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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest
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Digital 'cloud' clouds town's skies

By Mary Stamp

The rural, small farming town of Quincy, just East of the Cascades and Columbia River, has been transformed with six data centers locating there to access cheap hydroelectric power, ground water to cool the servers and lax air quality regulations.

Patty Martin, who was mayor from late 1993 to 1997, said they may have expected little opposition from a community of 6,000 with a population that is 74 percent Latino.

As mayor, she had become an environmental activist who challenged corporations that dumped toxic waste into fertilizer that was used in area farms. When she learned about the environmental footprint of the data centers, she went into action to do research and to protect her community.

Now, rather than looking across the cemetery outside her window at the 75 acres of a farm field, she sees 600 yards away Microsoft's 500,000-square-foot concrete data center, a digital warehouse with rows and racks of servers, built in 2007.

Dell, Yahoo, Sabey, Intuit and Vantage have also located data centers in Quincy, which expanded its



Patty Martin receives Environmental Justice Award from Sierra Club and CELP.

urban growth areas into fields that once grew beans, potatoes, apples, cherries, alfalfa and wheat.

These data centers are among three million of varying sizes spread across the world, according to a report, "Power, Pollution and the Internet," published Sept. 22, 2012, in *The New York Times*.

The digital "cloud" that stores and transmits information for emails, websites, social media, online banking, online shopping, the virtual world and business operations has a physical footprint in Quincy.

In addition to gobbling up land, energy and water, emissions from backup diesel generators are a concern to area residents, especially when inversions trap pollution in the valley, she said.

Just as Patty spent time researching the toxics in fertilizers, she has spent the last two years learning about the data centers and raising challenges in court and at hearings, giving workshops and doing exhibits to educate people.

She organized Safe Food and Fertilizers to address that issue, and she and Danna Dal Porto a retired teacher, formed Microsoft Yes, Toxic Air Pollution No, (MYTAPN),

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Benefits feature people telling how stories in The Fig Tree help 'make connections'

At The Fig Tree Benefit Breakfast and Benefit Lunch in March, several speakers will share a few minutes each on the theme, "Making Connections," telling how The Fig Tree newspaper, resource directory and its online presence help people connect with each other and connect ideas that motivate.

The breakfast buffet begins at 7:15 a.m. and the program at 7:30 a.m., Wednesday, March 13, in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

The lunch buffet begins at 11:45 a.m. and the program at noon,

Friday, March 15, also in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

The 2013 breakfast speakers include Denise Atwood, fair trade advocate through Ganesh Himal Trading; Jan Martinez, founder and director of Christ Kitchen; John Osborn, a physician and long-time volunteer with the Upper Columbia Chapter of the Sierra Club, and Peggie Troutt, founder and coordinator for the Calvary Soup Kitchen in East Central Spokane.

The lunch speakers are Tony Stewart of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations;

Dick Boysen of the Spokane Guild's School; Nasreen Shah of Jasmine Crafts and the Inter-faith Council, and Lena Lopez Schindler of the Cathedral of St. John's Service League and The Windfall Thrift Store.

Evanne Montoya, an intern from Whitworth University who is writing articles for The Fig Tree, is preparing a video and slide show on the theme.

The events gather both people 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 events raise funds to help cover the costs of producing the media to share stories of everyday people who make a difference because of their faith and values.

"The benefits are opportunities to articulate our nonprofit model of journalism," said Fig Tree editor, Mary Stamp, "to tell The Fig Tree story, like public broadcasting appeals, and not only invite

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Ecumenical group sets services for Holy Week

Ministers Fellowship sets week of services

For the sixth year, the Ministers Fellowship is sponsoring evening services at 6:45 p.m., Monday through Thursday, at St. Matthew's Baptist Church, 2815 W. Sunset Blvd. Each evening two churches are responsible for planning the music, readings and preaching, said Jimmy Pierce, president of the group, "to give a flavor of the different denominations."

Unspeakable Joy Christian Fellowship and St. Matthew's are responsible for Monday, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal for Tuesday, Mt. Olive and New Hope Baptist for Wednesday, and Calvary and Morning Star Baptist for Thursday.

"The Good Friday Experience" will be a musical led by LaSalle Pierce, Yvette Williams of the Kurt Carr Singers, The Chosen singers and Sam Townsend as emcee. It is at 7 p.m., Friday, March 29, at Bethel, 645 S. Richard Allen Ct.

The preacher for the Ministers Fellowship Easter Sunrise Service at 6 a.m., Sunday, March 31, at St. Matthews is the church's associate pastor the Rev. Donnie Stone, who is chaplain for the fellowship. For information, call 868-1184.

Good Friday walk goes through downtown Spokane

The Rev. Bill Osborne, pastor of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, is organizing a Good Friday Walk in downtown Spokane, stopping along the way for readings, prayer and meditation at government offices, ministries and agencies that remind participants of Jesus' path from arrest to crucifixion. The procession begins at noon, Friday, March 29, at the Rotary

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Pope Benedict contributed to Christian unity

The World Council of Churches' (WCC) general secretary, the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, expressed "profound thanks" on Feb. 27 for the ministry and witness of Pope Benedict XVI as he officially completed his service as head of the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict announced his departure earlier in the month, effective Feb. 28.

Remembering Benedict's engagement with the WCC Commission on Faith and Order as a Catholic professor of theology in 1971, Olav honored Benedict's contributions to Christian unity.

"In looking from an ecumenical perspective over your entire service to the church, the World Council of Churches is grateful for your devotion to the quest for Christian unity as a pattern for the unity of all humanity," he stated in a letter.

Olav mentioned Benedict's "partnership in ministry" from which, he said, the WCC has benefited.

He also expressed thanks for the pope's support to Catholic representatives in WCC events, the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC, the Faith and Order Commission, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, as well as in independent initiatives such as the Global Christian Forum.

Remembering meetings with Benedict XVI in 2010 at Rome and at the 2011 Day of Prayer for Peace in the World in Assisi, Olav said, "Our conversations have left me with a conviction of the importance of strengthening already strong relations that enable Christians of many backgrounds to pray together, work together and rededicate ourselves to unity in faith."

Climate justice is ethical, spiritual imperative

Climate change is causing massive violations of human rights. This point was made at a side event on "human rights and climate change" during the 22nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.

Organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC) program for climate justice and care for creation, in collaboration with other Christian organizations, interfaith networks and civil society groups, the event was held on Feb. 26.

Geneva's Mayor Rémy Pagani, one of the speakers, asked participants to "commit themselves for human rights, justice and peace as well as towards struggles for the preservation of the planet." He cited the example of Geneva as a leading host city for dialogues on human rights and climate justice.

"We need concrete actions to address climate change and bring this cause to the human rights agenda, stressing that we cannot wait any longer," said Mariyam Shakeela, minister of environment and energy, and acting minister of gender, family and human rights in the Maldives.

She spoke about the vulnerability of the Maldives to effects of climate change, saying, "We urgently need to create an international mechanism on human rights and climate change."

The permanent representative of Bolivia to the UN in Geneva, Angélica Navarro Llanos, also told of climate change "affecting peoples, mother earth and the economy."

In Bolivia, which experiences floods and other weather hazards, she said climate change is also causing human rights violations. She called for forest protections and for an alternatives to a green economy solely relying on market forces.

The event, attended by more than 70 participants, addressed the relations between climate change and economic models, the water crisis and the need for a special reporter on human rights and climate change.

Guillermo Kerber, WCC program executive of Care for Creation and Climate Justice, emphasized the need to protect vulnerable groups and victims of climate change. He said action for climate justice is an "ethical and spiritual imperative."

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Coeur d'Alene Tribe grants Fig Tree funds

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe's Education Department granted The Fig Tree \$1,000 for use to educate interns in its media approach and in media literacy.

The award was presented Feb. 8, in Worley, Idaho, to The Fig Tree Board members Nick Block of the Spokane Friends Church and Kaye Hult, editorial assistant

of Veradale United Church of Christ.

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

International Women's Day is March 8

Spokane's International Women's Day, which features Veronica Tawhai, a Māori Fulbright scholar from Aotearoa (New Zealand) speaking on "Women Rising, Gaining Momentum," is from 3 to 5 p.m., Friday, March 8, at Spokane Women's Club, 1428 W. 9th.

Along with Veronica, a faculty member with the Longhouse Education and Cultural Center at Evergreen State College in Olympia, other presenters include three Fulbright scholars at Eastern Washington—Alena Rudenka,

from Belarus, and Zhu Lihui and Li Wanli from China—Denise Atwood of Ganesh Himal Trading Co. on micro-lending, EWU Step Dancers, and Kim Richards, visiting lecturer at EWU American Indian Studies, said Sally Winkle, co-chair with Mary Ann Murphy.

There will also be displays with information on resources for women.

Organizers and sponsors include the Eastern Washington University Women's and Genders Studies, EWU American Indian

Studies, the American Association of University Women, EWU Africana Education Deltas, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, Native Project/Native Health, United Nations Association - Spokane, Scary Feminists, Spokane Woman's Club, the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, Women's Resource Partnership, Gonzaga University Model UN and the YWCA.

For information, call 359-2898 or email swinkle@ewu.edu or maryannmurphy99@gmail.com.

Film festival gives flavor of Jewish culture

For the ninth year, the Spokane Area Jewish Family Services (SAJFS) is presenting the Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival on March 14, 16 and 17 at the Magic Lantern Theatre, 25 W. Main.

