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FEATURES 40+ EVENTS



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

Deacon's family reflects the world

By Mary Stamp

Immigration has made the family of Gonzalo (Chalo) Martinez, a deacon in the Catholic Diocese of Spokane, a reflection of the world.

When he spoke several years ago at a national deacons event in Spokane on diversity in the church, he said, "There are many faces in God's house."

Then he showed a picture of his family and said, "There are many faces in Chalo's house."

Chalo, whose family came from Mexico to Texas in the early 1900s, and his wife, Laura, who is first-generation Filipino, have two sons and three daughters. Their 14 grandchildren are a mix of African American, Native American, Irish and Italian heritages, as well as Filipino and Mexican backgrounds.

"We get along. It's not just because of blood. Skin color has no significance," Chalo said, challenging how society often makes skin color and immigration status divisive.

"We need to open people's eyes to accept those who come to the U.S., because diversity enriches our society," he said. "We are all God's children."

For Chalo, "all" includes immigrants, prisoners, parolees, home-



Chalo Martinez serves immigrants, prisoners, parolees, homeless and parishioners.

less people and parishioners.

At St. Joseph Parish in Otis Orchards, his ministry includes visiting elderly members, preaching each month, strengthening involvement of Hispanic Catholics in the diocese, visiting prisoners at Airway Heights and being present to people on the streets of downtown Spokane through a revived Nightwalk Ministry.

Before becoming a deacon in 1994, Chalo was a probation and parole officer for county, state and federal governments in Los Angeles, San Gabriel, Seattle, Walla Walla, Lacey and Spokane.

To inform people of immigrants' experiences, he told of his family's migration to and their life in the U.S.

Chalo's parents were children when his grandparents migrated from Mexico to Texas, where he grew up. They left Mexico because of injustice, poverty, violence and the "misery of hiding from soldiers in revolution after revolution," he said.

"Today people leave Central America to escape danger, robbery and political corruption," he said. "They don't come to take jobs from others. They are fleeing war,

Continued on page 4

Donna Simanton has advocated for peace through her 95 years

From growing up with Swedish Lutheran and Czech Bohemian Catholic parents on a farm near Lansing, Mich., to living in Spokane, Donna Simanton's commitment to advocate for peace and justice has woven throughout her 95 years.

In the Qualchan Hills neighborhood, she and her late husband Jim built a park across from their home. It has a peace pole with the prayer, "May peace prevail on Earth" in English, Swedish, Japanese and paw prints (for pets).

Donna's philosophy is that people should love one another—people of all colors and all creeds—and should care for the earth.

She shared how her life and Jim's intersected with the times in which they lived.

Jim, who had served in the Signal Corps and helped rebuild communications facilities at air bases in Germany and France after World War II, returned from seeing the destruction saying, "Never again!"

"I was glad he felt the same as I did," she said.

Influenced to live frugally by growing up in the Great Depres-

sion and World War II, and by their modest incomes, Donna and Jim gave gifts of \$20 to \$50 to groups promoting equal rights, peace and environmentalism.

Then, after they received a settlement for royalties from television manufacturers for Jim's development of stereophonic sound, they created the James R. and Donna H. Simanton Foundation in 1988.

They decided to use the funds to support global, national and local groups that promote education, medical health, mental health, hunger relief, housing, peace and justice, including KSPS, KPBX, Doctors without Borders, Habitat for Humanity, Johns Hopkins University, Michigan State University, the Salvation Army Spokane, the Southern Poverty Law Center, UNICEF and the Taos Music School for latchkey children.

Donna mentioned some other favorite beneficiaries, and told of some peace and justice actions she joined in.

• Another Mother for Peace, founded in 1967, educates for end-

Continued on page 8

Workshop starts census outreach through faiths

As an initial part of The Fig Tree's outreach to congregations to be involved in the 2020 Census, Jim CastroLang, pastor of Colville First Congregational United Church of Christ and member of the Faith Action Network Board, led a workshop at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.

"Involvement of faith communities in the census is one way to work for justice," he said, "because so much is at stake in representation in government and funding programs serving the vulnerable."

He is program coordinator for The Fig Tree's effort to have congregations invite hard-to-reach communities to participate.

As part of the workshop, Alex Panagotacos, Spokane County Census Committee coordinator at Innovia Foundation, spoke of the importance of a fair and accurate count. The Constitution mandates a count of the population every 10 years.

In 2010, the Census Bureau hired 200 people to do partnership outreach in Washington State. This year, 20 are hired.

"There is a lot to lose in the coming census. Thankfully, the cities, county, Washington State Department of Transportation, Spokane Transit, the airport and Innovia Foundation stepped up to make sure Spokane County has support to provide a robust census outreach," said Alex, adding that Innovia has partnered with the Office of Financial Management and Washington Nonprofits to give grants for nonprofits to help.

Questions are like previous surveys asking for gender, race, ethnicity, age and number in households. It's only 10 questions, takes 10 minutes and has impact for the next 10 years, she said

This year letters—most in English, some in Spanish—go out
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WCC urges accurate info, prevention on COVID-19

Related to the COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) outbreak, the World Council of Churches (WCC) urges people to share accurate information, practice prevention and pray for people suffering from it. The primary source for accurate information about it is the World Health Organization (WHO), so the WCC has been sharing information from WHO, said Mwai Makoka, the WCC's Health and Healing program executive.

Fake news distracts people from responding effectively, he said, raising false alarms and false confidence. Because the WCC links with member churches, it has trusted access in many communities, said Manoj Kurian, coordinator of the WCC's Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. "We can channel the latest information, so religious leaders can share correct information.

Both suggest churches support new research, and also limit travel, meetings and worship services if there is a risk of transmitting it. Manoj added that coronavirus is occurring amid other diseases, such as measles, malaria and HIV, and communities with poor health infrastructures suffer the most.

WCC head speaks out on climate fears, populism

Speaking in Bergen, Norway at an international conference on Sustainability and Climate in Religion organized by the WCC and Norwegian churches, WCC general secretary Olav Fykse Tveit reflected on "What's Love Got to Do with It? Climate Justice and Care for the Earth."

"Life can be destroyed in seconds by a nuclear war. It is also being destroyed slowly, but steadily by climate change and a dramatic loss of biodiversity," he said, calling for people to limit that catastrophe. Given that both stir fear, he advised awareness of how fear is used for political purposes. "To gain votes, populists stir fear of 'the other' (xenophobia), often directed against refugees and migrants," he said. That protects power, privilege and profits of dominant groups, drawing attention away from the real threats to life. "Grace," he said, "opens up the possibility for change."

WCC and Catholics work on interreligious issues

The annual meeting of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and the WCC was held Feb. 6 to 7 in Geneva, Switzerland. Staff of the PCID and the WCC's Office of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation discussed last year's activities and future programs. The meeting detailed work on a joint document, "Serving Together in a Wounded World: Towards Interreligious Solidarity." The offices have collaborated since 1977, with joint interreligious publications on interreligious prayer and marriage, and on Christian witness and education for peace in a multi-religious world.

WCC invites prayer, music for 2021 Assembly

The WCC invites prayer and music submissions for its 11th Assembly in 2021 at Karlsruhe, Germany, on the theme, "Christ's Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity." The assembly, the highest legislative body of the WCC, meets every eight years to review programs, determine the policies, elect presidents and appoint a Central Committee to govern between assemblies.

Spiritual life is the "heartbeat" of an Assembly. Prayers and songs continue to be used by many long after an Assembly concludes. Music and prayer submissions are due on March 31, 2020.

WCC calls for divesting from fossil fuel industries

The WCC supports a joint call for churches and faith-based organizations to divest from fossil fuel industries. The call will be formally announced March 26 to 28, coinciding with the Economy of Francesco conference in Assisi, Italy, where 2,000 young people from around the world will join prominent economists.

Operation Noah, leading the call, is collaborating with the WCC and others to invite entities in all denominations to commit to fossil fuel divestment. Organizers view this as a powerful response to the climate emergency, shifting investments out of the problem and into the solution. Participants commit to divest from fossil fuel companies as soon as possible or within five years.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Benefits feature four speakers each, video

The Fig Tree celebrates its 36th year of publishing at its 2020 Benefit Lunch on Friday, March 6, and Benefit Breakfast on Monday, March 9, in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

Addressing the theme, "Connects People, Inspires Action," speakers will relate how The Fig Tree monthly newspaper shares news of people who are making a difference because of their faith and values, and how the annual Resource Directory connects people in the caring community

and is used by people in need to improve their lives.

Lunch speakers are Margo Hill, Eastern Washington University associate professor; Mark Finney of World Relief; Linda Hunt of the Krista Foundation, and Jeanette Laster of the Human Rights Education Institute in Coeur d'Alene.

Breakfast speakers are Joe Ader of Family Promise; David Milliken of the Hutton Settlement; Dainen Pentaof of the Center for Justice, and Suzi Hokonson, social justice advocate.

Guests, who attend for no charge, are invited to donate to support The Fig Tree.

Nathan Slabaugh Media is preparing a video, featuring Roberta Wilburn of Whitworth; Mike Petersen of The Lands Council; the Very Rev. Heather Van Deventer, of the Cathedral of St. John; Deb Abrahamson of the SHAWL Society; Austin Zimmerman of Ganesh Himal Trading and Darrel Lundby, Branching Out organizer.

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

Program delivers meals, opens Silver Café

Each day, Greater Spokane County Meals on Wheels (GSC-MOW) makes 1,200 meals in its kitchen for home-bound seniors and Silver Café participants.

While drivers deliver meals on 44 routes over 1,800 square miles of Spokane County, some mobile seniors go out to socialize and eat a hot, nutritious meal at a Silver Café, one of the 12 congregate sites GSC-MOW operates Monday through Friday.

