36TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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CHECK FAITHS & NONPROFITS FOR VIRTUAL EVENTS



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

Camps find creative ways to do camp

By Mary Stamp

Just as faiths vary in their perspectives about opening their buildings for worship, so do camps of the faith communities.

The camps are making decisions about opening based on their facilities and the feasibility of keeping spaces sanitized so campers are physically distanced and safe.

Some camps are closing. Some camps are offering alternative programs for families, individuals and congregations because they have spaces that allow people to be separated. Some camps are opening but expect fewer campers. Some camps were still deciding by press time.

The Fig Tree contacted the area camps and includes stories of those who responded to share their discernment process and plans.

N-Sid-Sen Camp and Retreat Center for the Pacific Northwest United Church of Christ (UCC) lost its spring guest groups, allowing it to do a more thorough spring cleaning than usual.

Mark Boyd, managing director, said N-Sid-Sen offered its space, as did its sister UCC camp, Pilgrim Firs in Kitsap County, to be a site for isolation and quarantine for first responders, but N-Sid-Sen's



Nick CastroLang goes for a walk at camp with his five-year-old daughter and infant son.

location on the east shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene did not lend to that.

So conference and camp leaders developed an alternative, "Families at Camp." While it will not replace the usual summer income, it will be "a ministry to give people an opportunity to come to camp in a different way," Mark said. "We hope some will donate beyond the cost of coming for several days."

Because summer camps were suspended and the space is available, families who are isolating together may come Thursdays to Mondays. They may stay in one of four lodge-type spaces with a kitchen, or one of four cabins so they can stay to themselves. There is space for 24 people total.

"We don't know when we will open again for group rentals or what will be possible in summer of 2021," he said. "We know that churches are looking at different ways to do ministry now. Can we sing at camp fires or play community games? Will we need to limit numbers in cabins? Will we be able to load campers into a bus to go up the river for a float trip?"

There are many questions about camp traditions, activities, housing and meals.

Continued on page 5

Kroc Center diverts focus from fitness to help with food, services in pandemic

By Kaye Hult

As Wade Isley, corps ministry specialist with the Salvation Army Kroc Center in Coeur d'Alene, looked back at the recent months with COVID-19 at the center stage, he realized that the public orders began to relax in mid-May, the Kroc Center was closed as a fitness facility.

The ministry staff, of which Wade is a member, the emergency management team, the advisory board and about 90 staff have participated in the effort to help the Coeur d'Alene community. In the emergency management team, he operates as the spiritual care officer. of the Kroc Center.

As soon as the community began to set emergency operations in place, the Kroc team reached out to other local agencies and coalitions.

They forged partnerships with Coeur d'Alene Backpack, Community Action Partnership and the Post Falls Food Bank. They loaned staff to the Panhandle Health District Emergency Call Center, both the Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls Food Banks and the Emergency Operations Command (EOC) of the Sheriff's office. They joined the Homeless Coalition. The Kroc Center building warehoused EOC supplies. Staff made cloth masks. The center participated in the Kootenai United Food Drive at the Silver Lake Mall, providing 500 100-pound or smaller boxes of food. They provided personal protective equipment (PPEs) and hand sanitizer, made dinners for volunteers, and provided hygiene kits for homeless people. Staff volunteered to make food Continued on page 3

Agencies partner in COVID to serve women and children

Serving the community in a pandemic has brought creativity and partnership among Vanessa Behan, YWCA Spokane, and Women & Children's Free Restaurant (WCFR).

The nonprofits teamed up to support women, children and families experiencing poverty, food insecurity, family violence and trauma.

They are providing food, care and outreach with a grant from the COVID-19 Community Response and Recovery Fund of the Innovia Foundation and with other donations from the community.

view of the Kroc Center has transitioned.

The center opened in May 2009. People have perceived it as a state-of-the-art fitness facility from the beginning. Now that it has stepped up to help with the pandemic, people understand it to be the Salvation Army.

Until Idaho's shelter-in-place

The catalysts for the outreach efforts are Majors Don and Ronda Gilger, he said. The Gilgers are the senior pastors of the Kroc Church and executive directors

Van-Profit Organization Organization Organization AW AWAWE MA Permit No. 1044

The Fig Tree 1323 S. Peny St. Spokane, WA 99202-3571 The Women & Children's Free Restaurant provides meals to Vanessa Behan and YWCA Spokane Safe Shelter residents. Vanessa Behan and YWCA refer clients to food services at WCFR, which provides information on resources available to families in crisis through YWCA and Vanessa Behan through pocket guides with lunches and other food distribution.

"Women, children and families in our community are facing stresses compounded in a health emergency that isolates them from their usual support systems," said Regina Malveaux, YWCA Spokane CEO. "Working together, we are multiplying our effectiveness."

"For us, the gift of food brings comfort and support," said Lisa Diffley, WCFR executive director. "Always we use food to feed and lift up those in need, but through this partnership we also provide them clear pathways to seek other help."

"Children in family violence situations are often the silent victims," said Amy Knapton Vega, executive director of Vanessa Behan. "WCFR and YWCA Spokane help us touch families we ordinarily wouldn't have reached."

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Religion News Briefs Around the World

World Council of Churches News, PO Box 2100 CH - 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland Tel: +41-22 791 6111 Fax: +41-22 788 7244 www.oikoumene.org

42 faith groups divest from fossil fuels

As major challenges for the global economy are predicted in the coronavirus pandemic, a group of faith institutions calls for a just economic recovery. In mid-May, 42 faith institutions from 14 countries announced their divestment from fossil fuels, the largest divestment of its kind. They are from Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Myanmar, Spain, the UK and the United States.

As governments make investments in an economic recovery, faith communities urge them to think long term of a just, lowcarbon recovery.

Mark Campanale, founder and executive chair of Carbon Tracker, a think tank that analyzes the financial impact of an energy transition, said, "A comprehensive economic recovery means investing now in infrastructure to serve communities for years to come. Fossil fuels do not have a place in the long-term health of humanity. Governments should follow the faith institutions."

In early May, Operation Noah, an ecumenical response to climate change, said none of the major oil companies comply with the Paris agreement targets. Former archbishop of Canterbury, the Rev. Rowan Williams, said, "The current health crisis highlights the need for coherent international action. Can we recognize the global threat of climate change? To do so means taking practical, effective steps to reduce our lethal dependence on fossil fuels."

The multi-faith announcement—from Methodists, Anglicans, Catholics, Buddhists and more-includes British Jesuits, who divested its \$517.5 million portfolio from fossil fuels in February.

Illustrating the need for a just recovery, the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace in Bangladesh divested. Bangladesh has the world's largest refugee camp with more than half a million people near the Bay of Bengal, which is vulnerable to catastrophic storms from climate change.

Father Endra Wijayanta, director of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission for the Archdiocese of Semarang, in Indonesia, said, "The COVID-19 pandemic is time to reflect and to act. We have to stop our ecological spiral of death. We have to revive our ecological hope, in massive repentance of humankind, by taking the pathway to more sustainable living."

Faith communities have long led in global divestment, more than 350 of the global total of more than 1,400. The action by faith groups pressures governments to enact policies that lead to a comprehensive, resilient recovery.

Catholics' participation comes with Pope Francis' Laudato Si' 2015 encyclical on climate change and ecology. In April, 21 Catholic organizations with \$40 billion in assets committed to invest in companies that align with their values by signing the Catholic Impact Investing Pledge. Tomás Insua of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, said: "Every dollar invested in fossil fuels is a vote for suffering. These institutions are taking prophetic action to light the way towards a more just, sustainable future."

James Buchanan, Bright Now campaign manager at Operation Noah, said: "The decisions we make now will affect the future of humanity for thousands of years."

Isabel Apawo Phiri, World Council of Churches deputy general secretary, said: "We reiterate the urgent concerns of Christians around the world in relation to climate change and its adverse effects on the whole of creation. The moral imperative of fossil fuel divestment and of investing in a low-carbon path to realizing economic, social and ecological wellbeing, and sustainability for the whole creation is more urgent than ever."

The Rev. Rachel Mash of Green Anglicans in Southern Africa, said: "The COVID-19 crisis shows us our current way of living is unsustainable. We are sick because the Earth is sick."

Yossi Cadan, global finance campaign manager at 350.org, said: "Once again, faith groups lead the way and clearly indicate to the rest of the world that future investments or stimulus funds must exclude fossil fuels and yield long-term structural emissions reductions. The solutions to the economic crisis are the solutions to the climate crisis and an opportunity to accelerate the transition needed towards low- and zero-carbon.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Fig Tree nears benefit goal, receives two grants

As of May 27, The Fig Tree's Benefit fund raiser on Facebook raised \$5,113 of a total of \$26,821 toward its goal of \$28,000.

Fund raising continues with a pre-summer appeal that was mailed to previous Benefit donors and past-due sponsors the first week of June, to continue effort to reach the goal and to refocus on sponsor funding.

"We sent out by email an appeal in April. The pre-summer appeal goes to 700, about half of our donors who have not yet given in 2020," said Mary Stamp, editor.

"Because of our doing the Resource Directory COVID-19 online supplement, we were awarded a \$5,000 grant from Innovia in late May to support the directory and other projects."

Fig Tree ads have been somewhat down, but most advertisers have continued their support. In addition, appeals are still out to advertisers and community partners for the Resource Directory. Ads must be confirmed by the third week of June, as well as commu-

nity partners wishing recognition on the cover, but community partners may donate any time and be recognized in The Fig Tree.

The Fig Tree also received a \$2,500 grant from the Northwest Intermountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, matched by an individual gift, for the Branching Out campaign that funds The Fig Tree's development director position.

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

Faith Action Network holds Spring Summits

During May and June, the Faith Action Network (FAN) is holding **Regional Spring Summits around** Washington State.

Advocates gather to talk about how the FAN legislative agenda fared in the past session and strategize for the rest of the year on issues they care about most.

"It is a time to raise ideas for the 2021 legislative session," said Paul Benz, co-director. "Together, we look for ways to be more effective at creating lasting change."

people how they have been doing in this pandemic, what issues are arising in their communities and how their advocacy continues," said Elise DeGooyer, co-director.

