

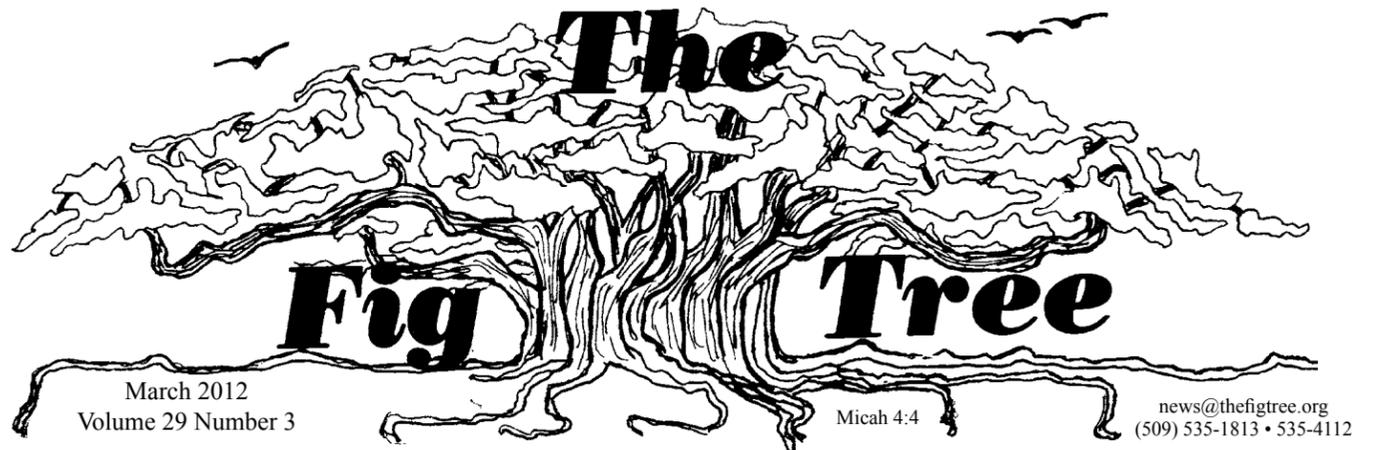
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Risk and adventure help at-risk teens - p. 9

Life Center develops global partners - p. 12



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

online in color at www.thefigtree.org

YWCA empowers abused women

By Mary Stamp

Trish McFarland finds that the most meaningful days of her work as executive director of the YWCA in Spokane since 2009 are when she shares her story to inspire women in classes, and they in turn share their stories.

The most frustrating days have been those following the recent Washington State Legislature, and wondering how state budget cuts may affect the YWCA-Spokane's budget, on top of federal and city cuts to the YWCA's primary program, Alternatives to Domestic Violence.

YWCA helps 15,000 women a year, including receiving 7,000 calls a year to its emergency crisis line. Women fleeing domestic violence have come from as far away as Florida to escape the danger, Trish said.

The YWCA's primary goal is to empower women.

A common way women are disempowered is through domestic violence, which, she said, "continues to be an issue in good times and bad," affecting people of all social and economic levels.

In Washington, about one in four people are affected by domestic violence. Most of them are women.



Trish McFarland appreciates the YWCA's clothing boutique, Our Sister's Closet.

"We need to continue to battle it," Trish said.

One way is to educate children and young women on what healthy relationships are and how to treat each other respectfully as human beings.

Domestic violence can be cyclical. As children see their parents hit or being hit, they think it's the normal way to show love, Trish pointed out.

According to a law enforcement report on causes of murders, 38 women in Spokane County have been killed in the last 13 years as a result of domestic violence and one man committed suicide after killing his wife.

"More than half of them met in high school, forming an unhealthy relationship at an early age," she said. "That's why we need to reach young people to help them understand appropriate ways to relate."

"There is violence everywhere, especially in TV and movies," Trish said. "Where is there civil discourse?"

She is concerned that the culture sets up an expectation of violence.

As a Catholic who had a family member abused by a priest, she attended a gathering for victims

Continued on page 4

Kosher Dinner builds relationships, educates community, dispels prejudice

Beyond offering a taste of Jewish foods, sharing ethnic music and fund raising to some degree for the synagogue, Temple Beth Shalom's annual Kosher Dinner welcomes the community to the synagogue to build relationships, educate people and dispel prejudice.

For David Williams, who has been co-chair or chair of the dinner for four years, it's about "opening our doors to remove any mystique of who we are. It's saying we can visit your congregation and you can visit ours to understand that beyond our

different beliefs, traditions and holidays, we are all part of the same human race.

"The dinner has evolved since its formation 71 years ago," David said. "Then there were fewer guests who came to the dinners and there was need for fewer volunteers to prepare the food."

"For many in our society, religion is becoming a fading piece of their lives," he said. "Some people ask themselves, should we come to the temple to pray for three hours on the Sabbath—Saturday morning—or go skiing? We are also living in more of an

interfaith society, where mixed marriages are more common and families need to make different choices."

While once the dinner primarily focused on outreach and educating the community about Jewish practices, he said, the continual rise in costs of utilities for cooking, security for the event and the need to outsource some of the foods, the goals have changed over the years.

One reason David has been involved is that when he moved to Spokane in 2003, he had been working for eight years in Seattle for two food distributors, specializing in supplying kosher foods from the East Coast to the Pacific Northwest.

While Temple Beth Shalom members may have once cooked and baked food in their own kitchens and later in the current temple kitchen, the number of guests has increased, making it necessary to outsource some of the foods for volunteers to bake, then reheat and serve to the 2,400 who now come to the Kosher Dinner.

Continued on page 6

Both events at Gonzaga's Cataldo Hall Benefit events explore credible communication

The Fig Tree's annual Benefit Breakfast begins at 7:15 a.m., Wednesday, March 14, and the Benefit Lunch begins at 11:45 a.m., Friday, March 16.

Both events are at Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

Table hosts are still being recruited, and hosts are still inviting guests to fill their tables, which seat eight people.

Several speakers will share a few minutes each on the theme, "Communicating Credibly," about how The Fig Tree media are engaged in modeling responsible media coverage. The speakers include Bishop Martin Wells of the Eastern Washington Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Mark Kadel, executive director of World Relief; Heather Crandall of the Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media; and Jim Mohr of the Gonzaga Institute for Hate Studies.

The programs that share The Fig Tree story begin at 7:30 a.m. and noon.

The benefit breakfast and lunch offer a time to gather those who value The Fig Tree media and people who are interested in learning about them. It is a time to celebrate The Fig Tree's approach to journalism and its media that connect people in the faith and nonprofit communities.

The Rev. Kaye Hult, a flute player who has been assisting The Fig Tree with an archival database, and pianist Joanne Smith will provide music.

The goal is to raise \$18,000 to help cover the costs of producing these media that connect and build the credibility of the faith and nonprofit communities in the region.

For information, call 535-4112 or 535-1813, or email info@thefigtree.org.

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WCC offers resources on Lent focus on water

During the seven weeks of Lent the Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) invites churches to join its Seven Weeks for Water Campaign, "The Economy of Water," with resources at oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home/resources-and-links/seven-weeks-for-water.html.

The time of prayer, reflection and action for local and global water justice began Feb. 20 and includes resources for World Water Day on March 22 and Maundy Thursday on April 5.

"Water is the lifeblood of the planet as well as the economy," said Maïke Gorsboth, coordinator of the Ecumenical Water Network. "It is crucial for sustainable development in regard to health, food security, energy and poverty—issues that affect and engage churches around the world in different ways."

The EWN is publishing weekly meditations on its website to raise awareness of water and justice. The reflections are accompanied by links and ideas for activities encouraging individuals and congregations to work towards water justice in their communities.

The weekly reflections offer biblical study on the economy of water, wasteful consumption and production, agro-ecological production and climate change adaptation.

The Rev. Konrad Raiser, former World Council of Churches general secretary, offers a biblical reflection on the thirst for life and thirst for water, integral to human survival, as well as the greed driving manipulation of this resource in the world today.

"To be thirsty for water is part of the human condition. It is the bodily expression of the longing for the fullness of life, but it can also turn into a greedy effort to maximize satisfaction," he said.

The campaign is also promoting the "Green Economy" concept, which connects economic development with environmental and social well-being. It is a topic in the preparation for the United Nations' "Rio+20" Conference on Sustainable Development.

WCC consultation explores conciliar ecumenism

"Ecumenism is a quality of life that needs to be articulated in all aspects of a Christian's life" and "conciliarity is an essential nature of the church," said Catholicos Aram I, head of the Holy See of Cilicia of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

He was speaking at the World Council of Churches (WCC) consultation in Beirut, Lebanon, hosted by the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) in February.

The consultation focused on the theme "conciliar ecumenism," which refers to the Christian councils and associations that pursue church unity at the national, regional or global level.

The 33 leaders from national councils of churches and regional ecumenical organizations who attended discussed the tradition of the World Council of Churches, regional and national councils, working together to express churches' desire for unity in Christ.

