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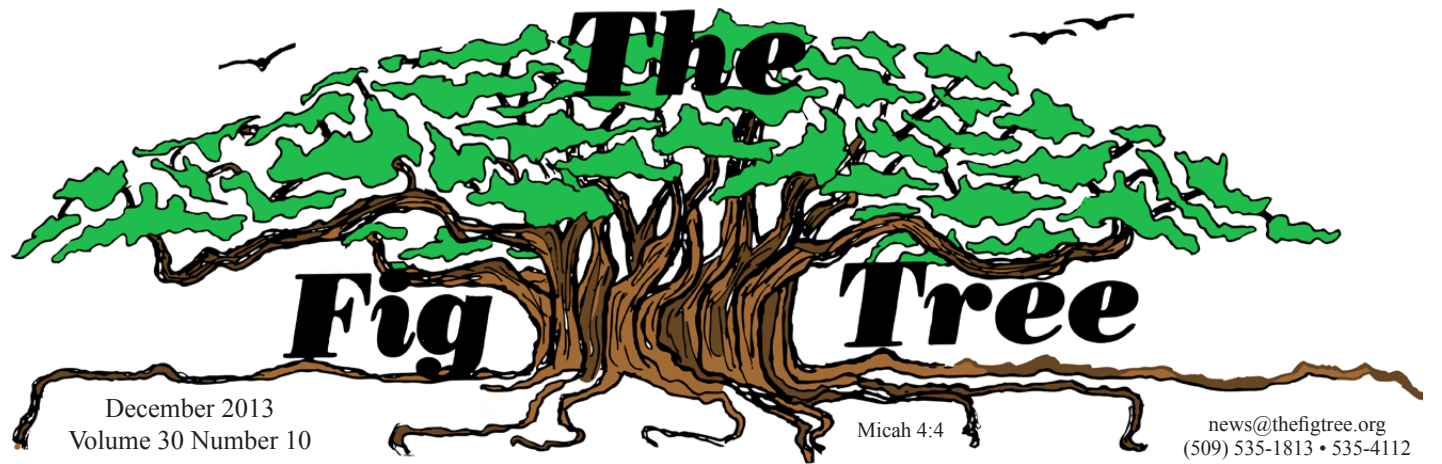
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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest
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Assembly initiates pilgrimage for justice, peace

By Mary Stamp

The 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches offered a myriad of opportunities to engage nearly 3,000 official participants and more than 1,000 guests from Korea and around the globe.

Set in Busan, South Korea, organizers and hosts from Korean churches introduced participants to their life, issues and culture.

Business sessions used consensus decision-making on resolutions about issues, program guidelines, priorities and policies for the WCC's future.

Along with electing eight new presidents and a 150-member Central Committee, delegates elected the first woman and the first African as moderator, Agnes Aboun, an Anglican from Nairobi, Kenya. A development consultant serving Kenyan and international organizations, she coordinates social action programs for religious and civil life across Africa.

What was the message?

The 2013 assembly's message—"we intend to move together"—was adopted with an invitation for churches to join a pilgrimage of justice and peace. It echoes the first assembly's message in 1948, "We intend to stay together."



A mostly Korean choir introduced new songs during assembly worship services.

Recognizing global crises in economic, ecological, socio-political and spiritual challenges, the assembly called "people of goodwill to engage their God-given gifts in transforming actions" and churches "to be communities of healing and compassion," seeding "the Good News, so justice will grow and God's peace will rest on the world."

By listening to voices from the margins, the message calls for sharing "lessons of hope and perseverance" and for recommitting to liberation and solidarity.

Beyond the decisions and messages, participants learned about work the WCC has done as they helped frame its work in the future.

Who participated?

More than 800 delegates from member churches and outgoing Central Committee members represented more than 90 percent of the WCC's 345 member churches in 140 countries.

There were also 575 representatives from ecumenical partners, other churches, observers and guests; more than 1,000 assembly participants; more than 1,000 Korean hosts, staff, volunteers and day participants; 200 staff, stewards and interpreters; 250 media repre-

Continued on page 5

Volunteer work teams are more than adventures; they are pilgrimages

After 15 years of guiding volunteer work crews, often after floods and disasters, Dave Bell, director of the Yakama Christian Mission, said he does that work so church leaders learn there are root human causes to disaster damage.

As he was recruiting the team going to Hughes, Alaska, one participant commented, "Well, at least it'll be an adventure."

That comment stayed with Dave while he was in Hughes. He came to realize disaster work is not adventure work.

"If journey, risk, danger and uncertainty had been all we experi-

enced, then it would have been an adventure," he said. "Volunteering can be adventurous, and 'adventurous' is a common way volunteers describe their experiences."

It was more than an adventure, because faith matters, Dave said.

"Faith nurtured for decades becomes embodied and leads one to say 'yes' to the bush, maybe even when one's health isn't what it was 30 years ago," he said. "Embodied faith is why folk need to quit volunteering to have an adventure."

He considers such an experi-

ence a pilgrimage, "the richer edge of adventure," because beyond the uncertainty, risk-taking and danger of adventure it involves spirituality, holiness and mysticism.

Dave said that work trips and mission trips draw volunteers into thinking that they are going to fix something that is broken, but that is charitable thinking, not the thinking needed to promote justice or end root causes.

"Pilgrimage is about more than justice. It's also about the pilgrim," he said, describing pilgrimage as an intentional journey, stepping into a sacred landscape that changes the pilgrims as they discern the sacred there.

Dave explained that as pilgrims come to know the mystical elements unique to the landscape and the lives of people living there, the lives of both the volunteers and the people they assist are enriched and become seeds for justice.

For information, call 509-969-2093 or see his blog at <http://wp.me/pPOIE-xM>.

See related story about a work team in Alaska, page 9.

Thursdays in Black protests seek to end violence against women

As former coordinator of the World Council of Churches' Women's Program at its headquarters in Geneva, Aruna Gnanadason worked for years to promote the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women and the Decade to Overcome Violence, particularly against women.

"This is my fifth assembly. We have talked about violence against women and tried to bring change through the decades," she told the pre-assembly on the community of women and men after a global village listening experience (story on page 6).

"How do we move from here?" she asked, expressing her commitment to see her four-year-old grandson grow up to be come a nonviolent man. "We need to reach every boy and girl, so we can bring love, peace and justice in the world."

Aruna invited participants in the pre-assembly to join on Oct. 31 in a revival of the WCC's 1980 "Thursdays in Black" campaign against sexual and gender-based violence.

By the simple act of wearing black every Thursday, people around the world can be part of a global movement urging an end to violence against women and expressing their desire for their communities to be places where women, children and men can walk safely without fear of being raped, shot at, beaten up, verbally abused or discriminated against for their gender or sexual orientation.

Aruna, who is from the Church of South India, earned a master's degree in English in Bangalore and completed a doctorate in ministry in 2004 at San Francisco Theological Seminary. She taught at two colleges in Bangalore from 1972 to 1982, when she became executive secretary of the All India Council

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Faiths have local networks for disaster response

As reports of deaths tolls mounting grew to more than 5,000, and reports of 4.4 million people being displaced came through media, local, regional, national and international response to Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) on Nov. 8 in the Philippines were underway. Then tornadoes tore through the U.S. Midwest on Nov. 17. Meanwhile cleanup and rebuilding continues following damage from Hurricane Sandy on the East Coast of the U.S. last year.

Websites of faith-based disaster relief agencies revealed the perspective that as each new natural disaster unfolds, relief is poised to be sent and appeals are ready to be made because each entity recognizes it is part of a larger, cooperative response effort.

ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance at actalliance.org brings together 140 churches and organizations in 140 countries to create sustainable change in the lives of poor, marginalized people, regardless of their religion, politics, gender, sexual orientation, race or nationality. It mobilizes about \$1.5 billion for work in humanitarian aid, development and advocacy. It is rooted in the communities it serves, building grassroots trust and respect, and maintaining commitments after world attention shifts.

One task is to support survivors of disasters. Its 130 member organizations include Church World Service, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, International Orthodox Christian Charities, Lutheran World Relief, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, Christian Aid and more.

It has issued a \$14 million appeal. By Nov. 22, food parcels, tents, psychosocial support, hygiene kits and sanitation and hygiene programs were reaching survivors in villages through the ACT Alliance member, the National Council of Churches of the Philippines. With the infrastructure collapsed, ACT works with local entities so those who survived the typhoon do not die of hunger.

Partners International partnersintl.org, which has headquarters in Spokane, said Haiyan, the strongest recorded typhoon in 30 years, has brought pain, loss and suffering to millions who are displaced and thousands who have lost their lives.

Its partner, the Philippine Missionary Fellowship, has received phone calls from pastors and churches on neighboring islands, reporting roofs blown off homes and churches, and wooden buildings destroyed. There is need for building materials, food and emergency supplies in areas where churches and homes have been damaged or destroyed, said Partners International.