On Jan. 31, GSC-MOW opened a new Silver Café at St. Mary of the Presentation, 602 E. 6th St. in Deer Park. Previously Deer Park's Silver Café was in the lower level of City Hall, but stairs made it difficult for many people to come, said Janet Dixon, director of development and communication. The new location is accessible for wheel chairs and walkers.

For 40 years, GSC Meals on Wheels has fought senior hunger

and isolation with its programs.

"Those threats jeopardize the health and well-being of older adults, especially those with limited means," said Janet. "Social interaction is vital for keeping seniors active, healthy and connected to their community. Silver Cafés include speakers, games and education."

For information, call 924-6976 or email info@gscmealsonwheels.org.

Habitat-Spokane will restore 'zombie' houses

In 2020, Habitat for Humanity-Spokane is acquiring blighted, abandoned homes—known as zombie houses—for rehabilitation, said executive director Michelle Girardot.

Funded in part by City of Spokane Community Development Block Grants, the Derelict Housing Acquisition and Homeownership Program purchases such homes, partnering with low-to-moderate income homebuyers, who earn 25 to 80 percent of the area median income.

Applicants, who complete its requirements of "sweat equity," homebuyer education and saving for closing costs, pay a mortgage at 30 percent of their income.

This program will help the community by transforming neglected, unsafe, unhealthy houses into safe, affordable homes and by providing more affordable housing for tax-paying homeowners.

"We are in a housing crisis with demand for affordable housing greater than the supply," she said.

The program relies on skilled and volunteer labor, in-kind donations and cash donations.

Several rehab projects are underway in the West Central neigh-

borhood, where some houses were magnets for criminal activity.

"Homes are sold at fair market value," Michelle said. "Our challenge is to find empty units that won't price out a family. Today even homes needing attention sell for over the appraised value and

then sit empty for months or years.

"Affordable homeownership helps families achieve the stability and self-reliance they need to build a better life. It also stabilizes neighborhoods," she said.

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



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Editorial Team

Editor/Publisher/Photos - Mary Stamp
Directory Editor - Malcolm Haworth
Website Developer - Lorna Kropp
Volunteer Coordinator - Kaye Hult
Editing - Carol Bellinger, Catherine Ferguson SNJM, Kaye Hult, Inga Jablonsky, Mary Mackay, Dru Powers, Nancy Roth, Marilyn Urness, Sara Weaver

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Habitat's Women Build is March 4 to 7

Habitat for Humanity-Spokane's annual Women Build event, "Building Strong Women and Strong Communities," from March 4 to 7, encourages women to help build houses in West Central Spokane. Participants who also donate receive swag with Habitat logos.

Women Build brings communities together to address Spokane's housing crisis. It empowers women as they help other women find strength, stability and self-reliance through home ownership, said Michelle Girardot, executive director.

While women and men build decent, affordable homes with low-income, hardworking families, they challenge stereotypes, learn home-building skills and have fun making a difference. For information, call 534-2552 or visit habitat-spokane.org/wb2020.

PJALS features Zach Norris as conference keynote

Zach Norris, executive director of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and co-founder of Restore Oakland, will speak at the Peace and Justice Action Conference Saturday, March 21, and at a Friday evening event, both at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, 4340 W. Fort Wright Dr.

The theme for the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS) event and spring benefit is "Believing in the Yet to Be."

Zach brings a restorative and racial justice lens to criminal justice issues and reform. A Harvard graduate and New York University-educated attorney, Zach is author of *We Keep Us Safe, Building Secure, Just and Inclusive Communities*. He is a co-founder of Justice for Families, which works to reduce youth incarceration.

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

LCSNW seeks more foster families for children

To meet the growing needs, Lutheran Community Services Northwest in Spokane seeks foster parents for children from birth to 17.

In 2019, it received 111 referrals from Washington's Department of Children, Youth and Families to place children, but lacked homes to place any. LCS had an average of eight referrals a week for unaccompanied refugee minors, but placed only eight youth in the year.

In December 2019, LCSNW had 31 youth in care. For information, call 747-8224.

Gonzaga is one of 50 sites for Holocaust exhibit

Gonzaga University is one of 50 sites for an exhibit of the American Holocaust Museum and the American Library Association, "Americans and the Holocaust," from March 16 to April 27 in its Foley Library Rare Books Room. Gonzaga's Institute for Hate Studies, its Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and the Spokane County Human Rights Task Force are planning three public events.

- An opening reception and panel on "Hate Reflections and Action" is at 7 p.m., Sunday, March 17, in Hemmingson Auditorium.

- Holocaust survivors Cora der Koorkanian and Carla Peperzak will share their insights in a "story court" at 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 31, in Hemmingson Ballroom.

- A panel from the consortium academic centers for the study of hate will discuss "Hate: Documenting It, Understanding It and Countering It" from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Monday, April 22, in Cataldo Hall.

For information, visit www.gonzaga.edu/holocaustexhibit.

Whitworth offers several March lectures

- For Whitworth's fourth Bioethics Symposium, Tripp Parker, a machine learning leader at Amazon and founding member of AI and Faith, will speak on "Artificial Intelligence: Hope for the Future or Ethical Nightmare?" at 7 p.m., Thursday, March 12, at Weyerhaeuser Hall.

- Jemar Tisby, president of The Witness, a Black Christian Collective, will discuss "What Is the Color of Compromise: The Role of Race in the Church Today" at 7 p.m., Tuesday, March 17, in Weyerhaeuser Hall.

- Eric Metaxas, bestselling author of *If You Can Keep It*, will speak at 7 p.m., Wednesday, March 18, at Cowles Auditorium.

For information, call 777-1000 or visit whitworth.edu/calendar.

Presentation shares census information

Continued from page 1

March 12 to 20, inviting people to do the survey online, which may be a barrier to some, but paper forms are available, too. In May, there will be home visits to encourage participation.

For Washington, \$13.7 billion is at stake, and \$640 billion nationally, Alex said. That includes funds for Section 8 Housing, Head Start, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and more.

The count determines the number of representatives in Congress, state legislatures and city councils, and has impact on school district lines.

"In Eastern Washington, \$3,000 per year per person is at stake to fund schools, roads, hospitals and housing," Alex said. "Everyone counts."

She said Title 13 protects people's data. The law prevents the Census Bureau from sharing information with anyone, she said. They cannot share with Homeland Security, ICE, landlords or anyone. Every Census Bureau employee takes an oath to protect the information. Once received, personal identity and demographic information are separated.

Communities that are hard to count include low income, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ, non-English speakers, persons experiencing homelessness, undocumented immigrants, people who distrust the government, young children, mobile persons, persons with mental or physical disabilities, people not in traditional housing and people living



Kimball Bighouse, Fernanda Mazof, Lucas Leek, Sarah Dixit and Jim CastroLang share in panel discussion.

in rural communities.

The Fig Tree is developing maps to relate locations of faith communities with hard-to-count areas, Jim said.

Panelists from hard-to-count groups shared their insights:

Sarah Dixit, senior field organizer with Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho (PPGWNI), talked of students reaching peers on college campuses.

Lucas Leek, who is transgender health and community coordinator at PPGWNI, told of fear of discrimination and difficulty filling out the form, which gives only two options for sex, M or F. While F is on Lucas' birth certificate, M is on Lucas' driver's license

Alex said that the Census Bureau will not compare responses, but "it's an understandable fear."

"There is a \$100 fine if we do not fill out a survey, \$500 for falsifying information and \$5,000 for misrepresenting information," Lucas said.

Fernanda Mazof, who organizes with the Latino community with Raiz of PPGWNI, said 2.7 million

African Americans and Latinos were undercounted in the 2010 census because many distrust the government.

Kimball Bighouse of the Kootenai Nation, employed by the Coeur d'Alene tribe, said tribes also distrust the government because of broken treaties and subjugation.

Because letters go to people with an address, not a PO box, it leaves out homeless people and people on reservations who do not have a street address, he said.

Even when census volunteers go door to door, they may miss people who are away.

Catholic Charities is helping count people in its housing projects.

"Faith communities may sign up to help count people in their neighborhoods and people receiving their services," Jim said. "We need to build trust, so we have an accurate count to make sure there are resources for everyone."

For information on the faith community outreach project, call Jim at 998-4203. To learn about the census, visit spokanecensus.org.

Gonzaga involves campus in Northeast Spokane

Gonzaga University is launching Opportunity Northeast to improve lives of individuals, youth and families in Northeast Spokane and offer transformative learning opportunities for GU students, faculty and staff.

GU President Thayne McCulloh said it represents Gonzaga's mission to work with partners and neighborhoods to

address their priorities, especially in education and health care.

Molly Ayers, director of GU's Center for Community Engagement, said many students thrive in hands-on learning that can have lasting impact in a specific place, aligning with partners, focusing on priority needs and working for outcomes neighbors seek.

Northeast Spokane faces eco-

economic, educational and health challenges. Data gathered in 2017 found a median household income of \$33,171, 39 percent of children living at or below the poverty line, 77 to 94 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, and lower life expectancy rates.

For information, visit www.gonzaga.edu/ONE.

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RSVP now to assure seating

Deacon says Hispanic involvement is rising

Continued from page 1
famine, disease and ecological disasters like drought. They come for a better life.”

His family settled in Dallas-Fort Worth as migrant workers. They traveled in caravans to do field work on farms in Indiana, Ohio and Illinois.

After Chalo’s grandfather abandoned the family, his father—the oldest—went to work. His sisters and nieces called him “Papa.” After his siblings married, he married Chalo’s mother, who was 13 years younger.

As children, Chalo’s older siblings worked in the fields and did odd jobs until his father found a permanent job at a Fort Worth meat packing plant, where his co-workers were African Americans and Mexicans. Chalo grew up in a neighborhood with black, white and Hispanic workers.

“There was no prejudice,” he said.

Chalo spent four years in high school in a seminary in California with the Claretian Fathers. After studying philosophy at Loyola Marymount, he realized when he graduated in 1966 that the priesthood was not his calling. He joined the Army and for three years was a dental assistant at Fort Lewis, where he met Laura, also a dental assistant.