"There are many issues we care about that this crisis has exacerbated, economic and racial inequities primary among them," she said. "There's so much work to do together to protect what we love-the people and communities in our lives. We see summits

"At summits, we hear from as a time to share what we know from the state and federal level and to hear from attendees."

The 2020 Spring Summits are being held online this year.

In the Spokane area, the summit is at 3 p.m., Sunday, May 31, and in Central Washington it is at 3 p.m., Sunday, June 14.

Participants can RSVP for a link to Zoom meetings at fanwa.org/ regional-spring-summits/

For information, call 206-625-9790 or email fan@fanwa.org.

Habitat Store reopens, receives donations

The Habitat for Humanity Store in Spokane and its donation drop off re-opened May 26.

Proceeds from the home improvement supply store and donation center support Habitat for Humanity's affordable home building. It sells building materials, appliances, new and gently used furniture and home accessories at a fraction of the retail price.

"The store is crucial to fund safe, decent and affordable homeownership for low-income families in the area. Outside of its purpose to keep homeownership affordable, the Habitat Store provides volunteer and donation opportunities-keeping waste out of our local landfills. It's good for the environment and good for the community," said Habitat-Spokane CEO, Michelle Girardot.

During the COVID-19 shelterin-place order, the Habitat-Spokane Store at 1805 E. Trent shut its doors to help flatten the curve.

"Safety of customers, volunteers, families and employees is our priority," she said.

While the store was closed, staff took measures to ensure safety by cleaning, disinfecting and implementing social distancing protocols, such as one-way aisles, increasing distance between items, adding a handwashing station, building glass barriers at the checkout counter, as well as improving the shopping experience.

Through the recent months, construction supervisors at Habitat sites continued to build and now are putting in place procedures for welcoming back volunteers to the construction sites

with social distancing to keep people safe.

"Now is the time for people to get involved again," Michelle said. "Let's go from helplessness to hope, from fear to courage, and from sitting and waiting to taking bold action."

Habitat-Spokane seeks donors to support local families so they have homes, communities and hope. People can donate financially and shop at the store.

"The COVID-19 crisis and resulting economic hardship showed us that safe, affordable housing is more critical than ever," Michelle said. "Putting God's love into action, we have since 1987 provided permanent, affordable housing for 330 low-income families.'

For information, call 534-2552 or visit www.habitat-spokane.org.

Hospice of Spokane names medical director

Brian Seppi, M.D., is the new medical director of Hospice of Spokane. He will guide medical care for patients working with a team of physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains, nurses' aides, bereavement counselors, volunteers and support staff in providing holistic, end-of-life care.

He brings more than 25 years of experience in healthcare administration, team leadership and patient care from work as an internal medicine physician and dence Medical Group.

Store

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+ home improvement items + furniture

With a passion for end-of-life care, he served three years on the Hospice of Spokane Board of Trustees. Hospice of Spokane serves Ferry, Pend Oreille, Spokane and Stevens counties.

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Kroc Center in Coeur d'Alene forged partnerships to serve community

Continued from page 1 deliveries to food banks, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and other Salvation Army Corps. They also assisted St. Vincent de Paul's operations.

The Coeur d'Alene School District used its building as a meal site.

A video board near the theater in the building flashes statistics. In mid-May, the board said 633 local families were fed and 1,125 masks were handmade. 3,762 individuals participated in online group exercises. The center fielded more than 450 prayer requests, and 1,321 items were supplied to emergency responders. Two hundred homeless hygiene kits were delivered. Employees provided 1,514 volunteer hours with local agencies, and 17,314 people participated in online worship.

Twenty-five Kroc employees assisted with 9,467 spiritual support calls with Kroc Center members, church members and others in the community, Wade said. Gift cards from Fred Meyer and Super 1 supplied \$5,000 to \$6,000 worth of food and fuel to people in need.

"It has been a good witness for the church," Wade reflected.

"Many things we were doing as a relief agency have now slowed or stopped," he said.

The Kroc Center has transitioned to helping with recovery. It also recently re-opened as a fitness facility, and is adding more activities and functions with each stage of recovery.

The Kroc Church has resumed in-person worship. Each week, the worship has become more relaxed. Wade said the center is following Center for Disease Control



Wade Isley coordinates outreach ministries.

(CDC), Panhandle Health District and Idaho governor's guidelines. They take the pandemic seriously.

As corps ministry specialist, Wade is the administrative pastor of the church.

"I manage day-to-day operations, budgeting, social media, youth and church staff," he said.

"Now that the Kroc Center has changed to recovery mode, we primarily do casework with people through our voucher program," he said.

Vouchers help with five assistance components: rent, utilities, gas, pharmacy needs and food.

They work with clients to create a sustainability plan in case COVID-19 returns, he said. Planning for sustainability helps break chronic need and keeps the clients independent.

As part of recovery, staff participated in a six-week course, Redemptive Compassion, offered by Charity Reimagined and Love INC. Four staff and a volunteer are taking it. "It is important to build relationships," he said. "People need to be involved and invested in what they seek to achieve to break their chronic need and bad choices. We help with emergencies, but we want to help clients change their mindsets and practices."

The recovery services office at the Kroc Center is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. People may walk in or call 208-763-0777 for assistance.

"I always wanted to be a missionary," said Wade, who grew up in Eastern Oregon, graduating from Enterprise High School in 2017.

That fall, he moved to Coeur d'Alene to live with his mother.

"I had medical issues with mold," he said, "but it became an excuse to not do anything." He had walked away from his

faith, too. A conversation with his stepfather within a couple weeks of moving in became a turning point.

He told Wade, "Your life is off track. You need to 1) find a church, 2) make new friends, and 3) find a job. If you do these things, then 4) it will all come together."

Wade played basketball so much at the Kroc Center that he was told he ought to be paid for it. In October 2017, he began working at the Kroc as a gym attendant.

"I was paid to play basketball with the kids here," he said. "It's a wonderful mission. It's all about building relationships with the kids."

In six months, he became a personal trainer. A month later, he was promoted to wellness supervisor which he did for a year and a half.

"When I started at the Kroc, I wanted this place to live up to its ministry potential," he said. "That's what excited me.

"My participation in ministry came about because of a conversation I had with Major Don while I was a trainer. I told him of my vision for the center."

Wade became youth ministry coordinator in October 2019. He was moved to corps ministry specialist in January 2020.

"I have had amazing mentors since I came to Coeur d'Alene," he said. "Each one was there for a different season of my life, to help with each next step. I met my wife, Keira, at the Kroc Center, went into ministry and put my life back on track, because my stepdad was honest with me."

Now in ministry, Wade has begun training in a nine-month, online ministerial leadership program at Fuller Theological Seminary. His studies include creating an action plan for moving forward.

He also realizes from his own experiences of using his problems with mold as an excuse for inaction how to recognize when others use their symptoms as an excuse.

"I can see through their eyes because I've been there," he said. "I have learned compassion and empathy for others going through rough times. I have learned to deal with my symptoms and make the best out of life, and can invite others to do that."

The Kroc Church recently instituted a new program called The Well.

"It expresses my vision for a spiritual fitness program for all ages—for everybody," Wade explained.

It meets about an hour and a half. The Kroc Talk segment is motivational. Round Table Time is for community building. Then 45 minutes are for Pathway Choice, which is comprised of classes in subjects such as nutrition and financial help, but also dodgeball or journaling.

The Well program is guided. It provides membership benefits to the 85 people who have gone through it so far, but it's free. About 65 attend weekly to grow in physical and spiritual health (fitness).

Wade hopes monthly Saturday guided hikes will take place in June, July and August. The program has led to center memberships, church memberships and new-found Christian faith.

"We will continue to help people," Wade said. "That's a key component of who we are.

As Major Don says, "We will never go back to being just the Kroc Center. We will always be the Salvation Army."

For information, call 208-667-1865 or visit www.kroccda.org.

Second Harvest responds to second wave of pandemic: hungry people

The second wave of the COVID-19 crisis is hunger among families who have suffered economic shocks and are turning to food pantries to feed their families, said Jason Clark, president and CEO of Second Harvest, in a video presentation online.

Second Harvest seeks to make a difference by meeting basic needs and closing food resource gaps for families and individuals who are overwhelmed by the disruption caused by the coronavirus.

In addition to supplying partner food pantries in the region, it has increased direct distribution through its mobile market.

"Many people seek assistance at a mobile market for the first " he said, expressing the time, importance of making people feel welcome. "It's hard with drivethrough distributions that limit contact. We help people feel okay by offering smiles and waves, as we help them put food on the table." In this crisis, Second Harvest seeks to keep staff, volunteers and the food they handle safe. "Donors, farmers and food industry partners help us find food," he said. "Economic shocks keep coming and we need to continue responding even as we search for solutions to provide more food for the coming year." Unemployment in the 26 counties Second Harvest serves was nearly 60,000 in early May, similar to 2009, when demand for food was double the normal amount. Jason anticipates needing two to four times the food distribution levels of 2019 for the next year.

Second Harvest is innovating to address this challenge to make sure vulnerable neighbors facing hunger have the food they need, he said.

Recently the National Guard helped Three Rivers Convention Center staff in Kennewick distribute food to 1,500 cars driving through the center's parking lot over two days. On May 15, they gave out 180,000 pounds of food, Second Harvest's largest mobile distribution ever. In late April, the Spokane warehouse distributed 170,000 pounds of food in its parking lot over six hours.

While some farmers plow under crops and pour out milk because of disruptions in the supply chain, Second Harvest helped Washington farmers give away 100,000 pounds of potatoes in the Tri-Cities. "We supplement donated food with purchased bulk food and repack it as fast as we can. Canned goods are hard to find and variety in the donated food supply is diminishing," he said. Second Harvest now partners with Spokane Food Fighters started by Marcus Riccelli to help restaurants prepare meals for shut-ins. They partnered to deliver more than 1,500 emergency food boxes to families in April and May.

said more direct distribution may be needed to meet the region's rising need. In April, 75 mobile markets served 20,000 families.

In the pandemic, food pantry distribution methods are challenging because many rely on volunteers who are older and vulnerable. Many pantries lack adequate refrigeration for the food provided.