Church World Service at churchworldservice.org has been working with CWS-Asia/Pacific and its partners, to set up an operation center in the Colegio de la Immaculada Concepcion in Bogo, Cebu. The operation center works as a hub for all its activities in the region, from procurement to distribution. CWS coordinates efforts of its 37 U.S. Protestant and Orthodox member communions, often working through ACT Alliance.

An International Caritas Humanitarian Team of Catholic Relief Services at crs.org has linked with local parishes and Caritas staff in Tacloban and Ormoc. A local seminary is an evacuation center where local Caritas and church volunteers are helping more than 500 survivors. Caritas Philippines is distributing aid and trucking food and water through its local network.

World Relief at worldrelief.org is partnering with Philippine Relief and Development Services, Inc., to assist typhoon victims. It has mobilized and deployed rapid assessment teams, supporting local churches and collaborating with government bodies and other faiths to coordinate disaster response.

World Vision at worldvision.org is putting together resources to assist 1.2 million people, including food, hygiene kits, emergency shelter and protection.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee at jdc.org and American Jewish World Service at ajws.org are collecting donations for relief efforts.

Islamic Relief at irusa.org is gathering resources and sending personnel to help with emergency efforts, creating strategies to help people in efficient ways.

Each church and faith has agencies for channeling disaster relief aid and for organizing recovery efforts.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Tree of Sharing gifts are due by Dec. 12

The Tree of Sharing at River Park Square, Northtown and Spokane Valley malls, plus at the White Elephant and four Hastings stores continues through Dec. 12 to give out gift tags and receive gifts to share with families in need at Christmas.

For 31 years, the Tree of Sharing has been serving people who are often forgotten. It began in

1980 as an outreach of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, with KREM-TV joining in sponsorship in 1982. It has grown to serve up to 6,000 people through about 50 participating agencies that submit gift requests. It is now an independent nonprofit.

Shoppers pick up a tag with a gift request and return the gift to

the Tree of Sharing location.

"Our gift return rate is at 92 percent—up from 82 percent in previous years," said Barbara Borgens, one of the volunteers from Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ. "We would love to see it better this year."

For more information, visit www.treeofsharing.org.

Salvation Army raises funds at holiday lunch

The Salvation Army's Annual Celebrate the Season Holiday Luncheon with KXLY-TV's Mark Peterson and Colleen O'Brien will be held at noon, Wednesday, Dec. 11, at the Davenport Hotel's Grand Pennington Ballroom.

The fund-raising event reminds

community leaders and supporters about the Salvation Army's programs for needy people in the community.

Its services continue to grow with 384 children staying at Sally's House, a 15 percent increase from 2012; 40,957 individuals

receiving food assistance; 3,168 parent-child visitations and counseling sessions for more than 1,000 campers aged five to 17 spending a week at camp; 184 families receiving shelter or temporary housing.

For information, call 392-2732.

Center hosts three retreats in January

Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC) is offering three retreats during January.

IHRC is offering a Weekend Healing Retreat for Women, "Consider Him: Removing Obstacles to God on the Road to Healing and Freedom," with Thea Loughery and Sara Compton, prayer ministers at Transformed Hearts Ministries, from 6 p.m., Friday, Jan. 10 to 1 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 12.

Kent Hoffman, marriage and

family therapist who is one of the pioneers of the "Circle of Security" program to help parents bond with their babies, will lead a Day of Reflection for Therapists and Caretakers from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 14, on "Building a Daily Practice: Spiritual Response to Compassion Fatigue." He will discuss the importance of a daily sacred practice to boost spiritual reserves.

The Coffee and Contemplation ecumenical spiritual discussion

and prayer event from 9 to 11 a.m., Wednesday, Jan. 15, features the Most Rev. William Skylstad, bishop emeritus of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane, speaking on "That They May Be One: The Radical Call and the Great Vision." He was bishop of the Diocese of Yakima from 1977 to 1990 when he began as the bishop of Spokane, serving until 2010.

For information, call 448-1224, email skrause@ihrc.net or visit ihrc.net.

Retreat offers process of creating icons

In a Monday, Feb. 3 to Friday, Feb. 7 retreat at The Spirit Center at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, iconographer Father Damian Higgins will guide participants through the prayer process of creating icons.

Painting icons is a visual form of prayer. The purpose is more than the completed image. It is also the process of creating it.

"We're an iconographic people," Father Damian said. "We're surrounded by images we respond to, but mostly they advertise. They direct us toward a product. Holy icons direct us not toward themselves, but toward the divine."

The creation of icons is a form of prayer or meditation grounded in the physical act of holding pencils, preparing paints and manipulating materials to form a painted object.

"The purpose is not to acquire a product," he explained. "The

importance is the process. Materials are natural and organic to bring closeness to the earth."

Father Damian's icons are featured in churches and collections around the world. He was introduced to iconography in 1988 when he joined the Monks of Mount Tabor, a Ukrainian Catholic religious community at the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in northern California.

Later serving in a social service agency in one of the toughest neighborhoods in San Francisco, he served soup to a man who was a master iconographer and shared his knowledge of the art.

At the retreat, participants will create an icon of St. Gertrude, the patroness of the monastery.

For information, call 208-962-2000 or visit www.Spirit-Center.org.

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Six report on Healing Walk in Alberta

Six Inland Northwest participants in the July 2013 "Healing Walk of the First Nations" will report on their observations of the Alberta Tar Sands at 3 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 7, in the Arts Workshop at the 1912 Center, 412 E. Third St. in Moscow, Idaho. "We journeyed 1,000 miles to see first-hand the scale of environmental devastation caused by producing crude oil from mining tar sands," said Pat Fuerst of the Palouse Environmental Sustainability Coalition.

Helen Yost, James Blakely, Anne Remaley, Pat and Dan Rathmann, and Pat will connect what they learned with local mega-loads, climate change, pipeline projects, moral issues and impacts on people. For information, call 208-339-5213 or email epfuerst@frontier.com.

Singers perform holiday benefit concert

Jonathan Mancheni and Isabella Ivy will perform a benefit concert, "Harmony for the Holidays," at 8 p.m., Friday, Dec., 20, at the Bing Theater, 901 W. Sprague. This will be the third benefit concert Jonathan, a 2006 Mead High School graduate, has given in Spokane. It will benefit Catholic Charities Foundation and Second Harvest to meet needs of homeless and hungry people in the region.

Jonathan is in his second year of his master's program at University of Nevada Las Vegas, and Isabella has recently graduated from there as a vocal performance major.

When he sang in a church youth choir, he heard an older child sing vibrato and wanted to sing like that, so his parents invested in lessons, and he discovered opera. Singing opera made his Tourette's syndrome symptoms disappear. He began studies at Eastern Washington University and transferred to the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. A baseball injury led him to focus on music.

Isabella, also a costume designer, has done costumes for three operas at the UNLV and created a set design for the Las Vegas Opera Company. She sings opera and has a jazz combo. She has performed in Sydney Australia, in Graz, Austria, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

For information, call 358-4255 or email dhake@ccspokane.org.

West Central Festival of the Arts planned

Salem Lutheran Church is sponsoring West Central Festival of the Arts from Dec. 4 to 22 with art work, music, dance and poetry offered at 1428 W. Broadway.

"We will tell a story of beauty, hope and possibility in our community," said organizer Debbie Wilson. "Events will revolve around weekly Advent themes of the Annunciation and the Magnificat, journey and rejection, and birth and witness.

"These themes mirror our life experiences," she said. "Many of us have or desire some sort of dream or calling to inspire our lives. We also experience seasons of journey and rejection where things are unclear or we don't seem to belong. Finally, there are moments when our hopes are realized and something beautiful and meaningful is birthed, often out of the pain that came before."

The art gallery will show Spokane artists' paintings, wood crafts, pottery, jewelry, photography, quilts and more. The gallery is open at 5 p.m., Wednesdays, followed by supper and a service.

The art viewing and sales are also 5 to 8 p.m., Fridays.

At 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 7, Spokane Choral Artists sing. At 1:30 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 8, is a liturgical dance workshop with Judy Mandeville. The Covenant Marimba Band will play at 4 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 14. Spokane's poet laureate Thom Caraway will present a literary night, at 7 p.m., Friday, Dec. 20. There will be caroling in West Central at 5 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 22. For information, call 328-6260 or email salemcongregation@gmail.com.

Street kids hand out sack lunches downtown

Along with serving teens on the streets in downtown Spokane, Volunteers of America's (VOA) Crosswalk program encourages the youth to find ways to reach out and help others.

One afternoon recently, eight teens made about 300 sack lunches with sandwiches, chips, an apple and cookies. They took the sandwiches to hand out to people at the bus plaza.

Stephen Miller, Crosswalk director, said the program has done this service project in recent years as a way the youth can give back to the community.

"Two of the girls said it felt nice to do something for someone else," he said. "Often the teens do not think about or have the opportunity to help someone else."

For Christmas, he said youth need socks, gloves and hats.

"No matter who they are, kids are hopeful about Christmas and appreciate any gifts they receive," he said.

