the entire nation if certain states or counties "opt out," especially if they already have

populations of refugees living there who have children or spouses seeking to join them from war-torn areas.

There are already court challenges to this law, as it may suggest a kind of discrimination against people who are already fully vetted and authorized to enter the U.S.—just because their immigration status is "refugee." That would make it unconstitutional.

The refugee resettlement program is already fully funded by the federal government, so there is no direct additional cost for states or counties who welcome refugees.

By granting "consent" the county and the state do not take on any additional financial or administrative responsibility for refugees.

They simply agree to continue to let the nonprofit organizations in the community work with the federal government to continue doing what we've been doing here successfully for decades.

We are grateful for our state governor and our county commissioners taking action to specifically welcome refugees.

They all recognize the value of refugees for our nation, our state and our county.

Mark Finney, director World Relief Spokane

Thanks for all you do, especially now.
Linda Tompkins Liberty Lake

Calendar of Events

Weekly Rental Rights Clinics - 835-5211

- Mons** • Center for Justice, 35 W. Main, noon,
- Tues** • NE Community Center, 4001 N. Cook, 10 a.m.
- Weds** • Envision Center, 130 S. Arthur, 10 a.m.
- Thurs** • Envision Center, 130 S. Arthur St., 1 p.m.
- Jan 2** • **Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council Racial Equity Committee**, The Gathering House, 733 W. Garland, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 477-3860
- **Diverse Voices Writing Group**, Spark Central, 1214 W. Summit Parkway, 5:30 p.m., 279-0299, sparkwestcentral.org
- Jan 2,16** • **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
- Jan 5, 12, 19, 26** • **"Peace with Our Neighbors,"** interfaith speakers on Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Native American faiths, Spokane Friends Church, 1612 N. Dalke, 10 a.m., 327-7852
- Jan 8** • **"Sabes Que? Speakers Series,"** Hispanic Business / Professional Association Networking and Dinner, Fiesta Mexicana, 1227 S Grand, 6 to 7:30 p.m., hbaspokane@gmail.com, hbaspokane.net
- **Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council**, Spokane Regional Health District, 1101 W. College Ave. Room 140, noon to 1:30 p.m., 477-3860
- Jan 8** • **Grand Opening of Relocated Cafe**, Lunch and Bake Sale, Transitions New Leaf Bakery-Café, YWCA, 930 N. Monroe, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., 328-6702
- Jan 9** • **Showing Up for Racial Justice Committee**, book discussion on *White Fragility*, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 11** • **Women+s March Resource Fair** and Auction for Action, West Central Community Center, 1603 W. Belt, 1 to 4 p.m., 993-3051, womensmarchspokane@gmail.com
- **Rental Rights Clinic**, Hillyard Library, 4005 N. Cook, 10 a.m., 835-5211
- Jan 14** • **"Everyone Has a Story,"** People for Effective Government forum with family therapist Chris Crutcher, Weyerhaeuser Hall at Whitworth University, 7 p.m., pegnow.org
- Jan 15** • **Silent Day of Prayer**, "Prayer Messiah, Model and Master: Reflections to Re-center Our Lives on Jesus Christ, Fr. Kyle Ratuiste, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr, 448-1224 ext. 100, ihrc.net
- Jan 16** • **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
- **Peace & Justice Action Committee**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 17-19** • **Weekend Manuscript Illumination Retreat**, "Word and Image: Illuminating the Our Father," Hannah Charlton, IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224, ext 100, ihrc.net
- Jan 16, 23, 30** • **Taizé Prayer Service**, The Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, 4:15 to 5 p.m., 313-5765
- Jan 16** • **Jewish Musical Interfaith Event**, with Cantor Jessi Roemer, Hemmingson North Ballroom, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m.
- Jan 17** • **Musical Shabbat Service**, Hemmingson Room 201, Gonzaga, 5:30 p.m., Goldstein@gonzaga.edu
- Jan 18** • **Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast**, Martin Luther King Jr Community Center, 500 S. Stone, 868-0856, mlkspokane.org
- **Spokane Symphony Masterworks 5:**