Chalo served in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969 and returned to Los Angeles to work as a probation officer. He and Laura married in Olympia in 1969. They celebrated their 50th anniversary Aug. 23, 2019.

“As a parole officer in East and South Central Los Angeles, I met poverty, robbery and gang infestation that was likely as bad as what my parents had fled,” he said.

“Many juveniles and others I worked with were first or second generation immigrants, whose families had migrated seeking the American dream of freedom and justice,” he said.

Later in the federal system, Chalo met some who had experienced coyotes, cartels, injury and death enroute, crossing between legal border crossing points. He also met young men who were brought to the U.S. as children, grew up here, had never been in Mexico and did not speak Spanish, but were deported there.

When Chalo worked in the San Gabriel Valley with gang members—in and out of jail since they were 10 to 12 years old—he helped some progress through parole to earn associate, bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

From 1978 to 1979, he was inter-group relations specialist at Washington State Penitentiary in

Walla Walla. From 1981 to 1990, he was a state parole officer in the Olympia area. For three years in Lacey, he was hearing examiner for the U.S. Parole Board, traveling around the U.S. and home on weekends.

When he became federal probation officer for U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington, he moved to Spokane Valley.

Both probation and parole are alternatives to incarceration. Probation is before or instead of prison. Parole is early release from prison. As probation or parole officer, he supervised people who were to follow certain rules.

“Now, both are called supervised release,” said Chalo, who applied what he learned in seminary as he saw “the life with its ups and downs.”

“With faith, I see good in people. Just as the juveniles’ parents, I had hopes for them. The youth would open up about what was going on inside, about their dreams and hopes. Most accepted responsibility for what they did. I saw many change their lives.”

Chalo worked with offenders even as they violated parole, went back to prison and came back out.

For 23 years, he did lay ministry. The priest at Sacred Heart Parish in Lacey, where he helped with liturgy for Spanish services, encouraged him to become a deacon.

During the Archdiocese of Seattle’s four-year diaconate program, he moved to Spokane Valley, was a lay leader at St. Mary, and was ordained a deacon 25 years ago in 1994. In May 2004, he earned a master’s degree in pastoral ministry at Gonzaga University and retired as U.S. parole officer.

Chalo has served at St. Mary in the Valley, the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Joseph in Spokane, and at St. Rose of Lima in Cheney.

For 20 years, he has served intermittently with the Hispanic ministry at St. Joseph’s on Dean.

Along with being a deacon, he has been involved with immigration issues, people in the criminal justice system and as a Hospice of Spokane chaplain.

Before Lutheran pastor John

Olson—who founded Nightwalk Ministry in downtown Spokane—retired in 1999, Chalo joined that ministry of presence on streets and in bars, listening to people’s needs. With Deacon Kelly Stewart of Assumption parish, he is reviving Nightwalk.

He encourages parishioners at Assumption, St. Joseph’s in Otis Orchards and St. Rose of Lima to bring food and clothing to homeless people.

“In Nightwalk, I don’t know what I will encounter. I meet rough looking guys who ask to talk with me. They share how they messed up or lost parole. I listen to them and pray with them,” he said.

Chalo has also been involved with the national V Encuentro program, engaging Catholic leaders to reach out to Hispanic Catholics who are on the peripheries of the church and society—those not actively involved in a faith community or living in at-risk situations. It started in the early 1960s, to develop liturgies in Spanish and reflect Hispanic cultural traditions.

In the 1990s, attendance at St. Joseph’s on Dean was low because many Hispanics had left. Now, he said, it is “packed and active” with prayer groups and Bible studies.

In January 2018, 300 attended the diocesan V Encuentro in Othello.

In the Spokane Diocese, St. Patrick’s in Tri Cities, the largest parish, is more than 50 percent Hispanic. Other parishes with Hispanics are Sacred Heart in Brewster, St. Patrick in Walla Walla, St. Vincent in Connell, and Sacred Heart in Othello.

At St. Joseph’s on Dean, parish leaders encourage Spanish- and English-speaking members to mingle at events to break down barriers “and remind them we are many faces of God in God’s house,” Chalo said.

“We help parishioners accept their differences and feel comfortable when they are together,” he said. “We help them be conscious that we all are God’s children.”

For information, call 263-9553. gmartinez@dioceseofspokane.org.

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Eastern Washington Legislative Conference

State and local issues for tenants and landlords opens conference

The opening session of the 2020 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference brought calls to challenge unjust housing policies that leave tenants fearing they will lose their homes, and for the city to address both improving tenant-landlord relations and increasing affordable housing.

Terri Anderson, executive director of the Tenants Union of Washington in Spokane, and Breean Beggs, City Council president, spoke on how rising rents and eviction policies increase homelessness.

The tenants union offers four walk-in tenants' clinics a month in Spokane to help renters improve their living conditions and organize.

Terri's presentation outlined several problems and priorities:

- One is expanding housing choice vouchers so people pay no more than 30 percent of income on rent. Funds cover only 20 percent of people in need nationally and just 12 percent in Spokane.

- Another is a cap on the rate of increase in rents. Some report rents rising from \$550 to \$750 in one month. The state has no rent control law. No city or county can establish one.

- A third is to require longer notice for all rent increases and to allow tenants to pay up-front costs in six monthly installments.

- Fourth, the city tenant protection proposals could also require landlords to possess a business license, require limited inspection on certain rental properties and require landlords provide



Terri Anderson



Breean Beggs

tenant information and voter registration material when the tenant moves in.

"Currently a landlord can give notice on the 10th, after rent is paid, and the tenant has to be out on in 20 days," Terri said. "Rarely are damage fees returned.

She suggests the city adopt a Cause Ordinance that will require landlords to provide cause in order to terminate a tenancy and another to protect tenants to organize in their buildings free from retaliation.

Terri said Spokane is the largest city in Washington with no tenant protections beyond the Landlord-Tenant Act. Tenants lacking resources may lose housing. She also suggests Spokane adopt a prepaid tenants' relocation fund if the property is condemned. The city could pay the tenant to sue the landlord to recoup the funds.

The City Council will consider tenant protection ordinances in March.

Breean said policies are often set to benefit people with money and power, but when people organize, they can make changes.

"There need to be critical masses coming together to influence issues such as housing," he said. "I've been a social worker, lawyer, city council member and a street protestor. There are all sorts of ways to work for social change. We have to figure which tool works when and who will do it.

"Our community is housing burdened with many paying more than 30 percent of their incomes for rent. We are in a housing crisis because there are not enough units. Half the population, who are homeowners, don't understand the thousands experiencing rent increases on month-to-month

leases," he said. "We need people to understand so we can lift the entire community."

He suggests expanding affordable housing and keeping mixed neighborhoods. One idea is to change the law that limits use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to infrastructure improvements and let it be used for building affordable housing, such as in West Central Spokane.

Breean said the city continues to improve landlord-tenant ordinances, adding to one passed two years ago creating loans for deposits and relocation assistance.

He said there is also need for new options, like single-room occupancy and cooperative ownership buildings.

"Clearly, there are some bad landlords and some bad tenants, but most are good," he said. "The

ultimate empowerment is to have affordable housing and adequate pay."

Paul Warfield of the Mayor's office spoke briefly, saying the mayor seeks to meet people where they are and move forward, collaborating to communicate on issues, which she recognizes are about the price and number of housing units. She plans to work with the Council on addressing the affordable housing shortage.

For information, contact terria@tenantsunion.org, breeanbeggs@gmail.com or pwarfield@spokanecity.org.

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Leader uplifts working together for change

In closing the Legislative Conference, Naghmana Ahmed Sherazi, a scientist, educator and mother who moved to Spokane from Houston seven years ago, was impressed by the issues covered.

"Like the five fingers on each hand, each digit is of inherent worth and created for a reason," she said. "Like the opposable thumb, for the hand to function efficiently, all fingers must come together to make it work.

"For society to work, we all must bring our individual expertise, gifts and skills, celebrate our cultures so society can be enriched and function as a whole," Naghmana said.

"We must all come together and work together on all these issues we care about. Collectively, we can make a difference and our strong, unified voices will be heard," she said.

"We were all created different,

so we can teach and learn from each other," Naghmana said. "Similarly, we all have insights into how different bills can affect us.

"No one can bring change alone. I had no family in Spokane when I came, so I created community here. Like minds gravitate towards each other," she said.

She appreciates that Spokane welcomed her, a Muslim immigrant woman from Pakistan. She is now a citizen and is involved

with the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, Refugee Connections, Muslims for Community Action and Support, Spokane Women Together, the Center for Justice and Spokane FāVS.

"With Spokane 87 percent white, that means that 13 percent of the population is people of other cultures," Naghmana observed. "So we must strive to build community and accept each other."

For information, email sherazi@gonzaga.edu.

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FEATURED SPEAKERS

Jonathan Moo | "Creation Care: Bridging Science & Faith"
Edward B. Lindaman Endowed Chair
associate professor of theology at Whitworth University

J. William T. Youngs | "Expo '74: The Environment Then & Now"
professor of history at Eastern Washington University
author of *The Fair and the Falls: Spokane's Expo '74*

Kara Odegard | "A Report on the Spokane Community Adaptation Project"
policy analyst with the Spokane City Council
focusing on climate and environmental sustainability

SCHEDULE SUMMARY

Friday Afternoon & Evening: Showcase of local organizations, dinner and keynote address
Saturday: Morning workshops on air, land and water, networking lunch, afternoon sessions on technology and social action, interfaith discussion, feedback with local civic leaders, and closing prayer and music.

EVENT FEES \$20 for students* \$40 general* \$15 additional for Friday dinner
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Panel focus on need for relationships and systemic compassion for homeless

Joe Ader of Family Promise, Alan Eschenbacher of All Saints Lutheran Church, and Megan Chandler and Renee Norris, both of Catholic Charities, called for “Understanding Homelessness: Compassionate Communication towards Those in Need” in a workshop for the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.