In other VOA of the Inland Northwest programs, Marilee Roloff, executive director, said that as at this time each year, she supplies books for the Christmas Bureau, so each child can have a book for Christmas.

For Hope House, the main needs are for blankets and towels.

Related to VOA's social service programs, she said, "we are seeing either small decreases or flattening of federal and state funding every year, except with the veteran's programs," she said.

"As other nonprofits, we continue to rely more and more on private giving, but that's not as stable as government contracts," Marilee said. "We work on more private giving."

"So we keep appealing for a little bit here, a little bit there, and eventually the little bits add

up," she added. "God bless our local givers."

For information, call 624-2378.

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The Arc seeks to build respect for people with disabilities, opens doors to jobs

By Evanne Montoya

As the Arc of Spokane supports and advocates for people who have developmental or intellectual disabilities, it spreads the message that "they are people like you and me," said executive director Greg Falk.

He has found that many people have connections with people with disabilities, some temporary and some long-term. After his wife, Sharon, was in an accident that shattered her leg, he learned when wheeling her in a wheel chair about which facilities are accessible and which are not.

While some may need to change their way of thinking about people with disabilities, he said that others just need to be reminded and encouraged to act on the impulses they already have to be kind and inclusive and fair.

The Arc is committed to making the community more welcoming, inclusive and supportive for individuals of all ages with intellectual and developmental disabilities and for their families.

"We respect the people we serve, and when I go to places where our programs operate I see smiles," he said.

While many of The Arc's programs support people with disabilities by providing activities, financial management, and political and individual advocacy, part of improving their quality of life is engaging and educating the community.

The goal is to help constituents receive a good education, achieve greater independence, be employed, live in the community in decent housing, and enjoy friendships and activities.

One man with a disability told Greg he wants people to know that



Greg Falk seeks to create caring community and funding stability.

if they ever needed help, he would help them.

"He wanted the world to know he's not always the one who needs help. He's also somebody who can give help," Greg said.

Many people ignore people with disabilities, not realizing how hurtful it is, he said, telling of a man who used an electric wheelchair because he had physical disabilities, but his intellectual capacity was fine.

He told Greg that he wished "people would just look at me and say 'Hi.' People turn their eyes away from me. When I'm in a grocery store, I love it that children often run up and say, 'Why are you in that chair?'"

However, the man said, often the children's parents tell them to "stop bothering that man."

People with disabilities want to be looked at and interacted with like anyone else, Greg said. Because familiarity lowers apprehension, and as people are exposed to people who are different they become more comfortable. So The Arc offers ways to do that.

• Arc volunteers recognized the desire of people with disabilities to be seen as others when they started the Community Fun Run, an event that fosters interaction between people with and without disabilities. The event has grown since April 2010 from nearly 50 people to 350 in 2013. People of all ability levels run, walk or traverse the course in wheelchairs.

• Part of helping the community learn to interact well with people who have disabilities is working on the language they use. The Arc and students at Gonzaga University are involved with a national campaign, Spread the Word to End the Word, which seeks to end use of the word "retarded" as offensive, derogatory and exclusive.

• The Arc also recently organized a program, Photo Voice, which paired individuals with disabilities with a professional or amateur photographer, who volunteered and spent time learning

about their partners. They then helped their partners use images to express what they wanted to tell people about themselves.

• The Arc also provides free access to a riding stable, Free Rein, for adults with developmental disabilities to ride horses for free.

• The reminder to be just, kind and fair extends to the business community through an annual Hire Ability Day in October, which started 10 years ago to persuade employers to include people with developmental disabilities in their work force.

One of The Arc's goals is to start an awareness campaign to let the community know The Arc does more than pick up used clothing.

Another goal is to increase funding so The Arc's 190 employees can have a raise.

"Most of our funding is state money," Greg said. "When the recession hit, they stopped giving us funding to pay raises."

After five years without giving raises, the Arc now seeks to increase wages about 3 percent each year for the next five years.

While there is always room to move forward, he has been pleased with the progress they've made over his time at The Arc.

More than two years ago, The Arc moved from two locations a mile apart into the building that housed Inland Power and Light since 1950 at 320 E. Second Ave. The \$1.8 million for remodeling transformed the building into office spaces and a day center that involves 100 adults a month in activities Mondays through Fridays.

Outside is parking for the trucks that pick up used clothing. Ten years ago, The Arc earned \$125,000 beyond costs from selling clothing to Value Village, supplying about half of their inventory.

Greg said he gained "a heart for people facing disadvantages" from his mother, even as his family moved frequently because his father was a Marine pilot.

He spent his teen years in Seattle after his father retired. He moved to Spokane as a newlywed in 1976, to attend Whitworth University. In 1978, he graduated with a degree in religious studies and moved to Eugene, Ore., for a job. He returned to Seattle to pursue a master's degree in health administration at the University of

Washington, graduating in 1985.

Greg worked about 15 years in health care management.

He and his wife, Sharon, had fond memories of Spokane. After he had a job interview in Spokane in 1997, they decided to move here.

"We quit our jobs in Seattle," Greg said. "Neither of us had a job yet in Spokane, so it was nerve wracking for a couple of years, until we found work."

In Spokane, he worked two years in health care, until he saw an ad in the paper for a job as a program director at The Arc. He applied and was hired, taking a 45 percent cut in pay, because he felt his work in health care was "not a good fit for me," Greg said.

He thought working for a social service nonprofit would be a better fit.

For him, it was. A year after he came to The Arc his boss retired and he applied to be executive director.

"I enjoy people. I enjoy social service and helping people have a fair advantage in life," Greg said.

He likes supporting a staff and directors who do great work in the community.

Greg, who attends Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, said the hope and love that stem from his Christian faith are imperative in his work at The Arc.

Much of what The Arc does is "valuing people, caring for them and having empathy," he said.

"I find that families of and people experiencing disabilities and disadvantages are available to share profoundly about their lives and experiences," he said. "What I do is to care for souls."

When individuals and families first learn about their disabilities, they experience both loss and gain, he said.

Parents may lose their dreams of their children being great quarterbacks or having other future opportunities, but they gain in empathy as they begin a lifelong commitment to care for a family member, Greg said.

For him, hope is the most important aspect of leadership. Part of the role of a leader, he said, is helping people find their aspirations, and "continually stoking the fire of 'We can do great things if we put our minds to it.'"

For information, call 328-6326 or email gfolk@arc-spokane.org.

The Arc opens thrift store Dec. 9

The Arc of Spokane will hold a grand opening of its own thrift store, The Arc of Spokane Thrift Store, on Monday, Dec. 9, in the 25,000-square-foot former Comp USA building at 808 N. Ruby.

"For 20 years, we have collected used goods from the community and sold it wholesale to Value Village. Now we will be able to sell what we collect retail to help us support our mission and programs that do not receive enough funding from government sources," said Greg Falk, executive director.

The Arc of Spokane has hired nearly 40 employees to run the thrift store, in addition to about 25 collecting donations from the public. About 13 years ago, The Arc of Spokane made \$125,000 net income a year, but last year budgeted to lose \$50,000.

"We had to shut down the collections or do it differently, because of the Washington state minimum wage rising each year and income from collections going down," he said. "The community is so generous in their donations to us."

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Myriads of encounters and dialogue opportunities build relationships

Continued from page 1
 sentatives, and 180 students and faculty involved in the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute.

More than 700 youth attended. **What happened?**

Prior to the assembly beginning Oct. 30, there were two days of pre-assembly gatherings for a community of women and men, for youth under 30, for indigenous people, for the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network and for ecumenical partner meetings.

Morning programs explored elements of the theme, "God of life, lead us to justice and peace," the multi-faith context of Asia, the WCC's new mission statement, "Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes," and church unity.

Morning and evening worship services introduced new songs in languages from around the world, but English was the official language for business sessions and documents.

The documents were translated into Korean, French, German and Spanish, and simultaneous translation was provided.

The assembly included 20 Bible studies in language groups; 21 ecumenical conversations on issues of faith, life, peace and justice; 81 workshops; 80 side events, including dialogue, music, dance and activities; 88 exhibition booths with resources on WCC, Korean and partner organization programs, and 18 options for weekend excursions to visit ministries and learn about issues of concern for the Korean churches.

The assembly used the Korean term, "madang," for events involving the exchange of ideas and experiences.

"Madang" is a courtyard in a traditional Korean home, a space for encounter, sharing, celebration, fellowship, greeting visitors and welcoming strangers.

Informal encounters in hallways of the convention center, on the busses, over meals, at the hotels and in other settings were in as many languages as the participants spoke.

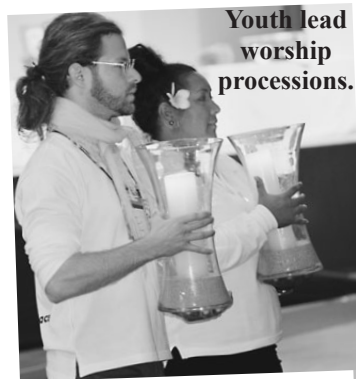
Videos of plenary sessions and prayers are online at wcc2013.info/en. They were made so people around the world could participate in the assembly through live streaming.