- **Beethoven's 250th Birthday**, Martin Woldson Theater at the Fox, 1001 W. Sprague, 3 p.m.
- **Women+s March on Spokane**, Red Wagon at Riverfront Park, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 879-4752womensmarchspokane@gmail.com
- Jan 19** • **Martin Luther King Jr. Community Celebration** and Speaker, Location TBA, 4 to 6 p.m., 868-0856, mlkspokane.org
- **Yakima's City-wide Martin Luther King Jr.** Commemoration Service, St. Michael's Episcopal Church, 5 S. Naches Ave., Yakima, rtrimble51@gmail.com
- Jan 20** • **Martin Luther King Jr Day Rally** and March, 10 a.m., Resource Fair, noon to 2 p.m., location and speakers TBA, 868-0856, mlkspokane.org
- **34th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Peace March**, Fifth Ave. and Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Yakima, begins 11:45 a.m., rtrimble51@gmail.com
- **NAACP Spokane Membership Meeting**, 35 W. Main, 7 to 8:30 p.m., spkncpr@gmail.com
- **Spirituality 101 Seminars** with Kathy Finley, begin at The Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Mondays, 313-5765, kathy484@gmail.com
- Jan 23** • **Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration**, W. Kamau Bell, sociopolitical comedian, CUB Senior Ballroom, Washington State University Pullman, 6:30 p.m., 509-339-6172, mlk.wsu.edu
- Jan 24-26** • **Weekend Retreat** on Apologetics, "The Protestant Question: How to Answer Biblical Objections to Catholic Beliefs," Karlo Broussard, IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224, kparker@ihrc.net
- Jan 25** • **Eastern Washington Legislative Conference** panel, workshops and briefing, "Making It Happen," Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, 115 N. Raymond, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., 535-1813, 535-4112, event@thefigtree.org
- Jan 26, 27** • **Spokane Symphony "Movies and Music 2:** Pixar in Concert, Martin Woldson Theater at the Fox, 1001 W. Sprague, 7 p.m. Saturday, 3 p.m. Sunday
- Jan 28** • **Showing Up for Racial Justice**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Jan 29** • **The Fig Tree Mailing and Delivery**, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 24th and Grand, 9 a.m., 535-1813
- Jan 30** • **Homeless Connect**, Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., spokanehcc.com
- **Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival**, "Fiddler: A Miracle of Miracles," Wolff Auditorium in Jepson, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., sajfs.org/our-programs/sjcff
- **"Dancing at Lughnasa**, benefit performance for Our Place, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, 211 E. DeSmet Ave, 6 p.m., reception, 7:30 p.m., play begins, 326-7267, office@ourplacespokane.org
- Feb 1** • **Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival**, "The Light of Hope," Wolff Auditorium in Jepson Center, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., sajfs.org/our-programs/sjcff
- Feb 2** • **Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival**, "The Unorthodox," Wolff Auditorium in Jepson Center, Gonzaga University, 3 p.m., sajfs.org/our-programs/sjcff
- Feb 3-7** • **"Exploring the Mystery of the Creative Experience,"** a cohort program, Spirit Center, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, ID, 208-965-2000, spirit-center.org
- Feb 6** • **The Fig Tree Benefit and Board**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., noon, Benefit, 1 p.m., Board, 535-1813

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Thursday, Jan. 30
 6 p.m. reception / 7:30 p.m. play begins

DANCING AT Lughnasa
 Brian Friel

at the
Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center
 211 E DeSmet Ave

Presented by **Gonzaga University Theatre Arts Department - Benefits**
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Embracing the Artistic Call

A Cohort Program for Exploring the Mystery of the Creative Experience, Initial Week: February 3-7, 2020



This retreat brings together individuals at any level of artistic proficiency who have a desire to live a creative life with intention, connecting in deeper and more life-bringing ways to God, the source of life, us, and all our gifts and inspirations.

Spirit Center retreats at the
Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, ID
 208-962-2000, www.Spirit-Center.org



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'Untold Stories'

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7 pm Thursday, Jan. 30 Fiddler: A Miracle of Miracles	7 pm Saturday, Feb. 1 The Light of Hope	2 pm Sunday, Feb. 2 The Unorthodox
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The power of community helps in healing struggles of homeless people

By Marilyn Urness-EWU intern

Ami Manning's belief in the healing power of a community stems from her own experience with homelessness.

As director of housing services with Transitions, her job involves working with case managers from the Transitional Living Center, known as TLC, which provides a safe, secure place for women and children who have undergone traumas such as domestic violence, addiction or homelessness.

"Folks can't heal or gain any momentum unless they have a safe place to call home," she said.

When she was a child living in Missoula, Mont., her family, supported by her single mother, was left homeless in the middle of winter when their space heater malfunctioned and burned her home to the ground.