"For the past few years, we have brought international films to Spokane that share Jewish life and culture," said Rabbi Tamar Malino, co-director of SAJFS. "This year's films offer glimpses into diversity in Israeli society, Jewish contemporary life, and challenges of disability, illness, loss and family relationships."

In addition to providing cultur-

al enrichment, the festival raises funds to help support SAJFS's outreach to elderly people and people experiencing hardship.

"Every year, SAJFS distributes hundreds of pounds of food, and makes many visits to people isolated in their homes, at hospitals and in nursing homes," Tamar said. "We provide monthly social events for seniors and assistance to individuals in crisis."

At 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 14, the film, "Mabul - The Flood" tells of Yoni, a 13-year-old physically underdeveloped boy who struggles with his upcoming Bar

Mitzvah, and family dynamics.

After a 7 p.m. reception at Boots Bakery and Lounge, 24 W. Main, the film, "The Other Son," will be shown at 8 p.m., Saturday, March 16. Joseph, an 18-year-old musician preparing for military service, learns he is not his parent's biological son but the son of an Arab Palestinian family.

"The World Is Funny" at 7:30 p.m., Sunday, March 17, shares a comedy/drama about storytelling, a fractured family and reality intertwining with fantasy.

For information, visit www.sajfs.org.

Retired bishop promotes global solidarity

"Solidarity Will Transform the World!" is the theme for a workshop at 1 p.m., Wednesday, March 13, at St. John Vianney Parish, 501 N. Walnut.

The program features Bishop Sylvester Ryan, retired bishop of Monterey, Calif., speaking on behalf of Catholic Relief Services.

Scott Cooper, director of Parish Social Ministries with Catholic Charities Spokane, said the bishop will speak about Catholic social teaching around the world, reaching out to "the least" in solidarity and what that means for one's spiritual life and Catholic identity.

Scott, who traveled in India

with Bishop Ryan two years ago, said the bishop was so transformed by the experience of seeing poverty in India that he urges parishes and dioceses to be in solidarity with people around the world.

For information, call 358-4273 or email scooper@ccspokane.org.

Flannery lecturer discusses Vatican II

Richard Gaillardetz, the Joseph Professor of Catholic Systematic Theology at Boston College, will deliver Gonzaga University's 37th annual Flannery Lecture at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 21, in Cataldo Hall on "Vatican II: An Unfinished Building Site."

The Second Vatican Council, an

assembly of all Roman Catholic Church bishops from 1962 to 1965, liberalized and modernized church practices.

Richard, an expert on ecumenical councils, will discuss why the project was, in many ways, left fragmentary and will outline responsibilities for the Catholic

Church to undertake to complete the unfinished agenda.

Gonzaga's Flannery Lecture, which promotes theological study and teaching at Gonzaga University, is delivered each year by an outstanding Catholic theologian.

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

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Editorial Team

Editor/Publisher/Photos - Mary Stamp
Diane Crow, Chuck Fisk, Kaye Hult, Inga
Jablonsky, Mary Mackay, Nancy Minard
& Sara Weaver

Coordinators & Contract

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Organizer explores some 'surprising benefits'

The 35th Annual Roger Williams Symposium of the Common Ministry at Interfaith House in Pullman features the Rev. Michael-Ray Mathews, director of organizing clergy and lead organizer for the Prophetic Voices initiative of the People Improving Communities through Organizing (PICO) faith-based network of more than 1,000 congregations and 1 million families. The symposium, sponsored by the Common Ministry and the Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches, is Sunday, March 17 and Monday March 18 in Pullman.

He will speak on "Faith Organizations Working for the Common Good" at the 6 p.m., buffet dinner Sunday at the CUB Junior Ballroom at Washington State University.

Beginning at 8:45 a.m., Monday, he will lead a day of workshops and speak at a lunch at Simpson United Methodist Church, 325 NE Maple. His themes are "Surprising Benefits of Community Work," "Surprising Benefits of Confronting our Assumptions," and "Surprising Benefits of Midstream Changes."

For information, call 332-2611, email office@interfaith-house.com or visit www.interfaith-house.com.

Whitworth graduate speaks on life in Egypt

The Rev. Ben Robinson, a 2003 graduate of Whitworth, will speak on Egypt as part of the Great Decisions Lectures. He worked there with St. John the Baptist Anglican Church in Cairo from 2004 to 2007 and from 2009 to 2012. He was associate minister for youth and education in Egypt during the Tahrir uprising. His talk is at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 14, at Weyerhaeuser Hall at Whitworth University.

Ben, who earned a master of divinity degree at Princeton Theological Seminary and a master's at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, will also share information from his contacts with the Muslim and Coptic religious communities in Egypt.

For information, call 777-4937 or email kfector@whitworth.edu.

Abbey resumes Dharma Day program in March

Sravasti Abbey, the Buddhist monastery in Newport, resumes its monthly Sharing the Dharma Day program from 9:45 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday March 10. For 2013, the topics come from *Don't Believe Everything You Think*, a new book by Sravasti Abbey's founder and abbess, Venerable Thubten Chodron.

The book is a commentary on the Tibetan tradition that teaches how to transform life's ups and downs into spiritual awakening. The March topic, "Precious Human Life and How to Use It Wisely," considers steps to make life more meaningful. For information, call 509-447-5549 or email office @sravasti@gmail.com.

Yom HaShoah focus is on resisting genocide

Tony Stewart, a founding member of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, will speak on "Resistance to Genocide," the theme for the 2013 Yom HaShoah, Spokane Community observance of the Holocaust, at 7 p.m., Sunday, April 7, at Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave.

He has been professor of political science at North Idaho College for 40 years and has worked to challenge hate and white supremacists in the Inland Northwest through the task force.

The observance includes reading of the winning high school and middle school entries in the Eva Lassman Memorial Creative Writing Contest on that theme.

The theme was chosen so students and Yom HaShoah participants would learn about resistance to the Holocaust, in which Nazis in Germany exterminated 6 million Jews—two-thirds of the entire European Jewish population—and 5 million other people, including Romani, Communists, the disabled, homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Despite odds, people did resist. Essay writers will tell what they can do to prevent acts of genocide and hatred in the community, region and world, and how they can support people who suffer.

Carla Peperzak in Holland and Michelle Culbertson in Belgium, who were involved in resistance,

will light the candle in honor of the righteous of the nations.

April 2013 is the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, when 750 lightly armed Jews challenged the heavily armed German military and successfully held them at bay for one month until the Germans leveled the ghetto and shipped the few survivors off to death camps.

Not all resistance was violent and not all resistance originated with Jews. The White Rose Society was an inspiring example of German citizens who organized to oppose the genocidal policies of their government.

For information, call 747-3044 or visit spokanetsb.org.

Good Friday and Easter events planned

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Fountain in Riverfront Park to walk along the sidewalk, stopping at various locations to connect events in Jesus' life with experiences in the lives of people in this community.

Bill is contacting downtown churches, clergy and agencies to participate and help establish the route.

For information, call 850-5839.

Presbytery of the Inland Northwest; Bishop James Waggoner Jr. of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane; Bishop Martin Wells of the Eastern Washington Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Rev. Dale Cockrum, the Inland United Methodist District Superintendent.

For information, call 313-6789.

Easter Sunrise Service set

This year, Greenwood Memorial Terrace and Heritage Funeral Home are presenting an Easter Sunrise Service with the Rev. Homer Todd, retired United Methodist pastor, preaching at 6:30 a.m., Sunday, March 31, at Greenwood, 211 W. Government Way.

The offering will go to Hospice of Spokane. For information, call 326-3800.

Area bishops lead Good Friday Tenebrae

The third annual Ecumenical Tenebrae Prayer Service will be held at 7 p.m., Good Friday, March 29, at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes, 1115 W. Riverside.

Participating leaders are Bishop Blase Cupich of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane; the Rev. Sheryl Kinder-Pyle, executive presbyter of the

Benefit events celebrate The Fig Tree's 29 years and begin its 30th year

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support but also to invite people to become involved as volunteers and writers."

She said this year's events celebrate the completion of 29 years serving the Inland Northwest and the beginning of the 30th year.

"While media are not direct service, as people are informed, they are inspired and become involved in serving people and advocating for policies to improve lives," she said. "We see when mainstream media focus on disasters, projects or issues, people are motivated to give and to help. As mass media attention wanes, our media continue to tell stories of how faith and nonprofit communities work to restore lives, reach out and work to make society just."

"The Fig Tree not only makes connections, but also communicates that even though people and institutions may fail, people in faith and nonprofit communities care, serve, overcome divisions, challenge bigotry and greed, and

work for shalom," Mary said. "Those who live their faith and values give us a plethora of stories to share."

In 2013, The Fig Tree improved its website at www.thefigtree.org and is using Facebook and Twitter to help connect people with resources.

This year, The Fig Tree will

reprint 10,000 copies of the Elder Refugee Resource Directory it produced in Russian, Arabic, Nepali, Karen and Chin, in collaboration with World Relief, Refugee Connections Spokane and Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington.

In addition, The Fig Tree trains interns from Whitworth University, Gonzaga University and Eastern Washington University, offering practical experience in its solutions-oriented media.

"We need to prepare young journalists for careers in new en-

trepreneurial forms of responsible community media," Mary said.

Table hosts cover the cost of the meals for the guests they invite. There are still tables open to host and spaces for people to RSVP.

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

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Ecumenical Tenebrae Prayer Service

Good Friday, March 29 - 7 p.m.

Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes
1115 W. Riverside

Catholic Bishop Blase Cupich
Presbytery Executive Sheryl Kinder-Pyle
Episcopal Bishop James Waggoner Jr.
Lutheran Bishop Martin Wells
United Methodist District Superintendent Dale Cockrum

Former Quincy mayor continues activism to protect environment

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 which has challenged permits that have not required the data centers to install pollution controls.

Patty said that when the Department of Energy in Washington granted Microsoft permits for new backup generators in October 2010, MYTAPN appealed the decision to the state's Pollution Control Hearings Board. After a two-day hearing in February 2012, the board upheld Microsoft's permit, amending it to include that Microsoft must inform administrators in the nearby elementary school when it test the generators. MYTAPN has appealed to Superior Court, but because she is not an attorney and had not been named a party in the appeal, the case was not admitted. Patty has intervened in the remaining cases and is now a party in the remaining appeals.

For her witness and courage to protect the environment, the Upper Columbia Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Center for Environmental Law and Policy presented her with the 2013 Environmental Justice Award at their recent Winter Waters event in Spokane.

"Who would think that a woman standing up for the health and environment of her community would be met with unpopularity, rather than gratitude," said Rusty Nelson, retired director of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, who presented the award. "When she stood up against corporations putting hazardous waste in fertilizers, the state stood with the polluters. Patty has been a conscience for the state and her community.

"Now as high-tech corporations use energy, raising energy costs, and degrade small town life, Patty has exposed the dirty part of the cloud, shining light on corporate indifference to protecting the air, soil and water," he said.

While referring to the industry as "the cloud" gives the impression that it may be "green," saving use of paper, Patty has found that the data centers in Quincy use enough electricity to power more than 400,000 homes and each one uses "incredible amounts"—500,000 gallons per day—of ground water for cooling.

Microsoft is permitted for 37 locomotive-sized diesel generators. Dell has a permit for 28. Yahoo has 23. Intuit has nine. Sabey will have 44 generators that are 3,200 horsepower. Vantage will have 17.

"Only Vantage uses filters to reduce 90 percent of the emissions," she said. "The rest just build taller smokestacks."

There will be a total of 158 diesel generators within one-and-a-half miles of each other, with some as large as 4,400 hp. In contrast, Patty said she has been

told that the generators at five data centers in Spokane have 625 hp engines because of stricter air quality regulations. With five centers in Wenatchee and six in Quincy, there are 56 in Washington—www.datacentermap.com.

"The cloud produces a diesel cloud," said Patty. "Diesel exhaust and particulates are known carcinogens.

"Diesel is toxic, emitting black carbon, which has a global warming potential 4,500 times that of carbon dioxide on a per gram emitted basis," she said. "Diesel particulates are seven and a half times more toxic than the combined toxicity of all 188 federally regulated hazardous pollutants. The DOE tells me the pollutants will 'blow away'."

However, with so many diesel generators in such a small area, the data centers have to coordinate monthly testing so they do not exceed air quality standards, she said.

After moving from California to Canada in the military service, Patty's father settled with his family of seven children in Quincy, where he worked with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, dealing with land and water rights.

Patty earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Gonzaga University, planning to study medicine. At a food processing plant in Oregon, she met her husband. They lived in Alaska for three years and then Hermiston before moving back to Quincy in 1987, where they raised their four children.

Patty worked as the Community, Activities, Recreation and Education (Q-CARE) coordinator and started a recycling, adult literacy and after-school latchkey program. After the birth of her fourth child, she left that position and started an all-volunteer first-grade tutoring program.

In the early 1990s, Patty learned of farmers having low yields, cancer in a cowherd and people developing rare diseases. Several farmers went bankrupt.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) came to investigate and found toxic chemicals like cadmium, beryllium, chromium, titanium, lead and arsenic and other metals.

A series of articles in *The Seattle Times*, "Fear in the Fields"

reported on hazardous waste—from nuclear fuel processing, steel mill flue dust, mining waste, coal-fired power plants and film processing—being "recycled" in fertilizer, because it contained nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, copper, cobalt, magnesium, calcium or other micronutrients.

Based on his investigative reports for *The Seattle Times*, Duff Wilson wrote the book *Fateful Harvest: The true story of a small town, a global industry, and a toxic secret*, published in 2001.

Under a federal loophole, U.S. industries saved millions by sending toxic waste to fertilizer makers who sold their product to farmers without disclosing what was in it, said the reports.

Washington State became the first to require fertilizer companies provide detailed chemical analyses of their products, Patty said. The effort has influenced national policies on hazardous waste recycling.

Now she focuses her activism on "the cloud," referring people to the 2012 *New York Times* article that covers the issue in detail.

She has asked state air quality managers why laws do not protect Quincy's air quality.

While such data centers elsewhere in the state must keep emissions less than would cause 10 cancers per million, the "acceptable" cancer rate for Quincy was raised to 100 cancers per million, Patty said.

"The state also granted data centers millions of dollars worth of tax incentives to build in Quincy's urban growth area, requiring only that each create 35 full-time jobs," she said. "Instead, the plants could have added \$.5 billion to the state treasury."

With construction workers coming from elsewhere, "there's an illusion that Quincy is booming, because hotels are full and restaurants are busy," she said.

"Communities like Quincy are ripe for abuse. People are disenfranchised and will not likely complain. Many distrust government," Patty said.

"People do not understand the cloud nor the amount of energy and water it uses," she said.

Tribe also recognized for environmental efforts

In February, the 2013 Winter Waters awards of the Sierra Club Upper Columbia Chapter and the Center for Environmental Policy and Law that presented Patty Martin of Quincy with the Environmental Justice Award also recognized the Colville Confederate Tribes as Watershed Heroes for their work to clean up Columbia River pollution from Teck Corporation's lead smelter in Trail, B.C.

The Fig Tree will cover their story in a future edition.

my style. When something is wrong, I try to make it right," she affirmed.

Patty would like an environmental justice law that would "require notification of and outreach into communities, so that all members of a community can participate, regardless of language, and so that all communities are treated equally under the law, regardless of race, color, country of origin or income level."

"I can't be too disillusioned, because I'm still fighting. Democracy is participatory and needs local people involved," she said. "I can't imagine not working for justice."

For information, call 787-4275 or email martin@nwi.net.

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Kosher Dinner planner values reviving faith in her family's life

Brad and Hyphen Huffmanparent grew up non-observant, non-kosher homes in neighboring Jewish communities in New Jersey, but they decided when they had children they would be observant Jews and have a kosher kitchen.

Their motivation is because Brad is the grandson of two people who escaped Nazi Germany in the 1930s—his grandfather at 17 in 1936 and his grandmother at 15 in 1938 before Kristallnacht. They first came to New York City and then settled in Fairlawn, N.J., a community with a large Jewish population.

The oldest of Brad and Hyphen's 10-year-old twin daughters, Ellie, is named after her great-grandmother. Lily is named after another grandmother. Their other children are Bazzy, 7, and Adeline, 4.

Hyphen is chair of publicity for Temple Beth Shalom's 2013 Kosher Dinner, one of many ways she now immerses herself in the life of her faith community.

Ellie and Lily will be one of the performing ensembles, singing a cappella Hebrew songs they learned at camp, some songs from musicals written by Jewish composers and traditional blessings.

They are also baking cookies for the kosher bake sale.

"The year we married, we saw a movie about a family lighting Shabbat candles and saying the blessings," Hyphen said. "It struck me that after all his grandparents had gone through, when we had children, they had a right to their heritage."

So the Huffmanparents began going to the synagogue. Now they attend services Fridays and Saturdays.

"We decided to expose our children to everything Jewish, not just a set of beliefs. We want them to gain connection to their family and history," said Hyphen.

So they light candles, say the same blessings and hold to the strong sense of ethics their great-grandparents had.

They home school their children, plus send them to Sunday school and Wednesday Hebrew school at Temple Beth Shalom. Ellie and Lily will do their B'Nei Mitzvah next year.

Hyphen did not do a Bat Mitzvah, but has been learning Hebrew with her daughters.

"I feel I have a place. Lighting the candles and saying the blessings every day reminds me I'm part of something larger," she said.

Dorothy-Ann, called Hyphen because her name is hyphenated,



Ellie and Lilly will sing at the Kosher Dinner, which their mother, Hyphen Huffmanparent is helping plan.

grew up in Hackensack, and Brad in Elmwood Park, N.J.

They lived in Maryland, where Brad joined the Air Force two days after she earned a bachelor's degree in media studies in 2001 at Washington College at Chestertown, Md. They lived in Oklahoma before moving two years ago to Spokane. Brad is now a civilian worker at Fairchild Air Force Base.

Although Hyphen grew up attending a performing arts school through third grade, a Catholic school from fourth through eighth grade, and a public high school, she decided to home school her children so she could teach about Judaism, as well as school lessons.

Ellie is learning Hebrew and reading the Torah. Lily said she says blessings and that it's easier to keep kosher because they are home schooled.

"I try to integrate faith in with their school lessons," said Hyphen.

Because she did not grow up with kosher food, she has had to learn about kosher cooking.

It means not eating pork or shellfish and not cooking dairy and meat together. A kosher kitchen has one set of utensils just for dairy and other utensils just for meat, she said.

Hyphen finds many options for kosher cooking. A cheeseburger can be hamburger with soy cheese or a veggie burger and dairy cheese.

They eat fish and chicken, kosher hot dogs, soy options, beef pepperoni, turkey bacon, and plenty of vegetables and fruit.

Helping with the Kosher Dinner, Hyphen has been impressed how most members of the synagogue volunteer to prepare for the event.