Catholicos Aram I identified three trends: 1) the growing shift from church-centered ecumenism to people-centered ecumenism, 2) a shift from multi-confessional ecumenism to confessional ecumenism, and 3) a shift from global ecumenism to regional and local ecumenism.

In his presentation, the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, the WCC general secretary, identified other realities, such as the multiplicity of ecumenical actors, churches not yet identifying with the ecumenical movement and the financial sustainability of councils.

He encouraged participants to ask:

- "Are we really the fellowship of churches that we are called to be, communities of churches that move forward towards the goal of visible unity?"

- "Are we a common witness in the spirit and ethos of koinonia and guided by its values, such as solidarity, mutual accountability and the commitment to consensus and common witness?"

Koinonia is the New Testament vision of unity within the communion of the Holy Spirit, he said. In their responses, participants focused on the theological and biblical basis of conciliar ecumenism, reflecting on its different expressions and implications for the role of national and regional councils.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Deb Conklin to give Easter Sunrise sermon

The Rev. Deb Conklin, pastor of St. Paul and Liberty Park United Methodist churches, will preach on "Which Gods Do We Serve?" for the 2012 Ecumenical Easter Sunrise Service at 6:30 a.m., Sunday, April 8, at Greenwood Memorial Terrace, 201 N. Government Way in Spokane.

Musicians include Lauri Clark Strait, guitar; Zak Longoria, bass; Hailee Longoria, soloist, of Country Homes Christian Church, and Brad Perry, keyboard, of North Hill Christian Church.

Mark Kadel, executive director of World Relief, will speak about the shared work The Fig Tree and World Relief are doing to translate entries from the annual Resource Directory into Russian, Arabic, Nepali, Chin and Karin languages.

The project will serve refugee elders who live alone and have no one to translate for them.

World Relief is an arm of the National Association of Evangelicals that resettles refugees.

The offering will be shared by The Fig Tree, which is organizing the service for the community, and World Relief.

The Easter Sunrise Service began in the 1940s under the Spokane Council of Churches, and has been carried on through succeeding organizations—the Spokane Christian Coalition, the Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries and the Interfaith Council.

Deb earned a degree in philosophy in 1977 followed by a degree in law in 1981, both at the University of Washington in Seattle. She clerked at a law firm in Colorado before serving as deputy prosecutor for Clallam County, Washington, from 1983 to 1987.

In 1994, she began seminary at

Vancouver School of Theology in British Columbia. After earning her master of divinity in 1997, she was ordained and then served as pastor of United Methodist Churches in Rosalia for three years, at Ocean Shores for three years, and with Davenport Edwall until 2007, when she began at Deer Park and Liberty Park, until last fall when she left Deer Park and began serving St. Paul.

Two years ago, the Interfaith Council passed the responsibility for the service on to The Fig Tree Board. In 2007, it had passed on responsibility for the Resource Directory. The Fig Tree was founded in 1984 under the coalition and was part of that organization and the ecumenical council until 2000.

For information, call 535-4112 or visit www.thefigtree.org for a flier.

UN Association plans World Water Day

The United Nations Association of Spokane has planned an event to recognize the United Nations' World Water Day from 4 to 6 p.m., Sunday, March 25, at the Washington/California Room of Gonzaga University's COG Building.

After refreshments at 4 p.m., the panel presentation begins at 4:30 p.m.

Panelists are Rick Eichstaedt of the Center for Justice, speaking on "40 Years of the Clean Water Act," Mara London, an environmental engineer in Gonzaga University's

Civil Engineering Department, who will speak on "Water Issues in Developing Countries," and Rachael Osborn of the Gonzaga School of Law, speaking on "The Columbia River Treaty."

For information, call 313-3610 or email taninchev@gonzaga.edu.

Author speaks on Jesus' words as poems

Author and poet Willis Barnstone will speak on "Poetry as the Voice of the Divine in the Gospels and Gnostic Scriptures" Friday and Saturday, March 23 and 24, for the 34th annual Roger Williams Symposium, sponsored by the Common Ministry at Washington State University (WSU).

Speaking of Jesus as one of the greatest poets of all time, he will address such questions as: What happened to deafen people to the poetic nature of his words? In shifting from oral Aramaic into written Greek, and later into

English, the lyrics were locked up as prose.

The Guggenheim Fellow and Pulitzer Prize finalist in poetry, is professor emeritus at Indiana University. He has written *The Poems of Jesus Christ* (2012), *The Restored New Testament* (2009) with co-author Marvin Meyer and *The Gnostic Bible* (2003).

In *The Poems of Jesus Christ*, he reveals poetry through seeing the words of Jesus in Mark, Matthew, Luke and John, as wisdom lyrics and narrative parables full of natural imagery.

Willis will lead lectures and discussion at 7 p.m., Friday, at the WSU Center for Undergraduate Education in room 203 and 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, at the Community Congregational United Church of Christ, 525 NE Campus Ave., in Pullman.

The Common Ministry invites theologians and scholars for the Roger Williams Symposium to highlight intersections of religion, academics and faith.

For information, call 332-2611 or visit interfaith-house.com/symposium.

Fig Tree staff expands with AmeriCorps, intern

For the spring, The Fig Tree is involving three new people in helping with its work.

Two AmeriCorps members will assist with recruiting volunteers, constituency building and focus on The Fig Tree and Resource Directory.

Rochelle Mullin, who moved to Spokane from Salem, Ore., earned

a bachelor's in history at Eastern Washington University in 2009 and hopes to start a master's in teaching soon. She worked two years through AmeriCorps, training people at Work Source to use computers.

Shannon St. Hilaré graduated from Gonzaga University in English and Spanish in December. She recently was publications intern at Leadership Spokane.

She is awaiting word on a mission opportunity in Central America.

Rochelle will work for 900 hours—six months—and Shannon for 450 hours—three months.

Heather Kennison, an intern from Whitworth University journalism program, is assisting with The Fig Tree writing, editing and creating a video/slide show for the benefit events.

For information, call 535-4112.

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Bryan Massingale is Flannery lecturer

Gonzaga University will host the 36th annual Flannery Lecture at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 29, in Cataldo Hall featuring the Rev. Bryan Massingale, associate professor of theological ethics at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wis. He will speak on "Cultured Indifference: The Culture of Racism and Catholic Ethical Reflection." The author of more than 60 articles, books and book reviews will address the implications of culture and cultural formation for ethical responsibility and analysis. He will also discuss how social structures and institutions facilitate sin.

The lecture is organized by the Religious Studies Department at Gonzaga University. For information, call 313-6782 or email fulton@gonzaga.edu.

'Coffee and Contemplation' series begins

Immaculate Heart Retreat Center is introducing a new weekday series, "Coffee and Contemplation," beginning at 9 a.m., Wednesday, March 21, with a program facilitated by Nancy Copeland-Payton on "Catching our Breath: Prayer for the Long Run."

Nancy, a Presbyterian pastor who lives in Sandpoint and leads retreats around the country, recently presented an ecumenical prayer retreat at Immaculate Heart. She is a spiritual director and leads Gonzaga University's training for spiritual directors.

The series continues on April 18 with Sr. Sharon Bongiorno, FSPA and on May 16 with Episcopal Bishop James Waggoner, Jr.

For information, call 509-448-1224 or visit at www.ihrc.net.

Contemplative living is series focus

The Franciscan Place at St. Joseph Family Center has set an eight-week series on Thomas Merton's Bridges to Contemplative Living. The program at 6 p.m., Tuesdays, with Patricia Novak, OSF, provides a journey toward personal spiritual transformation through a contemplative, peaceful life.

Series II will explore "Living Your Deepest Desires" on March 20 and 27 and April 3 and 10. Series III, called "Discovering the Hidden Ground of Love," will be on April 17 and 24 and May 1 and 8.

For information, call 483-6495 or visit www.sjfconline.org.

Coeur d'Alene Earth Day Fair seeks vendors

The Earth Day Fair in Coeur d'Alene is set for noon to 3 p.m., Sunday, April 22, at the Coeur d'Alene Library.

The theme for this year's fair is "Earth Day In Your Backyard." Organizers are recruiting vendors who will empower the more than 500 expected visitors with tips and tools to improve the local environment. Vendor applications are due March 30. For information, call 208-667-9093 or email adrienne@kealliance.org.

Gonzaga graduates to hear Desmond Tutu

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu of Cape Town, South Africa, will be the keynote speaker for Gonzaga University's 125th commencement at 10 a.m., Sunday, May 13, in the Spokane Veterans Memorial Arena. Admission is by invitation only.

The Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, a voice for justice, peace, truth and reconciliation, accepted Gonzaga's invitation, inspired by the global activism of its students, faculty and alumni.

Tutu retired as archbishop in 1996. In 2010, he announced he would limit his public appearances to spend time with family.