Second Harvest distributed 5.8 million pounds of food from March 1 to May 1, with a record of 1.3 mil-

lion pounds the week of April 27.

Second Harvest's operating costs are up with the increased cost of food acquisition, plus logistics and trucking costs, Jason said.

The Washington National Guard works beside staff and volunteers to process, prepare and ship donated produce, frozen foods and dry goods, and to help with mobile distributions.

Recently, Life Center Church committed to be part of the solu-

tion to hunger, he said, providing a matching gift of \$125,000. On a Saturday in May members raised \$135,000 for a gift of \$260,000.

Second Harvest accepts food donations from food drives or homes, but encourages people to give money instead because it means one less physical interaction and enables Second Harvest to respond flexibly in this crisis, he said.

For information, call 534-6678 or visit 2-harvest.org.



Second Harvest continues to partner with At the Core and Spokane Public Schools to deliver mobile markets at schools with Bite to Go weekend nutrition programs.

While supplying neighborhood pantries is the primary approach to deliver food to people facing food insecurity—serving tens of thousands of people each week—Jason includes human services, health care, and resources for children, families, seniors, veterans, environment & justice advocates.

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Yakima groups support efforts of fruit packing workers on strike

Volunteers with the Yakima Immigrant Response Network (YIRN), which received the Faith Action Network's 2019 Justice Leadership Award, not only observe ICE flights out of Yakima but also now support workers striking in May at seven fruit packing plants in Yakima, Selah and Naches.

Members Danielle Surkatty and Mary Lopez told about YIRN's efforts and their reasons for involvement.

YIRN, which began in 2017 in response to fear in the immigrant community of ICE raids, also documents and challenges raids. Danielle also talked about its role in building respect for people of different backgrounds.

YIRN supports immigrant communities through Know Your Rights presentations, Family Safety packets, workshops, employer outreach, rapid response in support of the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network Hotline, raid verification observer training, rapid response, accompaniment and advocacy, and helping parents set up a power of attorney for their children in case they (the parents) are deported.

YIRN responds to community needs that arise and members participate based on interest.

Members accompany immigrants when they go to court, because ICE has been ramping up its arrests outside courthouses.

Danielle gave an update on YIRN's effort tracking flights that deport immigrants or transport them to detention. Their goal is to raise awareness, generate solidarity, advocate for change and let immigrants know they are not alone.

She is among the five members who continue to observe ICE flights. On May 19, the 64th flight transported 43 men and five women to the Mexican border for deportation.

Airport officials moved the observers to a smaller space so only five could come, not the previous 10 to 14 who observed regularly.

"We have counted 4,179 people transferred to the Tacoma Detention Center or deported to the border from the Yakima airport," she said. "I have been there for all but four flights."

She reported that only for the last month have ICE agents and their contractors with GEO Group and IAero Airways been wearing masks and doing medical checks before they put people on the plane.



Strikers have socially distanced themselves along sidewalks.

in Guatemala and testing positive," she said.

Danielle grew up in Yakima, leaving in 1979 to go to college in Chicago and worked after graduation with the YMCA International Division in Central Java. She then worked with the Indochinese Refugee Resettlement program through the YMCA in Houston, after which she also worked with the Saudi oil company and the Indonesian consulate. After eight years in Houston, she returned to Indonesia, where she raised her three children for 14 years. She returned to Yakima in 2002.

Danielle brings to YIRN a strong commitment to social justice.

In Jakarta, she started her web design consulting firm and volunteered with a nonprofit publishing house, writing and selling guide books to foreigners. From 1989 to 1997, book sales raised \$100,000 to \$200,000 annually to fund projects in Indonesia for clean water, scholarships, tuberculosis education and development.

Danielle said living abroad and seeing the impact of poverty changed her outlook on life.

"I don't take for granted the prosperity of living in America because I have lived in places where many struggle to survive," she said.

This affects her outlook and relationships, and inspires her engagement with the immigrant community and her desire to be part of the solution.

"I want people to have a fair shake. The most vulnerable people are undocumented people, who are exploited and marginalized," Danielle said. "They just come to the U.S. to make life better for their children."

After working with people of different nationalities abroad and in Yakima, she finds "involvement with other cultures is the spice of life."

web developer with businesses, governments, schools and nonprofits globally and in Washington.

She also helps coordinate community members who make masks for farm workers, fruit packing warehouse workers and grocery store workers. They hope to collect more than 5,000 face masks to give to farm workers in the county, aware that the health of those who pick and pack food—often immigrants—is important for everyone's survival.

"Despite Yakima having the highest rate of COVID-19 growth on the West Coast, few frontline retail workers wear masks," Danielle noted. "Our cases have gone up with 75 to 110 new cases every day in the last two weeks.

"News reports and the health department say 63 percent of workers in the Yakima Valley are considered essential workers because they are in agriculture," she said.

Thousands work on storage and packing lines at seven packing plants where there are strikes because of concern about working conditions, health precautions, disease spread and hazard pay.

Mary, who is a YIRN member and an organizer working with One America in Yakima, actively supports workers who are striking but have no union.

She said strikers are asking employers to provide better CO-VID-19 safety measures, such as masks, six feet of social distancing in buildings, a \$2/hour hazard pay increase and protection from retaliation for protesting.

Mary has helped bring them food and talks with them to hear their stories and build their confidence.

"One woman worked for the same company for 26 years and is still being paid minimum wage," on Facebook.

Many are mothers with children to support, so they continue to work, but are scared for their health.

During a phone interview, she passed the phone to Jenny, a member of the Yakama Tribe from Goldendale who has worked at one warehouse more than two years, and to William, an African American who has been there since last August.

Both heard that someone in their warehouse tested positive, but they were not informed who it was or whether the person was in their section.

They said their employer has installed Plexiglas between them and the fruit, and thin plastic sheeting between each worker, but workers were not always able to be six feet apart.

Both said strikers want supervisors to respect workers and communicate better with employees.

William said the company provided too few masks, so most wear homemade masks. Often hand sanitizer and soap dispensers run out so they cannot wash their hands.

Despite regular site inspections by the Yakima Health District

Farmels Market

checking on social distancing and sanitizing surfaces, the district confirmed 29 COVID-19 cases among workers at one warehouse.

According to an article in the Yakima Herald, inspectors said measures employers have in place meet guidelines, but "employers could do more to reduce exposure and improve communication."

By May 29, four of the seven resolved and the Governor announced new rules for agricultural industries as "essential" workers.

Mary said OneAmerica seeks a peaceful world where everyone's human rights and dignity are respected, communities appreciate differences and work for justice and equality.

OneAmerica believes the pandemic shows that everyone's health and wellbeing depends on their neighbor's health, and "we are only as safe and healthy as the most vulnerable members of our communities, so ensuring their wellbeing is how we ensure our own."

For information on YIRN, call 509-966-1529 or email yakimasresponsenetwork@gmail.com. For information on the strike, call 509-386-3525 or email mary@ weareoneamerica.org.

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"News reports say the people deported do not have COVID-19, but we do hear of people arriving

Danielle currently works as a

said Mary, who not only listens to their stories but also shares them



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Lutherhaven is finding alternatives to traditional camps for summer

For the first time in 75 years, the Lutherhaven Ministries board of directors and senior management staff announced May 13 they would suspend its children's and youth camps until the summer of 2021, with the promise of safe, fun, alternative options in 2020 for families and day camps for local congregations.

"This was not an easy decision. We believe that summer camp is more important than ever, but after months of consulting with our team of healthcare experts around the nation, it became clear that suspending typical activities is the right thing to do for the safety of our communities," said Bob Baker, executive director of Lutherhaven Ministries

Lutherhaven Ministries operates Camp Lutherhaven on Lake Coeur d'Alene and Shoshone Mountain Retreat and Ranch, and McPherson Meadows up the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River, plus Lutherhaven Community Day Camps and Idaho Servant Adventures.

Bob spoke of the discernment, prayer, patience and wisdom that went into choices about planning summer camps during a global pandemic.

Hebrews 11:1, which speaks of being "sure of what we hope for, certain of what we cannot see," became the guiding verse for Bob and his team in making the decision.

"We are not alone in this season of quandary. We struggle with 7,000 other camps around the nation—and businesses," he said.



Lutherhaven offers options for families, groups, individuals.

"We consulted with health and camp experts around the nation. We came to this decision because we care about the wellbeing of children and families."

"Lutherhaven Ministries welcomes campers from across the region, nation and world," Bob said. "This summer, we had campers coming from 18 states with different coronavirus restrictions, timelines and re-opening schedules. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and other healthcare guidelines for youth camps recommend programs for 'locals' only.

In a recent survey of 350 camps, only 33 percent were opening as usual and 51 percent were opening with adjustments, he said.

The Lutherhaven Ministries Health Care Alliance was unanimous in their support of no traditional youth camps at Lutherahaven sites, he said.

"The very nature of camp is closeness, the opposite of social distancing," said Bob. "Camp at Lutherhaven is close friendships, face-to-face conversations, high fives, fist bumps, hugs, singing, s'mores around the campfire, bunk beds, tag on the ball field physical contact. This season of COVID-19 complicates all that, beyond how we feel we can reasonably keep kids and their families back home healthy and safe.

"Camp has so many moving parts. How do we disinfect lifejackets between each use, and canoe paddles, golf putters, bows and dozens of arrows launched into trees—not to mention bathroom sinks, door knobs and s'more sticks," he said. Realizing traditional camps could not occur, Lutherhaven leaders began to plan for new, creative ways to use the camps.

The Lutherhaven board and staff are creating alternative ways for families to enjoy camp. Plans are underway to open July 1 for families to rent individual campsites and cabins, and to enjoy water sports, campfire meals and the outdoors. The facilities are also available to small groups from local congregations and agencies with measures to ensure participants can practice safe social distancing.

"Hebrews 12 says, 'Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders us... and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.' That is exactly what we are trying to do in this new season," said Bob. "While this summer's changed plans are not the race many intended, it's a race marked out for us by God, a race that we run with campers, staff, parents, pastors and grandparents."