Documents and news releases are also online.

Why is it important?

Gathering in person for worship, education, encounter and business builds ecumenical relationships beyond the assemblies.

The assemblies have been held once every seven to eight years—1948 in Amsterdam; 1954 in Evanston, Ill.; 1961 in New



Youth lead worship processions.



Delegates make decisions on issues by consensus.



Dutch and South African women join Thursdays in Black.

Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp, center, with Corazon Reyes of the Philippines and Marilyn Lariviere of Hyannis, Mass.



Asian culture, struggles and life introduced through music, dance and drama.



Korean and Ghanan women meet.

Delhi, India; 1968 in Uppsala, Sweden; 1975 in Nairobi, Kenya; 1983 in Vancouver, B.C.; 1991 in Canberra, Australia; 1998 in Harare, Zimbabwe, and 2006 in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

In gathering face-to-face, people build trust and understanding as they reaffirm their commitment as member churches and ecumenical partners to pray together as they search for church unity as a diverse fellowship.

The gathering reflected on current local to global realities in light of the assembly theme.

What issues were addressed?

Delegates adopted statements on such public issues as the politicization of religion and the rights of religious minorities, human rights of stateless people, peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula, the way of just peace, affirming the Christian presence and witness in the Middle East, and border disputes at oil-rich Abyei, South Sudan.

Other issues addressed included calls to support peace-building in the Democratic Republic of Congo; to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 2015; to improve U.S.-Cuba relations and lift economic sanctions, and to continue to give attention to indigenous people's issues.

There were more than 130 proposals for actions on issues. Many were incorporated into documents adopted. Many others were not included, because they are already part of current WCC programs or

previous statements.

Some were referred to the Central Committee, which makes decisions between WCC assemblies.

Who protested this time?

There have been protestors at each assembly.

Outside the conference center, several hundred protestors from the Christian Council of Churches in Korea (CKK) were gathered throughout the assembly to protest the WCC for not having the "right" understanding of Jesus, for being "Communist"—a fear heightened by the location on the Korean peninsula—for respecting people of other faiths or for some member churches inclusion of all people regardless of sexual orientation.

Participants had to pass by protestors to go to restaurants or to busses.

Many assembly participants tried to get acquainted, engage in dialogue and pray with some of the protestors. Most protestors seemed insistent on their perspectives, which they announced by

handouts, megaphones, shouting and speeches.

Even after two protestors broke into the closing worship, causing a disruption as they reached the stage and altar, several from the WCC went to visit them after police took them to jail, to be sure no one was hurt and to express their caring.

After a bomb threat at the Busan

Exhibition and Convention Center (Bexco), which hosts 900 conventions a year, police presence was evident throughout the assembly

Organizers were aware there would be protests, as at previous assemblies, but the CCK group, which is not a member of the WCC, was expected to be larger.

Why was it in South Korea?

Civic and church leaders, however, wanted the assembly in Busan, hoping it would spark a movement for peace on a peninsula divided into two countries by an armistice signed to end fighting of Korean War 60 years ago. There is still no official peace treaty.

Korean organizers hoped the assembly would be an opportunity for churches from around the world to stand in solidarity with Korean Christians who seek reconciliation, reunification and peace.

Upcoming issues of The Fig Tree will share more about assembly business, workshops and interviews to give area congregations and faiths insights into "local" issues of churches around the globe. Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp attended the assembly as a member of the press.

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Process of telling stories of gender injustice begins healing, prevention

Stories about life around the world made abstract ideas addressed at the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly real.

"It's time for the church to embrace those damaged and broken by violence, abuse and marginalization," said the Rev. Maake Masango, a professor of practical theology at the University of Pretoria and author of *Pastoral Care in the Midst of Violence: A South African Perspective*.

He believes healing can begin as people share their stories of pain with people who listen, receive the stories and have their consciences stirred to inform others and build a basis for reconciliation that includes commitment to end violence and advocate for people broken by violence.

During the pre-assembly on the community of women and men on Oct. 29, he arranged six chairs in a small group for a global village listening experience.

Maake, a psychotherapist who formerly served on the WCC's Executive Committee and was former moderator of the Uniting Presbyterian Church of South Africa, was involved with the South Africa Council of Churches' Truth and Reconciliation Commission's listening and healing process.

He and three others sat in the small circle, leaving two chairs open for people to enter the circle to share their stories of trauma.

Maake, who has visited Whitworth University, uses this model to educate people on gender-based violence, as it has been used to address racial violence.

"Gender violence is a global issue," said a leader of the National Council of Churches in India. "Churches know how serious the issue is. We need to do more than pray for gender justice."

Often churches pray, Maake said, when they do not know what to do.

Several women church leaders took turns coming into the circle to share stories of gender violence from their own lives and from people in their communities:

- **An Indian woman told** of seven men raping a woman on her way home from school. She died. When the pastor learned, he and community members visited the rapists' families, but not the family of the victim.

- **A woman from Zimbabwe** said an HIV/AIDS initiative seeks to transform boys so they learn to respect women. She said that in Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe there is a crisis about masculinity and how to respond



Maake Masango, right, explains village listening process to Aruna Gnanadasan and a leader of India's National Council of Churches.



Panel discusses 60 years of WCC efforts to end patriarchy and violence.

to cries of women so there can be a community of men and women as God intends.

- **A woman seminary teacher** in Bangalore said the church told a religious sister who was gang raped in 2008 to be silent. She reported the crime and identified the perpetrators, but the police did not record it. She left even more shamed.

- **A British woman is disturbed** by the chasm about masculinity. "Some expect men to sort the problem out for women, rather than for women to sort the problem out for men," she said.

After allowing women to lament, she said men need to see their own vulnerability and ask for forgiveness. It's too easy for the church to think of forgiveness first, before the long journey of walking together in lament.

- **A woman with the Ugandan** Council of Churches said that two years ago there was no staff on the gender desk.

Then they learned that a father had impregnated three of his four daughters after his wife left him. One daughter stabbed him one night. In court, she was found guilty of premeditated murder and sentenced to six hours, in recognition that the trauma she had experienced was more than life in prison.

After that, a bishop asked the council to do something about gender violence in families.

- **A Nigerian woman asked** the church to support people like her aunt who suffered abuse, stigma and exclusion by the church after she was raped and conceived a daughter. Even though her aunt remained bonded to God, she was no longer welcome in the church or community.

- **A Thai leader** in World Day of Prayer gave a prayer of lament: "Bless every child in the world. Protect them, especially those with no home, no food, no school. Bless every child. Every child is our next generation in the churches. Every child needs someone to care for him or her. Bless every child in the world."

- **A Indonesian university** student in South Korea learned that when a friend was five years old, Indonesian soldiers took her from East Timor to Indonesia. At 18, she tried to find her parents in East Timor. She found a mother longing for her child who was taken. They claimed each other. She knew the woman was not her mother, but she met that mother's longing. They became mother and daughter.

When the student heard the story, she realized her father had been in East Timor as a soldier.

"Not knowing how many children were separated from their families, I felt I needed to repent," she said, wondering if her father had separated families.

- **A woman from Congo told** of a blind woman raped by five men and told by her brother to go live with other women because God did not intend for her to have sex. Now living with HIV, she does not believe in God. We need to repent to women like her.

Maake received the stories, shared in the hope that as the

stories were embraced by the "village," held in the hearts of participants, and told to others, the violence would not be repeated because people would be aware.

He told participants to carry the stories home to keep their consciences stirred and to share the stories so women and men in congregations around the world will have their consciences stirred and will join in work for gender justice.

For information, contact maake.masango@up.ac.za.

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Assembly's opening prayer captures cries and hopes from around world

A prayer of confession and lament that began the opening worship service of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea, summed up pains from divisions, oppression, injustice and violence prevalent in news and in lives of people around the world and gathered there. The prayer also shared hopes for healing, reconciliation, peace, justice and climate health.

The prayer picked up themes expressed in stories of suffering shared in the pre-assembly on the community of women and men and in awareness that church leaders present shared in the suffering.

Between each region's cries and hopes, people sang a South African response, "Senzenina," which means "What have we done?"

The prayers are paraphrased.

Cries and hopes - Africa:

Nurturing and vulnerable God, when you gave life to creation... interconnected and interdependent: Behold, it was all good.

It is no longer all good. Your beautiful image in Africa has been deformed as the greedy have raped its resources, scrambling over boundaries that separate and divide communities. Within communities, the powerful have raped the less powerful....Your people's lament is echoed in your own deep groans [as rivers drain dry, lakes flood and trees are torn up]....

God of life, breathe new life into our efforts for justice and peace so we can, with you, declare once more that creation will be good again.

Cries and hopes - Asia:

Accompanying God, we see you in the tears and moans of girls and women raped, raped again and gang raped, and those whose lives are broken beyond repair.

We see you in the wailing and mourning of mothers, wives and children who have lost their sons, husbands and fathers to mindless violence in the name of God; for the greed of a few for power and money. We see you in the signs of the violated, displaced and silenced Dalits, indigenous peoples,



linguistic and ethnic minorities.