Gonzaga President Thayne McCulloh, who will present him with Gonzaga's honorary Doctor of Laws degree—adding to honorary doctorates from 130 universities—said that in his own undergraduate studies at Gonzaga in the 1980s, he was active in campus efforts

against apartheid when Tutu and Nelson Mandela worked to overcome it.

Recalling that time led him to visit Cape Town as part of recent efforts to connect students with opportunities for study in Africa.

He considers Tutu "a living exemplar of Gonzaga's historic commitment to the ideals of equality and a free society as a Catholic, Jesuit and humanistic university."

Tutu continues to work for equality, democracy, freedom and human rights worldwide.

He earned the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize because of his commitment nonviolent efforts to sustain human rights and peace at the peak of unrest in South Africa's racially segregated townships.

In 1985, he was appointed Bishop of Johannesburg and in 1986, he became the first black cleric to lead the Anglican Church

in South Africa when he was named Archbishop of Cape Town. In that role, he helped bridge a divide between white and black Anglicans.

South Africans elected Nelson Mandela president in 1994, the first time in the nation's history that all races voted in a democratic election.

In 1995, Mandela named Tutu to chair South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, created to investigate human rights violations under apartheid.

Tutu's findings on the commission marked a milestone in South Africa's healing process and served as an international model for reconciliation.

For information, call 313-6132 or visit gonzaga.edu/commencement.

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Center for Justice
'40 Years of the Clean Water Act'
Mara London
Gonzaga Civil Engineering Dept.
'Water Issues in Developing Countries'
Rachael Osborn
Gonzaga School of Law
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Domestic violence affects women across the spectrum of society

Continued from page 1

and families. With media coverage focusing on men who were abused, she was surprised that many women were there whose stories have not been told or covered in media.

Women in the YWCA's Domestic Violence Awareness program are not uneducated, helpless women. Some are lawyers and doctors.

Trish explained that domestic violence is often about control issues in the home. It can develop subtly, slowly and insidiously.

"The women had no idea they were being controlled or that the control was domestic violence," Trish said.

She described some dynamics of power being taken from a victim by increasingly keeping her away from family, depriving her of access to cash or credit cards and telling her she is not capable of finding a job or doing anything.

"When a woman comes to us, the first thing is that she is safe and creates a safety plan," Trish said.

The YWCA's safe shelter has space for 40 women, but if it's full, women are taken to a hotel or motel.

"We never turn anyone away," she said, adding that police and cab drivers know where to take women seeking help. They drive around so no one follows.

The 24-hour crisis line at 325-2255 always has a person available.

"Women who seek help may choose to go back—especially if they did not bring their children or a pet. They may love the man," Trish said.

"It's not our place to tell a woman to leave. She's been living with someone who has been telling her she can do this and can't do that," she said. "A woman

needs to make her own decision. Often, a woman comes back four to five times before leaving. We do not judge that."

Women can stay at the safe shelter 60 to 90 days. Then the program helps them move into transitional living, helping with rent.

Women go through the YWCA's Women's Opportunity Center to build their job readiness with computer classes, budgeting and training for job searches and interviews. They are given a secure email, and learn about cyber security and cyber stalking.

The center helps women look at their strengths to plan their lives.

Women receive two outfits, shoes and accessories when they go job hunting. Once they find a job, they can select five outfits from Our Sisters' Closet, a boutique of donated clothing that serves 140 women a month.

Recently, five women found jobs in one week.

"There is turnover," Trish said. "Their success is an indicator that the economy is improving."

The YWCA recently started the Child Advocate Program, headed by Shawna Hill, who deals with children in the shelter who have seen abuse or been abused.

"She works with them one-to-one to address their fear," Trish said. "Studies show that complex trauma begins when children see their mother hurt, their dog threatened, or they are hurt. It stops their development and learning."

Shawna helps children create a safety plan for themselves, so if they feel afraid, they know whom to call or what neighbor they can go to.

On the state budget, Trish hopes cuts will be no more than 10 percent.

"We may have to lay some people off, but would juggle services so fewer people may do more work, but we will not turn anyone away," she said.

Having lost federal funding, the YWCA engages legal advocates to give clients advice on family law and help them through the process of charging domestic violence in court.

Federal funding remains so the YWCA can continue its Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), part of Head Start, geared to help low-income four-year-olds prepare for kindergarten. They serve 51 families at the

YWCA and at West Plains Community Center.

Trish feels she has come full circle, back to using her studies in sociology from Fort Wright College in Spokane, where she graduated in 1968.

Having modeled fashions to pay for her studies, she continued to work six years after college for the Bon Marche in Tri Cities and Seattle, and for Nordstrom's in Spokane. In the 1970s, she married and took time to raise her children and volunteer for civic groups.

In 1989, she became director of Ronald McDonald House. In 1995, she became development director for Gonzaga

Preparatory School.

Then she headed the foundation and major gifts at Eastern Washington University until she started working as development director of the YWCA in Spokane in 2006.

Trish, who plans to retire at the end of 2012, finds Spokane a community where people can make a difference.

"People understand when change is needed and step up when people suffer," she said, referring to the effort to build the collaborative YMCA-YWCA at 930 N. Monroe, completed in 2009.

Since moving into the new, more visible building, she said requests for services have risen 21 percent.

In sharing her story with women in classes at the YWCA, she wins their trust, so they are open to share their stories as they struggle to move on.

Trish considers YWCA staff heroes.

"It's important for the community to remember to advocate for those who do not have as much," she said.

Singer, actress, author and inspirational speaker Queen Latifah will lead "A Conversation with the Queen" at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 22, at the Spokane Arena to help raise funds for the YWCA and to engage women in conversation on domestic violence.

Along with empowering women, the YWCA works to eliminate racism, primarily in collaboration with the national YWCA's annual Stand Against Racism program on April 27.

"It's an opportunity to work to end hatred and racism in our community," she said, noting that the board and staff continue to educate themselves on racism.

For information, call 326-1190 or email trishm@ywcaspokane.org.

'A Conversation with the Queen' features Queen Latifah at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 22, at the Spokane Arena

Organization of International Religious Science and Centers for Spiritual Living unite and move

International Centers for Spiritual Living, which has had headquarters at 902 E. Second in Spokane since 1990, and Religious Science International in Golden, Colo., have united to form a single organization, Centers for Spiritual Living.

As the Spokane center moves to Golden, the local congregation of the Center for Spiritual Living at 2825 E. 33rd Ave. has gained furniture from the headquarters, which closed the end of February.

The Rev. Joe Niemiec, spiritual leader of the Spokane group with his wife, Toni, said the move indicates that "we are at the end of an era and the beginning of a new one."

The Center for Spiritual Living Spokane was first affiliated with Religious Science International in 1946. It holds the 23rd charter for that organization, Joe said.

"The merger of the offices was finalized at our recent New Orleans Conference," he said. "Some of those we have worked with closely in the home office already have moved to Golden."

On Feb. 13, the Rev. Kenn Gordon was elected the first spiritual leader and the Rev. John Waterhouse was elected the first president of the Centers for Spiritual Living.

"This change will have little effect on individual members but is seen as a shift of consciousness as the two organizations come together to serve the global community," he said.

International Association of Religious Science Churches (IAR-

SC) was formed in 1949. Ernest Holmes, the founder, along with a group of ministers created their own organization, the Church of Religious Science, in 1953. In 1954, it was renamed United Church of Religious Science, and later renamed United Centers of Religious Science.

IARSC continued and was renamed Religious Science International and later the International Centers for Religious Science.

"Our teaching is about creation and empowerment, letting go of what was and creating something new that will serve us and, therefore, the world," Joe said.

For information, call 534-1011 or visit cslspokane.org.

let's talk trash

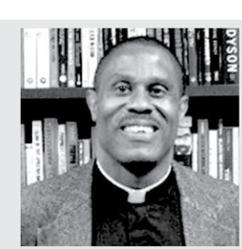


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SHAWL Society maintains vigilance as Superfund cleanup begins

Even though the U.S. government reached an agreement with Newmont Mining Co. and its subsidiary Dawn Mining to spend \$193 million to clean up the Midnite Mine on the Spokane Indian Reservation, the SHAWL Society will continue to monitor the process.

The U.S. Department of the Interior will add \$42 million to cleanup efforts because it failed to fulfill federal trust responsibilities to the Spokane Tribe in providing oversight of the open-pit Midnite uranium mine.

Deb Abrahamson, founder of the Sovereignty, Health, Air, Water and Land Society (SHAWL), said the tribe in the fall also received a Radiation Exposure Screening and Education Process grant through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to help address health impacts for former uranium workers.

With promises of jobs and royalties for the Spokane Tribe, the Midnite Mine opened near Wellpinit, Wash., in 1953 to produce uranium for nuclear arms. The mine closed in 1981. The Dawn Mill Site is still open. Concern continues regarding the effects of the mine and mill sites on the health of former workers and the environment along the Blue Creek and the Spokane River.