Families can choose from experiences at the three locations. Camp Lutherhaven on the shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene is a traditional summer camp setting. Shoshone Mountain Retreat—on the edge of the Bitterroot Mountains—provides opportunities for hiking, fly-fishing, huckleberry picking and river floating.

Options include camping and cabin rentals, family camps and retreats, congregational and agency camps, a women's retreat, online high school leadership experiences, volunteer and college-age opportunities, and a weekend for families with a special needs child.

Those who registered for camps may donate their deposit, transfer it to 2021, leave the payment on their account for a future event or receive a full refund.

The staff team is working with its health care team to develop health and safety protocols in line with guidance from the CDC and regional health district. Those protocols will be announced by June 30. Individuals and groups from areas with high rates of CO-VID-19 may not be able to come until their county has a health department "all clear."

There are plans for a high school Servant Leadership Experience for ninth to 12th graders seeking a faith-building experience while serving neighbors. There will be two three-week sessions that combine video and live online meetings with staff and peers, including Bible studies and discussion on what it means to be a servant leader. Teens will be mentored to develop meaningful service projects in their own communities.

"Lutherhaven is fortunate to be able to craft alternative plans, because many camps around the region and country are closing altogether," Bob said. "The ministry still strives to safely make camp a possibility for as many campers as possible, of every age and ability."

For information on options, refunds and news, visit lutherhaven.com.

N-Sid-Sen is offering 'Families at Camp' to give families a get-away

Continued from page 1 "In the future, we will likely have a nurse on staff and have a medical check required for campers before coming," he said of some suggestions being explored. "We need to look at how to do camps carefully and safely."

Mark is grateful to have so many creative people thinking through ideas.

This summer, volunteer camp directors are also thinking how to connect with campers.

"We won't be doing virtual camp, because we believe outdoor ministries needs to be out-ofdoors and people have already been online more than normal," he said. "Ideas are being developed.

"We have to change. Change is hard, but this has come so rapidly," he said. "It's an opportunity to look at why we do what we do and whether what we do achieves what we want." **Conference Minister** Mike Denton has been challenging leaders and committees saying, "We do this so that..." and urges leaders to think about the ultimate goals and ways to tweak what they do to achieve them. "We have seen incredible things happening around the conference, generating positive energy to look at a different future," Mark said. "Who would have thought of Families at Camp?" he mused. "Families who have been isolating together will come Thursday to Monday. They will be able to swim, hike, canoe, have campfires, dive into scripture and challenge themselves."

families coming May 8 and 15.

Andy CastroLang, pastor at Westminster Congregational UCC, and her husband Jim, pastor at First Congregational in Colville, were looking for a chance to get away after Easter and learned about the Families at Camp, so they included their son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren who were isolating with them.

"Going to camp was the perfect get away. We could walk all over, throw rocks in the lake, swing, canoe, go inside warm, dry cabins when it rained," she said. "Mark provided the gear ahead of time so we didn't contaminate anything."

Mark said each family is assigned a canoe, paddles and life jackets. A family came each of the last two weeks of May, and three the first week of June. More are booked. tions from Idaho and Washington, the American Camping Association and the Center for Disease Control, opting for the most stringent to ensure safety," he said.

Year-round staff is at camp until July 14. Two volunteers will come for the summer to clean between families. There will be limited contact between staff and families.

On Mondays when families leave, they will open the windows and doors. The space sits open until Tuesday afternoon, when staff will begin intensive cleaning, wipe all surfaces, wash linens and quilts all day Wednesday and Thursday morning.

Guests will bring their own food and take leftovers home.

With spring and fall cancel-

spaces in the fall for individual retreats to bring income.

Micah 6:8, "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" has been a theme for the Pacific Northwest UCC churches.

Those words were in Mark's mind thinking of summer programs.

"Doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly led us to

suspend 2020 summer programs we could not provide safely," said Mark, "but meant we did not close the camp."

"Camp in 2020 will still change lives," he said. "We will encourage people always to take the camper they are at camp into the bigger world that needs the justice, kindness and humility they experience at camp," Mark said. For information, call (209) 689-

3489 or visit www.n-sid-sen.org.



The camps started with pastors'

There are also RV hookups for self-contained RVs.

"We are following recommenda-

lations, along with no summer camps, it will be a tough year financially, but the Pacific Northwest Conference received a Paycheck Protection Program loan/ grant and plans a fundraising campaign.

Staff are also exploring offering



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Camp Spalding is holding onsite option open while developing Plan B

In late May, Andy Sonneland, director of Camp Spalding near Newport, said the camp would work within restrictions of the four-phase reopening in Washington. With clarification of conditions for reopening still ongoing, the camp had not decided if it would offer onsite camp or alternative programming. So they are preparing for both.

Restrictions will determine if it is safe to bring campers to camp, he said, adding that another update will be made the week of June 15 to 19 giving the summer plan, calendar of sessions, health protocols and a registration link.

"Plans may change at any time if restrictions are increased or lessened," he said. "Adaptibility is the theme for the summer."

"We will wait as long as possible to allow for the best possible outcome," he said. "If we can run onsite camps in any capacity, we will, even ramping up on a short notice if restrictions ease as the summer progresses," Andy said.

With Washington's four-phase reopening plan, he is more optimistic about onsite camps, while continuing to monitor guidelines from the American Camping Association (ACA), the Center for Disease Control and state and county restrictions.

The ACA released a guidebook on how to do overnight camps.

Camp Spalding's summer ministries are to campers, summer staff and students who do community service,

He told 42 college age summer staff members they could come for an onsite experience of Christian service, but they would not be able to be paid because of un-



Camp Spalding awaits decision of onsite and/or alternatives.

certainty about summer income. Of those, 25 agreed to come as volunteers, prepared to do plan A onsite or plan B with no overnight stays onsite.

Plan A depends on the state being in Phase 3 after June 22, which would allow gatherings of 50, so a high school leadership camp with more than 70 campers would be capped at no more than 50 campers and counselors.

"Numbers will be down in any case. Last year we had record attendance. We recognize some families will not be comfortable sending their children to camp. That alone will reduce numbers," he said.

Phase 4 might happen by July 15, allowing for major sporting events and concerts in the open.

"We would have a registered nurse and set up health protocols for a safe experience, working with the local health district," said Andy, who has been directing the camp operated by the Presbytery of the Inland Northwest for 30 years. Parents will need to sign a liability waiver, he said.

The alternative ideas include campers 1) coming for onsite day visits, or 2) meeting with small groups in Spokane or online to build relationships between staff and campers.

"We are planning a summer discipleship program with volunteer staff, each assigned to interact with eight "campers," nurturing relationships and interaction on what life would be like with Christ. Each leader will have three groups based on age and gender to shepherd through the summer. Possibilities would include online craft and nature activities from camp.

In a letter to staff and campers, Andy said he believes that the camping "ministry will emerge intact on the other side of the crisis." He pledged to find "creative ways to fulfill our mission in the midst of these challenging times." While few think traditional

camp translates to an online for-

mat, Andy, in conversations with partners, senses "the Holy Spirit providing fresh inspiration and cool ideas to fulfill the heart of our mission this summer: for kids to come to grow closer to Jesus."

Staff will develop ways to meaningfully engage with campers, focusing on relationship building to connect youth to Jesus.

"We will not charge families for the program we provide, unless we can offer traditional camp," he said.

With no revenue from spring groups, no anticipated summer income—usually more than half of the annual revenue—and uncertainty about fall groups, Camp Spalding, like thousands of businesses and nonprofits, faces significant financial challenges in the months ahead. Andy said summer expenses will be down about 90 percent, reducing income needs.

While on a recent walk, Andy sensed God saying, "You will see me move this summer!"

"As the seeds of new ideas emerge, I am excited to watch them unfold. I believe elements of what God provides this summer will find fruitful application for how we do ministry in the future, even when we can fully return to regular camp," he said.

"God is walking with us through it," he said.

To move through this new time, Andy invites those committed to the camp to support it, perhaps using the CARES Act tax deduction of \$300 per person or \$600 per couple, even for those taking the standard deduction.

Those who registered can support Camp Spalding by contributing their payment, applying their payment as a credit for camp next summer, or receiving a full refund.

For information, call 509-731-4244, email andy@clearwaterlodge.org or visit campspalding. org.

Kroc plans to run day camps

The Kroc Center in Coeur d'Alene will offer full- and halfday camps beginning June 15, said Colin Lynch, programs manager.

They will add two-hour minicamp sessions after the week of July 4. Camps will run through the week of August 17 to 21.

"We will try to make the camp experience as normal as possible, within guidelines set by Idaho's Governor Brad Little," said Colin.

Full-day camps will welcome children of all ages. Half-day camps are for ages four through five. The mini day camps will run for five days, two hours each day.

They will focus on topics that are age specific for ages four through 14.

In July, the focus is on arts and dance.

While the camps are open to all

children in the community, they also function as child care for parents who are working, not only for those in jobs considered essential but also for those in regular jobs.

At the beginning, campers will be dropped off and checked in outside. Staff will engage in extra cleaning, both of the facilities and making sure campers wash hands between activities, said Colin.

"We will practice social distancing, which will restrict some activities, such as contact sports. We have cancelled field trips for early sessions," he said.

Anticipating Idaho to be in Phase 4 after July 4, he expects camps to be normalized by then, but continue social distancing and increased cleaning measures.

For information, call 208-763-0641 or visit kroccda.org.

Ross Point plans to open with protocols

Marta Walker, administrative assistant at Ross Point Camp & Conference Center at Post Falls, said that with cancellations they have moved youth camps into July and combined camps.

"We are working on protocols to meet regulations with cleaning, sanitizing and dining room service," she said. "We purchased four automated hand sanitizing stations."

In the dining room, tables will be six feet apart and meals will be served by staff cafeteria style, not family style as usual.

"We are still working on de- cabins to be six feet apart.



Swimming is always a favorite camp activity.

cabins to be six feet apart. "Ross Point has been in a healthy financial situation for quite some time, so we will do okay," she said, "but we faced a huge loss for half of March, all of change of pace and plans to keep camp safe," she said. "Some are excited, but some are concerned about safety." Food for Kidz

promotes, organizes and services packing events with donations at 25 cents per meal around the United States
helps people make a difference by facilitating service learning events that change lives of children around the world
encourages service organizations to do packing events
facilitates cooperation among partner organizations
introduces economic development to bring sustainability

tails," she said.