"There are not many Jews in the area, so it's something everyone can do as a community," she said. "With it being the 72nd Kosher Dinner, some who are

now grandparents have been volunteering every year since they were children."

Not only is Hyphen meeting

more people in the Jewish community, but also in doing publicity she is learning more about the community and its media.

Hyphen also likes the Kosher Dinner because it's a time to invite friends who are not Jewish to come to Temple Beth Shalom and learn about the faith, culture and traditions.

"It's an opportunity to educate the community as we sit, eat, talk and share the experience of a kosher dinner," Hyphen said.

For information, call 747-3304 or email temple@spokanetbs.org or visit spokanetbs.org.

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Kosher Dinner is March 10

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Speakers promote prayer, policies, perspectives, progress, persuasion

In his ministry of advocating in the Washington State Legislature for programs that reflect faith values, Paul Benz, co-director of the Faith Action Network (FAN) prays for legislators and urges congregations to pray for the legislators in their districts and to call them to adopt policies that “put our prayers into action.”

State legislators are part-time, in session 105 days, Jan. 14 to April 28 this year, and 60 days next year. This year, they develop the biennial budget for July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2015.

“They are to use the state treasury for everyone and to balance the budget, which is \$2 billion in arrears as the state recovers from a severe recession,” said Paul. “With the state required to provide ample funding for education, there are few areas to cut.”

He expects contention over the budget with the new Senate majority coalition of 23 Republicans and two Democrats.

He summarized FAN’s agenda, urging participants to contact their legislators to:

- Prevent wage theft by employers underpaying employees;
- Advocate gun-violence prevention through a universal background check of gun buyers and another for safe storage of guns;
- Support adequate funding for health and human services through the State Food Assistance Program, the Farm to School Program, the Housing Trust Fund and Medicaid expansion;
- Work for reforms to create revenue to balance the budget by extending the beer tax, extending the business and occupation tax to financial services, enacting a capital gains tax, and adopting the tax exemption reform bill that sets expiration dates for 600 tax exemptions and evaluates how many jobs they create;
- Support criminal justice reform through three Second Chance Act bills, to review juveniles sentenced to life without parole, to repeal prohibition of state funds for higher education programs in state prisons, and to prohibit disseminating a juvenile’s court record;
- Repeal the death penalty, favoring life without parole, which will at least have a hearing;
- Adopt a state DREAM act for immigration reform for students and for the Voting Rights Act to enfranchise people of color.

Paul encourages congregations to put the legislative hotline, 800-562-6000 in church bulletins, newsletters, e-news and websites, so members can voice their views.

For information, call 206-390-4133 or email benz@fanwa.org.

Advocates are effective

Even though for the last six years it seems that the only things legislators have talked about is budget, Scott Cooper, director of Parish Social Ministries with Catholic Charities, said “change



Breean Beggs and the Rev. Lonnie Mitchell present information on the Smart Justice Campaign.

agents need to tell stories of how we have been effective.”

He reminds that for years, people of faith advocated for mental health parity in health insurance.

“It was a pipe dream, but we promoted it because of our faith values, and it passed,” he said.

“It’s important to tell our elected officials our values and what we want, because they are there to take input from constituents, even if it seems impossible,” Scott said.

For years, having a State Housing Trust Fund seemed impossible, but now it’s in place.

“Even though the task seems daunting, people of faith need to move forward. We are in this for the long haul,” Scott said. “Look at how the tectonic plates are shifting on immigration right now. The conversation is changing. Maybe the legislation won’t be perfect, but there is movement.”

Change happens that requires new policies and ways of thinking, he said, aware it sometimes takes a generation.

“What happens in my generation may not be reflected in a particular bill today,” he said, “but there will be changes because you came today and will communicate what you learned. We are effective change agents,” he said.

Scott calls for keeping perspective and hope, so “we see that things will be better. There can be more justice. We need to act. Our children and grandchildren will need to act, too.”

For information, call 358-4372 or email scooper@ccspokane.org.

Race matters in public policies

Tia Griffin of the Washington Community Action Network (CAN) Spokane Team said that with 30 percent of Washington

residents being people of color—and the numbers growing—race matters in public policies.

Washington CAN evaluated legislators in its “Report Card on Racial Justice,” giving them overall a “D,” and 60 legislators “F” grades based on their votes on 25 bills and their leadership in 2012.

“The health, wealth, education and political representation gaps between people of color and white people are widening,” she said, “quadrupling since the mid 1980s. That is the result of policy decisions on education, housing, civil rights and tribal sovereignty.”

Fifty-one groups endorse the report and call legislators to pass laws to advance racial equity by expanding access to Medicaid, dental care and early learning; supporting voting rights and full funding of education; abolishing the death penalty; prohibiting mandatory e-verify of employees; adopting a capital gains tax and closing corporate tax loopholes “so everyone pays a fair share to create opportunities for everyone to share prosperity,” she said.

See February article at thefigtree.org/020113griffin.html.

Attorney’s activism evolves

Spokane attorney Breean Beggs said his activism, inspired by growing up United Methodist, has evolved over the years.

In college, a 1959 quote of Martin Luther King Jr. informed him of the need to be “tough as a serpent and soft as a dove.”

“When we advocate for causes, we need to balance having a tough mind and a tender heart,” he said. “We need to organize and educate people to bear witness, agitate and tell truth to power. We need to march and protest, but also need to

engage and appreciate legislators so they write the laws we need.”

After graduating from Whitworth at 22 and feeling no one was listening to his answers to the world problems, Breean decided to go to law school to be “tough as a serpent” by suing people.

“I did that a while,” he said. “I won some and lost some, but realized the legal system is designed to keep money and power where it is.”

He also helped on campaigns. Occasionally his candidates won.

Realizing he would not win enough in courts, elections or media debates, Breean wanted to change minds. He decided to relate with and appreciate the needs and fears of people in power so he could persuade them to enact laws and policies that increase justice.

“To create the Kingdom of God, we need to engage with and empathize with people to change hearts and minds,” he said. “People in power can do what is important if they can be convinced.”

Lobbyists know they need to

understand what legislators want in order to sell their bills. Activists can use the same tools.

“We are promoting policies for causes we believe in, so if we respect legislators, we can talk with them about those causes to make the world a better place,” he said.

So Breean has met with Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich. He supports building a new jail, and Breean opposes it. By hearing each other’s concerns, they realized they may disagree on building a jail, but both support alternatives to incarceration.

In the Smart Justice Campaign, Breean and others are educating people about some alternatives.

“If we treat those in power as people who are children of God as much as we are, we may adopt some of their views, if we think they are justified. We are vulnerable, but so are they, and in that vulnerability there is the possibility they will adopt our solutions.”

That’s where being tough minded comes in. Breean means doing the “hard work” to “understand why we believe what we believe and why we want a policy.” It means connecting statistics and values. Statistics make problems and solutions measurable: How many people are hungry in the state? Where do they live? How old are they? What does food security look like?

When negotiating face-to-face, it’s important to know what language needs to be in a law and how it will affect people, said Breean, advising taking time, putting agreements in writing and reviewing wording with people who will be affected by the changes.

“A comma can change everything,” he said.

For information, call 251-8713 or email breeanbeggs@gmail.com.

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Faith values weave through discussions at 2013 Legislative Conference

Faith values of loving neighbors, caring for the least, serving the poor, welcoming strangers, seeking justice for prisoners and protecting creation wove through discussions during the 2013 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.

Paul Benz, co-director of the Faith Action Network (FAN), said FAN works in Olympia to help people of faith raise their voices in the halls of power because of their concern that lines at food banks and shelters are too long.

"We are looking at a systemic approach to addressing the lines," said Paul Benz, legislative director with the FAN, calling for faith communities to come with "a united voice advocating for justice." FAN helps do that by organizing more than 60 faith communities around the state to be involved as advocating congregations.

Catholic priorities coincide

Anecdotally, Scott Cooper, director of Parish Social Ministries with Catholic Charities in Spokane, senses that more panhandlers are lining downtown street corners because programs such as General Assistance Unemployable have been renamed, revised and reduced.

He urges the faith community to keep up with changing policies and programs as legislators try to save dollars and limit discussions to budget rather than evaluating how each program serves people and saves funds in the long run.

Aware good can come from change, Scott noted that priorities of the Washington State Catholic Conference—the detailed list is at www.thewsec.org—this year call for "retaining programs that provide services for the most vulnerable persons, collaborating with policy leaders to improve efficiencies in providing services, creating a just tax structure, providing adequate revenue to support 'safety net' programs and establishing new revenue sources if the state is not able to address the needs of poor people through existing resources or re-prioritizing expenditures." He said the goal is that programs long promoted to help people are not "whittled away to nothing."

For example, until fall 2011, under General Assistance to the Unemployable, recipients received about \$339 a month in assistance. That became the Disability Lifeline, with support dropping to \$197 a month, and after six months it transitioned



Kathy Lee, Whitworth political science professor leads discussion.

in spring of 2012 into three programs: Housing and Essential Needs (HEN), Aging Blind and Disabled (ABD) and Pregnant Women each providing \$197.

While DSHS still processes applicants for the ABD and Pregnant Women programs, the state is contracting with the Salvation Army in Spokane County to administer the HEN program, Scott said.

As the landscape for services changes, people of faith need to keep up, he said, and advocate to retain needed programs.