We see you in the distress and disappointment of millions of children forced to work...in hazardous industries, and in the pain and anguish of those forced to eke out a living in faraway places.

Empowering God, we see you in the resilience, resistance and creativity of the weary and heavy-laden, crushed lives and broken relationships. Transform our greed to consume into a thirst to share and our collective insanity that thrives on abuse of nature and people, and wash us clean of carelessness and callousness.

Cries and hopes - the Caribbean:

In the midst of globalization, help us pray for one another. Many in the Caribbean have suffered the cruelty of institutionalized slavery and had their identity confused through colonialism, often with the church's complicity.

Many societies struggle with domestic abuse; missing children; homicides and gang violence; the demise of family life; eroding norms and values; weak economies and migration with injustice in the market place; degradation of creation, and corruption.

Thank you for accompanying us on this journey towards justice and peace in our societies and in nations beyond our shores. Help us see one another in our weaknesses and our potential. Help

us find hope. May your kingdom come to rule our hearts and shape our interactions.

Cries and hopes - Europe:

We gather from nations, communities and churches of great diversity and many contradictions. We represent a unique history of civilization, culture and spirituality—a tradition of human advancement, yet a heritage of death: wars, colonial exploitation, racism and genocide.

Grant us faithfulness as we struggle to make Europe a better place for all, closing the gap between rich and poor. Open our hearts and homes to refugees, migrants and all in need, and bless us with a culture that nurtures hospitality, cares for the vulnerable and follows your way of justice and peace.

Cries and hopes - Latin America:

Creator, Redeemer and ever-present Spirit, we recognize your power in the expanse of land you give—mountains, tropical rainforests, savannahs, pampas, caverns, rivers and ocean vistas.

We ask forgiveness for having allowed so much to go wrong, the exploitation of indigenous people and African descendants, the abuse of women and children. We hear the cry of the poor who suffer because of injustice, cor-

ruption and violence, and the cries of all victims of crime. We listen to the earth groaning as it yearns for liberation. Help us put into practice the vision that another world is possible.

Cries and hopes - the Middle East:

Hear us as we cry out for peace and justice for the peoples and the land itself. Grant us homelands where water, land and resources are respected and shared by all.

Help us share your love with our neighbors and plant seeds of tolerance in our communities. Comfort us so our souls are healed from the wounds of wars and conflicts. May your justice course through our lands like an unstoppable torrent. Teach us to trust in hope that one day soon all may dwell beneath their vines and fig trees in peace and happiness.

Cries and hopes - North America:

Lord, have mercy on us, for we mine resources of our lands and [others' lands], leaving in our wake environmental devastation.

Christ, have mercy on us, for we demand cheap goods, heedless of the sweatshops and child labor required to serve our selfishness.

Lord, have mercy on us, for we are addicted to a culture of violence, numbing ourselves to the increasing number of victims

at home and abroad.

Cries and hopes - the Pacific:

Your Pacific people cry as our beloved ocean rises up and overwhelms us. We feel rivers of pain as our ancient land disappears and distances us from your creation.

We face mountains of despair as our cultures erode and engulf us in greed and power. We tremble under earthquakes of changes and their effects on our lives. We despair at hurricanes of problems we face and anguish they cause.

Yet Lord, we believe in your mercy, we hope in your love, we trust in your strength, we love in your grace, for in your mercy, love, strength and grace, we live.

Throughout the assembly, there were morning prayers, evening prayers, Korean church services, informal prayers and communion, and the closing prayer.

Prayers set the tone for the encounters, discussions, events and decisions as the World Council of Churches set priorities for its programs and elected leaders.

A prayer of intercession after the opening worship sermon appealed: "God of life, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God with us yesterday, today and forever, guide and comfort us on our pilgrimage towards justice and peace."

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In empowering women to overcome violence, single mother was empowered

Moumita Biswas, a human rights worker with the Church of North India in Calcutta, West Bengal, calls for challenging “the politics of injustice with the politics of justice.”

In 2014, she and another woman who serve at St. Paul’s Cathedral there will be the first Indian women ordained in the Church of North India as it celebrates its 200th anniversary. They will succeed a Scottish woman, who is the only woman priest in the diocese.

Moumita’s father has been a champion of her ordination.

She had chosen a husband she loved, but seven days after they married, she was in the street, beaten. A victim of domestic violence, she lived in shame, even as she worked to empower other victims of domestic violence. She often went to the church to pray after her husband beat her. Eventually, she gained strength to leave the violent relationship.

“Over the years I realized that when home is no longer safe, the church can be of great use to empower women against violence,” said Moumita, a single mother who studied at the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches near Geneva and graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in 2003.

“We always see glimpses of love, hope and God. As we share stories of terrible things, we also share stories of how the church of God can spread help,” she said.

“Now I help women turn pain to power by combating human trafficking and domestic violence,” she said in a presentation during the pre-assembly on the community of women and men before the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly in Busan, South Korea,



Moumita Biswas speaks on domestic violence, human trafficking.

during October.

“To weep is not weak when we weep about injustice done to us. Crying brings out righteous anger. It brings us life,” she said. “We cry for peace. God weeps. Jesus weeps. Many weep, ‘Father, why have you forsaken me?’ We weep for life.”

As Moumita spoke of her work against human trafficking, she said that “women are bought and sold in our own back yards”—everywhere around the world.

“Slavery exists and happens to women in our back yards. Human trafficking is modern slavery. It is the second most profitable industry after drug trafficking. It’s the fastest growing criminal enterprise,” she said.

The United Nations defines human trafficking “as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receiving persons, by means of the threat or use of force, or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse

of power or a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation includes prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”

With more than 800,000 people trafficked each year, she said it’s “a pressing global reality we need to explore given the rising number of slave traders and profits at \$20 billion.”

Women and children, as the most vulnerable people, are caught in human trafficking.

Her anger about it was further stirred when a friend went to Gili, the capital, and returned crying and shaken. Men had taken her, but another woman helped her escape.

Moumita described some of the

many forms of human trafficking:

- In Bangladesh, oxytocin, a hormone given to cows to produce more milk, is given to trafficked girls so they will be voluptuous.

- Some three- to five-years olds are taken to be camel jockeys. They cannot weigh more than 44 pounds, so they are fed little and do not grow. They race from 4 a.m. to noon on the hot desert.

- In China, women took out a boy’s eyes to sell for an organ transplant. Kidneys are also sold.

- In Europe, China and Russia, there are mail-order brides.

- Thai women, who are sold as slaves, are forced into prostitution. Men are also prostituted.

- Some traffic virgin girls because of the belief that having sex with a virgin will cure a man of HIV/AIDS.

- Children are also trafficked to be soldiers in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Africa.

- Some are bonded as agricultural workers.

- Gangs traffic children in India to be beggars.

“Trafficking of women is age old,” Moumita said, suggesting human trafficking and slavery can be stopped if people know it is in their back yards and act on that awareness.

“We must become aware, break the silence, educate and advocate. We can buy fair trade products. We can hold protest rallies when someone is raped,” she said.

Moumita said that the Salvation Army in the United States has a Day of Prayer for Victims of Sex Trafficking. In the United Kingdom, Salvation Army members collected newspapers, cut out ads on sex and sent them to the newspapers, saying, “Thanks but no thanks! It’s human trafficking.” In a few months, the ads stopped.

“Spiritually, we must reclaim and nurture constructive anger,” she said. “Trafficking is a crime, a human rights violation. How are churches and church women using their voices?”

For information, email moumitabiswas3110@gmail.com.

In the Inland Northwest, Lutheran Community Services’ Spokane Crime Victim Service Center, Catholic Charities Spokane, World Relief, the YWCA Alternatives to Domestic Violence, the Salvation Army and the Intercommunity Center for Peace and Justice are among faith-based programs addressing human trafficking.

World Relief is offering a Human Trafficking 101 class at 5 p.m., Monday, Dec. 9, in its office at 1522 N. Washington. For information, call 484-9829.

Also of local note, Moumita is a friend of The Fig Tree editor’s daughter, Marijke Fakasiieki. They met at the WCC in Geneva.

Women, men join ‘Thursdays in Black’ campaign

Continued from page 1
of Women unit of the National Council of Churches in India, organizing conferences for urban and rural women on development, violence, health, justice and more, lobbying the Indian government to bring change.

In 1991, she began working with the World Council of Churches, where she is now executive director for planning and integration in the General Secretariat. She is author of *No Longer a Secret: The Church and Violence against Women*.

Soon after Aruna started at the WCC, the story of rape of women as a weapon of war emerged in 1992 in the Balkan War.

“It’s as old as the world,” she said, “yet Swiss women responded, going to investigate and offer solidarity. The WCC sent a group to Croatia while the war was going on. We met women in refugee camps, churches and mosques.

“We heard their stories of being raped. Their sadness hit me,” Aruna said. “I was filled with anger about what happens to women around the world.”