Ross Point will offer three weeks of camps planned by the American Baptist Churches in the Northwest and will offer space for rental to groups.

It's possible Idaho will be at the end of stage four by then, with normal capacity of 50 to 75.

"Our number of COVID-19 infections are less than in Spokane, but part of the issue is that we would draw from Washington State, which has more restrictions," Marta said.

Ross Point hires summer staff and operates with volunteers leading the programs for senior and junior high youth the week of July 12, junior camp and children's camp (second to sixth graders) the week of July 19, and family camp the week of July 26.

Expecting fewer campers, she said they can spread out in the

April and May, and most of June. "We have emailed those in our database to let them know of the "Most of the activities will be outdoor in the sun and fresh air," Marta pointed out.

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Camp Cross opts with "loving one another' and keeping people safe

In a May 19 video and letter to members of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane and Camp Cross alumni and registrants, Bishop Gretchen Rehberg announced she had cancelled camp sessions at Camp Cross on the western shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene for the summer because of the pandemic.

"Camp Cross has been a vital part of this diocese since its beginning in 1923, and it is a premier formation immersion opportunity, not only for our children and youth, but also for our adults," she said in an earlier announcement.

While plans were underway for the summer's programming and expanded offerings, leaders began discerning how to safely hold camp and what would happen if there was still a stay-at-home order.

In conversations with Canon John Palarine, camp director, Skip Hubbard, business and facilities manager, the camp nurse, and camp teams around the country, the bishop had hoped to have a "robust" summer at camp.

Gretchen committed to follow Christ's command to love one another while also following guidelines of local, state and federal health districts and officials.

"We want to be part of the solution to this pandemic, not contribute to the problem," she said.

The question of how to safely hold Camp Cross sessions came up many times. Information was ever changing. Initially, the dio-



Group singing, a way to spread COVID-19, is integral to camps.

cese decided to delay the start of camp, hoping that by July the situation would be better.

On May 19, the bishop wrote: "Every generation has its seminal events, days and times that will never be forgotten, times with impact beyond a day or season."

She remembers where she was when the Challenger exploded, the Berlin Wall came down, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks took place.

"Every generation and person has times that are joyous, and times full of disappointment," Gretchen said. "The question is how we respond.

We are currently living in such a time, a global pandemic, and so much of what we experience as normal life has been disrupted. We are not in our congregations worshiping together," she said.

There is much stress as families do school at home, people lose

jobs, businesses close, medical personnel struggle and people are uncertain what is next.

"In the midst of this, we are followers of Jesus, called to continue to walk together in the wav of love. Our call is to always act in ways that show love of God and love of neighbor," she said. "As bishop, the guiding principle behind my guidelines are that all of our actions be loving towards our neighbor."

While the decision not to open Camp Cross this summer was "heartbreaking," she said her times at the camp had been part of the happiest and most formative of her life, as is true for generations of campers from this diocese and beyond.

She and the other staff decided it was impossible to offer the programming and fellowship the camp experience entails.

Camp Gifford cleans camp, remains hopeful

The Spokane Salvation Army's Camp Gifford on Loon Lake began clean up in May with volunteers helping to clean the grounds, weed the property and pull necessary items out of storage.

In these uncertain times, The Salvation Army believes that hope is greater than fear and plans to open Camp Gifford to give more than 1,000 children an outdoor camp experience.

About 80 percent of the children who attend Camp Gifford are on scholarships. With sailboats, a rock wall and ziplines, Camp Gifford offers a chance for children to find themselves, make new



Camper climbs wall.

friends and experience creation in all its beauty.

'While we're hopeful of being able to operate summer programs, there is still work to be done. Whether Camp Gifford opens this year or not, the grounds must still be maintained," said Major Ken Perine of the Salvation Army of Spokane.

Camp Gifford is not only a bright spot in Eastern Washington," he said, "but it's also a bright spot in the lives of many children. It's an experience they carry with them throughout their lives, so we hope to provide the experience, not just this year, but for many years to come."

For information, call Dan Tollerud 325-6810 or email daniel. tollerud@usw.salvationarmy.org.

Talking of health and safety changes, too many aspects central to campers' experiences-singing, worship, eating in community, sharing in sacred circles and small groups, playing games, enjoying the waterfront activities-were being stripped away and changed in ways that would negatively impact the experience.

So Camp Cross joined other camps on Lake Coeur d'Alene and across the United States who made the hard but necessary decision to not open this summer.

Summer staff will still work on camp facilities and do leadership formation. John and Skip said they are thinking about "what's next."

Gretchen invited prayers for the campers, counselors and staff who will have a different summer than they anticipated, including those from other camps on the lake and around our country.

"Camp Cross is not simply a location on McDonald Point, Lake Coeur d'Alene. It is a way of being, a way of offering the love of God to all, a way of creating a community of love. We might not have camp sessions this summer, but Camp Cross still exists and continues in new ways," she said.

"This year will be a year we will never forget. It will change us," she said. "Let us make sure that it is a change for the better, so all we do may be in service and show love of God and love of neighbor.'

This is the first season it has not operated a summer program for the diocese's 32 churches from the Cascades of Washington through North Idaho.

Those who registered will be contacted about their registration. For information, call 624-3191 or visit campcross.org.

Methodists offer virtual camp fires that keep up to 275 campers involved

Alan Rogstad, executive director of the camping program for the Pacific Northwest United Methodist Church (UMC) camps, said that leaders have made the hard decision to cancel the programs at its four camps: Camp Indianola on the Kitsap Peninsula, Ocean Park Camp at Long Beach, Lazy F Camp near Ellensburg and Twinlow Camp on Spirit Lake near Rathdrum, Idaho.

Virtual camps are already underway, however, on Youtube and Facebook, with campfires and singing at Indianola, Ocean Park and Twinlow. Lazy F has an introduction of staff.

Twinlow has also had virtual day camp stories and crafts for nine weeks.

Alan said that 50 to 275 campers follow the videos—hopefully singing along in isolation.

"It's a way we can continue to connect. We send emails to constituents to let them know, and we hope families are watching them together online," he said.

Alan said they had looked at opening with the American Camping Association guidelines, and following the local health departments, but realized the programs would have to be altered with small groups not interacting much, mostly outdoor activities, limited housing capacity, small cabin groups and eating outside-all



A screen shot of a video shows Twinlow staff singing for a virtual campfire.

do what we usually do. We love camp, knowing its impact on kids, giving families a break, and offering spiritual growth," Alan said.

Plans are still on for providing retreats and perhaps some limited programs later in the summer as restrictions allow.

"We are looking at safe alternatives to our traditional programs," he said. "For now, we will continue to develop virtual camping experiences.

For information, call 206-

UGM Camp working out details for late opening

Using Center for Disease Con- shelter 25 years ago, addicted ages 12 to 18, will be held from 3 trol Guidelines for Camps, Ryan Brown, youth outreach director at believes "reaching children is and Fridays, at the Student Impact

since he was a young teenager, Union Gospel Mission (UGM), key to breaking the generational Center.

to 8 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays

said the UGM Camp, an hour out of Spokane on the Spokane River, was still working out the details for opening from July 7 to Aug. 19.

"We are moving forward with camp," he said. "In addition, we will do our inner-city programs in Spokane."

Ryan, who checked into the Union Gospel Mission men's cycles of poverty, abuse and addiction that feed homelessness."

Camp is part of that effort, so the UGM summer programs will be open for seven weeks.

The Young Club, inner city activities for eight to 12 year olds, will run from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Tuesdays through Thursdays during that period. IMPACT, inner-city activities for

For information, email ryan. brown@uniongospelmission.org.

keeping social distancing in mind. 384-1209 or email arogstad@ "It's devastating that we can't pnwumc.org.



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Funeral directors finding online platforms helpful in arranging services

CEOs managing four of Spokane's funeral home, cemetery and cremation networks recently discussed the impact of COVID-19 on their services and on families 'grieving processes. Governor Jay Inslee and the State Department of Health limiting attendance at funeral services and internments to immediate family has been frustrating to both those offering services and to family members under stay-at-home restrictions.

Leila Bradish, general manager of the Dignity Memorial Funeral Homes in Spokane, said online platforms make it possible to arrange services for those who stay at home or who live far away. Those platforms are also being used for pre-planning.

The Dignity Memorial network she manages includes Hazen and Jaeger in Spokane and Spokane Valley; Thornhill Valley Chapel in Spokane Valley; Ball and Dodd Funeral Home and Advantage Funeral and Cremation Services in Spokane, and Strate Funeral Home in Davenport.

Leila said Dignity Memorial is North America's largest provider of funeral, cremation and cemetery services with a network of 2,000 funeral homes in the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico.

WebEx is the primary platform they use. The funeral home sends email invitations and shares the computer screen and video for what Leila said is a "more dynamic presentation and way to connect" than phone or email.

"We also offer creative ways for friends to send messages," she said. "We have put messages left by friends and family at the online obituaries on balloons and staged the balloons in seats during the service.

"Services are more modest, because few can travel or leave their homes to attend. We rotate visitation times so more can come, limiting to a few at a time," Leila said.



Leila Bradish

The Dignity funeral homes in the area have large chapels so social distancing will be possible when more can attend.

"Across the network, we experienced challenges," she said.

Two local staff went to assist Dignity firms in New York for three weeks. They were in two-

week quarantines upon returning. They helped the New York funeral homes answer phones, gather information and take decedents into care.

We were blessed not to face the increased death rate that New York had," she said. "My team are service-oriented people, so it was important for us to send supplies and people. With the number of cases stable, we will not send more."

Dignity Funeral Homes in the area have cared for a few individuals who died from COVID-19.

Leila recently did research on the number of deaths in the state and found only a modest increase in 2020 deaths compared to 2019, but not out of the normal range.

She grew up in Oregon and was in the restaurant industry 10 years before entering the funeral business 10 years ago. She attended the Dallas Institute of Funeral Services and Mortuary Studies, graduating in 2011. She served families in Dallas, and in Grants Pass and Portland, Ore., before moving to Spokane two years ago.