For faith-based advocates, it's no longer about "what we would like" but "what we need to keep," he said, and making sure "we don't balance the budget on the backs of the poor," given that under Washington's regressive tax system, low-income people pay a greater percentage of their income in taxes than do the well-off.

For information, call 358-4372.

Immigration reform possible

On immigration reform issues, Greg Cunningham of Catholic Charities' Immigration and Refugee Services similarly pointed to a changing landscape, especially with recognition that 72 percent of the Latino vote helped re-elect Barack Obama as President.

"Now both sides realize immigration reform is necessary," he said.

Greg discussed the different policies for the status of immigrants and those designated as refugees, who are welcomed to protect them from persecution based on ethnicity, race, religion or politics. There are also varying rules about U.S. citizens supporting visas for family members.

Proposals by the U.S. Senate and President are similar, but differ on the implementation of prerequisites, if any, of an earned

legalization program.

Greg believes there will be some action to allow undocumented immigrants to gain legal status to live and work in the U.S. They may or may not lead to permanent residence and citizenship.

He also noted that the motivation for many, especially from Mexico, to come diminished with the recession and unemployment.

When people say they want to protect U.S. jobs, Greg also reminds that the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994 increased immigration to the United States, as it undermined Mexico's economy, which lost 1 million jobs. In addition, drug violence, fed by U.S. consumption, has also motivated people to flee.

He encourages people to keep informed on immigration issues through One America, the Immigration Advocates Network and Justice for Immigrants.

For information, call 455-4960.

Environmental bills listed

Tom Soeldner, who is with the Faith and Environment Network and FAN, spoke of three environmental priorities in the 2013 Washington State Legislature: 1) An example of common sense legislation is "Toxic-Free Kids and Families"—SB 5181 and HB 1294 that will remove unnecessary flame retardants from children's clothing and furniture in homes, and will prevent chemicals identified by the state as a concern for children's health from being used as replacements.

2) The need for clean energy solutions means the state needs to develop a climate policy that accelerates clean energy investment and helps free consumers from the "economic dead weight of fossil-fuel dependence.

3) Conservation works funded

by the state's capital budget can promote fiscally-responsible projects that benefit the entire state by protecting Puget Sound, reducing toxic runoff, expanding recreation opportunities and improving habitat and forest health. "These projects preserve the incredible natural resources of our state that make it a great place to live, work and raise a family," Tom said.

He recommends that people keep up with issues through the Environmental Priorities Coalition at www.environmentalpriorities.org, Earth Ministries in Seattle at earthministry.org and the Center for Environmental Law and Policy at www.celp.org/water/celp/Home.html.

For information, call 838-4632.

Wage theft creates poverty

The top 2013 priority of FAN is for the Washington Legislature to pass a law that would end "wage theft," referring to various ways employers avoid paying their

employees what they are owed.

"It's a growing area of economic injustice that involves day labor, shorting people on social security and unemployment, and other practices," said Paul Benz of FAN.

"It affects those on the bottom of the economic ladder and contributes to the state's and nation's poverty rate, hunger and homelessness. We believe hundreds of cases go unreported, because employers would retaliate, given that Washington is an 'at-will' state and employees would likely be fired. It also means a loss of revenue to the state treasury."

A bill before the House of Representatives HB 1440 would stiffen penalties for employers who "cheat employees," said Paul, urging people in their faith communities to join the effort to stop wage theft.

For information, call 206-625-9790 or visit www.fanwa.org.

continued on next page

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Changing death penalty and criminal justice laws would save money

continued from previous page
Death penalty questions raised
 Shar Lichty of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane's Death Penalty Abolition Group said that there continue to be legislative efforts to abolish the death penalty.



Shar Lichty outlines reasons death penalty should be abolished.

"It does not make the state safer or lower the homicide rate," she said, adding that abolishing the death penalty could be a source of saving the state money, because capital cases cost on average \$800,000 more in the trial phase, because of the extra precautions in place to prevent innocent people from being convicted and sentenced to death.

Even so, more than 60 percent of Washington's death row cases have been overturned by the Washington State Supreme Court.

Shar pointed out that it would be more effective to use funds to assist families of victims or help crime labs solve more cold cases.

The death penalty is unfair and arbitrary, given that it's applied more in some areas than in others. Because of cost, smaller counties choose not to pursue capital cases. Race is also a factor, with half of the people on Washington's death row being African Americans, even though they are only 13 percent of Washington's population.

"The risks of making mistakes and executing innocent people are too high," Shar said. "Nationally, 142 people have been released from death row, and it is uncertain how many on death row are innocent."

She also pointed out that the death penalty fails to meet needs of victims' families, because due process takes so long. They have to relive the pain over and over, rather than moving to healing.

"Life without parole is a safe, sane and just alternative," Shar said. "Life without parole also costs about one-third what it costs to house people on death row."

In the past five years, five states have abolished the death penalty and the Oregon governor has put a moratorium on executions.

"The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled the death penalty cruel punishment, but until nine more states abolish it, it won't be considered unusual. Once 26 states abolish it, it will be both cruel and unusual, and then it will be unconstitutional," Shar said.

For information, call 838-7870.
Criminal justice reforms needed

Attorney Breean Beggs and the Rev. Lonnie Mitchell of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church shared their hope that the Smart Justice Campaign can draw supporters to encourage Spokane County commissioners and small cities to be aware there are al-

ternatives to the problems of the criminal justice system that can be safer and more cost effective.

Given that many people who are in jail are mentally ill, their being locked in a cell with little contact makes their situation worse.

Of those in the Spokane County jails, 70 percent are functionally illiterate, 75 percent are unemployed, and 19 percent are people of color—especially African Americans and Native Americans—even though they are less than 8 percent of the area's population.

"The Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court has said that the criminal justice system is racist and needs to change," Breean said. "Criminologists say jail makes people worse, more violent and more likely to commit crimes."

Smart Justice has 30 years of data on what works to reduce recidivism. Given that 70 percent of the county budget is for public safety to operate two jails, Breean and Lonnie called for building a nonpartisan coalition to seek changes.

Lonnie said, "We need to educate people on how to keep the community safe and how we can do better for society. Suggestions and resources are online at smartjusticespokane.org."

Breean said there are an average of 760 people in the two jails every day at a cost of \$120 to \$137 each, almost \$40 million a year.

Two-thirds are there pre-trial, waiting to be processed, and have not been convicted.

Unless they are dangerous or may flee, he said they could safely use electronic monitoring for 100 of them at \$8 a day, saving \$112 a day. There is also technology to monitor for alcohol use with the same equipment and there are options to do drug tests for other substances.

"These measures could save

millions of dollars a year, because we wouldn't have to pay for medical care and other costs while people are in jail. They could be out supporting their families by caring for their children or working.

He added that 30 percent of people in jail are there because they missed one of their five court hearings. They might be present if they could receive a text or cell call reminder.

Many others are in jail because they did not pay traffic tickets or were driving with their licenses suspended. Those misdemeanors could be decriminalized and a process could be set to reinstate the license, have education and pay \$25 a month on overdue tickets.

Drug courts, mental health courts, veterans courts, drunk driving courts also help address problems and needs, rather than evaluating someone solely based on the crime for which they were arrested time. A more comprehensive assessment of all their problems and dangers of future crimes should be conducted so they have intervention that better protects the public. Those

require expanding pretrial assessments and better drug and alcohol treatment, compared with jail. Addressing needs and treating people reduces recidivism, and shrinks the number of people in jail, Breean said.

He and Lonnie also suggest shrinking the number of people in jail by providing increased resources for housing, employment and education.

"People who have a prison record are often excluded from

housing, financial aid and employment," Breean said. "Unable to get what they need most, they may return to crime, and then we pay the price."

Lonnie said there is a Smart Justice statement online at smartjusticewashington.org/index.php/spokane/ and the campaign seeks signers and endorsers to sway county commissioners, the sheriff, police and city councils in the county.

For information, call 251-8713.

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Visiting Ethiopian scholar recounts consequences of ideas, faith

By Evanne Montoya

In his transformation from a young Marxist revolutionary to a Christian professor and author, Tibebe Eshete has found complexity and simplicity in history and life.

As he interacts with the next generation of leaders, he wants them to see the world's diversity.

Tibebe is a visiting history professor at Whitworth, filling in for professor Tony Clark, who is in China for a year. He grew up in Harar, Ethiopia, and taught at Asmara University and Addis Ababa University before coming to the United States in 1993 to study.

After earning a doctoral degree in African history at Michigan State University, he taught at secular and Christian institutions—Missouri State University, Calvin College, Cornerstone University and Michigan State University.

Tibebe believes a narrow, local perspective is dangerous. Widening students' perspectives informs and empowers them. Although his classes cover the depravity of humankind, he is optimistic because of his assurance of what God can do with people.

As he teaches about the genocide in Rwanda, he emphasizes that Rwanda is "a history of us."

He encourages students not to see these events as evidence of the evil of certain groups or historical figures, but as evidence of a potential for depravity in everyone.

Just as everyone has potential to do bad things, they also have potential to do great things.