Alan Eschenbacher, Megan Chandler and Renee Norris

Compassion includes engaging someone experiencing homelessness with greetings and eye contact before offering help, as well as the “systemic” compassion of shelters that receive homeless families and individuals having a coordinated entry plan.

When people go to Homeless Families Coordinated Assessment Program, case workers first establish a relationship, then gather information to understand their eligibility for programs and goals, said Megan. The information is entered in a database agencies access to decide the best place to refer the people, rather than having them enter shelters on a first-come-first-served basis.

Renee said because those in trauma are vulnerable and find it hard to navigate the system, she

offers a copy of The Fig Tree’s Resource Directory as a self-help tool. SNAP also has a pocket guide to shelters and food banks.

She said anyone—after making eye contact—can give the guides to people experiencing homelessness.

Fourteen years ago, All Saints Lutheran saw many homeless people across the street in Coeur d’Alene Park. So the church started a Tuesday evening dinner for about 70. Now 120 to 150 come—200 in the summer. About 80 percent of them are homeless. Other churches send volunteers to help set up, cook and clean up. The church’s food bank gives out 3,000 pounds of food a week.”

The church also has a mental health chaplaincy that has trained 35 companions to work with

homeless people.

“The best way to break the cycle of homelessness, once someone is housed, is for them to have a companion,” Alan said.

Since 2000, poverty shifted from urban to suburbs, but most programs focus on people downtown,” Joe said.

“Along with that, we have not built enough housing to meet the population increase, so the vacancy rate is under 2 percent in Spokane and .6 percent in Spokane Valley,” said Joe, noting that homelessness is about the rising cost of housing, not just drugs and mental health.

“Over five years, average rents rose 48 percent, 13 percent a year,” he said. “High rents increase homelessness, because income increased only 15 percent. The living wage is

\$21/hour. With the minimum wage \$13.50/hour, there is a gap even for those working 40 hours.”

Renee said in this market many people spend 40 to 50 percent of their incomes on rent plus utilities.

Income inequality makes it hard to move out of poverty,” she said.

Often people with a 20-day eviction notice can need a deposit plus first and last month’s rent, which can mean they need \$3,000 to \$5,000 to move into another house or apartment.

“In Washington, there is no cap on deposits, which are often fully non-refundable,” Megan said.

A family of three with one member working a full-time, minimum-wage job may not qualify for low-income housing.

“Many worked in retail, but 1,400 stores closed in 2018 and 1,900 in 2019,” Joe said. “We are experiencing fundamental changes in the economy.”

Alan said those who can’t compete are on the sidelines, not included in unemployment statistics. Corporations add part-

time jobs, so they do not pay for benefits like medical coverage.

Before judging homeless people, he suggests sitting on a park bench beside someone who is homeless to learn who they are and their experiences.

Joe said a common factor in homelessness is the loss of community, friends or family to lean on.

“We will not solve the issue with housing only. We need to build community support structures,” he said, telling of a family housed in a church two months ago.

The father had a tumor behind his eye. Church members took him to the doctor and paid rent.

“Programs do not change people. Relationships do,” said Joe. “There will never be enough pastors or social workers to relate to the people with no homes. The faith community can befriend people and advocate for housing, social services and opportunities.

For information, call 747-5487 or 325-5005 or visit familypromise.org, cceasternwa.org/homeless-resources or allsaintsgather.org.

Workshop identifies dynamics of racism, supremacy

Gen Heywood of Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience, Walter Kendricks, pastor of Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church, and John Smith, a former state senator, led an interactive workshop at the recent Legislative Conference on “Faithfully Facing Racism: Confronting White Supremacy.”

Gen said it’s essential to challenge racism and white supremacy, name the behaviors, say “Stop,” and not wait for perfection.

John, who grew up in a white supremacist family in Stevens County, shares about his experiences. He believes from his study of scripture and faith that people of faith have an obligation to speak out, both to defend the rights of the vulnerable and to restore those transgressing. However, he called for acting with care to avoid making “an oppressor feel oppressed because that spreads white supremacy. The goal is to restore people. That’s how to overcome racism.”

Walter invited people to share their experiences of white supremacy and what it was like to

be in that moment. He listed three examples: 1) being patronizing; 2) saying, “I’m not racist. I’m color blind,” and 3) ignoring inequities of the criminal justice system.

“I used to deal with racism by avoiding places where I was not welcome,” said Walter, who now seeks to educate people.

Gen suggested an approach that uses two hands: holding a hand out to say “stop” while reaching out with the other hand to say, “I’ll meet you in our common humanity.” She said, “Stop” may include a spectrum of responses to hearing a racist comment—from calling it out to calling the police or taking a video.

“When a person says they don’t see color, we can point out they do and offer the second hand offering to meet in our common humanity, which means recognizing we all can turn to a better way. Not to see someone’s color is to reject that person’s experiences and humanity,” Gen said.

NAACP Spokane president Kurtis Robinson noted: “Race is

a construct. It’s not real.”

John was taught as part of white supremacy to seek a black or Hispanic friend, so he could say, “I’m not racist. I have a black friend.” Now he knows that’s what racists say.

“It’s important to see there are differences and not minimize the differences, but see who people are,” he said. “We need to create empathy. Part of racism is projecting fears on others.

“If a woman is a victim of sexual assault, it’s not because all men are bad. Black people have experienced harm from some white people, but not all white people are bad,” said John.

Kurtis invited people to join efforts by attending NAACP third-Monday meetings, the Spokane Coalition Against Racism or a “Why Race Matters” workshop.

“Come and see how you can engage with the community and understand how internalized racism is,” he said.

For information, call 408-593-9556, 724-0301 or 209-2425.

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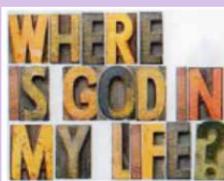
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Eastern Washington Legislative Conference

Workshop reports progress in responsible investing, shareholder advocacy

Sr. Pat Millen of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and Mark Kinney, a local financial adviser with CUSO Financial Services located at Numerica Credit Union, told participants in an Eastern Washington Legislative Conference workshop that shareholder advocacy and socially responsible investing are “ways to change the corporate culture.”

Sr. Pat, noting those efforts began about 1978, has served on her community’s Corporate Responsibility Investment Committee since 1982 and is on the Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment (NWCRI) with the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center (IPJC) in Seattle.

With both, she brings her community’s values and voice through proxy votes, commonly challenging corporate boards when there were few or no women or people of color nominees.

“Religious communities of women and men have retirement investments. How we invest our portfolio is important,” she said. “Our community seeks to be so-



Sr. Pat Millen and Mark Kinney

cially responsible, not just invest for financial returns. We invest to have a voice in a company for advocacy, or do not invest in companies on our ‘no-no’ list.”

The sisters do not invest in some companies because of their labor practices and do not invest in others because of environmental issues.

Sr. Pat described some efforts:

- Nora Nash OSF challenges Wells Fargo, which bought the bank the community used in Philadelphia. Through shareholder advocacy, she pushed the bank to make changes after some

ethical lapses.

Nora has also addressed abuses of other corporations.

- Judy Byron SP works with NWCRI, a coalition of religious communities IPJC formed in 1994. Through NWCRI, they bought stock in gun companies to have a voice. They have also had impact on gun sales policies at several major retailers.

“Sometimes large groups influence companies by not buying their products,” Sr. Pat said. “We also urged airlines to train workers to identify human trafficking.”

Part of her community’s and NWCRI’s investments are for shareholder advocacy to urge corporations to be accountable for their policies and actions.

“We collaborate with the national Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) on social, economic and environmental health,” Sr. Pat said. “We use our power as investors to shape a more just world. Shareholder dialogue with companies on practices has brought some economic and environmental justice.”

Recently, however, the five-member Securities and Exchange Commission, appointed by the White House, proposed rules that may undermine shareholder actions, she said. Instead of holding at least \$2,000 in stock one year before filing a shareholder resolution, the proposal requires holding stock three years or having \$25,000. It also wants to limit the influence of coalitions with aggregate holdings, like NWCRI.

Mark told of efforts at the recent World Economic Forum at Davos, calling corporations to build a sustainable world through

environmental responsibility, social responsibility and governance access (ESGs), he said.

He sees some major investment firms adding diversity to their boards, being committed to ESGs and seeing climate change is an investment risk.

“I didn’t hear this talk five years ago. Some companies are realigning their priorities to care about their workers and invest some profit into the economy and jobs,” he said.

Despite progress, there’s more to do. For example, corporations need to shift from hiring people to work for too few hours to qualify to receive benefits like pensions or health insurance.

Mark thinks millennials are savvy and ready to challenge.

“More consumers want these issues addressed, and more people ask their financial advisors to find investments that reflect their values,” he said. “Five years ago, socially responsible investing was a niche market. Now it’s expanding.”

For information, call 535-7613 or email mkinney.cfsinvest@numericacu.com.

Faith entities aid people in having a voice on bills

Paul Benz of the Faith Action Network, Mario Villanueva of the Washington State Catholic Conference and Jacob Schmidt of Earth Ministry each offered an overview of bills being proposed for the 2020 session of the Washington State Legislature during its second week.

They are among the faith groups that meet with legislators to lobby on issues related to their values.

“Our voice matters,” Paul said. “There’s a hotline anyone can use and people could participate digitally in the Feb. 6 Advocacy Day.”

By calling 800-562-6000, people can offer their views on bills and have messages go to their three state legislators and the governor. Residents can also call their legislators’ offices directly.

FANWA has information at fanwa.org to help people find their districts, meet with legislators, write letters or emails, develop effective messages and advocate in Olympia. It also has fact sheets on priority issues and information on the status of bills.