With the reservation checkerboarded with private land owned by descendants of homesteaders and tribal people who gave up land to shop owners to pay off debts, Deb is concerned that the mining company is purchasing such parcels within the reservation for cleanup purposes or future resource extraction.

As a result, an emphasis of SHAWL's effort is community education, so tribal members are informed of and involved in the mine closure process. In addition, SHAWL is working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop strategies.

"From 2006 until recently, there were no public meetings on the mines," Deb said. "The community needs to know about the closure process, the employment available, the health hazards associated with that employment and the closure, and the impacts on the environment."

Recently, she said, the mine purchased 80 acres adjacent to the mine site. She has learned that the mine plans to clear cut that land, take off two feet of topsoil and dig the next six feet to use as clean fill for the closure.

"It's cost effective for the mine," she said, "but it will further destroy the reservation. This proposal was not included in the



Deb Abrahamson was recently honored as a 2012 Watershed Hero - story page 11.

plan. They say they will give the land back to the tribe, but it will take years to regrow the trees, and it's an elk habitat."

She is also concerned that the mine company is arranging another purchase behind closed doors. So SHAWL wants to keep tribal members and the community aware of what is happening.

"What are our rights when corporations come in and want to destroy land?" Deb asked. "We hope that with pressure from the people we can reverse the decision."

Deb said that if the mine buys land within the reservation to dig, there may be no environmental impact statement or any cultural assessment.

"One site in that area was widely used by our ancestors," she said.

"It was not our original understanding of the cleanup process that they would dig holes within the reservation to fill the open pits," she said, "but the Environmental Protection Agency has

agreed, saying that if they take the topsoil off and put it back on, it's permitted."

SHAWL will present those concerns at the next General Council of tribal members in April.

Deb also wonders whether in digging, cleanup workers may uncover and expose more uranium.

The Spokane Tribe hopes that the cleanup process will employ people on the reservation, but this time with safety protections to prevent health consequences, she said.

"People, especially those living along the roadway, have the right to know the waste will be coming through their community," she continued, telling of a truck that went off the road and sank into a ditch near wetlands and a bird sanctuary near Reardan.

Another issue is whether the gravel pit over the major aquifer may be pierced in the process.

On each of the issues, Deb said there is need for transparency around receipt of the grant by four entities involved: the Spo-

kane Tribe, SHAWL, Portland Area Indian Health Service and Epidemiology Center, and the local Indian Health Service Clinic. They collaborated to develop the grant. Since they received the funds, there is a need for transparency, accountability and oversight, she said.

When Deb visited the Navajo Tribe in New Mexico to learn about its efforts to clean up, those she met reinforced the need to take precautions and assure oversight.

"While only one person on the Spokane Reservation has been compensated for health issues, nearly 1,500 in the Navajo Tribe and surrounding communities have been compensated through the Department of Justice and the Department of Labor under the

Radiation Exposure Compensation Act," she said.

So the SHAWL Society will continue to monitor protection of the health of the land, the water and the people.

"Our work is far from over," she said, listing the need to protect archaeological sites and the new generation of cleanup workers, who may forget how their parents and grandparents died.

To further her work with the tribe, Deb plans to study for a master's degree in tribal governance at Evergreen College in Olympia.

"We wish to return to the value of paying it forward to care for the next generation," she said.

Among recent gatherings to inform tribal members, SHAWL held a "Water Is Life" gathering in October on the reservation. It included a time for prayer and for elders to address the role of the people to protect their water.

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Kosher food tradition reminds Jewish people of their heritage

Continued from page 1

David uses many of his connections from the food distribution business. The selection of kosher foods needed for the dinner are somewhat limited in Spokane area supermarkets, he said.

Because Temple Beth Shalom as an institution is able to buy the food wholesale, he can work directly with his sources to purchase beef brisket, potato knishes and the chocolate rugelach.

Even in purchasing the foods, there is still much work in cooking the brisket and preparing the carrot tzimmes, challah bread and Mediterranean spiced apples.

For the Jewish community, it's also a time of building camaraderie as the synagogue's members help prepare and serve the food, and perform to provide entertainment while guests wait.

Much of the music comes from the Eastern and Western European, African and South American roots of the Jewish community in Spokane.

Last year and again this year, David has invited the Spokane Community Gospel Choir to sing. Some have asked him what their presence has to do with Jewish traditions.

"It's not 'our' tradition per se, but the choir members have great voices, and our dinner is about reaching out to all the people in the community," said David, who always asks the choir director to focus on the gospel music from centuries of Jewish music, especially songs based on stories from the Hebrew Bible.

"We share with African Americans a common history of oppression in face of white supremacy both historically and locally," he said. "Plus, as Jews, we strive to find a common bond while working together with our neighbors."

David, who spent his early childhood in Seattle, moved with his parents to Israel, where he attended an Israeli public school, became a citizen, graduated from high school, served in the military, and earned a degree in theatre arts in 1985 from Tel-Aviv University.

In 1987, he went to restaurant school in New York City, where he met his wife, Vickie. When she completed her law degree at New York University, they moved



David Williams, Kosher Dinner co-chair, heats a pan of brisket.

to Seattle, where she practiced law. David worked at a few jewelry stores before becoming a stay-at-home father and eventually entering food distribution. They moved to Spokane in 2003 when Vickie became a professor at Gonzaga Law School. David continued in food distribution after their move and currently works with a furniture and home décor distributor.

Having been raised as a Reform Jew, he said he did not grow up eating kosher foods regularly, not even while living in Israel, where much of the food is commonly kosher.

"Often the choice one makes to keep kosher is less about the particular diet and more often to remind us of our heritage and who we are as Jewish people," he said.

David helps cook the brisket the week before the dinner. It is reheated the day of the dinner. From sundown Saturday, March 4, to Sunday, March 5, several volunteers cook about 1,300 pounds of meat in the synagogue's six ovens.

"Brisket needs to cook for at least four hours until it's tender," he said. "Otherwise, it's chewy."

Because the synagogue kitchen is usually kept "dairy," Rabbi Michael Goldstein and a team of congregants "kasher" the kitchen on the Thursday before the brisket is cooked to make the transition from dairy to meat.

In kosher cooking, he explained, dairy and meat cannot

be mixed because of the biblical passage that says: "A calf is not to be cooked in its mother's milk."

When the kitchen is kashered, they sterilize all surfaces, the flatware, china, pots and pans, and anything that was not put in storage and kept aside for the kosher dinner. After the dinner, the kitchen is transitioned back to dairy, using similar methods.

In the 2011 Kosher Dinner program, Rabbi Michael explained that the term and concept of kosher come from the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy where God commands the Jewish people to follow specific dietary laws:

1) Meat and milk are not to be mixed.

2) Kosher animals both chew a cud and have a split hoof. Kosher birds do not scavenge, and kosher fish have fins and scales.

3) Some animals, birds, sea creatures and insects are forbidden even if they meet the requirements—pork and shellfish.

To be certified as kosher, animals must be slaughtered by ritual and birds by hand with a blessing. All blood must be removed before cooking. Meat and dairy are not to be eaten at the same meal, and there must be a waiting period between eating them. Fish, eggs, vegetables and fruit may be eaten with either meat or dairy. Cooking and eating utensils for meat and dairy must be kept separate.

Kosher foods are certified, for example, by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, by Kof-K and other organizations that send inspectors to supervise that the food is prepared according to kosher laws.

"Keeping kosher reminds us

of who we are," David repeated.

For him, the most important part of Jewish faith is its ethics and morals. It is about how people should treat one another—with honesty and integrity, by working together in harmony, by being there to help others and by believing in God.

"On the Sabbath, we are not to labor in the sense of cooking, driving, watching TV or creating a spark by turning on anything electrical. So a traditional Jewish household will often prepare cholent, the Sabbath stew, the day before the Sabbath. It is set on the stove to cook overnight and into the next day," David said.

"On the Sabbath, we attend services at the synagogue and study Torah. A kiddush lunch, which is prepared in advance, is often served on Saturday after service. A non-Jew can be asked to reheat a dish if necessary," he said.

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Students set aside hesitancy and engage in dialogue for study in China

By Heather Kennison

In a cultural, political, faith and language setting new to 19 Whitworth University students, Anthony Clark led a semester-long study abroad at Minzu University of China in Beijing last fall.

Aware that they might be hesitant to engage in dialogue, he encouraged them to set aside their fears and be open to be enriched in their faith, minds and hearts.

Anthony, who is associate professor of history at Whitworth, taught classes on Chinese culture and religion, and the political history of Beijing.

His wife, Amanda, who went with him as an adjunct faculty member, taught an optional Chinese art class for those who were interested.

In addition to these classes, the students spent four hours a day immersed in language classes offered by the Chinese institute and taught by local professors.

The program, which is Whitworth's first study-abroad program in China, is part of its commitment to develop study centers in different areas of the world, like one it has in Costa Rica. Anthony hopes the semester study will be offered at least every three years.