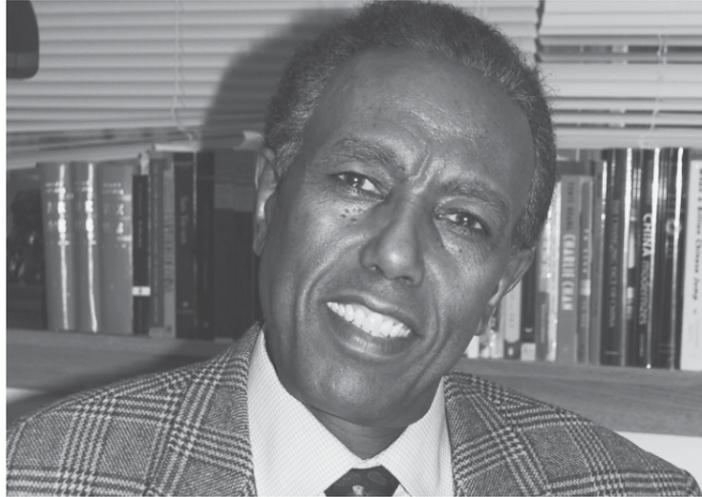
"I want students to see the power of the individual. Martin Luther King, Jr. was one person, but had an enormous influence. As Christians, we have great promises," Tibebe said. "I want students to know they have the capacity to do great things."

He knows the power of individuals to influence each other from two people who helped along his journey of faith.

Growing up in an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian family, his experience with church was centered on rituals and traditions, not on having a relationship with Christ.

"When I joined the university in Addis Ababa, I had the little faith I picked up with my family and at church. It wasn't enough to sustain me in the barrage of new ideas," said Tibebe, who struggled to hold onto his religion in his first year. In his second year, peer pressure, the intellectual culture and Marxism drew him away.

He was among the first generation of his family to go to the only university, Haile Selassie I University, which opened in 1961. As he and classmates studied, ideas of people such as Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire and Marx



Tibebe Eshete challenges students to widen perspective.

began to sink in. "Ideas have consequences," he said.

Students saw society, ruled under the monarchy of Emperor Haile Selassie I, as polarized between a few privileged people controlling political power and much of the land, and the masses.

While most ordinary people saw the situation as their fate, students believed society needed to be reordered and revolution was the way to achieve it, he said.

"It was a mistake," Tibebe said, now aware of the danger of dislocation and destabilization from bringing hasty change to a society with a rich, complex history.

When the revolution began in 1974, students began demonstrating, and were joined by others—teachers, then taxi drivers and the military. "It was a chain reaction."

The military told the emperor they wanted change, but would keep him in place. Tibebe described the revolution as "a creeping coup." When the military gained control, they supported students' ideals, such as redistributing land ownership, but soon the military abused its power, and the revolutionaries split.

Some supported the military, thinking they needed it to complete the revolution. Others believed it had shown its true colors and must be taken from power.

"We broke into two extremes, another tragic mistake," Tibebe said. "The military solidified its power as leftist revolutionaries fought among themselves, brothers against brothers. Friends imprisoned and killed one another. I was imprisoned and tortured."

Into this tumultuous time of his life 24 years ago when he was a university lecturer working on his master's degree, God placed two individuals, he said.

Taeme Gernay, an economics lecturer, went with Tibebe on a two-month government assignment—banishment—in a rural area. Even when Tibebe made life in their small, one-room living area difficult for Taeme, Taeme was kind to him. Tibebe did not respect Christians, but respected Taeme as an intellectual, and listened to him.

Tibebe said God began to work through Taeme. By the time they returned to Addis Ababa, Tibebe was curious, intrigued that someone as rational as Taeme could be a Christian. So he agreed to go to the International Evangelical Church (IEC) with him. He wanted to see if other intellectuals believed like him.

The church's U.S. pastor and members discussed the Bible in an intellectual manner. He saw professionals, ambassadors and professors. He began to wonder: "Where have I been? Why haven't I seen this world?"

After Taeme finished his master's and went to teach elsewhere, God brought a second person into Tibebe's life. Having "discovered something new," Tibebe wanted to pursue it, so he continued to attend. An usher, Evangelist Abere Darge, befriended him.

He was also a member of an underground Baptist church. The Marxist military government had closed churches. Because the IEC were mostly expatriates from Europe and the U.S., it stayed open.

The usher invited him to dinner, lunch and coffee. Abere, who had only a seventh grade education, was not an intellectual, but Tibebe said he "saw the power of the gospel in this man, the love and simplicity of Christ."

It was hard for Tibebe to extricate himself from the influence of Marx-

ism, but Abere taught, supported and led him, eventually inviting him to the underground church.

Once faith became a part of Tibebe's life, it affected all aspects of it. He realized if one person could change his life profoundly and help him see Christ, he could be that person for other people.

In Ethiopia, he created his own mission field, inviting people to meet, letting them come as they were without judging them.

From his participation in Ethiopia's Christian movement, he felt God gave him experience to understand the era and a call to share the story in *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia: Resistance and Resilience* (2009).

His faith now informs his work as a professor: "God didn't invest in me in vain. I still want to do more with the Lord," Tibebe said.

God changed the trajectory of

his life. Many of his companions at that time were killed. He wanted to stay and fight, but believes God had other plans for him.

Tibebe cares about Ethiopians in Ethiopia and in the Diaspora. He has compassion and respect for people of his generation who are still influential. He would like to reach them with the Gospel of Jesus that has changed his life.

In 1991, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Front, formed by students to fight the military, overthrew the unpopular, discredited military government.

"Ethiopia has a long way to go still," said Tibebe, who doesn't know where he will go next.

"The best place to be is where God wants me to be. I will spend the rest of my life for God," he said.

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Ongoing efforts to make needed changes eventually bring results

The Legislative Conference presenters reminded us of the need to be “smart,” rather than playing political games and twisting words to confuse the people—that’s “we the people,” who are the government.

The hate-the-government rhetoric we have endured for too many years has not improved our ability to think, care or connect ideas. Certainly, we each have aspects of government spending and policy with which we disagree, so we make our voices heard. These days, however, the government is held hostage by a minority who have wrested power by requiring two-thirds votes that thwart rule of the majority.

We need to engage with people who are vulnerable to understand their needs, wants, hopes and ideas. We also need to develop relationships with those in power, so we understand their needs and interests.

As in any communication, knowing someone’s context helps us “translate” their visions, hopes and ideas so they can be understood and incorporated by those who make decisions and write laws.

I was grateful that presenters at the conference pushed us beyond the usual bill numbers and advocacy actions needed, so we could see issues and actions in light of our faith and values. I appreciated taking

the long look at what has been accomplished and an awareness that people of faith in a democracy have a responsibility to participate in dialogue and promote their ideas as an ongoing responsibility for the long haul.

We also have responsibility to bring along next generations to understand the democratic process and to work for charity, justice, peace and stewardship of creation. With all the talk of the need for students to read and write, and to focus on math and science to compete with the rest of the world, we must never forget the need to learn about history and government, so

we do can maintain our democratic responsibility in the sea of media geared to entertain, divert and even numb us to the realities around us.

Do we dare hope? Yes, knowing we are not alone—be it that we are in organizations that share our efforts or be it that we stand in a line or heritage of people taking risks and acting—we can persevere to raise challenges that seem lonely, and we can spread the word to others and keep people informed so they act.

Perseverance is at the heart of democratic responsibility, and it requires faith.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Fuss over funding a study overlooks the goal of sharpening seniors’ skills

To mature, we must develop different ways to handle both everyday life and emergencies.

How do we know when we are grown up? When we view our world realistically and make our best contributions to its welfare, we are well on our way.

Having reached “a certain age,” I am aware of a phenomenon known as “normal age-related memory loss.”

Our minds are always a bit tricky and something of a mystery, but with age they can also be a bit slippery.

A few years ago, I read Martha Weinman Lear’s book, “Where Did I Leave My Glasses.” Noticing changes in her memory and fearing that she was losing it, she consulted with a neurologist. She learned ways to cope more effectively, became interested in the field of knowledge and began interviewing experts and reading.

After reading her book, I tried of number of her suggestions and have decided that much of it boils down to paying attention to things that have previously been automatic.

This normal phenomenon is irritating, sometimes funny, and can result in healthful, if unexpected, exercise. If I park my car at a mall and fail to notice landmarks—a nearby cart-park and what part of a building I’m even with—I may later take a long hike in the parking lot. I’m not lost. I just misplaced my car.

All our lives we make small adjustments as we grow. This doesn’t stop when we retire.

A friend once observed that we lose some of our marbles as we age, but we compensate by rearranging the rest more elegantly.

With this in the background, I learned of a study being done at North Carolina State University and Georgia Tech. The

study has become the object of a Twitter campaign by some members of the House of Representatives, and the subject of articles by PolitiFact.com and FactCheck.org.

The Twitter campaign claims it is a waste of taxpayer money and pays seniors to play war games. The fact checking articles explain the research and its funding.

Hurrah for fact checkers! They are a welcome addition to online and print news sources in our toxic political scene, where the goals are to destroy opponents and wield power rather than to find smart solutions for a just society.

To summarize: The premise is that memory, problem-solving and strategies needed to master some online games may benefit seniors.

The university paid \$5,000 for a pilot study that included a pre-test of cognitive skills, playing a “spatial puzzle game” and

taking a post-test. Results were positive for those with low pre-test scores. Those who needed it improved.

In the pilot study, a small number of subjects had taken pre- and post-tests related to playing an online game, “World of Warcraft,” on their home computers. Those results meshed with the others.

No war games are included in the four-year \$1.2 million study that the grant financed.

So what was the fuss about, given that the goal is to develop online games to keep seniors’ skills sharp.

Seniors are a valuable group in the volunteer world. They provide services worth millions—probably billions—to nonprofit organizations. Isn’t it economically worthwhile to keep seniors in operating condition?