Among its 2020 priorities are closing the capital gains tax break, a working families tax credit, strengthening Temporary Access for Needy Families, establishing a fruit and vegetable incentive program, changing rules on driving with a suspended license, repealing the death penalty, post-

conviction reviews, supporting sustainable farms, setting climate pollution limits, protecting immigrants from arrests outside courthouses, banning semi-automatic weapons and high capacity magazines, eliminating private detention facilities for immigrants, sequestering agricultural carbon emissions, and accessing dental therapy.

Mario said the WSCC works to bring the Catholic voice in a nonpartisan action focusing on Catholic social justice teachings and teachings on life.

It has an online network, wacatholics.org/alert, with an advocacy bulletin, a list of legislation they oppose, support and are neutral on. Because the legislature is in motion, there are also updates on priorities at 206-274-7680.

Like FAN, they support challenging discrimination against immigrants, abolishing the death penalty, training people in the hotel business on human trafficking, preventing private companies from owning and managing immigration detention facilities and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation.

Jacob said Earth Ministry supports the clean fuel bill for energy decarbonizing in transportation, eliminating fire-fighting foam to keep drinking water safe, banning single-use plastics and encourag-

ing reusable bags, and protecting orcas and salmon.

More than 1,750 bills passed out of committee by the first cutoff on Feb. 7. By Feb 11, bills passed out of fiscal committees before moving to the floor of the Senate and House.

Bills must pass out of the first committee in the opposite chamber by Feb. 28 and the second budget committee by March 2. Bills that don’t pass by midnight March 12 are dead.

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



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Donna's commitment to peace has been influenced by her faith and life

Continued from page 1

ing war to solve disputes among nations, people and ideologies. Donna marched with their Chicago group on the snowy day before President Nixon signed the peace treaty ending the Vietnam War.

- The United Religions Initiative fosters interfaith efforts for peace, justice, cooperation and dialogue.

- Acting to protect the environment, Donna and a friend lay down in front of bulldozers to stop DuPage County near Chicago from building a road through a forest preserve.

- To protest war, she participated in a Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane march against the Iraq war and a candlelight march.

Donna said her commitment to peace was influenced by her involvement with Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, nondenominational and United Church of Christ churches, and what she called a "hip" church—the Community Church of the Servants led by a Lutheran pastor in an Episcopal church. In Spokane, she is active in Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ.

Donna shared her story.

Living on a farm outside Lansing, Mich., she began first grade at five in a one-room country school with 11 students in eight grades.

Her mother cooked Swedish food and re-made second-hand clothes for her to wear.

In the Depression when Donna was in junior high, her family's farm was auctioned off. They moved to Okemos, a Lansing suburb and home to many Michigan State University professors.

She attended a small high school where she was one of two students studying Latin, the only language offered. The principal also taught math and shop. She was the lead in school musicals and plays.

Her father found work with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) public works projects. Some classmates made fun of WPA workers.

Donna graduated top in her



Peace pole in park with prayer for peace to prevail in Japanese and dog paw prints, left. Donna Simanton in her home, right.



class of 26 and worked a summer at a WT Grant store, earning \$15 a week.

Living at home, she started at Michigan State, but failed chemistry and went back to work. Then she saw a brochure saying that John Hopkins University School of Nursing was recruiting women for its Nurse Cadet Corps and would pay for three years of study plus \$15 a month. She started the program in Baltimore in 1944.

The war ended in April 1945, and Donna graduated in June, so she returned to Lansing to work as a private duty nurse and with an ear, nose and throat specialist.

In an evening philosophy class at Michigan State, she met "a delightful man." Jim had spotted her, too, asked the instructor for her name and called her mother, on the excuse that he was missing an assignment. Their first date was Nov. 9, 1947. They were engaged on New Year's Eve, before Jim left for California to work with his brother. In July, she flew there. They shopped for an engagement ring, which took them five years to pay off. They married in October 1948 in Berkeley.

Her parents couldn't afford to come, so her mother made and sent her wedding dress. Donna and Jim drove on a one-week honeymoon, returning with no money,

so co-workers at Jim's plant gave them a food shower.

In Berkeley, Donna was a private duty nurse and physical therapy nurse in a polio unit.

Then Jim's brother invited them to move to Phoenix for a job with an agricultural chemicals company, but it went out of business. Jim had education points on the GI bill, so they returned to Lansing for him to study at Michigan State.

Their first son, John, was born. The delivery cost \$300, which meant another five years of payments. They lived in married student housing, a prefabricated World War II Quonset hut with no plumbing and a communal dining area, built to accommodate the influx of soldiers going to school.

Donna left work as a visiting nurse after Jim earned a master's in business management in 1950. They moved to Port Huron, where he developed an auto light, one of his many inventions.

From 1951 to 1956, Jim taught chemistry with Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, where their son Michael was born. There he helped faculty discover Aluminum 26, a radioactive isotope, and did carbon dating on the recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls.

In 1956, he began nuclear research at Argonne National Lab in Glen Ellyn, Ill., helping develop a particle accelerator. In the 1960s, he joined Fermilab, in Batavia, Ill., developing robots to work in radioactive areas.

They took out a \$15,000 loan to build a house in Glen Ellyn, moving in when it was just a foundation and shell. Until the boys were in school, Donna stayed at home, nailing wallboard and painting walls.

She worked seven years as an orthopedic nurse and then as a private duty nurse for a rich retired couple. She also went as a nurse to vaccinate children in Chicago's crime-ridden Cabrini Green neighborhood.

With the Glen Ellyn United Church of Christ, she chaired Casa Central, helping inner city Spanish-speaking and Mexican people.

In 1975, Jim helped found Telesonics, Inc., which developed and patented the stereo sound system for television. The first tests, conducted with station WTTW 11 Chicago, were at the Simanton home in Glen Ellyn.

In the 1980s, Jim sued Zenith for patent infringement. Zenith's 20 attorneys did not show up in court, so the judge awarded Jim patent royalties for every TV in Japan, Canada and the U.S.

After retiring, they spent winters in Arizona and the rest of the year in Spokane, which they discovered while traveling around the U.S. in an RV. Jim designed their Spokane house and had it built before they moved in 1995.

The summer after Jim had a stroke in 1998, he sat on their front porch in a wheel chair and designed a park across the street on an Etch a Sketch. Qualchan Hills Park Homeowners Association now owns it.

Their son John retired from the Navy and moved to Spokane to help care for Jim until he died in 2002 at the age of 80.

Donna continues her activism, which today includes writing letters to the editor and praying every day for peace.

For information, call 448-7680 or email dmsimanton@aol.com.

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City does Climate Action Survey during March

Spokane City Council's Sustainability Action Subcommittee is working with Kara Odegard, the city's sustainability research analyst, to draft a Climate Action Plan. To do that, they have released a survey to study impacts of climate change on Spokane.

From Feb. 21 to March 20, the subcommittee is doing a climate action survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spokane-sas-survey> on how the city should respond to climate changes.

For information, email kodegard@spokanecity.org.

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Couple welcome asylum seeker into their lives, help him share his story

The story of Lewis Gwegeh Nuah's asylum journey last year from his homeland, Cameroon, through South America, Central America and Mexico to Spokane, gives insights into what asylum seekers experience.

He is in Spokane because Suzi Hokonson visited the border a year ago to volunteer with asylum attorneys. For seven weeks, she helped with child care, lunches and clothing while the attorneys worked with asylum seekers.

Suzi sponsored three Nicaraguan men. Alberto and his uncle Silvio have been moved five times and are currently in detention in Mississippi. Lester was sent to Adelanto Detention Center north of San Bernadino, and was in phone communication with Suzi after she left. Suzi and Eric Henningsen drove down for Lester's asylum hearing on Aug. 19, 2019.

After Lester was granted asylum and freed, he went to Las Vegas, where he has a childhood friend.

Lester told Suzi of a friend in Adelanto named Lewis. So when Lewis called Lester at Suzi's phone number, she knew who he was and learned more of his situation.

Suzi and Eric were corresponding with Lewis, and Eric offered to be his sponsor. Eric and Suzi flew to Los Angeles for Lewis' bond hearing.

"It was of value for us to go and show our white faces," said Eric.

Lewis was granted release on bond for \$25,000. Eric and Suzi returned to Spokane, put together the funds and drove to Tacoma to pay Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE).

Lewis called Suzi on Monday, Dec. 16, to tell of his release. A paralegal Suzi and Eric had met in the waiting room arranged for him to travel by bus to Spokane. He arrived Dec. 19 and lives with Eric.

Lewis shared his journey into seeking asylum.

From colonial times until the 1960s, Cameroon was divided into French and English sections. After the colonial powers left, the people were divided by the cultures from their colonial history. The English-speaking are 30 percent of the population, and the French-speaking—70 percent—run the government and economy.

"Grievances and discrimination arose from uneven government representation and economic development," Lewis said. "In 2016,



Eric Henningsen, Lewis Gewgeh Nuah and Suzi Hokonson

there was open violence between the English-speaking people and the French-speaking government. The government tried to quell the uprisings, which are still going on, and the government has responded with brutality."

Lewis earned a college degree in political science in 2014 at Cameroon University in Buea.

"I hoped to serve in the national or local government to make changes," he said, "but I learned that serving in the government is about who you know."

"Most allegiance to the government is out of fear, not love," Lewis said.

In 2016, he opened a small grocery store. He ran it until government forces burned it down in September 2018, because he spoke out against government brutality on the civilian population. He fled because the government threatened his life because he stands in solidarity with English-speaking Cameroonians. He left three siblings, a girlfriend and his son.

"I crossed into Nigeria, but they have an extradition agreement with Cameroon, so I did not feel safe. Many from Cameroon go to Ecuador, which offers a free visa to Cameroonians. I arrived in Ecuador Feb. 8, and at the hotel, I met two others from Cameroon and two from India. We shared our stories. They were heading to the U.S. for political asylum, so I decided to join them."