Students were in classes with people of diverse faiths and nationalities, studying at a university where all 56 of China's minorities are represented.

Senior cross-cultural studies major Amy Wyatt went on the program as a way to immerse herself in the Chinese culture.

Taking the 17 credits offered, she also made use of a week-long Chinese holiday to volunteer at an orphanage run by the New Hope Foundation.

"That sparked a chain of volunteering, where another student and I were able to volunteer at a school for children with autism," Amy said.

"Many students study abroad and do their American thing," she said. "There is nothing bad with that, but I think that if you're going to go that many miles away, why not be in China, rather than being an American doing the American thing in China?"

Now in his third year of teaching at Whitworth, Anthony had first begun a dialogue with the study abroad department just after his first year, having recognized a growing desire from students who wanted to learn about non-Western subjects on a deeper level.

Asians make up 60 percent of the world population and Whitworth is becoming aware of their influence and the necessity for students to have some awareness of Asia, he said.



Amy Wyatt meets orphans in China.

Photo courtesy of Amy Wyatt

"I consider myself a missionary of two things: my faith and Asia," Anthony said.

Students had opportunities to debate with each other within temples of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. They also engaged alternative ways of thinking about religion by debating about each point of view.

"Learning about the different religions and lifestyles was a paradox, because I found components of Christianity in each of them," Amy said.

For example, Confucianism shares the concept of honoring your parents, she said. Buddhism, like Christianity, calls one to take care of the needy.

"Every time I personally go to China, I come back thinking about what it means to believe in a different way and what it means to put that belief into practice. I come back a different Christian," Anthony said.

The professor's interest in China began when he was 12 years old after his parents enrolled him in a Tai Chi class to help channel some of his energy. He was later able to think about and incorporate Chinese philosophy into his own life.

After reading Thomas Aquinas' theory that "from nothing, nothing comes," he was intrigued that the Chinese belief was almost the complete opposite: that the only thing that can create something is nothing.

"Encountering these Asian ways of thinking that were so opposite from and contradicted Western thought excited me so much that I continued my studies of China and Chinese literature and history," he said.

Anthony studied Chinese language and literature at the Uni-

versity of Oregon and was an instructor at the university while finishing his doctoral work. He then taught at the University of Alabama before coming to teach at Whitworth.

"What secular universities need is to be more open-minded," Anthony said. "They boast of being open-minded but in reality are quite limited in raising questions of faith and the existence of God."

"At Whitworth, whether you believe in God, the question of God is open for discussion," he said.

In this small, private university, he finds it liberating and comforting that he can be a whole person: a scholar, a teacher and a Christian at the same time.

Anthony thinks of his work as a sort of prayer. Growing up in a family of Irish Catholic roots, he was influenced by such teachings as the Benedictine approach to faith, living and work. According to this point of view, prayer and work are related. However, he said this does not mean there is no doubt or skepticism in one's relationship with God.

"Prayer doesn't mean a constant faith, it means a dedication to God," he said.

With this dedication, Anthony has devoted much of his life to learning about China and Asian cultures.

His next book, for which he received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities



Anthony Clark

Photo courtesy of Anthony Clark

(NEH), is looking at Christian missions in North China and the history of conflict and accommodation between non-Christians and Christians.

"I think the NEH has seen recent history of pure human conflict," he said. "My book seeks to confront questions of conflict, questions of unrepresented voices and questions of gender."

Other than materialism, Christianity is the largest-growing entity in China, Anthony said. There are now 60 to 70 million Christians in China, up from about 4 million in 1949. Looking at these statistics, he sees optimism in China. He said he has experienced a confirmation in his conviction that even outside the church there is goodness and holiness.

Also witnessing this, Amy asked herself, "How do you see God in this culture? Do they have to be wrong if we're right?"

In his personal faith, Anthony said he also tends to have a Franciscan approach to preaching—that is, "Preach always and when necessary, use words."

"Who we are and how we behave speaks to a belief in goodness or faith," he said. "When I'm in China, my approach is to be a good person, to be a caring person. My first voice of dialogue is just goodness."

For Amy, the program reconfirmed her calling to help in orphanages, but challenged her with questions of faith and society.

"If we're not challenged in our faith, we become stagnant," she said.

Anthony considers the China study abroad program as a way of personal enrichment.

"No truly rich life stops being enriched," he said. "We have to keep learning. We have to keep growing."

For information, call 777-4368 or email aclark@whitworth.edu.

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Four Newport churches join in Lenten soup suppers and worship

Members of four Newport churches who see each other in business, schools and events have a chance during Lent to talk about their faith over soup Wednesday evenings for six weeks.

The American Lutheran Church hosts the first two weeks, St. Anthony's Catholic Church, the second two weeks, and the Newport United Church of Christ (UCC), the last two weeks. The Mennonite Church assists the UCC church. A massed choir of 30 to 40 voices from the four churches sings at the fifth and sixth services.

This year the theme for the Soup Supper sermons is, "The Body of Christ." Each pastor will discuss different parts and what they mean in the Lenten journey.

The Revs. Janine and Matt Goodrich of the Lutheran church will preach on the eyes and mouth.

Father Frank Bach, who is serving the parish until a new priest is placed there, and John Westover, who will soon be ordained a deacon, of the Catholic church will speak on Christ's hands and heart.

The Rev. Russ Clark at the United Church of Christ will talk about the knees and feet of Christ.

Agnes Goertzen, an elder at Spring Valley Mennonite, will assist at the UCC services.

Chris DeChenne, secretary of the UCC church, said members have helped prepare two of the six weeks of ecumenical Lenten Soup Suppers and worship services for long enough that they have a notebook on how to set up tables, soup recipes and time lines for preparation.

The United Church of Christ, American Lutheran, St. Anthony's Catholic and Spring Valley Mennonite churches have held Lenten gatherings every year since about 1994, she said.

"Our unofficial motto is 'until we eat again,'" Chris said.

"I know people from practices with the Northwoods Performing Arts Center, seeing them on the street and meeting them at other places in the community," she said. "It gives members a chance to hear different preachers and experience the similarities and differences in our worship services."

Russ, who came to the UCC church in July, is amazed at the number of people who participate and at the level of cooperation.

He said the pastors know each other because they meet weekly to study the lectionary texts as they prepare their sermons.

"It makes the journey through the most difficult season of the Christian liturgical year easier," said Matt.



Cindy Sayre and Lois Lunden prepare soup for a Lenten supper.
Photo courtesy of Newport United Church of Christ

"We reflect on our brokenness and detachment while we sing, eat, pray and laugh together in an amazing time of fellowship," he said. "We are facing the cross with our hands held together, hearing different perspectives in the body of Christ. It prepares me for Easter, making Easter an exclamation point that punctuates the conclusion of our time of sharing in the suffering and joy."

He is impressed that the suppers and services have been sustained so many years by the commitment of lay people. They started years before he and his wife and co-pastor Janine came seven years ago.

"In this day, ecumenism is difficult," Matt said. "This experience reminds us that our churches are about Jesus, not a denomination. It's an example of what we can do and be. Who knows where it will lead us."

In addition to the six soup suppers, the UCC and Lutheran churches also celebrate Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday together.

Sharing in these events is part of these churches' pattern of encouraging members to go back and forth to each other's events and fund raisers, as well as to share in community ministries, Russ said.

"We don't have a common purse, but we each help support Rural Resources and the Crisis Network, which serve the community by helping people with housing, medical assistance, food, clothing and emergency shelter," he said. "The Crisis Network began in our church, with members of our church and community people forming it."

Russ, a graduate of Whitworth who grew up in Colfax, went in 1983 to Lancaster Seminary. He returned to the area and served a UCC church in Ritzville and then served churches in central Pennsylvania.

"Members of the different churches know each other and work together in the community," he said. "The soup suppers give people who see each other in businesses, in the community and in school the opportunity to connect with each other on the faith level."

"Coming together around faith, they can overcome differences and share commonalities," he said.

Fr. Frank, who served St. Mary's Catholic when the Tri-Parish program with the former Good Shepherd Lutheran and Resurrection Episcopal churches held ecumenical services, is impressed that this small community draws 125 to 150 people.

"It has a strong impact in a small community," he said.

While most of the four congregations have many older members, the soup suppers draw a spectrum of ages.

Sundays, about 85 worship at the UCC church, 114 at the Lutheran church and 200 at the Catholic church.

Each church chooses a charity for the offering collected when the service is at their building.

Chris, who grew up in Newport, a community of 2,000, returned in 1970 after graduating from Washington State University in music education. She and her husband, Don, are the piano organ team for the United Church of Christ.

When the UCC church was rebuilding after a fire in 1980, Chris

said the congregation worshiped at the Catholic Church.

During that time, the UCC, Catholic and Lutheran churches began doing a shared vacation Bible school.