Nancy Minard - editorial team

Legislative Conference

Sounding Board

Advocacy Tools

Five workshops at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference discussed advocacy tools—recruiting/partnering, campaign styles, motivating people, community organizing and advocating congregations.

Partnering and recruitment as tools

James Wilburn Jr. said that the NAACP, the oldest civil rights organization in the United States founded by European Americans, Jewish Americans and African Americans, continues to draw all races together in Spokane, where James A. Stokes founded the branch 94 years ago.

Tools to combat racism and challenge hate under his tenure as president of the Spokane branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People include an emphasis on recruitment, partnerships and education.

Recruiting members—with a goal of 100 for each of the next two years—will bring more people and funds so the NAACP can do more and activate its committees for veterans affairs, media relations, education, political action and more.

“The more people we have, the more strength we have in numbers to influence what happens,” he said.

James said the NAACP also seeks to partner with agencies it once was at odds with, including the City of Spokane and the Spokane City Police to prevent violations and reduce the high incarceration rate.

“The new Jim Crow is evident in the fact that the United States has five percent of the world’s population, but incarcerates 25 percent of its people in jails. Although African Americans are 12 percent of the U.S. population, they are nearly 44 percent of those incarcerated. In Spokane, where African Americans are two percent of the population, they are 12 percent of those who are in jails.”

Because the numbers are smaller in Spokane, he believes it’s “fixable,” and can include reducing Latino and Native American incarceration rates.

He has asked the mayor to recruit people of color for the Police Accountability Commission. Through working in partnership he believes police can deal with people in a calmer, more civil way when they come into low-income communities, rather than “riding roughshod over our children and families.”

James challenges the “prison industrial complex” that privatizes incarceration, so if beds are empty, for-profit prisons lose money.

To improve educational opportunities, he said children living in poverty need health care, food and tools so they can compete in school. He advocates investing \$5,500 a year to educate a child, rather than later paying more than \$23,000 a year to imprison someone who is angry—taken from family, jobs and homes.

For information, call 443-3252.

Campaign tools

Sue Lani Madsen and Ben Stuckart discussed campaigning for political office.

“An effective campaign is motivated by a passion to serve the community,” said Sue Lani, who ran for state representative.

Ben said stories of how the economy affects people were key in his run to be Spokane City Council president. He visited small businesses, such as those in South Perry and learned how they improved their business district and created community.

He learned that a city policy that businesses in urban poor areas had to have a parking lot was counterproductive.

“I helped change those rules so more businesses could develop,” he said.

By learning what problems people have and what motivates people, he used that to tell why he was running for office.

Sue Lani, an architect, reinforced the idea of stories, because Jesus told parables.

“Campaigns are about packaging and focusing on many people in a short time,” said Sue Lani, who visited around her district. “Each district has its own ways of connecting people.”

Although conservative and independent, Sue said some labeled her a “hippie” because she is also a goat rancher.

“You need to label yourself before others do,” she said, noting that as an independent she could speak to both liberals and conservatives about conservation.

Ben said candidates need money to reach a mass audience and spread his message.

For information, call Sue Lani at 236-2311 or email Ben at bstuckart@spokane-city.org.

Tools for motivating people

Liz Moore, director of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, spoke about “four ingredients to motivate people” based on a community organizing model Marshall Ganz teaches at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. From his experience in the civil rights and farm-worker movements, he summarized the ingredients with “AHUY”—referring to Ask, Hope, Urgency and You.

1) Ask questions to agitate people and stir the anger they have tamped down to find out what they care about.

2) Then stir people to hope by developing a clear plan people believe can make a difference.

3) Once people hope, it’s necessary to communicate a sense of urgency by setting a deadline, planning an action or rally.

4) Then it’s necessary to communicate that “you” can make a difference. She suggests recruiting people to do a collective, meaningful, achievable task.

Participants talked about what they want to do and planned how they would ask someone to join them.

For information, call 838-7870.

Community organizing tools

The Rev. Deb Conklin, pastor of Liberty Park and St. Paul’s United Methodist churches and The Oak Tree, said community-organizing tools from the Spokane Alliance empower churches to build leadership skills.

The Oak Tree is a faith community and a movement, building a community of activists concerned about social justice and connecting them to awareness that people of faith are engaged in transforming the world by how they live, what they do, how they treat people and what choices they make.

She uses the organizing model of holding listening sessions for people to share concerns, surface common concerns and then discuss ideas for action that can realize change.

Deb has worked with the two small congregations to help them discern their passions for ministry in their neighborhoods—East Central and West Central Spokane, which are among the poorest in the community. Beginning by building pastoral relationships and helping them take leadership is her style.

She facilitates small groups to discuss controversial issues, shared values and the church’s mission.

For information, call or text 251-4332.

Advocating congregation tools

Paul Benz, co-director of the Faith Action Network of Washington, said that FAN now has 61 Advocating Congregations. Although most are in the Seattle-Tacoma area, there are 13 east of the Cascades and others spread around the state.

Advocating congregations are in regular communication with FAN and with each other to coordinate education, public action and advocacy on their shared faith values.

On the website, advocating congregations can have access to resources and can share messages.

The Faith Action Network also provides e-news and Advocacy Alerts to be part of a statewide network for justice, informing participants of legislation coming up and key people to contact about it.

FAN’s website at www.famwa.org is also a source for information on priorities of FAN and educational events.

For information, call 206-625-9790.

Event galvanizes peace, justice work

The Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane is holding its 2013 Peace and Economic Justice Action Conference Friday and Saturday, March 15 and 16, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Ft. Wright Dr.

Friday is an opening reception from 6 to 8:30 p.m. with music.

From 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, there will be 22 workshops.

Keynote speaker Allison Cook director of community engagement with the Story of Stuff Project, will discuss its recent video, "The Story of Change: Why Citizens (Not shoppers) Hold the Key to a Better World." Its premise is that, for a sustainable, just future, people need to come together as citizens to demand rules that work. The project's other movies focus on what makes the economic system tick, who pays, who benefits and how to turn it around.

Workshops cover military aid to Israel, civil rights vs. corporate domination, psychology and activism, organized labor and economic equality, interrupting oppression, knowing rights with the police, restorative justice circles, inclusive community, the war on terror, Smart Justice, corporate personhood, racial and economic equity, empowering youth, influencing others, motivating people to act, dreaming of citizenship, raising funds, abolishing the death penalty, cultivating volunteers, the race-constructed world and marketing organizations.

For information, call 838-7870 or email pjals@pjals.org.

Calendar of Events

- Mar 7** • **"Stand for Justice: Justice for Immigrants, Refugees and Victims of Human Trafficking,"** Stephan Bauman, World Relief International, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., worldreliefspokane.org
- **"Myanmar and Southeast Asia,"** Richard Schatz, professor emeritus, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 777-4937 or email kfechter@whitworth.edu
- Mar 8** • **International Women's Day, "Women Rising, Gaining Momentum,"** Spokane Women's Club, 9th and Walnut, 3 to 5 p.m., 359-2898, maryannmurphy99@gmail.com
- Mar 9** • **"Meeting the 'Other' with Jesus,"** Fernando Ortiz, The Ministry Institute Saturday Workshop, 405 E. Sinto, 313-5765
- **"Human Trafficking in Our Community,"** Mabel Elsom, anti-human trafficking coordinator, Lutheran Community Services, Lincoln Center, 1316 N. Lincoln, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., 924-6405, joanp115@webband.com
- Mar 10** • **Kosher Dinner,** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave., 747-3304, spokanetbs.org
- **"Cultura," International Women's Day Celebration** by La Casa Hogar, Capitol Theatre's 4th Street Theatre, 14 S. 4th St., Yakima, 4 to 7 p.m., lacasahogar.org
- **"Precious Human Life and How to Use It Wisely,"** Venerable Thubten Chodron, Sravasti Abbey, Newport, 9:45 a.m. to 3 p.m. 447-5549
- Mar 12** • **"Invisible War Documentary,"** film by Kirby Dick on rape in the U.S. military, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7 p.m., 777-4566, watts@whitworth.edu
- Mar 13** • **Fig Tree Benefit Breakfast,** Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:15 a.m., 535-4112 or thefigtree.org
- Mar 14** • **"Egypt," Great Decisions Lecture** by Ben Robinson, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7:30 p.m., 777-4937
- Mar 14,16,17** • **Spokane Jewish Film Festival,** Magic Lantern Theatre, 25 W. Main, 747-7394, sajfs.org
- Mar 15** • **Fig Tree Benefit Lunch,** Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 11:45 a.m., 535-4112 or thefigtree.org
- Mar 15-16** • **PJALS Peace and Economic Justice Action Conference,** Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Ft. Wright, 838-7870, pjals.org
- Mar 15-17** • **Women's Cancer Survivor Retreat,"** The Franciscan Place, 1016 N. Superior, 483-6495, SJFOnline.org
- Mar 16** • **Spokane Orphan Summit,** Eastpoint Church, 15303 E. Sprague, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., spokaneorphansummit.com
- May 17, 18** • **Roger Williams Symposium,** "Faith Organizations Working for the Common Good," Michael-Ray Matthews, CUB-WSU in Pullman, 6 p.m., Sunday; Simpson United Methodist, 8:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Monday, 332-2611
- Mar 18** • **NAACP,** Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 7 p.m.
- Mar 20** • **"Seeing the Holy in the Ordinary: Taking the Incarnation Seriously,"** Kathy Finley, Coffee & Contemplation, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9 a.m., 448-1224 or ihrc.net
- Mar 21** • **"Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Assembly: Is Your Freedom of Assembly under Threat,"** Todd Gitlin, visiting scholar, Jundt Art Museum, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., 313-3567
- Mar 23** • **Relay Walk to Keep Our Community Whole,** on Division from Francis to Hastings, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., rally at Mead High School, slichty@pjals.org
- Mar 25-27** • **"Preparing for Paschal Mysteries,"** retreat for men, Fr. Frank Case, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 448-1224
- Mar 28-30** • **"Preparing for Paschal Mysteries,"** retreat for women, Fr. Frank Case, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 448-1224
- Mar 25-29** • **WSU Spokane Diversity Week,** Riverpoint Campus, exhibits first floor Spokane Academic Center (SAC),
- Mar 26** • **Mae Jemison,** first African-American woman astronaut, Washington State University Women's Recognition Luncheon, WSU's CUB Senior Ballroom in Pullman, 11 a.m., 335-4386, kim-barrett@wsu.edu
- Mar 25-28** • **Spokane Ministers Fellowship Holy Week Services,** St. Matthew's Baptist, 2815 W. Sunset Blvd., 6:45 a.m.
- Mar 29** • **Ecumenical Good Friday Procession** in downtown Spokane, Rotary Fountain at Riverfront Park, noon, 850-5839
- **Good Friday Experience Musical,** Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 645 S. Richard Allen Ct., 7 p.m.
- **Ecumenical Tenebrae Service,** Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes, 1115 W. Riverside, 7 p.m., 313-6789
- Mar 30** • **Dolores Huerta,** co-founder of United Farm Workers, "Cesar Chavez Celebration," University of Idaho Administration Auditorium, Moscow, 3 p.m., 208-885-5173, camp@uidaho.edu
- **"Behold! Jesus: An Easter Drama,"** INB Performing Arts Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., 1 & 6:30 p.m., spokanedreamcenter.org
- Mar 31** • **Easter Sunrise Service,** Spokane Ministers Fellowship, St. Matthew's Baptist, 2815 W. Sunset Blvd, 6 a.m.
- **Easter Sunrise Service,** Homer Todd preaching, Greenwood Memorial Terrace, 211 N. Government Way, 6:30 a.m.
- Apr 3** • **Fig Tree Distribution,** St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m.
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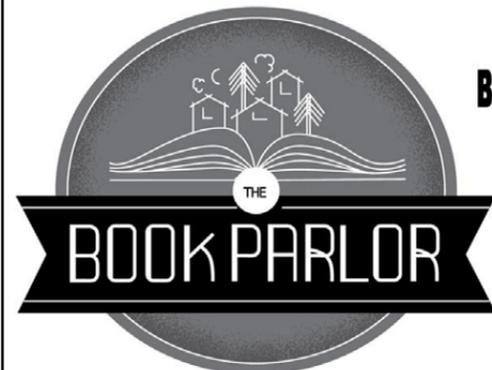
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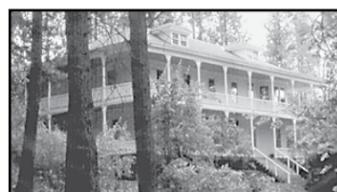