Trekking and traveling by bus, they crossed Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico. It took four months to reach Tijuana on May 3, 2019.

Mexican immigration authorities had Lewis and 20 others cross to San Ysidro, Calif., where they were taken to the ICE detention center near the port of entry. He

spent eight days there and was in San Luis, Ariz., 10 days before going to Adelanto Detention Center near San Bernadino, where he was in detention for seven months.

"Enroute and in detention, I learned that people in every country face unique threats, and every country has different ways of treating immigrants. When we arrived in Colombia, we found our own accommodation and applied for a transit permit," he said.

Panama, where thousands flee from Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela, India and Africa, has makeshift camps. Costa Rica has established migrant centers.

In Honduras, local families rent rooms for \$10 a night to immigrants for five to 10 days, while they apply for a pass to take a bus to the border.

In Guatemala, immigrants found cheap motels or rooms in homes.

In Mexico, immigrants are put in detention. Lewis was in detention in Tapachula, Veracruz and Mexico City. In Tapachula, 2,000 were in a space intended for 500.

"We were not free to come and go while we waited for a pass," he said.

From Mexico City, the group he was with went by bus to Tijuana, where they registered and were put on a waiting list. When their numbers were called, they could

cross the border into the U.S.

Some with money paid corrupt officials to be put ahead on the list, he learned.

"When I went to Ecuador, I had \$1,000. In Panama, I ran out of money. A childhood friend now living in Chile sent \$2,000, which took me to Tijuana," Lewis said.

In San Ysidro, he was locked in a 10-by-24-foot room with 20 others for 10 days, and just let out for meals. He slept on the floor in a foil paper "blanket" to keep warm.

In Adelanto, he met other detainees and learned why they fled. He befriended Lester and Alberto, playing soccer in the two-hour exercise time four days a week.

"I learned what was happening around the world, hearing scary stories of others fleeing from political violence," said Lewis who learned Spanish enroute, adding to speaking French, English, Vengo and Lamso.

"Some people lost their entire families. The family of one was in prison. Some could not account for relatives. Like me, they were heading to the U.S. to escape imminent danger," Lewis said. "Some had bullet wounds. Some had fingers chopped off. Some were fleeing gang violence. Those from India were fleeing religious violence and discrimination."

Just as detainees' stories varied, he found ICE officers varied. Some were compassionate, but followed professional rules to avoid becoming close. Some were mean, he said.

Until his asylum hearing Dec. 15, 2021, Lewis must wear an ankle monitoring device and visit an ICE field officer periodically.

He is eligible for a work permit in six months. Lewis has started a six-week Microsoft class and will spend some time volunteering. He is already helping at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center and at the Lands Council.

Lewis, who feels warmly wel-

comed in Spokane, seeks invitations to share his story of fleeing and immigrating with faith communities and community groups.

Lewis, who stays with Eric, is grateful for all Eric and Suzi do for him and other asylum seekers.

"Many are sympathetic and are praying that my asylum will be granted so I can be a legal resident," he said.

Eric, whose grandparents immigrated from Denmark, said that immigrants come to find safety and freedom.

"We need to figure out how to solve our immigration situation," said Eric, who retired eight years ago and volunteers with Vitalant and the Fox Theater.

In 2016 and 2017, he and Suzi volunteered, taking five trips over nine weeks to participate in the Standing Rock Water Protectors protest of construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Lewis, who grew up Catholic, shares with churches his belief that this is God's world.

"When there is life, there is hope. Life is not a bed of roses. There are ups and downs. When I feel down, I know trials strengthen us," Lewis said. "I appreciate what I had, have and what will be. My faith keeps me resolute for whatever life brings."

For Suzi, the experiences with Lewis and at Standing Rock are ways to "live God's love in the world."

Once he is granted asylum, Lewis wants to do post graduate studies in environmental science.

In March, he will speak on "One Year: An Asylum Journey from Cameroon to Spokane" at 1 p.m., Saturday, March 14, at South Hill Library; 11:45 a.m., Saturday, March 21, at Argonne Library, and 7 p.m., Tuesday, March 24, at North Spokane Library.

For information, call 808-1255 or email suzihokonson@yahoo.com.

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Scandinavian lifelong learning integrates just relations: it happens here, too

In a recent column in the New York Times, David Brooks reflected on the high levels of economic productivity, social equality, social trust and personal happiness in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland.

He attributes their living quality to their “generations of phenomenal educational policy,” seeing education as “Bildung,” a German word he says reflects “the complete moral, emotional, intellectual and civic transformation of the person” through lifelong learning.

Rather than just teaching skills, Bildung helps people understand systems and relationships between self and society. It’s about maturing to take personal responsibility “towards family, friends, fellow citizens, society, humanity, the world,

while enjoying bigger personal, moral and existential freedoms,” helping people see circles of connection they need to thrive.

In the midst of the competition schools often foster to help people survive in this culture, we could bemoan that we don’t have that, but we do. Many media share perspectives that help people see their interconnection and inspire caring for the well-being of family, community and society.

We hope The Fig Tree and Resource Directory help do that, but it wouldn’t happen without all the people we encounter, the people whose stories and insights express that reality.

It’s easy as we see the necessary media stories about the tumult as national leaders cave in to corruption based only on

self-interest, accumulating wealth and self-protection. The a retaliatory mindset we see hardly fosters on a national level the trust and true loyalty that come from nurturing relationships and connections that seek peace, justice, love and community.

Listening to those who spoke for the benefit video, many whom I have known for many years, I rejoiced hearing how their perspectives, insights and persistence have grown. Beyond the video clips on value about The Fig Tree, we will include more of their comments on what they do online.

Those who shared in workshops and plenaries at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference found new approaches to many age-old concerns, words of inspiration about the influence of shareholder

advocacy and responsible investing, words of innuendos to consider on racism and white supremacy, words of insight about the intersection of the region’s growing economy and the housing squeeze.

How easy to read David’s column on Bildung and think that’s not happening here because our education system doesn’t foster that, but it does. Where it falls short, our faith communities continue to promote such education—with Bildung being “formation”—to build communities that care and seek justice for everyone.

After the encounters with people in preparing each Fig Tree, I continue to come away refreshed and amazed at all that people right here are doing.

Mary Stamp - editor

Workshop leaders look at value immigrants bring to the society, economy

Samuel Smith, an immigration attorney with World Relief, and Luisa Orellana, an English teacher for refugees at Spokane Community College, discussed immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in an Eastern Washington Legislative Conference workshop.

Samuel assured that refugees, who flee their nations because of persecution based on race, religion, national origin, social or political group, undergo a long process of background and security checks with the United Nations over an average of 17 years in refugee camps. U.S. agencies review their cases and do security checks again.

In recent years, the State Department’s cap on refugees went from 85,000 in 2016, to 110,000 in 2017 (for Syrian refugees) to 45,000 in 2018, to 30,000 in 2019 to 18,000 in 2020. It admits less than one percent of the world’s 29.5 million refugees.

He said Eastern Washington Rep. Cathy McMorris Rogers and others have asked for the cap to be reset at 85,000. World Relief continues to advocate for admitting more refugees. In its 30 years in Spokane, it has resettled more than 10,000 refugees.

In 2016, World Relief here resettled more than 600. Last year, only 158 were resettled here. That means less funding and fewer

staff, but WR maintains staff to welcome new refugees and help refugees here adjust.

A Maryland court blocked a recent executive order, saying governors and county executives must approve refugees’ entry into their areas. While the case was pending, Gov. Jay Inslee and Spokane County said they welcome refugees, but the governor of Texas, previously the biggest receiver of refugees, said refugees are no longer welcome there, Samuel said.

“World Relief has plenty to do to inform people. Groups and congregations volunteer with people who are here,” he said.

“Among immigrants, there is fear Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will pick people up,” he said, “but refugees are protected, because they have green cards and a path to citizenship.”

Samuel trains refugee and immigrant clients how to talk with ICE officers if they are picked up, to show their ID and green cards. He knows it’s still traumatizing, because they escaped trauma in their homelands.

“We need to be proactive in fighting prejudice and threats, and to support refugees’ mental health. Fear keeps them from reporting crimes and may discourage their participation in the census,” he said.

“Refugee admission is humanitarian. We

resettle the most vulnerable people, giving them a chance to be educated, find work and thrive,” he said. “Data shows refugees pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits.

“We also gain economically and culturally as they share their food, language, music and art,” he said, encouraging people to go to cultural events, marches and vigils.

“Taking refugees out of dangerous, degrading and difficult situations makes our city, region and the U.S. better,” he said.

Luisa, whose family crossed three borders to settle in the U.S. through the Sanctuary movement in the 1980s, now teaches students and has them share their stories.

She began teaching Asian grade school students 27 years ago. Although it was not thought professional, she visited their families to hear their stories and teach them English. She has taught immigrants from Ukraine, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Some never used a pencil or paper. Her students have gone to college, become social workers and work in the community.

“My goal is to be a bridge for students to succeed,” Luisa said. “I understand their fear and hesitancy to trust people. I tell them of resources, like attorneys and counselors.”

She knows children who were present when their father was arrested. Their grades

dropped. It was hard for them to focus.

Luisa is concerned about children and youth at the border, who are separated from their parents, and about unaccompanied minors in Spokane who may face extortion by people who loaned them money to come.

When people ask why she chose to come to America, she says “America” is a continent. She was born in America—Central America.

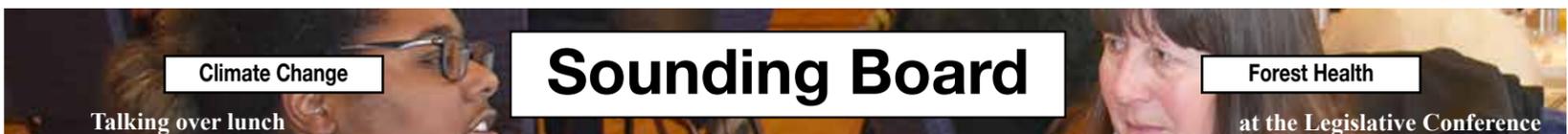
Angry about injustices, Luisa takes a deep breath and asks God for peace to give her strength to act.