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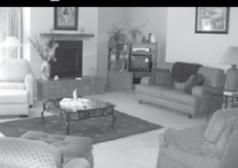
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Risk and adventure help at-risk teens find themselves, realize potential

By Josiah Brown

Since starting in 2006, Peak 7 Adventures has gone from serving 137 youth on about 12 rafting trips and one backpacking trip to providing an outdoor adventure for 2,237 underprivileged, at-risk inner-city, urban and rural 13- to 19-year-olds.

The nonprofit, faith-based ministry takes teens into the wilderness where they take risks—under the supervision of trained guides—find solitude and gain adventure skills that help them handle life problems and realize their potential.

The program is often the first experience the teens have in outdoor adventure.

It developed when co-founder and executive director Ryan Kerrigan sought to mesh his skills and faith.

When Ryan graduated from Clemson University in South Carolina with a degree in parks, recreation and tourism, he was not sure what he wanted to do with his life.

He had been working for REI and was on track to become a manager, but when that opportunity closed, he needed a new job.

Someone he had taken rock climbing offered him a job with Thriava, a new software company in Spokane that provided online camp registration and management.

In 2004, Ryan moved to Spokane. When the company moved to Seattle in 2005, he decided to stay in Spokane to start a camp. Thriava asked him to design an adventure program.

During his childhood in Kenya and Ecuador, where his parents were missionaries, he had learned to love the outdoors.

"I climbed every tree I could find and chased monkeys in the jungle," Ryan said.

In college, he started climbing with gear and doing other wilderness activities. He also worked with summer camps.

Ryan is a certified whitewater kayak instructor, a raft guide instructor, and a climbing and backpacking guide.

He wanted to use those skills to do "kingdom work."

"Growing up a Christian in a missionary family, part of me always wanted to be doing ministry," Ryan said.

Thriava decided to support his decision, giving him a year's salary as start-up capital.

Peak 7 Adventures, which now has branches in Spokane, Portland and Seattle, started with whitewater rafting and backpacking.

The organization is expanding



Ryan Kerrigan on a whitewater rafting adventure with a group of youth.

Photo Courtesy of Ryan Kerrigan

to include single-day rock climbing and multi-day rafting. They also offer whitewater kayaking, winter camping and snowshoeing.

Peak 7's single-day experiences help groups connect and build relationships. Its goal is to interest the youth in going on a multi-day trip.

"We use God's creation to challenge teens physically, emotionally and spiritually," said Ryan.

"Some of the teens have never been out of the city or even their neighborhoods. We take them outside their comfort zone and their barriers break down. They open up," he said.

Although Peak 7 is a Christian ministry, staff and volunteers do not force the gospel on anyone.

"These youth have had bad stuff handed to them in life, so we choose to focus on loving them first," Ryan said.

They are upfront with teens that they are a Christian organization.

On single-day adventures, groups pray beforehand and have an optional Bible study related to debriefing at the end of the experience. About half of the groups participate in that study. Other groups have a non-Bible centered processing time.

Multi-day trips provide more opportunity to talk about faith.

Every night the group has an optional Bible study, but only one teen has not engaged and that was only for the first night, Ryan said.

With the adventure experiences, the focus is on having the guides engage the youth and love them.

"If the youth aren't asking the questions then they usually won't listen," Ryan said.

Peak 7 is also a resource for other groups.

"We are not trying to be Youth for Christ, but to provide a tool for other ministries at a low cost," he explained.

Peak 7's guides are trained in safety and wilderness skills. They are also trained in communicating with youth.

"We serve many different types of youth. With a church youth group, we may be able to talk about God as father, but with

others we need to realize that if someone's father beats him, he doesn't want to hear about God as father," Ryan said.

In addition to funds from fees for trips, Peak 7 is subsidized by donations.

Participants pay based on their family's financial situation. If they can only afford \$25, then that is what they pay. If they cannot afford anything, then the group will do community service sometime before the trip.

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Editor Nancy Minard moves to Portland to be near grandchildren

Our editing team that meets third Fridays, fourth Mondays and fourth Thursdays—Mary Mackay, Nancy Minard, Sara Weaver and Eugenie Alexander—will have a hole to fill as Nancy, who has also written editorials, moves to Portland to live next door to her grandchildren.

Her interactions with and observations through the eyes of her grandchildren have given insight into some of the “obviousities” about our faith, society, economy, politics and lives.

Her house sold soon after it went on the market, so she may be leaving next month. We’ll be honoring her and saying thank you at the Benefit Breakfast and Benefit Lunch.

Nancy worked as a reference librarian in New Jersey before moving to Spokane in 1998. She earned a bachelor’s degree in education and journalism in 1958 at Whitworth and taught a few years in Bellevue before she married Jim Minard.

Nancy has had a knack for catching and correcting factual information from her awareness of history and current events.

In compiling some of the editorials she has written since 2006, she has covered a range of topics:

On educating and empowering women, she pointed out that women’s empowerment raises economic productivity, reduces infant mortality, contributes to health and nutrition, and opens opportunities of education to future generations.

On chipping away to solve major problems, she has observed that when we start editing each issue of *The Fig Tree*, there are random stories. As the editing progresses, connections among the articles emerge, showing how pieces fitting together helps deepen faith.

On faith communities, despite the tight economy, assisting in disaster areas long after the light of mainstream media has turned to other issues. Despite tight budgets, congregations continue to find ways to assist.

On responding to the national economic woes, she cited the validity of behavior lessons children learn in kindergarten: be

kind, be fair and be responsible.

On the disagreement in public discourse, she pointed to the need to disagree without being disagreeable and the need for people of faith to foster safe, civil and sacred spaces for discourse, rather than generating disrespect toward anyone who deviates from their approach.

On connectivity of issues, she used the image of setting up dominos. Immigration policy, health care, high unemployment, food insecurity and increasing demands on food banks have become hot button issues. Our complex life resembles the domino game: jiggling one small element in one area affects the others.

On “talking points” that often highlight media coverage of news, she advises caution when seven politicians, spokespersons or pundits repeat the same words. Those words can become inflammatory rhetoric.

On how much is “enough,” she has observed from singing with her grandchildren that the words of children’s songs are asking about how much is enough.

On words, she noted that some have “entered the realm of uselessness because of misuse.” Language is always changing, but some would like to slow that process to facilitate communication, rather than muddy or inflame it.

On wealth, she observes that “we will suffer less if we share our wealth in money, goods and love.”

On enough, she points out that “enough” is about a theology of abundance of God’s love and care. In U.S. society, she notes that omnipresent advertising too often tries to convince people that they don’t have enough of anything “except shortcomings that their products can cure.”

On young adults, she is concerned that too many judge churches’ hypocrisy before knowing stories of hope from the many ways people live their faith commitments.

These are a few topics on which Nancy has shared her wisdom and challenged us with a twist of humor that makes the message palatable.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Books and poetry help us share thoughts and emotions, touching our lives

Perhaps it’s the librarian in me or maybe just the lover of reading, but books—almost all kinds of books—can make my mind ramble as it absorbs new information from them and makes connections with the old.

There is a bit of a book-club mentality at work for me, because I find that sharing about what I read helps create a common understanding and continuity.

My mother always liked to find a book or two among her Christmas presents and start reading one of them the day after Christmas as a way of slowing down after Christmas season activities.

She read widely and appreciatively. After she had enjoyed David McCullough’s biography of President Harry Truman, she learned that all his books were still in print, and she made reading them a joyful project.

The rest of us learned a great deal of miscellaneous information about the Johnstown Flood and the building of the Brooklyn Bridge and the Panama Canal.

Bright fall days often remind me of

“October’s Bright Blue Weather,” one of her favorite poems.

Rita Dove is a prize-winning poet and former Poet Laureate of the United States. After hearing an interview with her about her editing of *The Penguin Anthology of 20th Century American Poetry*, I informed my husband that it should be my Christmas present. Since then, I have been dipping into it frequently, sometimes intentionally and sometimes at random.

As seems usual, when I shift my attention to a subject, I see it everywhere.

Certainly, the Gospel of John, with its extended metaphors, encourages us to read it as poetry no matter how it is laid out on the page.

Poetry can often give us new or deeper slants on subjects both great and small, and even poetry itself.

Billy Collins, an award-winning poet and former Poet Laureate, often has a slightly skewed approach to his topics.

He presents “Introduction to Poetry” as

if he had been teaching a class. He encouraged students to “waterski across the surface of a poem,” but they persisted in a sort of enhanced interrogation, “beating it with a hose to find out what it really means.”

Maybe we’ve been doing that to the parables of Jesus.

Poet Willis Barnstone, who will present the Roger Williams lectures on March 23 and 24 in Pullman, believes that the parables of Jesus were most likely delivered as poems.

That could be one reason they were remembered in Jesus’ time.

Clearly the disciples were not carrying notebooks and ballpoint pens as they followed Jesus around Galilee.

Theirs was a primarily oral culture with a literacy rate in the low single digits.

Poetry, chant and song all create a rhythm and simplify remembering long passages or lists of facts.