Shock that it was happening in Europe for the first time since World War II drew media attention, she said.

“For media, it was a sexy story. They kept pushing me, but I refused to speak of the raped women. When I came back, however, I shared with women, and asked them to join in solidarity. We started Women in Black to protest rape,” she said.

The idea came from Israeli and Palestinian women who started wearing black to protest rape and violence. Thursdays were chosen to connect to the Mothers of the Disappeared in Argentina, who gathered in silence in Buenos Aires’ Plaza de Mayo on Thursdays.

“Black is the color of protest,” she said. “As more women and men join in weekly protests just by wearing black and telling people why, we can overcome violence against women.”

Having heard the stories of violence against women in the listening circle, Aruna said, Thursdays in Black is a tool participants can

use to take the stories home, “so we have courage, not sadness that could paralyze us. Each time we wear black, we need to remember the women’s stories.”

Fulata Mbano-Moyo, now the program executive for Women in Church and Society, challenges churches to act together to ask people to wear black on Thursdays to accompany women who bear scars of violence and to show their commitment to advocate for gender justice.

For information, see oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/thursdays-in-black-zero-tolerance-for-violence-against-women.

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Work team rearrange schedules to rebuild flooded homes in Alaska

By David Helseth

Golden leaves of birch trees were already falling in September in north central Alaska, a few miles south of the Arctic Circle. Winter can come early.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) staff realized time was running out.

The communities of Galena and Hughes were declared disaster areas because of flooding in June. The focus of recovery had been on Galena, where dozens of homes were flooded by the Yukon River.

Hughes, a small village about 100 miles north of Galena on the Koyukuk River, received minor damage in comparison, with only six homes affected. Galena's recovery was nearly done, but Hughes had fallen to the bottom of the list.

Nestled beside the Koyukuk River, homes in Hughes flooded in June when that river thawed from a long, bitter winter, damming up water until it overflowed its banks and entered low-lying log homes. For two days it was high until ice dams broke and the water rushed toward the Yukon River 100 miles to the south.

FEMA called Josh Baird, director of Disciples Volunteering of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to see if he could find a group of volunteers to fly into this village and work for two weeks.

The work had to be done before October or families would not have livable homes for the winter.

Josh contacted David Bell, director of the Yakama Christian Mission in White Swan. He had participated with a 2009 work group to help rebuild Eagle, Alaska, after a similar flood. He has 15 years experience of working with volunteer work groups.

A couple of days later, Dave was sitting in a three-seat plane flying from Fairbanks to Hughes to check the damaged homes. The village of about 80 was quiet.

Moose season had just opened and many of the community's men and women were hunting moose.

Other community members were in California fighting the Rim Fire.

With a FEMA representative, Dave spent the morning accessing flood damage to see if a volunteer group could do the work, how much time was needed to complete it, and what sleeping and eating facilities might be available for a volunteer team.

On Saturday, Sept. 7, Dave returned to White Swan and



David Helseth's hand is at the level of floodwaters.

started calling people he knew to see if they were able to rearrange schedules and be gone for more than two weeks on short notice.

FEMA wanted to know by Tuesday Sept. 10 who would be going so flight arrangements could be made for everyone to fly on Monday, Sept. 16.

By Tuesday, Dave had 10 people who were willing and able to go with him. Seven could leave on Sept. 16 and four more could fly in a week later. Flight schedules were made and commitments at home were readjusted.

The team included Katherine Bell, Kate Van Haren and Greg Norman of White Swan; Dick Cowin of Wapato, David Helseth of Yakima, Nancy Johnson of Puyallup, Jim Piper and Nathan Ridenour of Nampa, Idaho, Rod Parrott of Hood River, Ore., and Mike Robinson of Normal, Ill.

The first team flew from Seattle on Sept. 16, spent the night at University Community Presbyterian Church in Fairbanks, and then flew in to Hughes on Sept. 17.

An AmeriCorps Tribal Civilian Community Corps young-adult team based with the Hoopa Tribe of northern California had been there for more than a week, mucking out water-soaked wood floors and mold-infested floor insulation.

Dave's team was to put six houses back together. Supplies arrived for five of them. The sixth homeowner had not ordered supplies until a week after they arrived, so five were completed.

The team was at the mercy of weather, airplanes or people at desks in Anchorage who made decisions over which they had no control.

Miss M's house was one of the first ones started, because she had a young child and was living in a tent out back.

As the team worked on her home, they learned her story. Her mother had died in 2012. The 20-by-20-foot log cabin in which Miss M has grown up with her siblings was now hers. Early in 2013, her father was diagnosed with cancer and in September was flown to a hospital in Fairbanks, about 200 miles southeast of Hughes.

As word came that her father might not live through the week, more volunteers were assigned to her house, and her father's house next door, so they would be available for arriving family.

On Wednesday, Sept. 25, the tent temporarily sheltering her and her five-year-old collapsed under the weight of heavy wet snow. That day, her father died.

On Thursday, Sept. 26, her home was finished and ready to move back into, just in time for family and friends to arrive for the funeral.

When word of Miss M's father's death came, men, including three from the work group, traveled up the river two miles to dig the grave. It took parts of two days. Taking turns, the 15 men dug down through shale rock to the required level.

His body arrived in Hughes on Saturday afternoon with the community gathered at the airport.

On one side of the plane family and friends greeted one another with hugs and tears as they left the plane.

On the other side, a large door opened and men in the community lifted the casket, box and large cross from the plane and carried them to the Episcopal Church less than 100 yards away.

The funeral service was scheduled for Monday noon. Because of a conference for Episcopal clergy in Fairbanks and the difficulty of flight arrangements, the

team learned Monday morning that no priest would be there for the service. Someone asked Dave if one of the team would officiate. Nancy Johnson, pastor of First Christian Church in Puyallup, was asked to do the task.

As the rest of the work crew spent the morning working on houses, Nancy and Dave prepared the service, even though they did not know the person or family, were guests in a village that had different customs and traditions, and were not familiar with the Episcopal liturgy.

Seventy-five people gathered in the community center that cloudy, cold day to remember the life of one who had lived his whole life in Hughes. Communion was served with juice and saltine crackers.

After the service, the body was carried to the river and placed on a boat for the journey up the river two miles. About 35 people took a boat up the cold gray-steel river and then used ropes to pull themselves up a steep hill. Young men carried the casket up the hill, not letting it touch the ground. There were some steps notched into the hillside but snow and wet dirt made uncertain footing.

After the committal, men filled the grave with the dirt and shale that had been dug out. Sharing five shovels, each person worked a minute or two and then received a tap on the shoulder. Another person took the shovel and continued the task.

While this was happening, women were singing Gospel songs. Some men joined in.

The grave was soon filled. A large cross was anchored into the ground, standing above those working and singing. Flowers that had been carried up the hill were placed on the grave.

At 5 p.m., the potlatch took place in the community hall. The work group joined the community, tasting bear meat, moose meat,

tasty soups and stews along with salads and desserts.

Miss M helped pass out the abundance of food.

The snow that had fallen five days earlier and flattened her tent was still on the ground. It will be there for the winter. The days were growing colder and shorter, but now she was back in her home.

The team had no idea how their lives would intertwine with those in the village.

They realized they did more than just repair houses damaged by floodwater. They were welcomed into the community and invited to share in the remembrance of life in a way that could never have been expected.

One member of the group commented that it was a life changing experience for him, but, then, the group had prayed that God would work through them.

The Rev. David Helseth is pastor of Englewood Christian Church in Yakima and a frequent contributor to The Fig Tree's Sounding Board column.

See story on page 1 with Dave Bell's reflections.

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Wherever we are, we take moments to be God's presence for people

The notion that the local is global and the global is local was reinforced as I met people at the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly and as I reflect on the contributions of one of The Fig Tree founders, Carl Milton, who died on Nov. 20.

It was uncanny that in the first two days at the assembly I met people who had been to Spokane or knew people here—small world. When I said I was from Spokane, Maake Masanga from South Africa said he had been at Whitworth University. Sirirat Pusurinkham from Thailand and I recognized we had previously met—maybe at another assembly. Perhaps, but she had been on the cover of The Fig Tree in November 2011 when she visited to be at First Presbyterian's Jubilee International Marketplace with friend Nancy McCabe.

In a small group talking about issues for

women and the church, I mentioned my daughter. When I gave her name, Marijke Fakasieiki, Moumita Biswas recognized that she knew her from when Marijke spent a year as an intern at the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Centre in Geneva. In fact, I greeted many people as Marijke's mom.

I also reconnected with friends I knew from studies with the WCC, previous assemblies, my denomination and other contexts, and I made new friends.

Global friendships give us new eyes to see what is happening here and elsewhere, and new ears to hear perspectives here and around the globe. These contacts help us see that consistency in faith and life are possible and we need to be in solidarity with each other to make that happen.

So as I reflect on the life of one of The

Fig Tree founders, Carl Milton, I see a consistency. A physics teacher at Lewis and Clark High School, he was a teacher in his home, church, friendships, ecumenical commitments and interest in the world.