Samuel at times lets his anger motivate him, but he knows he must find balance and not be stuck in his anger. He is frustrated that World Relief lacks the capacity to help everyone who needs help—even with four full time immigration law practitioners.

“We need to hold on to hope and keep helping,” he said. “It’s important to inform the public, so people have confidence to refute misinformation and prejudice.

He invites people to connect with immigrants through schools, Refugee Connections, World Relief and community colleges, because “connections educate community members and help refugees feel safe.”

Information is at worldreliefspokane.org or email ms.orellana@icloud.com.



Environmentalists offer ways to challenge climate change, forest fires

Actions for individuals and communities to protect the environment were the focus of a Legislative Conference workshop on climate change.

Brian Henning of 350 Spokane and professor of environmental studies at Gonzaga University, and Tom Soeldner of the Upper Columbia River Group of Sierra Club, led the session.

“We formed the 350 Spokane advocacy group three years ago, modeled on the national group, founded 10 years ago and part of an international, decentralized group,” said Brian.

On climate change, he noted: “It’s warming. It’s us. Experts agree. It’s bad. We can fix it.”

Brian focuses on fixing it.

“The injustice is that those who benefit the most from polluting are affected the least, but those who contribute the least to pollution are the most affected and have the fewest resources to respond,” he said, suggesting smoke shelters may be needed, like warming shelters, to bring homeless people out of wildfire smoke.

A sign of legislators’ interest in climate change is a website on bills: waclimateleg.info. Brian listed several:

- One bill addresses liquid transportation fuels as the largest source of greenhouse gases in Washington—because most electricity generation is clean. He said biofuels grown in rural communities can help.
- The Sustainable Farms and Fields bill

would provide grants to farmers to support such farm practices as better fuels and no-till—turning over the soil releases carbon, he said.

- The Climate Pollution Limits Bill sets targets to reduce greenhouse gases, requires the state to align goals with science and develop a carbon budget.

Brian suggests that to move toward 100 percent clean fuels, “we need to change our language. Natural gas is not ‘natural’ but a ‘fossil gas.’ When fracked, stored and transported, it releases methane that is 36 times more potent than carbon in trapping heat.

“Challenging climate change requires collective action to address systems, as well as individual action to change behaviors,” he said.

He listed resources:

- 350wa.org has information on bills.
- 350 Spokane meets at 6:30 p.m., second Tuesdays at 25 W. Main.
- A 350 Spokane interfaith subgroup meets at 6:30 third Wednesdays in the Humanities Building at Gonzaga.
- The 50th anniversary of Earth Day, to be held from 2 to 4 p.m., Wednesday, April 22, includes a global climate strike at the Pavilion in Riverfront Park.

For information, call 313-5885 or email henning@gonzaga.edu.

As National Forest chair and member of the Spokane River Team of the local Sierra Club, Tom offered insights on forests, forest fire suppression and restoring forests.

Oceans, landmass and forests sequester carbon. Fossil fuel use, cement production and farming put 33 gigatons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, he said. Forests absorb 30 percent of that, oceans, 20 percent, and cold water and ice absorb more. As ice melts, carbon is released.

“Intact forests are the most carbon intense, biodiverse ecosystems, with 19 percent of carbon in plants and 81 percent in soil,” Tom said. “Older forests sequester more carbon. U.S. forests remove sufficient CO2 to reduce national annual net emissions by 11 percent.”

“Reforestation of areas cut and afforestation—planting areas that were not forest land—help, but trees do not sequester or store significant carbon until they are 50 to 80 years old,” he explained.

“Proforestation keeps forests intact, preserves ecosystems, biodiversity, water quality and air quality. Natural forests, soils and wetlands are most effective at carbon removal,” he said.

Tom suggested that logging seldom improves forest health because logging roads and the equipment that use them tend to spread invasive weeds and logging tends to promote erosion and the clogging of streams.

Logging removes biomass, larger drought resistant trees and tree diversity that makes forest ecosystems resilient, he said.

Tom suggested thinking about wildland fires beyond prevention and suppression.

Catastrophic fires in Washington result less from fuel in forests than from drought and weather, he said. With limited resources, the Department of Natural Resources frequently hires commercial companies to remove small diameter trees, but to make profit, these companies are often also allowed to take larger diameter trees, he said.

He urged people to contact Hilary Franz, public lands commissioner, about her plan and to challenge widespread thinning of forests for forest health.

“We should let fires that do not threaten communities burn,” Tom said. “Natural processes are better for forest health and for sequestering of carbon in the face of climate change.”

The workshop included a video on ways to improve the environment beyond modifying personal behavior, calling for systemic changes, including:

- 1) to go to 100 percent renewable energy standards;
- 2) to keep 80 percent of reserves in carbon-based fossil fuels in ground permanently, and
- 3) to lobby and petition institutions to sell stocks in fossil fuel industries and drain those companies of their wealth so other industries can rise up as individuals and institutions invest in socially and environmentally responsible companies or investment firms.

For information, call 270-6995 or email waltsoe@gmail.com.



Calendar of Events

- Mar 4-12** • **Novena of Grace**, "Journeying Toward Hope," Jerry Graham SJ and Tom Lamanna SJ, St. Aloysius Catholic, 330 E. Boone, 313-5896
- Mar 5** • **Peace and Justice Action Committee**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- **"Water Resources in Washington: Are We Getting Thirstier?"** Nick Bond, Washington State climatologist, Jepson Center, Gonzaga University, 5 to 6:30 p.m.
- Mar 6** • **The Fig Tree Benefit Lunch**, Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 535-1813
- **March for Meals**, Meals on Wheels Greater Spokane County, Spokane Valley Mall and Northtown Mall, 924-6976, gscmealsonwheels.org/events
- **"Winter Waters,"** Patsy Clark Mansion, 2208 W. 2nd Ave., 6 to 9 p.m., 270-6995, waltsoe@gmail.com
- Mar 7** • **"The Continuity of Life in African Traditional Religion: An Illusion?"** Religions and Philosophies Series, South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry, 4 p.m., 444-5300
- Mar 8** • **International Women's Day** Celebration featuring Pastor Marie Mwange, originally from The Congo, Fowler United Methodist Church, 3928 N. Howard, 5 p.m., 325-3242, fowlerumc@yahoo.com
- Mar 9** • **The Fig Tree Benefit Breakfast**, Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga, 7 to 8:30 a.m., 535-1813
- **"Is Buddhism a Religion?"** Rev. Melissa Opel, Spokane Buddhist Temple, South Hill Library, 6:30 p.m.
- Mar 10** • **Silent Day of Prayer**, "Overcoming Cancer: Supernatural Oncology," Fr. Darrin Connall, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224, ihrc.net
- **Truthful Tuesday**, Leader of Conscience Award to Sandy Williams of The Black Lens, Veradale United Church of Christ, 611 N. Progress, 5 p.m., genheywood@att.net
- Mar 11** • **Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council**, Spokane Regional Health District, 1101 W. College Ave. noon to 1:30 p.m.,
- Mar 12** • **"Artificial Intelligence: Hope for the Future or Ethical Nightmare?"** Bioethics Symposium, Tripp Parker, of the consortium AI and Faith, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m., 777-4433, dsoden@whitworth.edu
- Mar 12, 26** • **Showing Up for Racial Justice**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- Mar 13** • **Hawaii Club's 50th Annual Luau**, Whitworth Fieldhouse Gym, 5 p.m., 777-3786, kcorpuz20@my.whitworth.edu
- **Special Refugee Shabbat Service** and Light Dinner, Congregation EmanuEl at Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th, 6 p.m., learn about global refugee crisis and ways to be involved locally, rsvp at 747-3304
- Mar 14** • **"Keeping a Holy Lent,"** Patricia Novak OSF, The Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., rsvp 3/10, 241-3180
- Mar 16** • **"What Is the Color of Compromise: The Role of Race in the Church Today,"** Jemar Tisby, president of The Witness, a Black Christian Collective, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 777-3270, anitalweis@whitworth.edu
- **NAACP General Membership Meeting**, Hemmingson Center, 702 E. Desmet, 7 p.m.
- Mar 16-30** • **Traveling Library of Congress Exhibit**, the 19th Amendment Centennial, Chastek Law Library at Gonzaga
- Mar 16-Apr 20** • **Spirituality 101 Seminars**, Kathy Finley, The Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, register: kathy484@gmail.
- Mar 17** • **"Hate Reflections and Action,"** Opening Event for Americans and the Holocaust Exhibit, panelists George Critchlow, Michael DeLand and Shannon Dunn, Hemmingson Auditorium, reception 6:30 p.m., panel 7 to 8:30 p.m., 313-3665, hoover@gonzaga.edu
- **"What Is the Color of Compromise: Role of Race in the Church Today,"** Jemar Tisby, Weherhaeuser Hall, 7 p.m., dsoden@whitworth.edu
- Mar 18** • **Women Lead Spokane Conference**, Hemmingson Center, Gonzaga, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Gonzaga.edu/womenlead, **register by Feb. 29**
- **"Bridging the Gap** by the Judicial Institute," Latina/o Association of Washington, Gonzaga Law School, 4:30 to 6 p.m.
- **Prayer Vigil for Immigrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers**, St. Ann's Church, 2116 E. 1st, Advocacy Committees of St. Ann's and St. Aloysius, 468-9941
- **Eric Metaxas**, author of *If You Can Keep It*, Cowles Auditorium, Whitworth, 7 p.m.
- Mar 19** • **"US-Mexican Border: Humanitarian Consequences of Shifting Immigration Law and Policy,"** panel, Barbieri Courtroom, Gonzaga School of Law, 4:30 p.m.
- Mar 19-Apr 27** • **"Americans and the Holocaust Exhibit**, Foley Library, Cowles Rare Reading Room, Gonzaga University, mathies@gonzaga.edu
- Mar 20** • **An Evening with Zach Norris**, "We Keep Us Safe: Building Secure, Just and Inclusive Communities," Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, 4340 W. Ft. Wright Dr., 6 p.m., 838-7870
- Mar 21** • **Peace and Justice Action Conference**, "Believing in the Yet to Be," Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane, 4340 W. Ft. Wright Dr., 8:45 a.m. to 5 p.m., 838-7870
- **"Vedic Philosophy of Hinduism,"** Himani Agrawal of the Spokane Hindu Temple and Cultural Center, South Hill Library, 11 a.m.
- **"What It Means to be an Atheist,"** Inland Northwest Freethought Society, South Hill Library, 2 p.m.
- Mar 22** • **Beethoven's 250th Birthday:** Faculty Cello Recital, Kevin Hekmatpanah, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center at Gonzaga, 4-5:30 p.m.
- Mar 23** • **"Catholicism in Modern Society,"** Anastasia Wendlinger of the Gonzaga University Religious Studies Department, South Hill Library, 6:30 p.m.
- Mar 24** • **Women Activists and the Legacy of Progressivism**, Veta Schlimgen of the department of history, Jepson Center at Gonzaga, 7 p.m.
- Mar 25** • **Women's Suffrage Parade**, "Steps: From Suffrage to Solidarity," Gonzaga University, 12:15 p.m., suffrageparade@gonzaga.edu
- Mar 26** • **"Letters from a Dachau Liberator,"** Clarice Wilsey, South Hill Library, 6:30 p.m.
- **"Now See This! How the Suffragists** used banners, textiles and fashion for protest," Lena Lopez Schindler, Gonzaga art department, Jundt Art Center Room 110, Gonzaga, 7 p.m.
- Mar 27** • **"(Re)Thinking Conservation in New-Materialist Ecology,"** Hemmingson Room 310 at Gonzaga, noon, environmentalstudies@gonzaga.edu
- Mar 27-29** • **Women's Cancer Survivor Retreat**, Patricia Novak OSF, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 241-3180, pnovak.sjfc@gmail.com
- Mar 28** • **Intro to Breathwork**, IHP Coaching, Unity Spiritual Center, 2900 S. Bernard, 10 a.m.
- Mar 28-29** • **"Considering Matthew Shepard,"** Gonzaga Chamber Chorus, Spokane Kantorei and Spectrum Singers, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, Gonzaga, 7:30 p.m., Saturday, 3 p.m., Sunday, 313-2787, mwpac@gonzaga.edu
- Mar 29** • **"Speed Faithing,"** One Peace Many Paths, South Hill Library 5 p.m.
- Mar 30** • **"Why We Need Religion,"** Stephen Asma, Gonzaga's Religious Studies and Philosophy departments, Jepson Center, Gonzaga, 4 p.m., dimaria@gonzaga.edu
- Mar 31** • **"Inspiration for Today** from Holocaust Survivors," Carla Peperzak and Cora Der Koorkanian, Hemmingson Center Ballroom, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., 313-5931 or 313-3665, hoover2gonzaga.edu
- Apr 1** • **Fig Tree delivery**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9:30 a.m., 535-1813
- Apr 2** • **Fig Tree Benefit and Board**, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., noon benefit, 1 p.m. board, 535-1813