Translating poetry is notoriously difficult, and as the parables made their way

from Aramaic to Greek to Latin and then to modern languages, Willis believes that they lost their poetic form. The typesetters won.

Reading the parables as poetry, or chanting or singing them, could widen and deepen them for us.

Indeed, we might even find that we remember more of the details if we do that.

Poetry and music have a way of burrowing into the remotest reaches of our thoughts and emotions, touching every corner of our lives.

Dipping into the *Penguin Anthology* has revealed cries of anguish over the waste of war, as well as both serious and lighthearted reflections on the human condition, the conundrums of how we live together and how we deal with our solitariness, and our participation in the poetry that is Creation, including October’s bright blue weather.

As I prepare to move, I have been sorting through books and the memories they stir.

Nancy Minard
Editorial Team

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

We think we can identify what is good and what is evil: Mother Teresa good, Hitler bad, Batman good, the Joker bad, those for the parking lot good, those against it bad. If adulthood teaches us anything, it is that life is more complicated than the dialectic of good and bad. People are more complicated than the issues we peg them on.

I recently heard that Congress passed the fewest number of bills in history this past year. The House and Senate passed around 80 mostly benign bills. Of course, the Democrats blame the Republicans, and the Republicans blame the Democrats.

What is increasingly clear is that civil discourse has been on the way out in our culture for a number of years. Is this because we fail to remember that people are more complicated than we make them out to be? Are we just plain lazy these days when it comes to figuring out our own positions, let alone the positions of others?

Instead of figuring out who a person really is, we find it easier to put them into a category of what team they have joined. We even do that with Jesus. I have heard both Republicans and Democrats say Jesus would have clearly been a part of their political bent. In doing this, don’t we try to over simplify God?

I am not ready to say that all in “party

x” are good and those in “party y” are bad. What does give us hope? As Christians what ultimately gives us hope is the death and resurrection of Jesus. In our complexity, we rest in the truth that Jesus recognizes the complexity of our lives.

Our hope is in the one who draws all complexities to himself.

The Rev. Eric Dull
St. Mark’s Lutheran newsletter

Thousands of congregations across the United States are in the same position we find ourselves, with few if any young adults involved. There are churches that seem to have all the young adults, but they are a small minority.

The trend over the past 25 years is clear. There has been a significant increase in young adults who have no experience of and no interest in being involved in a church. The number of young adults participating in church, even evangelical churches, has been on a decline since 1995.

Many young adults state that one reason for their rejection of church is how the church has been portrayed in the public media for the past 20 years. The church is seen as negative, oppressing, against the rights of women and against all other religions. In other words, the church is a place that is against many things they hold

dear. Young adults love Jesus, but they can’t stand how organized church presents his message. Not all churches are like this, but this is how churches are seen.

The culture of most churches’ style of music and worship is a foreign culture to young adults today. We live in different cultural worlds. Young adults are not comfortable in the worship culture that is meaningful to older generations.

We live on a mission field. In order to relate, we have to enter their culture and get to know them where they are and on their terms. Some strongly held views are incorrect, but it will take a long time to overcome and correct them. We have to be church differently.

The Rev. David Helseth
Englewood Christian – Yakima -
newsletter

As Christians, we are called to live a life of following Christ—to be “in Christ.” Sometimes we forget that and think Jesus is to dwell in our hearts, but that is not what Jesus asks. What we find in Scripture is the request—not command—to follow him.

He will lead us to a place that we might not want to go from time to time, but when we do live in Christ, we are exposed to a world that is much bigger than we origi-

nally thought. It might mean we have to give up something, like the disciples of old who left their nets to follow Jesus. Their lives were never the same. Our lives might not be the same either.

To live “in Christ” means to be transformed into that new creation. It is to try and live in a way where loving God and loving our neighbor really matter, and where we recognize that everything we have has been gifted to us by God.

In our Lenten journey, are we focused on living “in Christ”? We will see where it leads us and we will see what God has in store for us as we explore his journey to the cross that he calls us to join him in.

There are many competing voices in the world today that try and say, do this or don’t do that. They ask us to follow their particular cause, their particular vision, to join them to vote this way or that way. Their voices can be loud and distracting, but remember that we are called to follow the one voice of Christ. Christ will not provide easy answers to difficult problems. What he does do is point us in the right direction and join us for the journey. He will not leave us or hang us out to dry. What he does is love us and forgive us. That is all we will really ever need.

The Rev. John Hergert
Pasco First Lutheran newsletter

Environmental groups honor watershed heroes

To underscore the importance of the region's watershed, which touches everyone's lives, John and Rachael Osborn started an annual tradition to honor "watershed heroes" at a gathering of and benefit for the Center for Environmental Law and Policy and the Sierra Club Upper Columbia Group.

For 2012, they recently recognized as "watershed heroes," Deb Abrahamson, founder and director of the SHAWL Society, and Mary Verner, former mayor who now teaches a class at Whitworth University and works with the Spokane Tribe.

"The Spokane Indian people, who love the trees, waters and land, now suffer cancers from uranium with a half life of 4.4 billion years. Countering that, Deb's love for the tribe, the water and the earth has an eternal half life," said author and climber John Roskelly.

He said her action is a witness that people can defeat hate, inertia and money. The SHAWL Society (Sovereignty, Health, Air, Water and Land) promotes community education and strategies to reduce radiation from mining waste on the reservation. Current efforts are described in an article on page 5 in this issue of The Fig Tree.

"Our people have been subjected to environmental toxins most of our lives, interfering with our food gathering," she said. "My father worked in the mine. He and many others have passed away. I was born into the toxins and seek to protect the water, our people and future generations. Water is sacred. Water is life. It's important to protect water."

John introduced Mary, saying that "as mayor, she advocated for the Spokane watershed."

Mary, who has a bachelor's degree in anthropology from Davidson College, a master's in environmental management from Yale University and a law degree from Gonzaga university, came to Spokane in 1992. She founded the Spokane Tribe's Natural Resources Department and directed the regional tribal consortium, Upper Columbia United Tribes. In 2003, she was appointed to the City Council. She was mayor from 2007 through 2011.

With the city, she worked to protect the aquifer, advocate for the river and establish the Sustainability Task Force.

"I love the river," said Mary, telling of first driving into the area from Montana and seeing

Lake Coeur d'Alene. "The water grabbed me and said this is home. I did not know then the water needed me, that it was so contaminated and there were so many permits for people to poke holes into the aquifer," said Mary.

"When we turn on the tap, we are drinking the same water our great, great, great, grandchildren need," she said, telling of helping Deb prepare a technical report on the contamination of Blue Creek. For information, call 209-2899.