"I wanted a career to make a difference in people's lives. I find it fulfilling to guide families through a difficult time," she said.

"It's important to let families celebrate their loved ones' lives in a way that's important to them," she said. "I have learned that life is precious."

Leila believes the grieving process is important, and funerals help by celebrating a life and sharing memories.

"Not allowing families to be together as their loved ones have passed is devastating," she said, referring both to restrictions on funerals and keeping couples married 50 years apart as their health declined.

Although not raised in a religion, she respects all faiths and helps people follow the rites of passage important to them.

"It's beautiful learning about the different traditions and helping families follow practices that are healing for them," she said.

For information, call 924-9700 or email leila.bradish@dignitymemorial.com.

Catholic Cemeteries do mostly graveside committal services for families

Rick McLean. executive director of the Holy Cross Funeral and Cemetery Services, sees his work with Bishop Thomas Daly, the Rev. Darrin Connall, the Catholic Diocese of Spokane and the Holy Cross Board of Directors as a ministry.

At Holy Cross Cemetery, St. Joseph Cemetery, Queen of Peace at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, Queen of Heaven in Sprague and assisting at St. Michael's Cemetery, he said, his team has dealt with only one confirmed COVID-19 death.

They have done graveside committal services, looking out for the safety of staff, families and the community.

Most services in recent months have been graveside committals, but there have also been a few outside graveside funeral Masses for immediate family, standing six feet apart. At funeral Masses "only the priest receives the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ, while those in attendance pray and partake spiritually," Rick said.

Staff sanitize the tent, chairs and equipment before and after the services. The ground crew wears appropriate PPE. Some family members wear masks, and the funeral homes make masks available for all family members, even though masks are not required when outside, six feet apart.



Rick McLean

Joseph's in Otis Orchards, as others, has been doing worship online, plus encouraging people to watch the Catholic TV station EWTN, which broadcasts Mass, and Masses led by Bishop Daly.

Rick is concerned about the long-term impact for people suffering the loss of loved ones without a proper closure. At first, gatherings were limited to 50, then 10, then zero. Currently, immediate family is allowed to attend.

"We encourage families to do

sanitize the office and wear masks when requested to.

"We respect that people need personal contact," he said.

Rick, who grew up in Spokane attending St. Pascal's and West Valley High School, graduated from Spokane Community College and went into the auto industry in 1984.

In 1994, he became owner of a new car dealership in Grandview, Wash. He sold the dealership in 2007 and returned to Spokane in 2010 with his business in sales training and motivational speaking, while seeking to find a ministry position.

Jim Falkner, his predecessor at Holy Cross, invited him to be an advisor, meeting with families at Holy Cross Cemetery. Rick was hesitant to do that, but after two weeks on the job, he knew it was his calling to meet and pray with families.

"It's a wonderful vocation to talk with them about God and the mercy of Christ," said Rick, whose focus now is administration. "The three significant times of life people remember most are births, weddings and deaths."

Rick is concerned about the impact of the virus on people physically, emotionally and economically.

final say. I do not fear death. I trust God is present. I pray for the end of the disease and for families who struggle without

proper closure."

For information, call 467-5496 or email rickm@holycrossofspokane.org.



"We purchased video equipment so we could make videos available to families who were unable to come," Rick said, "but many families take their own videos."

He notes that his parish, St.

a committal now and a proper memorial service later at their churches," he said.

If they choose cremation, the family may keep the cremated remains in an urn for a future burial. Staff now meet with families online, by phone or email. If families want to come in, staff

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"I believe God is the author of life and death, regardless of whether it's disease or a heart attack," he said. "God has the



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FUNERAL & CEMETERY SERVICES

Fairmount Memorial director is concerned that limits delay grief process

David Ittner, CEO of Fairmount Memorial Association, oversees 330 acres of cemeteries including Fairmount, Greenwood, Woodlawn, Riverside, Pines, Pines South and Spokane Memorial Gardens, plus the Heritage Funeral Home. The association also owns Pacific Northwest Cremation.

The cemeteries are also sites of events. Greenwood's Easter Sunrise Service was cancelled but they recorded the message for social media. Fairmount, Greenwood and Riverside hold Memorial Day activities that have included a car show, concerts and a walk through flag-lined roads. This year, those events were cancelled and American Legion Riders led a caravan of cars through the flag-lined roads.

David said Fairmount Memorial Association has handled the majority of the more than 30 COVID-19 deaths in Spokane County, with both cremations and burials.

"We learned early that the risk of staff getting infected by working with people who died of COVID-19 was low, but our



David Ittner

staff use PPE, such as face masks and gloves," he said. "Aware of the danger of the virus, they have been cautious."

When a family loses a loved one, it is often the worst day of their lives, but now there is added stress with the pandemic meaning services are limited to immediate family, limiting their ability to celebrate the loved one's life and

say goodbye, he said.

"People are unable to begin the grieving process the way they want or need to," he said. "Our task within restrictions is to provide the family a meaningful experience, learning about them by meeting on Zoom, a video conference or phone.

David has learned two things: 1) It is important to have a service to celebrate a person's life, and not doing that short changes families and impedes their grieving process. 2) The number of deaths because of COVID-19 has brought to mind the need for people to discuss their mortality. so Fairmount has had more people call or come to do pre-planning to save family members from making decisions after a death.

David said that over the last 30 years, more people choose cremation. While nationally 50 to 55 percent choose it, in Washington, more than 75 percent choose it.

"There seems to be a correlation between choosing cremation and the decline in religious affiliation. Some choose it because they want simplicity and want to save costs," he said.

"People shy away from conversing about mortality, and discussing burial or cremation, so more choose cremation because they perceive it as easy and quick. Many of them are less likely to have a service," he said.

Cremation still involves choices of how to memorialize a person. Some keep an urn of ashes, some bury the urn or put it in a niche at the cemetery.

David's path to the funeral industry was through landscaping. After earning a degree at Washington State University in crop science and turf management, he was assistant grounds superintendent at the Spokane Country Club. Then he was offered the opportunity to be grounds superintendent at Fairmount in 2003 and transitioned through different roles to become CEO, learning in the process what it takes to run a nonprofit cemetery that is like "a little city" with roads, grounds, monuments and buildings

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to maintain.

With COVID-19, most services are at the gravesides, so David said it is particularly important to provide a nicely landscaped setting.

Fairmount is also using a service called One Room that allows it to livestream services for those who cannot come.

Because of his faith as a Christian, David said he believes it is important to create a good working environment for his staff.

"If our employees are thriving, their natural empathy and abilities will shine through, and they will take better care of the people we serve," he said.

"From diving into God's Word, I believe our role is to serve others, love others and put others' interests before our own, along with loving God with all our heart," he said.

For information, call 326-6813 or email dittner@fairmountmemorial.com.

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Hennessey supports families after services

Melissa Johnson, managing partner of Hennessey Funeral Home and Crematory at 2203 N. Division, said the funeral home has a chapel, viewing room and reception hall. Each could potentially hold 10 people, six feet apart, but most services have just used one room for family.

The extra space helped when the mother of 10 children, with numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren died recently. The family decided that just the children and her 93-year-old husband-who drove with a son from Minnesota-would be at the service. They just used two rooms.

For those who cannot attend, they are livestreaming services. In phase three, she said, 50 would be allowed to gather for services.

Melissa said Hennessey has served families of three confirmed COVID-19 cases and some suspected ones.

The bodies of COVID-19 patients are double bagged in plastic and come with guidance not to open the bags. Two cases were direct cremation with no viewing and one was a direct burial.

"We can prepare someone who has died of COVID-19 if family wants to view the body because they could not visit in the hospital and they want to say goodbye," said Melissa. "Though embalming is not required by law, Center for



Melissa Johnson

Disease Control (CDC) guidelines indicate embalming is highly suggested for COVID-19 cases."

Using a photograph, she has embalmed bodies of people who died traumatically or in accidents if the family wants the comfort of seeing the body restored.

Melissa earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and forensics at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minn. She worked for coroners there and in Phoenix, going to death and accident scenes, taking the decedent to the morgue and determining what took place. In 2010, she earned an associate degree at Mesa Community College in mortuary science. She started with Dignity Memorial there and moved to Seattle for seven years, earning a master's degree in forensic science.

She learned that Hennessey, a full-service funeral home with the legacy of four generations of the Hennessey family, was seeking a partner, so she sought to fulfill that position a year ago.

Melissa said Hennessey's serves families beyond the funeral services.

"We connect with and support families after the phone calls end and neighbors stop bringing meals. We also help families understand the jargon on a death certificate," said Melissa.

"The best part of the job is serving families," she said. "I learn through the families I serve."

Melissa, who grew up as a Missouri Synod Lutheran and attended a Methodist college, appreciates how families find comfort in their faith—be they Catholic, Buddhist, Jehovah's Witness or Baha'i.

For information, call 328-2600 or email melissa.johnson@hennesseyfuneralhomes.com.



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Despite numbing quantity of tragedies, may we still be outraged and act

Even the addition of a "cares" emoji, the options of like, love, surprise, sad and anger emojis in response to Facebook postings are inadequate. I would prefer a thumbs down option, along with outrage, along with let's act. I found a thumbs down emoji and a letter writing one, but they still seem inadequate.

Outrage is more than anger that goes nowhere or breaks into violence. It it calls for speaking out and doing something in the tradition of nonviolent persistence, not just be a bystander expressing opinions with emojis.

The reports of George Floyd's suffocation as a Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee into George's neck stir outrage a social media response cannot contain. People went to the streets protesting in that city.

Someone juxtaposed the photo of the officer's knee on the African American's neck beside the image of football quarterback Colin Kapernick dropping to a knee during the national anthem to challenge the country to recognize that Black Lives Matter. It poignantly answered why he did that. On top of that is the disproportionately

high incidence of and deaths from CO-VID-19 among the Navajo nation, other native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic farm and food workers in Yakima. Through Refugee Connections, we learned that 74 or 2.7 percent of Spokane's 3,000 Marshall Islanders tested positive, in contrast to about 500 of 500,000 in the region.