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Half acre of weeds becomes community garden that draws people

By Kaye Hult

Before the spring of 2011, a half-acre area of the Lutheran Church of the Master grounds in Coeur d'Alene was filled with Knapp weed. Now it is a thriving community garden, where members of the church and community grow a variety of produce to feed themselves and people in need in Kootenai County.

People of diverse races, abilities, income levels and faiths—Buddhists, atheists and various Christians—help grow organic produce there. Volunteers and gardeners include two-parent and single-parent families, a man suffering effects of Agent Orange, two people with cancer, and some with hypersensitivity to chemicals.

An 80-year-old widow said, "I can come to the garden alone, but I don't feel lonely here."

The pastor, the Rev. Bob Albing said 20 youth from the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints helped clean up the garden at the end of summer.

"It was amazing to watch them work in the heat. They are part of what makes it a community garden," he said. "We serve the community, and the community comes and serves with us."

Last summer, two Eagle Scouts built some wheel-chair accessible beds that produced spaghetti squash and potatoes.

A third of the gardeners come from the congregation, and the rest are from the community.

In 2010, Eula Hickam, a member of the congregation, approached the church council with a suggestion from AmeriCorps to use the land for a community garden. It was too late that year. The next year the council approved the idea, committing to provide the half-acre area, water and insurance.

In spring 2011, council members Jeff Lien and Bart Kleng asked Bart's wife, Michelle Gutz-Kleng to manage the project.

"I had driven by the lot for four years, thinking, 'I have to do something about that!'" she said.

For ideas, she and Bart visited the Shared Harvest Community Garden also in Coeur d'Alene.

Mike and Kim Normand, who manage that garden, gave advice about setting up a board of directors and other aspects of developing the garden, including making rental contracts with gardeners.

"What took them a year to do, we did in three months because of their advice," said Michelle.

In March 2011, Michelle and Bart attended a Kootenai County Habitat for Humanity annual banquet. Bart won the heads-and-



Bart and Michelle Gutz-Kleng in the community garden.

tails game, giving them the \$250 they needed for seed money for the garden.

One auction item was a nine-foot tall, black wooden replica of the Eiffel Tower. Thinking it would fit in the garden, she bid on it and won. With her background in interior design and landscaping, Michelle created a garden design with the Eiffel Tower as its centerpiece.

From the start, creating the garden used the energy and skills of many people.

Jeff, Bart and a fishing buddy dug the irrigation lines in a snowstorm. They installed 12 faucets, one every 40 feet. A 50-foot hose can reach every part in the garden.

"We wanted people to work in the garden, so we use hoses rather than drip systems. That's also why we have raised beds," Bart said.

Michelle designed the garden with 72 four-by-eight-foot beds. Most have wood frames. The beds designated for produce to donate do not.

"The gardens are organic. We provide water and composted manure. Last year, we used fish emulsion. In the fall, we planted beds with winter rye, which is coming up this spring. We'll turn it under in March for green manure. This year, our third year, we'll finally have some compost of our own," Michelle said.

Each person who rents a bed for \$25 per season receives a volunteer task. People in their 80s may water fruit trees. Younger people may spread manure or bark or build beds. Others weed or transport produce.

"Church members help with the garden through their support of the church," she said. "Not everyone is a gardener, but everybody participates. Older women contribute their egg shells and lettuce scraps for compost."

The Lutheran Church of the

Master, at the corner of Ramsey Rd. and Kathleen St., is in a high density, low-income neighborhood. In that location, the garden has visibility that creates community awareness.

"It is rare that someone drives by without looking, waving or honking," said Bart. "Neighbors tell us how wonderful it is to see this eco-friendly habitat full of butterflies, quail and doves. Last year, a marmot passed through."

This year, Michelle and Bart hope volunteers will work one-on-one with the gardeners who rent the beds.

Last summer, they added a shade structure, a place for people to sit and enjoy the garden or share a picnic. When one gardener begins to participate, soon other family members come, from children to grandparents.

In 2012, the community garden added about 800 pounds of produce to that provided by other gardens for 15 area food banks and soup kitchens. Their goal for 2013 is 1,000 pounds.

Each community garden in Kootenai County has a different mission but "a universal theme is sharing what is harvested," said Michelle.

Bart and Michelle handle much of the behind-the-scenes work. Melissa DeMotte does finances.

Not only has the garden brought a new sense of community, said Bob, but it also "has helped heal

the congregation, which experienced a split in 2010. The garden has been a positive force bringing the congregation back together."

Bob is involved with the garden, meeting gardeners and volunteers, digging in the dirt and hauling compost.

While the garden draws people, it is not a project to recruit people to the church. Instead it is intended as a gift "to give back to the community, to share our gifts with the community and our neighbors, to share God's love," Bart and Michelle explained.

"It's a door through which the community can become a part of the church without even coming in the door," Bob said. "People can experience the grace of God through other people and through the experience of growing the garden. God's grace is at work in both."

Bob enjoys it as a way to see members in a different context and to meet others from the community there in a relaxed setting.

For Michelle and Bart, it's like a part-time job they can do together. It's also a place to meet people and make friends.

"We're there nearly every day in the summer, sometimes 12 to 14 hours on Saturdays," said Bart.

Feedback also motivates them. One man with mobility problems told her: "This is a piece of heaven on earth."

Others say they may be in a bad mood when they come, but after gardening, they feel better.

"People connect here. We're always introducing people to each other," Michelle said.

Bart likens the garden to love: "It nurtures us as much as it nurtures others. Michelle and I can work and can sit and enjoy the beauty, the joy and the birds."

When they are not in the garden, Michelle teaches piano. She has run her own business for 25 years. Bart is senior vice president of the Post Falls branch of Community First Bank, which supports his involvement in the garden.

Bart and Michelle hope their sons, Roman, 17, and River, 12, who have helped do construction, dig holes and pick up rock, will grow to love gardening, too.

Michelle's parents, who live in Coeur d'Alene, rent a garden bed. Her mother contributed 19 varieties of dahlias to the perennial and dahlia garden begun in 2012.

"I come from a long line of Nebraska farmers," said Michelle. "We wait all winter to garden. That gets us through the winter."

"It's God's gift" Bart added. "Every day it's like a Christmas present. Something has popped up or bloomed. When we bite into fresh produce, it's a continuous miracle."

The spring registration for garden beds and the cleanup is from 2 to 4 p.m., March 17 at 4800 N. Ramsey Rd.

For information, call (208) 772-7928 or email community-gardenofthelutheran@gmail.com.



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