Learning and teaching were central to his life, including a one-year job-home-car exchange with a teacher in Australia and teaching English in 1988-89 in China.

Carl connected ideas and issues. He questioned, listened and reflected on the relationship of science, religion and history. As a scholar, poet, artist, mathematician, professor, joker, performer, philosopher, storyteller, musician, mentor, spiritual guide and friend, as his daughter Ruth Michaelis describes, he taught, knowing how to pique the curiosity of students and anyone he met.

For him, living a Christ-like life was what

faith was about, that meant not holding in "contempt or disregard any human person for any reason at any time," Ruth said.

Everywhere we go, every moment with a person here or anywhere else is a special encounter, an opportunity to learn and teach. Whether here or far away, we are called to be God's presence to make a difference in someone's life. We may lighten a load by listening to stories that inspire solidarity; send aid to disaster victims; see abilities of those with some disabilities; connect gender justice with community safety; hear cries of anger, lament, care and hope as part of healing; see oppression in our own back yards; drop everything to rebuild homes before winter; realize we can find agreement despite differences, and enter into a pilgrimage for peace and justice.

Mary Stamp - editor

UN's World Happiness Report gauges costs of mental illness and health

The second World Happiness Report (WHR) was released this fall. It is a report to the United Nations by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (unsdsn.org/happiness). One section of it blends smoothly with the subject of my editorial last month.

Last year there was ridicule of the report largely based on the title. In a statement released with the report, the editors explain, "The word 'happiness' is not used lightly. Happiness is an aspiration of every human being and can also be a measure of social progress.

America's founding fathers declared the inalienable right to pursue happiness. Yet, are Americans, or citizens of other countries, happy? If they are not, what can be done about it?

In answering the questions of what af-

fects happiness, the report states that the most important determinant is mental health.

Last month I commented on Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in *Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. To simplify their conclusion: Name almost any social ill. It is worse in countries where inequality is high.

On the subject of mental health they state that if you fail to avoid inequality, "you will have to deal with higher rates of mental illness, drug abuse and every other kind of problem. If keeping taxes and benefits down leads to wider income differences, the need to deal with the ensuing social ills may force you to raise public expenditures to cope."

It sounds like a vicious circle.

Wilkinson and Pickett used information

from World Health Organization surveys. The World Happiness Report uses self assessments gathered by the Gallup organization in their World Poll.

The World Happiness Report finds that depression and anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problems. They are found to be highly correlated with levels of inequality in Spirit Level.

There are six central conclusions in the special report on mental health: 1) Mental illness is the single biggest determinant of misery. 2) It affects about 10 percent of the world population at any one time. 3) Worldwide, depression and anxiety disorders account for up to one-fifth of all disability, which involves massive costs in lost output. 4) Less than a third receive treatment. 5) Cost-effective treatments exist. 6) Schools and workplaces need to

be much more mental health conscious.

Regularly we are bombarded with sensational reports of violence committed by a small minority of the mentally ill among us and suicides by bullied, depressed children.

Lurking in the background in the media reports are the attempts by family and friends to find help in a complex system that is overcrowded and underfunded.

A friend works on the crisis line here. Most of the calls they receive are not sensational. They are from depressed or panicked people who need some help.

The World Happiness Report suggests beneficial side-effects of happiness: "Happy people live longer, are more productive, earn more, and are also better citizens. Well-being should be developed both for its own sake and for its side-effects."

Nancy Minard - Contributing editor

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

As I was driving Beth to work yesterday we came up behind a van operated by one of the several retirement communities here in Spokane. The advertisement on the back of the van featured a gray haired woman riding a motor scooter, hands firmly on the handlebars, legs extended out from the foot rests. She had an exultant smile on her face. The tag line was "live life fully."

It occurred to me that we see this implied definition of a "full life" all the time. Living fully means doing all kinds of things for the first time, getting out and going, being active and carefree, regardless of your age. The definition of "active" is variable; sometimes it means climbing mountains, sometimes it means heading to the casino, sometimes it means river cruises in Europe and sometimes it means being reckless with a motor scooter. Regardless of what adventure is being depicted at any given moment, we have all been carefully trained to believe that ceaseless activity, never ending fun, is the definition of a "full" life.

Now there is nothing wrong and much that is good with being active, but activity has nothing to do with the fullness of life. Indeed, ceaseless activity, the quest for ever more fun, is just as likely to be a symptom of avoidance of the important issues of life as it is to be evidence of its fullness. Genuine fullness of life is not about where you have gone and what you have seen. Genuine fullness of life is about how open you have been to the full range of human emotion and experience.

It is wonderful to have visited exotic places—I wish I had seen more of them—but the important issue for life is whether or not you have toured the recesses of your own soul. Have you found the limits of your tolerance? Have you discovered what makes you break? Have you allowed yourself to experience the most profound sort of grief,

as well as the greatest and highest joy? Have you been forced to discover that many of your convictions about yourself and others are simply mistaken, and have you at last become fully and completely honest with and about yourself? Have you discovered that you are boundlessly loved not because of what you have done but because of who God is? Have you accepted forgiveness when you felt unforgivable, and have you forgiven others who hurt you in ways that at least for a moment felt unforgivable?

Above all, have you loved? Have you given yourself away entirely to another and discovered the fullness of what that truly meant? Most simply put, have you been able to, as Paul put it to the Romans, "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep?"

If you have, then you can say that you "live life fully" regardless of where you have gone and what else you have done. You have fulfilled your true potential as a human being, and had your life authenticated in the only way that counts. After all, in spite of the various legends about the travels of Jesus, there is not a shred of evidence that he ever ventured outside the boundaries of first century Palestine. As I understand it, he is a very good example of one who lived life fully.

The Very Rev. Bill Ellis
Cathedral of St. John Newsletter

We recently witnessed a colossal typhoon, a super-storm in the Philippines. Thousands are dead, hundreds of thousands left to homelessness and despair, those whose carbon footprint is a tenth of mine. These storms are a new phenomenon.

The best analogy I've heard to describe this phenomenon is this: climate change is to weather what steroids are to an athlete. Any one unusually strong event—a storm

or a home run or a winning race—might not be caused by climate change or steroids, but a trend of powerful events in a given direction is damning.

Let us uphold and honor the heart-breaking testimony of the Philippines climate change representative Yeb Sano, a man who has lost family from climate disruption, calling out to the world community to "stop this madness." His call to the global community means that we can never say to the next generation, "we didn't know; there was nothing we could do."

There is so much we can do. The Catholic Bishops of Washington State have recently issued a statement on coal export, calling for a comprehensive environmental review of the proposed export terminal in Longview.

They ask that the Environmental Impact Statement for the coal terminal consider broad effects, including climate disruption caused by burning American coal in China. The coal that warms the air in Asia is the same that causes typhoons in the Philippines and drought in Africa.

Each of us can raise our voices in the face of crisis, much like the Philippine climate ambassador and the Catholic Bishops of Washington State. Let us speak now.

Jessie Dye - Earth Ministry
Program and Outreach Director

The end of power plays can strengthen the church. It recently occurred to me (this is only recent in geologic time), that Christians spend entirely too much time and energy arguing among themselves.

We weaken ourselves with claims that our particular views are correct. By definition this claim means that others—who also love Jesus—are incorrect. But I have found that my claim is matched, just as often as I make it, by those whose claim is contrary. Those

equal and opposite claims also always seem to match in intensity, as they must in order to be heard. So the argument repeatedly is joined, rejoined and ratcheted higher. If this is to end, one side of the argument has to win, doesn't it? No.

The victory and loss are the beginning of a new argument, or is it the old one just reframed? I ask, "How long oh Lord?"

In the book of Joshua, just prior to the battle of Jericho, Joshua is in the midst of a partisan situation and asks the Angel in front of him, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord, I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" Joshua completely gives up his position to follow God ... and a city thought unconquerable, the battle unwinnable, is won.

The left and right arguments today seem just as unsolvable as any great wall of the past. However, Joshua's change is the answer for us—a model for us in the church. Are you on our side or theirs? Neither.

The question is not if God is on our side; the question is whether we are on God's side. Our claims are based in our earthly power plays. We like being right, and in doing so we lay a claim to authority that I don't believe is ours to make. As a group or individually, we need to recognize that God and His Gospel have a claim on our lives regardless of the side of the aisle. His claim is superior so it supersedes our claims and power plays.

Now is the appropriate time for God's representative to fall facedown to the ground in reverence, and ask, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

Dave McCue - St. John and Colfax
United Methodist Churches
Reprinted from Inland Steeples

Documentary 'Inequality for All' showing set

A benefit community screening of the documentary, "Inequality for All," will be held at 6 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 21, at the Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, with the Smith-Barbieri Progressive Fund matching proceeds and donating the funds to the Second Harvest in Spokane to help feed hungry people this winter.

"Our community is no exception when it comes to stagnant wages and economic inequality," said Ron Reed, who is organizing the screening. "With food stamp needs and poverty growing in our community, benefiting 2nd Harvest isn't just an after-thought, it is recognition of the critical need."