Nationally, we passed 100,000 deaths. To move beyond the numbness from mounting statistics, media at least are telling stories of individuals who have died.

Behind the scenes of pandemic news, the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, other environmental regulations and nuclear treaties are falling by the wayside. More national lands are being gobbled up by fossil fuel interests and billions more dollars subsidize them. It's heartening that faith communities are not deterred from their witness and are divesting their portfolios from fossil fuel industries and investing in sustainable energy.

As media chase, lap up and analyze every presidential tweet, it's important to offer a reminder of equal time as the campaign season begins and to identify how media play into propaganda as they repeat the photo, name and words of one person, rarely noting any other candidates, for *any* other office.

The reality, as many are saying, is that we do not need to return to what was normal before COVID-19 or three years ago. We need a new normal.

COVID-19 exacerbates the racial, gender and economic divides. With losing jobs, people are losing their health insurance, revealing the folly of the employer-based health insurance system. When one loses a job, one loses health insurance coverage.

So many issues are cycling around in the midst of the loss of so many lives from the disease and from racial discrimination. What are you doing? What is your faith community doing beyond being caught up in whether to worship in person, when and how? How are our faiths dismantling racism?

We must join efforts of the NAACP Spokane, Spokane County Human Rights Task Force, Kootenai County Task Force on Human Rights, Spokane Coalition of Color, Spokane Coalition Against Racism, Carl Maxey Center, Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, and other groups educating and advocating to end racism. It's time to join, support and act.

Let's not let the number of 100,000 deaths, which will continue to mount, numb us from caring and acting, or blind us to the obvious inequities.

Let this be a summer of action—even if by virtual meetings and protests, letter writing, emails and phone calls. Our faith calls us to care for people's lives and social justice. May we persevere through numbing clouds of disaster and death to connect, care and act. Mary Stamp - Editor

Faith Leaders group hears health perspectives of effects of COVID-19

In late March, the Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience of Eastern Washington and North Idaho (FLLC) saw a need to speak truthfully about the pandemic with facts and a commitment to "love our neighbors as ourselves."

In April, Bob Lutz, M.D., Spokane Regional Health District Health Officer, spoke at the FLLC Truthful Tuesday Vigil on these challenging times, lifting up how the pandemic is impacting everyone but doing it disproportionately.

"The full extent of the impact on our marginalized communities is still being revealed," he said.

He urged people to come together with wisdom and compassion.

"We are more the same than different," he said, pointing to the need to recognize people's common humanity.

In April, Mayor Ben Wick from the City of Spokane Valley reported on the daily connections between city and county elected officials as they work together to create solutions they can offer in one voice. At 10 a.m. each day, they have virtual conferences open to the public. He said the city is helping its hungry and small businesses.

At the May Truthful Tuesday Vigil, participants learned about COVID-19 from Luis Manriquez, M.D., of Washington State University Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine and the new street medicine team working with Spokane's homeless population. He said the pandemic spread in Washington has been less destructive than it could have been because of the Stay Home, Stay Healthy directives.

Because there is no medical intervention to stop this disease, when people are ill, health care can only support them as they go through the experience, he commented.

"While it looks like people are exhausted with things happening, or not happening," he said, "we need to remember that the lack of cases is because we took action.

"The virus is active in Washington State even when no one sees it happening," he said, reporting that in Wenatchee, 72 orchard workers were tested and half had coronavirus despite showing no symptoms. Luis encouraged two actions: 1) Everyone must help each other stay safe by using good hygiene practices to slow the spread. 2) People need to be prepared for the increase of homelessness and hunger.

"Much of the fallout will not be medical, but social," he said.

He challenged people to consider what kind of world they want to live in after this experience and to work for the world they would like to see come from this.

"We are all in the same storm but not all in the same boat," he added.

While not a sailor, he said the maritime duty for any sailor is to come to the aid to others in need. Those at sea recognize that people need each other to get through.

"Whatever resources and privileges we have, it is incumbent upon us to help others," he said.

On testing and antibodies, Luis said that more testing will be needed, as case identification will be the main tool to slow the spread of infection. Antibody testing continues to develop. Many tests are not reliable. It is not yet proven that antibodies give immunity and to what level that immunity will protect people.

Members of the Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience shared words of encouragement at recent Truthful Tuesday Vigils.

In a message from the Jewish community and from her experience as a physician, Pam Silverstein called on everyone to act for the good of all.

Naghmana Ahmed-Sherazi spoke of the Muslim teachings to care for each person's wellbeing.

Joan Berkowitz shared a poem from the Jewish community, and Lani Delong brought encouragement from the atheist point of view, including that the wearing of a mask is an act of compassion for others.

The next Truthful Tuesday at 5 p.m., June 9, is on gun safety, because June is the second annual observance of National Gun Violence Awareness Month. It will be on the Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience Facebook page. Speakers are Rosie Zhou of Students Demand Action and Laurie Dwyer of Moms Demand Action.

> Gen Heywood Guest Editorial



Faith communities and their leaders have spent much time in recent months first deciding not to gather for worship in their buildings, "not out of fear, but out of our deepest respect for life and health," as the Catholic bishops of Washington said in a recent statement.

Leaders and pastors also spent time developing alternative means of gathering through live streaming and Zoom. They have not only used those tools to gather for worship, but also to gather for meetings, workshops, Bible study, prayer groups, social gatherings and even, in the case of the Pacific Northwest United Church of Christ, to gather for its Annual Meeting worship and each week to share reports of leaders and ministries. The Inland Northwest Presbytery announced that its office will now be a virtual office, something that was projected for the future but became reality in recent months. "As COVID-19 emerged and 'stay at home' orders were announced in March 2020, the presbytery office closed and staff members began working remotely. This pandemic time has given us a test run at working as a virtual office. With this unplanned launch into working virtually, we've expedited our plan to make the office a virtual office," said the Rev. Sheryl Kinder-Pyle, Presbytery executive minister. "Committee meetings will continue on Zoom for the time being, but eventually will be at church buildings."

The Catholic bishops also wrote: "As disciples of Jesus, we are called to be instruments of God's protection for the vulnerable and the public common good. Our love of God and neighbor is always personal. While we share the desire to bring people back to Mass as quickly as possible, we will wait to schedule our public worship when it is safe and we are prepared to do so," they said, also reporting that they were contact tracing if needed.

In parts of the state in Phase 1, there can be outdoor services for up to 100 on the faith's property.

The guidelines encourage remote services to continue for people in high risk groups and preferring not to go out.

With the Governor's announcement, Bishop Thomas Daly of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane said Spokane parof the Greater Northwest Area of the United Methodist Church—including, Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Alaska and parts of Montana and Canada—had issued a notice extending in-person worship suspension and building closures to all but essential services through June 15.

"This early in the phased reopening process, data on the spread of the virus is inconsistent and inconclusive. This date allows two more 14-day periods during which to assess whether COVID-19 cases are declining or increasing. Our churches will be on the leading edge of protecting public health, but not be on the leading edge of reopening at the risk of increasing exposures, infections and deaths," she said. The Rev. Mike Denton, conference minister of the Pacific Northwest United Church of Christ, suggested not gathering until a congregation has a plan to follow the mandates and guidelines, until staff is ready, until they have a plan for those who cannot attend and until they are ready to

engaging with the Governor's office on a plan and schedule for safe gathering."

They were consulting with Governor Jay Inslee along with leaders of other denominations and faiths.

On May 27, the Governor announced plans to revise limits on the size of gatherings for religious services indoors. For Phase 2, which includes Spokane and most of Eastern Washington, faith groups may hold indoor services with 50 or fewer people or 25 percent of the building's capacity, whichever is less, and as many as five people for in-home services. Rules apply to study groups, weddings and funerals. There is no limit to the number of services that can be held in a day.

Staff must have personal protective equipment. Employees must be trained to self-screen for symptoms. Facilities must be cleaned and disinfected. Participants must follow social distancing and wear masks, even when singing. There is to be no sharing of food, beverages or hymnals. Congregations are to log attendance for ishes could offer Mass beginning Pentecost weekend May 30.

He said: Face masks will be worn. There will be no singing. Homilies will be short. There will be no exchanging of a "sign of peace." Parishes will keep a log of those who attend. There is a suspension of the obligation to attend Mass for anyone who is ill or anxious about attending.

In the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane, several congregations in Washington and Idaho had submitted plans for moving toward coming together for public worship and Bishop Gretchen Rehberg had emphasized several points in her notices to the congregations.

The Governor's announcement came earlier than she expected. In communications with congregations she said that for her to approve plans, they must follow state and local restrictions about the number who can gather, and approval of a plan does not mean a congregation should "immediately start together."

In late May, Bishop Elaine Stanovsky

accept potential risks of gathering in the midst of a pandemic. **Bishop Kristen Kuempel** of the North-

west Intermountain Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America posted recently on Facebook: "Gathering for inperson worship is still high-risk. We never closed. We're still here. Let's make good choices to stay that way."

The decisions are still in flux for each faith community and congregation.

PJALS plans youth art show and more

The Peace and Justice Action ideas in new ways. League of Spokane's Young Activist Leaders Program (YALP) participants had planned Arts in Action for the spring.

With the COVID-19, the vision for a large in-person exhibition of video, performance, visual art and writing was displaced by plans to have a Virtual Gallery. It will open with a reception that is part of First Friday on June 5.

The event includes a show that grew out of a series of Wednesday workshops in May to inspire youth to create and express their

Every week through the summer, YALP will meet virtually from 4 to 5:30 p.m., Tuesdays, to build activist skills through workshops, projects and speakers. For information, visit pjals.org/yalp.

The Peace & Justice Action Committee plans to meet from 5:30 to 7 p.m., Thursdays, June 4, July 2, Aug. 6 and Sept. 3 through videoconferencing.

Showing up for Racial Justice will meet for a book study at 5:30 p.m., Thursdays, June 11 and 25, July 9 and 23, Aug. 13 and 27, on videoconference.

PJALS is also holding Webinar Wednesdays to accomplish some goals of its cancelled spring Peace and Justice Action Conference. Sessions will help participants deepen analysis, share skills, sharpen skills, improve strategies and strengthen relationships, said co-director Liz Moore.