Calendar of Events

- Mar 1** • **March for Meals**, Meals on Wheels Walkathon, River Park Square, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 924-6976
- Mar 2** • **First Friday with the Bishop**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 11:15 a.m. to 1 p.m., 448-1224
- Mar 3** • **Lenten Reflection Day**, "Return to Me with Your Whole Heart," The Franciscan Place, 1016 N. Superior, 6 to 7:30 p.m., 483-6495
- Mar 6** • **Dean's Dialogue** on Educational Achievement Gap, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7 p.m., 777-4263
- Mar 8** • **The Politics of Water: Power/Knowledge/Agency** in Global Water Governance, Global Studies Lecture, Vandana Asthana, Eastern Washington University, Hargreaves Hall, Walter and Myrtle Powers Reading Room, noon, 359-6200
- **Democratic Challenges and Change in Contemporary Africa**, Great Decisions Lecture: Megan Hershey, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7:30 p.m., 777-4937
- Mar 10** • **Insights on Wisdom from India**, John Sheveland, The Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 313-5765
- Mar 10, 17, 24, 31** • **Engaging the Artist Way**, The Franciscan Place, 1016 N. Superior, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., 483-6495
- Mar 10-18** • **Novena of Grace**, Signs of Hope for the Future of the Church, St. Aloysius Church, Boone and Astor, Daily Services 12:15 p.m. and 5:15 p.m., 313-5896
- Mar 11** • **Kosher Dinner**, Temple Beth Shalom, South Perry and 30th, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., 747-3304
- Mar 14** • **Fig Tree Benefit Breakfast**, Communicating Credibly, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:15 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., 535-4112
- Mar 15** • **Not as I Pictured: A Photographer's Journey** through Lymphoma, John Kaplan Lecture, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m., 777-4739
- Mar 16** • **Fig Tree Benefit Luncheon**, Communicating Credibly, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., 535-4112
- Mar 16-18** • **Spring Renewal Retreat for Men and Women**, N-Sid-Sen on Lake Coeur d'Alene, 208-687-5255
- Mar 17-18** • **Building Healing Communities for Veterans Conference**, Yakima National Guard Armory, 2501 Airport Ln., Yakima, 922-8383
- Mar 18** • **Palouse Choral Society Chamber Choir**, Monastery of St. Gertrude Chapel, Cottonwood, Idaho, 4 p.m., 208-962-2000
- Mar 19** • **Green Business Networking Luncheon**, "Sustainable Agriculture," Fred Fleming of Shepard's Grain, Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., 11:30 a.m., 509-209-2861
- Mar 20** • **Can the Supreme Court Deal with the 21st Century?** Erwin Chemerinsky Lecture, Barbieri Court Room, Gonzaga Law School, 12 p.m., 313-3738
- Mar 20, 27** • **Thomas Merton's Bridges of Contemplative Living Series**, The Franciscan Place, 1016 N. Superior, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., 483-6495
- Mar 20-22** • **"Creative Expressions from the Earth,"** Spirit Center, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho, 208-962-2000
- Mar 21** • **Coffee and Contemplation**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., 448-1224
- **Spokane City Forum**, Spokane in the Movies: Why We're Such a Great Place to Shoot Films, First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar St., 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., 777-1555
- Mar 23** • **Peace and Economics in the Changing World Order**, Erwin Chemerinsky Lecture, Barbieri Court Room, Gonzaga Law School, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., 313-3920
- Mar 25** • **World Water Day**, United Nations Association, Gonzaga University COG's WA/CA Room, 4 to 6 p.m., 313-3610
- Mar 28** • **If a Calvinist Had Coffee with a Feminist**, Lindaman Chair Lecture: Julia Stronks, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7 p.m., 777-4937
- **Even Silence Has an End**, Ingrid Betancourt Lecture, McCarthy Athletic Center, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., 313-3572
- Mar 29** • **Latin American Christians and U.S. Foreign Policy**, Great Decisions Lecture: Lindy Scott, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7:30 p.m., 777-4937
- **Annual Flannery Lecture**, Bryan Massingale, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:30 p.m., 313-6782
- Mar 30-Apr 1** • **Weekend Retreat for Men and Women** "Living through Grief," Fr. Stan Malnar, MD, and Jim Shaw, MD, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 448-1224
- Apr 1** • **Sex and Soul**, Donna Freitas Lecture, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 6:30 p.m., 777-3453
- April 2** • **Holy Week Retreats** for Women (Apr 2 to 4) and for Men (Apr 5 to 7), Fr. Rory Pitstick, SSL, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center 448-1224
- Apr 4** • **Fig Tree distribution**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m., 535-1813
- Apr 5** • **Fig Tree Board**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 1 p.m., 535-1813
- Apr 8** • **Easter Sunrise Service**, Greenwood Memorial Terrace, 201 N. Government Way, 6:30 a.m., 535-4112



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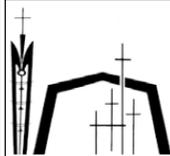
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Life Center reaches around world to awaken their own congregants

Given that many large churches have a wide front door and a wide back door—with people coming and going—Life Center Church in Spokane has not only small groups to build community but also involves worshipers in community and global ministries.

After the pastor, the Rev. Joe Wittwer, and a church team visited a water project in Kenya, the church decided to form global partnerships to engage in evangelistic work and connect people with other cultures.

Kristi Burns, director of community and international partnerships, said that on the trip the pastor read the book, *The Hole in Our Gospel*, by Rich Stearns, president of World Vision.

Joe was so moved that he ordered 5,000 copies and set a five-part sermon series in the fall of 2009, inviting Stearns to preach the last one.

Kristi, who has attended Life Center for seven years, decided to leave her work as vice president of university advancement at Whitworth University about that time. Her volunteer work at the church grew into a part-time job on Life Center's staff of 62.

Joe's vision is to engage at least 1,000 of the 3,800 worshipers in international experiences to change their world views through encounters with people in other countries who live in poverty.

"When we see the issues people of other countries face, we're never the same," she said. "Seeing, smelling and touching life in another culture causes us to take apart our lives and rebuild them."

Kristi, who at age 59 fulfilled her childhood desire to go to Africa, has looked at her use of resources and says God has strengthened her desire to share the Gospel. Reading *The Hole in Our Gospel*, she observes, has changed how members relate with each other, with friends and with grocery store clerks.

"In the busyness of our culture, we need to check our priorities and ask if we are caring for people, doing what Jesus would do and allowing God to use us," she said.

So far, about 150 worshipers have gone abroad and 200 are involved in local projects, plus 2,000—60 percent—sponsor children all over the world.



Kristi Burns shows the lobby kiosk announcing Africa Week at Life Center Foursquare Church.

After the sermon series, people offered more than 50 ideas for partners. Kristi met with them and evaluated the proposals based on Life Center's priorities. The church bases its partnerships on principles outlined in the book, *When Helping Hurts*, by Steve Corbett and Brian Fickert of the Chalmers Institute, a national organization that "helps churches help the poor help themselves" through relief, rehabilitation and redevelopment.

"While there is need to care for widows and orphans, feed the hungry and provide relief in disasters," she said, "we also want to build long-term relationships with the people of these countries through our partnerships."

When Life Center spreads the Gospel, it seeks to train native people to do it in order to respect the culture and the people.

"Many find it hard to believe we come to be friends, be among them and learn from them," Kristi said. "It's about loving God and loving people."

After reviewing possible partners, the leadership at Life Center chose six—El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mexico, Kenya, Ethiopia and Swaziland—and chose to work through several agencies, not one.

In El Salvador, Compassion International paired them with a church. Three teams have gone for week-long visits. Life Center has given matching funds to build a wall around the church and support a child survival center, where young mothers learn to care for their babies and gain job skills. Members also sponsor children in

the church's education program.

In Nicaragua with Globe International, Life Center supports two orphanages with children who are not adoptable because one parent is alive but cannot care for them. Teams have gone to repair orphanages, interact with children, lead vacation Bible school and dig a septic tank.

It also helps Forward Edge, a program that houses and educates abandoned girls who were rescued from living in garbage dumps.

In Mexico, Life Center partners with Penasco Christian Fellowship, in Puerto Penasco, four hours by car from Phoenix. It started nine years ago as a bilingual church in a tourist area.

"The community is impoverished, because of the loss of tourism and because 1,500 poor people migrated from Southern Mexico and live in a cardboard-box village near town," she said.

The church provides seven feeding stations, serving a daily meal in schools and the jail.

In April, a Life Center team of 12 will help at a Child Evangelism carnival that draws 3,000 children to hear the Gospel.

In Kenya with Springs of Hope, the focus is on evangelism through water, education, health and agricultural projects. During Life Center's Africa Week—Feb. 26 to March 3—one event focuses

on that effort. A Life Center group will go in October for a crusade.

In Ethiopia, the church works through New Covenant Foundation and Community Health Evangelism (CHE) in Soddo, an arid area where it helps a church, a feeding program, children's home and orphanage. CHE teaches people to grow alternative crops. Another team will go there in the fall on a "vision" trip to learn.

In the mountains of Southwest Ethiopia, an area of sustainable agriculture—bananas, pineapples, sweet potatoes and chickens—they support a Bible school and church planters who go from there to Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and remote parts of Ethiopia.

On a visit, Kristi was impressed with the dedication of three church-planting couples. The wives work to improve health and hygiene in remote villages.

Kristi and her husband, Jack, who teaches leadership studies at Whitworth, will go to Ethiopia in March to help CHE Ethiopia develop a five-year strategic plan.

In Swaziland, Life Center works on a World Vision clean water project and plans a fall trip, taking 12 people to meet the children they sponsor.

Kristi said partnerships and child sponsorships draw major gifts. In a special offering, the center raised \$60,000 one Sunday

in 2009 to dig two wells in Kenya. The wells led the government to build a high school there.

When World Vision's president preached, he recruited 1,500 sponsors for children in Swaziland, where agricultural projects bring water to 40,000 people. The \$35-a-month sponsorships support children and water projects to improve their lives.

Kristi estimates that members send about \$1 million a year to sponsor children.

When Life Center ended its fiscal year in September 2010 in the black, the church council transferred a six-figure amount to international and local partnerships, she said.

Life Center, which is at 1202 N. Government Way, also has five community partners:

1) Through World Relief, about 50 people have helped refugee families settle in Spokane.

2) With Global Neighborhoods, it supports a thrift shop.

3) About 53 participants mentor children at Sheridan Elementary School each week.

4) One family is in Olive Crest Kids at Heart's Safe Families program for preventing child abuse.

5) The center supports Antioch Adoption, an alternative, inexpensive way for parents to adopt, assisted by a social worker and an attorney who work pro bono.

Growing up Lutheran in Burlington, Wash., Kristi attended Evangelical Free and Baptist churches in Pullman.

She earned a degree in elementary education in 1974 at Washington State University (WSU), earned a master's in child and family studies in 1992, and worked as a substitute teacher, with USAID and the WSU Foundation before going in 1997 to Whitworth University, where she attended a Presbyterian Church before going to Life Center, a Foursquare Church.

She is one of 28 of the church's staff who are completing a certificate of ministry at Whitworth.

For information, call 327-4422 or email Kristi@lifecenter.net.

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