"It was the first time in my life that I looked around and there were strangers who cared about whether or not we had a house that night," she said.

Ami was too young to understand how difficult it would be for her and her family to be homeless. She said there was help from people saving silverware and bunk beds to old women giving them envelopes with five dollars and offering prayers. This experience gave her faith in the healing power the community has.

She believes people need to help those who have fallen get back up on their feet. People need a stable environment to gain momentum in their lives.

"Folks on the street, in a car or in a shelter have a hard time gaining on any other things," she said.

Ami has been in nonprofit work almost 20 years. While she served in several agencies, her passion lies in women's and children's transitional housing projects.

Housing has always been part of her career, from starting in tenants' rights to her work now at Transitions' Home Yard Cottages.

Her first work in transitional housing was at St. Vincent de Paul in Coeur d'Alene. There she worked in the transitional housing center, teaching children literature and art. She helped them understand art as a process to express their inner voice rather than just as creating a product.

Ami went on to work with the YWCA's domestic violence center and later with Habitat for Humanity Spokane.

Having studied government and women's studies at Eastern Washington University, she said she is not a social worker, but has done social work for most of her career.

In 2014, Ami joined Miryam's House, another project of Transitions programs for women in Spokane. It promotes dignity, community, growth, wholeness and justice. Transitions, founded in 1986, works to end homelessness for women by "giving every woman the opportunity to find success on her journey to stability and self-sufficiency," she said.

At Miryam's, Ami attended dinners cooked by one of the women and served from 6 to 6:30 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Staff and residents would sit down and chat. This experience expanded Ami's view of the role of community in the healing process.

She once believed events—like building a house—were where most change and healing take place. She now believes change



Ami Manning coordinates Home Yard Cottages.

starts and happens in small moments of integrity and fellowship during dinners.

At the TLC, she helps provide a stable, supportive environment to help women and children housed in 15 family apartments move out of poverty. Case management helps each occupant reach goals.

TLC provides family-oriented programs, such as parenting support, to give families the opportunity to heal and grow. Life skills classes give residents the tools they need to become independent.

Ami joined Transitions when its staff and board were envisioning and developing the Home Yard Cottages. At the time, Transitions was discussing the best use of a plot of land, which the

neighborhood had thought was a park. Ideas ranged from turning the land into orchards and a communal garden to building more transitional housing units.

Study results made it clear that Spokane residents were experiencing a continual increase in rent with no parallel increase in wages. That created a housing dilemma.

This meant it was almost impossible for women coming out of transitional living centers or shelters to have permanent residences.

"I am passionate about affordable housing for all," said Ami. "It feels almost impossible to get folks going and move them to where they want to be without having that sort of home base."

So, based on Transitions' mis-

sion to end homelessness, the staff and board decided to build 24 cottages for supportive housing for families and individuals. They were completed in October 2018 on two acres of land next to the TLC at 3128 N. Hemlock.

This provides a next step after the two years TLC offers residents who need that extra support.

Fifteen of the Home Yard Cottages are equipped with solar panels making them net-zero—the amount of energy a building uses annually equals the amount of renewable energy it creates.

The cottages range in size from 475 square feet for a single person to 1,000 square feet for a family of six. Rent is 30 percent of the resident's income.

These cottages provide personal space for residents, compared with communal space at shelters and TLC. The Home Yard Cottages are permanent supportive housing, so as long as residents earn less than a certain income limit, they can stay indefinitely.

One family was coming to the end of their two-year period in transitional housing at TLC. Needing more time to attain their goals, they now reside in a cottage, where they have a support system to

continue working on those goals.

Another family—a pregnant mother and her children—needed a safe place as an anchor to meet their goals and heal. Now they are thriving in their new home, Ami said. From their stable home, they have connected with parental care for their baby. The children are enrolled in preschool, giving the mother time to work on her GED.

From her own experiences, her faith in the healing power and responsibility of the community has given her an empathy for those in need. This belief has followed her throughout her career, giving her the power to change and influence people's lives for the better.

Other Transitions programs are Women's Hearth, Educare, and the New Leaf Bakery and Café.

A local volunteer 21-member Board of Directors governs day-to-day operations. A Board of Members, with one representative from each of four sponsoring communities—the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, the Sisters of Providence, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary and the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa—provides guidance.

For information, call 328-6702 or email info@help4women.org.

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