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Come to the Quiet
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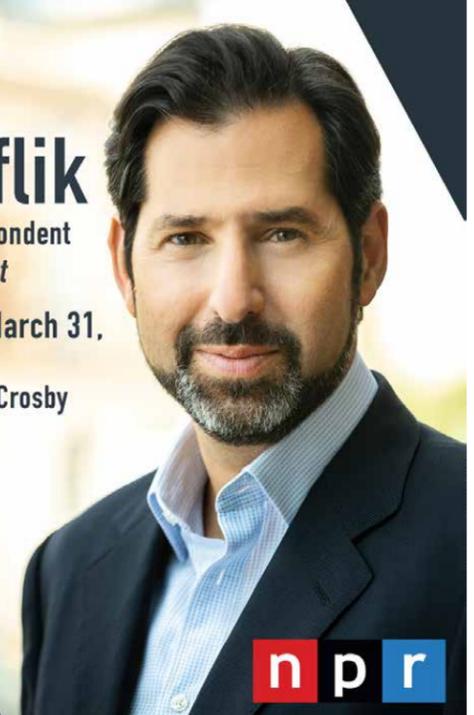
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St. Vincent de Paul envisions scaling its services to the county's growth

By Kaye Hult

As a newspaper publisher, Larry Riley used to “sell words for a living.” Since he became executive director of St Vincent de Paul North Idaho (SVDP) in May 2019, he said he now “sells hope for people in need.”

Larry came to SVDP after 36 years in the newspaper business, last as publisher at the Hagadone Corporation in Coeur d’Alene.

His vision for SVDP is as a community center that “provides direction and services supporting individuals and families in North Idaho needing assistance to enrich, fortify and rebuild their lives with dignity,” he said.

The program includes the main office of the H.E.L.P. Center—Helping Empower Local People.

“We don’t want to be an enabler,” he continued. “We want to be a hand up. We want people to invest in getting back on their feet.”

As an example, he cited the Christmas Village. In 2018, they provided parents ‘blind gifts’ the community gave—already wrapped with tags specifying age and gender.

In 2019, none of the gifts were wrapped. Gifts had point values. Parents were given 80 points to spend, so they could learn about making choices and budgeting. They wrapped the gifts. In 2020, SVDP will launch Christmas in July. Visitors can build points to use next Christmas at the Christmas Village.

For example, a father earned points for painting the H.E.L.P. Center kitchenette. Larry said that’s to teach people to invest in their future.

Several agencies have space in the H.E.L.P. Center.

- ICARE helps mothers and fathers develop parenting skills as their families grow.
- Veterans’ Services assists those who served in the armed forces and their families.
- Payee Services helps clients keep track of their finances.
- First Impressions helps those seeking jobs present themselves well when going for interviews.

Larry said they have more than 300 units of affordable housing



Larry Riley coordinates efforts to serve people in need.

for low-income people .

Among the housing programs, a Women’s Shelter has space for 12 women and their children, but SVDP never turns a woman away. A Men’s Emergency Shelter houses up to 12 men. Both accept people for up to 90 days.

Father Bill’s Kitchen serves up to 100 meals a day, seating 60 per setting, from 5 to 6:30 p.m., Mondays through Fridays.

The Warming Center in Post Falls is open when temperatures go below 28 degrees. The temperature chosen is based on funding. The shelter is funded by benefits and donations.

St. Vincent de Paul was founded in 1833 by a college student in France, Larry said. It is one of the world’s oldest nonprofits.

“The Society of St. Vincent de Paul National Council makes sure their brand means a lot. They help across every line of our business—programs, stores and new ideas for expansion,” he said.

Locally, St. Thomas Catholic Church founded SVDP in Coeur d’Alene in 1946. It is now one of the largest SVDP chapters—or conferences—in the nation.

“**Being large means** we require more resources to do the job,” he said, “Last year, we provided more than 6,000 unduplicated services for people in need.”

Larry seeks to provide resources people need, while providing vision and perspective. He is the face of SVDP in interactions with government agencies, coalitions

and congregations.

With Kootenai County one of the top five growing areas of the nation, the board of directors seeks to scale their growth with the county’s growth.

“**We’ll grow because** the county is growing,” he said. “We may not add more programs, but will do things well to address the area’s social service needs.”

Three entities fund the ministry. First are three thrift stores in Coeur d’Alene, Post Falls and Osburn in the Silver Valley.

Second are government grants, which are restricted to ensure funds go directly to beneficiaries.

Third are local benefactors.

“**The community’s generosity** is breathtaking,” he said. “We are good stewards of their treasure. The flow-through of the funds we receive is 90 to 95 percent, in line

with government standards. Administration cannot exceed five to 10 percent, so 90 to 95 percent goes to recipients.”

SVDP serves all people regardless of faith. Many denominations help. St. Thomas Catholic Church continues to provide direct support to SVDP.

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints community regularly asks what projects need their help. Faith organizations help because they know what St. Vincent de Paul is about.

Larry and his older brother Chuck are sons of Korean War veterans who were stationed in San Diego. Their father was in the Marines, and their mother was in the Navy. She divorced because of domestic violence when Larry was one and Charles was two.

When Larry was six, she broke her hip in a car accident. The year she was in traction and a rehabilitation home, the boys were in a Catholic orphanage, where they met boys with no parents.

Larry was unaware they lived in poverty. His mother was never on government support. She worked hard and sacrificed. He often went to his Catholic schools and pulled weeds. At 16, he learned he did it to help pay for his tuition, and realized he lived in poverty.

A cradle Catholic, he credits his

mother, who died when he was 24, with the work ethic and faith that have guided him.

He paid his way through San Diego State University. After 10 years he earned a bachelor’s in business in 1991 when he was 31.

Larry and his wife Linda give back and have taught this ethic to their son, Sean, a Gonzaga University graduate who will earn a law degree in May from the University of Oregon.

He began in the newspaper business at the San Diego Union-Tribune. He also worked at the Los Angeles Times, the Orange County Register, the New York Times in Florida and GateHouse Media/Gannett before coming to Hagadone Newspapers.

“Being in the social service industry is rewarding. Skills I built 35 years in the news business translate to social services,” he said. “When I left a paper on the East Coast, my boss called me a servant leader. My life path molded me for this job. A servant leader is needed to run organizations like this.

“People can say they want to end homelessness. I don’t believe that’s possible. It is practical that we can solve many homeless issues,” he said.

For information, call 208-664-3095, or email larry@stvincent-depaulcda.org.

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