They have included sessions on bystander training on anti-Asian racism and white supremacist efforts to influence youth online.

For information, call 838-7870 or visit pjals.org.

Unity in the Community will be Aug. 15

Unity in the Community is planning to hold the 26th annual multi-cultural celebration from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 15, at Riverfront Park.

Co-organizers April Anderson and Mareesa Henderson say it's a time to celebrate the joy of similarities and differences that make people stronger and build community.

The event includes a Career,

Education and Health Fair, a Cultural Village, a Senior Resource area, live entertainment, free K-8 school supplies, free bike helmets and other activities.

Unity in the Community began in 1994 as an event of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church to break down racial and cultural barriers. In 2004, AHANA (African American, Hispanic and Native American Association) continued it. In 2007, it was to Riverfront Park, where vendors included nonprofit organizations and others sharing information on their programs and services.

Believing that racial or cultural bigotry is about ignorance, April and Mareesa work to educate people about the diverse cultures in Spokane.

For information, email nwunity@icloud.com

Three nonprofits collaborate to serve

Continued from page 1

These leaders decided to partner when Innovia announced funding to increase service for those impacted by the COVID-19 emergency and by needs in the community.

WCFR provides free meals and groceries to nearly 400 families a week, and meals to 19 homeless shelters and care centers. Its weekly meal count exceeds 23,000, an increase of 20,000 meals since mid-March.

The YWCA shelter for domestic violence victims is full with some in overflow space at local hotels.

Vanessa Behan adapted their new space to serve more schoolaged children and increased capacity, acknowledging that stressful times create increased family violence.

Because of the pandemic, more victims of domestic violence and their children are isolated at home with their abusers. The stress of the pandemic, with financial challenges, job losses and school closures, adds to an already dangerous environment, said Amy.

Local law enforcement officials report they have not seen an increase in domestic violence, but

For children, Vanessa Behan provides unconditional love and attention from adults who hope to create lifetime memories of security. For parents overwhelmed and lacking support, it eliminates burdens, she said.

For information, call at 535-3155 or visit at www.vanessabehan.org.

For 117 years, YWCA Spokane has helped women and children overcome social, economic and personal barriers to accomplish goals and achieve healthier, more fulfilling lives. Today it supports victims of intimate partner domestic violence (DV), builds economic empowerment, promotes early childhood education, and confronts racial and social justice issues that negatively impact clients and the community, said Regina.

"We envision a community in which DV is no longer tolerated. We embrace this vision through our wrap-around services: our 24-hour Helpline, safe shelter, counseling center, mental health services, housing advocacy, child advocacy, civil legal assistance, legal advocacy, economic empowerment advocacy and free drop-in childcare," she said. "In 2018, we impacted more than 16,000 survivors and their children. By working at the intersections of inequality, poverty and DV, we help disrupt longstanding societal patterns of trauma.

For information, call 789-9303 or visit ywcaspokane.org.

"Women & Children's Free Restaurant & Community Kitchen has been a vital safety net for women and children since 1988, said Lisa.

It fills nutritional gaps while fostering dignity and respect, both in its restaurant and through partnerships with women and children focused nonprofits throughout Spokane, she said.

For information, call 340-0477 or visit www.wcfrspokane.org.

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they worry that the "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order has increased incidents and suppressed victims from reporting them, she said.

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Virtual conversation explores impact of pandemic on people of color

Roberta and James Wilburn hosted a virtual "Courageous Conversation" Memorial Day weekend, drawing more than 30 to a conversation on "The Impact of COVID-19 on Black and Hispanic Communities."

Vivianne Griffiths, an adult nurse practitioner from Louisville, Ky., and Vicki Hines Martin, a psychiatric nursing professor and assistant dean at the University of Louisville, joined Walter Kendricks, a member of the Washington Commission on African American Affairs and pastor of Morning Star Baptist Church in Spokane, along with Roberta and James, co-founders of Wilburn and Associates.

Panelists told of the pandemic's disproportionate impact on communities of color, and looked at health and safety issues that mean more risk in their communities.

Vivianne quoted journalist Zeeshan Aleem, who said "Coronavirus isn't an equalizer but a magnifier of inequality." Vivianne also quoted Center for Disease Control (CDC) data: Blacks are 30 percent of COVID-19 patients, but 14 percent of the U.S. population. They are six percent of Wisconsin's population but are 40 percent of COVID-19 deaths there. They are 33 percent of Los Angeles' population but 57 percent of deaths.

The reason for racial disparities in health care for minority populations is that African Americans with co-morbidities have an increased risk for death from coronavirus. For example, those with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, cancer, vitamin D



Vivianne Griffiths, Vicki Martin, Walter Kendricks and the Wilburns.

deficiency and other diseases are more at risk, as are older people, she said.

Vicki said that "the history of health disparities among ethnic groups has more influence on the risk than individual behaviors."

She spoke about "social determinants of health," or conditions in which "people are born, grow, live, work and age."

Those factors include economic stability in terms of employment, income and debt; the neighborhood and physical environment in terms of housing, transportation, safety, parks and zip code; education in terms of literacy, early childhood education, vocational training and higher education; food in terms of hunger and access; community and social context in terms of social integration, community engagement and discrimination, and the health system and care in terms of quality, insurance coverage, provider availability and provider linguistic and cultural awareness.

In the pandemic, more minorities are in essential services but earn lower income and cannot work from home, putting them more at risk, Vicki said, so they struggle to meet household needs,

rely on public transportation and lack access to quality health care.

Those factors make them more vulnerable, according to the CDC vulnerability index which identifies stresses and resilience that have impact on health outcomes. Sheltering in place does not help for people living on the streets, in prisons or in long-term

care facilities, she said. Vivianne then suggested that African-American and Hispanic people can help to mitigate the rate of infections by reporting symptoms early to ensure access to care, by using protocols for cleanliness like 20-second handwashing, by testing those without symptoms, by contact tracing for those testing positive and by social distancing.

Walter said the Spokane Ministers Fellowship received a \$15,000 Innovia grant, which he, as its president, has shared for African American pastors to give to members in need, because they know the needs.

'The crisis and virus show the inequities of the systems and systemic racism," he said.

"From the time we were in slavery through after we were freed, the country has been built on our sweat and labor, but since slaves were freed in 1863, we had no health care or social safety net.

"I don't want to return to what was normal in January. The capitalistic economic system does not support us. We need something better," he said.

"Because of the high rates of poverty and incarceration, there are more cases, and many are not even counted," Walter said, urging efforts to awaken people to deal with systemic inequities.

Walter added that many people of color are on the front lines, working in grocery stores and as essential workers tending to the needs of other people.

He mentioned recent articles that have stirred his thinking about being in a "slaveholders' republic," about how much a human life is worth, about how many will die to reopen the economy and about living in a failed state.

"With COVID-19, we need to ask who and what we are. I do not want to go back to the normal we had, because everyone should have health care and enough food. As the richest country, we can do better," he said.

Walter urges the state commissions on African-American and on Hispanic affairs to work together.

"There is strength in numbers. We are better together than when we stand alone," he said. "We need to be in love with justice."

He knows finding funding may be hard with the state losing funds, but people of color need to work together so their voices are heard.

"We have bailed out corporations to the tune of billions of dollars. It's time to assist American citizens," Walter said. "There should be funds to help people."

He called for "sticking together, calling an elder neighbor, sharing what we have and caring for one another."

James considered the statistics, citing that more than 20,000 of the nearly 100,000 deaths from the pandemic are African Americans.

"How much is a life worth? When we open the country, some will die. That's the price of the economy," he said. "We need to inform our community that this is killing us. Going back to work for many is a death sentence, and people of color are often the ones on the front line."

James reviewed history of how "our ancestors died to make change."He spoke of the high mortality on the Navajo reservation, one of the highest mortality rates in the world. He spoke of the dilemma of African Americans who are unemployed and must go back to work.

Vivianne suggested that people have their doctors write letters to employers about their medical conditions that put them at risk, so they can continue to receive unemployment.

Roberta added that "it's time to come together and think of the bigger picture."

She hoped the conversation makes participants more informed so they are better able speak to the issues.

For information, call 542-7636, email wilburnassociatesllc@ gmail.com or visit wilburnassociates.org.

Latino Civic Alliance calls for faith and other organizations to protect strikers

The Latino Civic Alliance (LCA) calls faith, nonprofit and justice organizations and tribes to support agricultural workers on strike in Yakima fruit warehouses.

The Faith Action Network (FAN) and Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) are among the organizations joining together to urge the Governor and State Legislature to protect workers by enforcing compliance with workplace standards and establishing protocols.

"As the pandemic spread in the ag industry, workers became sick or died, putting the food supply in danger," said Nina Martinez of the LCA board. "In Washington, where 90 percent of the agricultural workforce is Latino, data shows COVID-19 spreading at an alarming rate among them.

standards are met," Nina said.

"Food and ag workers are deemed essential, critical to the U.S. infrastructure, but have been excluded from benefits," she said. "Washington has one of the largest agriculture economies in the nation and ag workers contribute to local economies, but live below poverty levels, lack health benefits, sick leave and decent wages."

Agricultural workers have an average life expectancy of 49 years because of the working conditions in diverse jobs in fields, warehouses, orchards, farms, and meat processing plants.

On May 21, the alliance appealed for people and organizations to stand with agriculture workers so they have protections needed during the pandemic and beyond. Before COVID-19, farmworkers were vulnerable to illness from pesticides and poor working conditions, she said. The risk to the workers will continue into

for congregations.

On May 29, the Rev. Connie Yost of the Farm Worker Ministry Northwest announced that four of the fruit packing companies in the

ing inspections and ensuring that November. The LCA has a toolkit Yakima strike have settled with safety, and essential dignity and their workers. Three others were still in talks.

> Connie said the ministry has sought to "give these essential workers essential pay, essential

justice."

For information, call 206-661-0051, email nina@latinocivicalliance.org or visit at www.latinocivicalliance.org.



"The food industry has a responsibility to produce safe food in a safe workplace, and the government is responsible for setting safety standards, conduct-

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