"Inequality for All," a film directed by Jacob Kornbluth, examines the widening income inequality in the United States. American

economist, author and professor Robert Reich presents information in the film that premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in the Documentary Competition section, and won a U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award for Achievement in Filmmaking. It also won the Audience Award Winner, Best Documentary Film Traverse City Film Festival 2013.

"Inequality for All" allows viewers to start with little or no understanding of what it means for the U.S. to be economically imbalanced, and walk away with a comprehensive sense of the issue and what can be done about it, Ron said.

For information, call 993-5785, email ron@pacificad.com or visit inequalityforall.com.

Calendar of Events

- Dec 3-Jan 12** • "Lasting Heritage," links between ancient people, modern tribal people and the land, Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. First Ave., 456-3831, northwestmuseum.org
- Dec 4-22** • **West Central Festival of the Arts**, Salem Lutheran, 1428 W. Broadway, 328-6230, salemlutheran@gmail.com
- Dec 5** • **Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium's Annual Meeting**, "Celebrating our Housing Communities and Service Successes," 3102 W. Ft. Wright Dr., 11:30 a.m., 325-3235, cindy@slihc.org
- **"How to Effectively Communicate with Legislators,"** Peace and Justice Action Committee Workshop, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870, slichty@pjals.org
- Dec 8** • **German Christmas Carol Service**, Concordia Choir, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th Ave., 3 p.m., refreshments at the German American Society, 25 W. Third, 928-2595
- Dec 9** • **Opening of The Arc of Spokane Thrift Store**, 808 N. Ruby
- Dec 10** • **Human Rights Day**, 63rd anniversary of the United Nations establishing Human Rights Day in 1948 with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- **Spokane County United Way**, Introduction to Get Connected! volunteer management software, 920 N. Washington, Suite 100, 1 p.m., 838-6581 x101, volunteer@unitedwayspokane.org
- Dec 11** • **Inland NW Death Penalty Abolition Group, Spokane Police Accountability and Reform Coalition**, 5:30 p.m. for each, **Veterans for Peace**, 6:45 p.m., 35 W. Main, 838-7870
- Dec 11-20** • **Christmas Bureau**, providing grocery store vouchers, books and toys to families in need, Spokane Fair & Expo Center, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (excluding Sunday), 358-5454, jlee@ccspokane.org
- Dec 11, 12** • **"God So Loved the World,"** Singing Nuns' Christmas Evermore Concert with East Valley High School Strolling Strings, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 2 and 7:30 p.m., bingcrosbytheater.com
- Dec 12** • **Palestine-Israel Human Rights Committee**, 35 W. Main, 3 p.m., 838-7870
- Dec 13** • **Eastern Washington Legislative Conference Planning Committee**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, Room 215, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 1:30 p.m., 216-6090
- Dec 14** • **The Campbell Farm Gala**, "Is There Room in the Inn?" Dinner and Dance at Selah Elks Club, #318 Golf Course Loop Rd., Selah, Wash., 6 p.m., 509-877-6413
- Dec 15** • **Handal's Messiah Community Sing-A-Long**, First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar, 4 p.m.,
- Dec 16** • **NAACP**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 7 p.m.
- Dec 18** • **Human Rights Education Institute Book Club Book**, *A Prayer for Owen Meany* by John Irving, 414 W. Mullan, Coeur d'Alene, 5:15 p.m., hrei.org, kschumaker@hrei.org
- Dec 20** • **Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane Festivus Friday**, Community Building, 35 W. Main, 6:30 p.m., 838-7870
- **"Harmony for the Holidays,"** Jonathan Mancheni and Isabella Ivy benefit concert for Catholic Charities Foundation and Second Harvest, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 8 p.m.
- Dec 25** • **Christmas Day**
- Dec 31** • **First Night Spokane**, "Singing in the New Year" arts and entertainment, downtown Spokane locations, 4 p.m. to midnight with fireworks, 456-0580, firstnightspokane.org
- Jan 2** • **Fig Tree deliveries**, St. Mark Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m.
- **Fig Tree Meetings and Board**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., Development 11:45 a.m., Benefit, 12:30 p.m., Board, 1 p.m., 535-1813
- Thurs** • **Winter Market in South Perry**, 915 S. Perry, 3 to 6 p.m.
- Fridays** • **Learn about Buddhist teachings and meditation**, Ven Geshe Thupten Phelgye, 25 W. Main, 7 p.m., lori@barkcanoe.com

United Way has new program

Spokane County United Way is launching a new program for its online management of community volunteer connections through "Get Connected." The website's functions will be introduced during an agency training at 1 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 10, at 920 N. Washington, Suite 100 in Spokane.

The program will help agencies recruit, match and manage volunteers.

For information, call 838-6581 ext 101, email volunteer@unitedwayspokane.org or visit volunteerspokane.org.

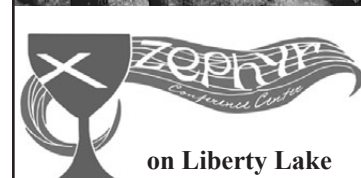
Program creates soul-tending cards

St. Joseph Family Center will offer a retreat on "Soul Collage," helping participants create decks of "soul-tending cards" from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 4, at the center, 1016 N. Superior.

Colleen Russell, a trained facilitator of SoulCollage® and author of *Overcomers, Inc., Stories of Strength, Hope and Courage*, has a master's degree in transpersonal psychology.

She will help participants create the soul-tending cards, using their imagination, intuition and creativity as they explore their souls' unique stories and their life purposes.

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WCC, Evangelicals, Catholics have historic agreement on mission, evangelism

Speaking on behalf of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to the World Council of Churches (WCC) 10th Assembly in Busan, Thomas Schirmmacher of Bonn, Germany, executive chair of the WEA's Theological Commission, announced that in 2011 the WCC, WEA and Roman Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue agreed to a common statement on mission and evangelism.

"Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct" was adopted in June 2011 as basis for churches developing mission statements.

The WEA's four concerns when it was established in 1846—Christian unity, human rights, world evangelism and religious freedom for all—"have never been combined more clearly than in the first ever joint document signed by the WEA, the WCC and the Vatican," Thomas said.

The document challenges unethical forms of witnessing to the gospel that deny human dignity or rights.

Witnessing to the gospel should never be done in a way that overrules the human dignity and the human rights of others, he said.

Having been involved in the five-year process, Thomas is grateful for the WCC's flexibility to include the WEA, which represents 600 million Christians in 128 countries.

"Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Therefore proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. However, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings," Thomas quoted.

"For the first time the three global Christian bodies representing 95 percent of world Christianity have spoken with one voice. Now the document goes from country to country, furthering Christian unity," he said.

Both in that document and through the Global Christian Forum, which includes Roman Catholics and churches not in any global ecumenical community, Thomas said, the WCC and WEA are giving Christian unity worldwide a higher priority than furthering their own organizations.

Given that "Evangelical" describes many groups, Thomas said, "We take responsibility for what we say and do as a global community, but we cannot influence what happens outside our members. Often we are the target of attacks.

"Evangelism is proclaiming in word, deed and Christian character of the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross and through the resurrection. He alone over-

came sin and can forgive and overcome sin," Thomas said. "Our churches are committed to seeing the Gospel proclaimed and demonstrated in all nations."

He said the WEA stands for "holistic evangelism and integral mission," which "emphasize the connection between proclaiming the good news in word and practicing it in actions. We need both for the integrity of the gospel."

The WEA believes personal conversion results in the growth of Christian character and witness.

"There have been times when mistakes have been made and Evangelicals have struggled to link proclamation of the gospel with acts of justice and peace," he said, "yet in our history there have been many people who exemplify the holistic nature of evangelism."

The WEA is committed to respond to growing biblical illiteracy, Thomas said, emphasizing



Thomas Schirmmacher

a recommitment to not only reading but also following the Holy Scripture as the necessary backing for holistic mission, "because the Bible also calls us to feed the hungry, help the poor, speak for the oppressed and utter our

prophetic voice against structural evils in societies, such as corruption or racism."

Given the WEA's commitment to human rights—beginning with working to free slaves in the 1800s—he expressed solidarity with those working for the reunification of Korea.

In a press conference, Thomas said the document contains the terminology and Christology acceptable to the WEA.

"It does not contain any sentence we would not sign," he said. "Like the WCC, we believe the world has to be reconciled."

When a reporter asked about the Christian Council of Churches of Korea, a member of the WEA, protesting the WCC assembly, Thomas said the WEA opposes their demonstration.

"Protests and denouncing other Christians is not the way to proclaim the Good News," he said.

When a reporter asked if everyone on earth should be Christian, Thomas said, "We can only witness to our faith in word and actions."

"Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct" is not a theological statement but addresses practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world. The goal is for churches, church councils and mission agencies to study the document, reflect on their practice and prepare their own guidelines for witness and mission in both word and deed.

For information, email chair_tc@worldwea.org or visit <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world>.



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