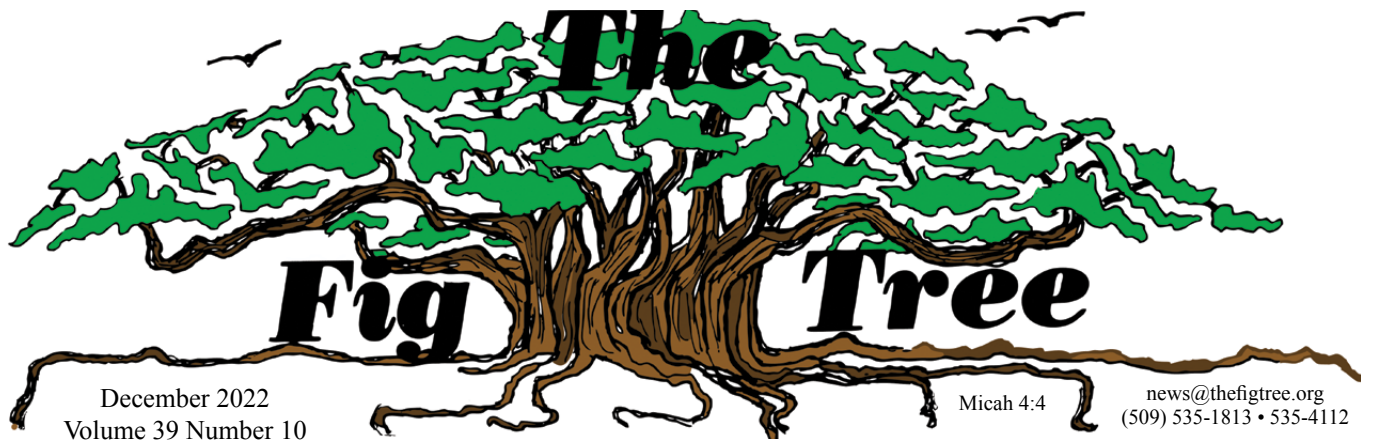


Stories inside

Jewish community resettles Afghan refugees - p. 5  
Marie Osborn was rural nurse practitioner - p. 7  
Pastor says church has 'halo value' in community - p. 12  
Faiths play role at COP27 climate talks - p. 13

CALENDAR ON PAGE 15  
FEATURES 80+ EVENTS



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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

# SCAR challenges racial disparities

By Mary Stamp

The Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR) is celebrating five years of organizing the community and building relationships to identify and address racial disparities.

Its programs include policy, education, advocacy, research, writing, civic engagement, community engagement, book groups, and direct action.

For its fifth anniversary, SCAR will hold a gathering from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 6, at the Carl Maxey Center, 3114 E. Fifth Ave.

SCAR is run primarily by volunteer teams led by the SCAR Steering Committee:

Justice Forral—their name since birth—has worked with SCAR for two years and is SCAR's first employee. They are the operations director.

Jac Archer is part-time coordinator of the Platform for Change and also organizer with the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS).

Walter Kendricks, the pastor for nine years at Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church, who founded SCAR with the late Sandy Williams, coordinates efforts.



Justice Forral and Walter Kendricks organize action against racism.

The other members of the SCAR Steering Committee are Scott Mueller, Curtis Hampton, Rick Matters and Pui-Yan Lam.

In May 2017, SCAR was formed at a meeting of 40 people in the Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church basement after a white jury decided the white man who shot William Poindexter, a black man, in the back was not guilty based on self-defense.

Two weeks later, SCAR held a rally in Liberty Park, walking to Altamont St., where the shooting occurred.

“Without the Poindexter verdict there would be no Spokane Court Watch,” Walter said. “Members of SCAR saw that the lack of presence of BIPOC or any court observers helped Poindexter’s killer walk free.”

Court Watch teams followed the next case, in which a 10-month-old black baby, Caiden, was killed in the care of a brother of the mother’s co-worker. The baby died of blunt force trauma and a fractured skull, Walter said.

During that trial, five to 15 people came every day. The judge knew black people and people wearing SCAR buttons were

Continued on page 4

## Growing Neighbors grows food, food security and relationships

In his ministry with Shadle Park Presbyterian Church, John Edmondson grows food, relationships and community with a vision of food security, inter-generational connections and earth justice.

After 17 years on staff, John is director of both the church’s family ministries and its Growing Neighbors (GN) initiative. He started in 2005 as full-time youth director. After eight years of learning the importance of caring for the whole family, not just one age group, he was invited to serve as the church’s

first family ministries director.

John began Growing Neighbors in 2016 as a volunteer, planting gardens around the church campus and neighborhood. In 2020, it became part of his paid ministry. Now GN has helped start or expand more than 60 “hyper-localized” community gardens at schools, homes, businesses, libraries and churches.

He helped several churches start gardens—Knox, Lidgerwood, First and Korean Presbyterian and Five Mile Community. Millwood and Opportunity Presbyterian also participate.

GN connects churches with the community in meaningful, practical ways, he said.

The family ministries and GN overlap in activities, including 5:30 p.m., Tuesday community dinners at the church, 5508 N. Alberta. They restarted this year after a hiatus for COVID.

From 5 to 8 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 6, the dinner features food from Nicholas DeCaro’s Island Style Food Truck and a program, “Growing Artists,” with a student art show and performances to raise money for GN and scholarships for summer art camps.

A recent community dinner, “End of the Growing Season Celebration,” was a hoedown. It drew 115 for games, dancing and garden tours—a large gathering for the small church, John said.

“We create opportunities for families to serve and learn together at the midweek dinners, which are followed by activities for all ages, service projects, discussion groups and worship,” John said. “Volunteers rotate to prepare meals and programs.”

Continued on page 6

## Advocacy event is Jan. 21

The 2023 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference will feature Gen Heywood, pastor of Veradale United Church of Christ (UCC) and convener for Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience (FLLC), as the keynote speaker, addressing the theme, “Caring for Our Common Earth Now and Forever.”

It is from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday Jan. 21, at Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, 115 N. Raymond, and online.

Gen will share insights from her participation in the 11th World Council of Churches Assembly held in September in Karlsruhe, Germany, at which representatives from churches, faiths and no faiths gathered to reflect on issues facing the faith communities around the world.

There will be three plenary sessions and one workshop session. The plenaries include “Legislative Briefings by Advocates in Olympia,” “Housing Is a Human Right,” and “Indigenous Voices on Environmental Justice.”

The briefings will be presented by Kristin Ang, policy engagement director of the Faith Action Network of Washington, Donna Christensen and/or Mario Villeneuve of the Washington State Catholic Conference, and Jessica Zimmerle of Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light.

Workshops will address welcoming refugees at Thrive International, racial justice issues with representatives of Spokane Community Against Racism and the NAACP Spokane, food security with Food Lifeline, and “Faithful Advocacy,” led with Earth Ministry.

Registration costs are \$32 in person with lunch or \$25/person for a group of five or more. Online registration is \$20 or \$15/person in a group of five+. There are scholarships. The Fig Tree seeks sponsors and organizations to present displays.

For information, call 535-4112, email event@thefigtree.org or register at thefigtree.org/donate.html or at secure.givelively.org/event/the-fig-tree/2023-legislative-conference.

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### Around the World

World Council of Churches News, PO Box 2100  
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Fax: +41-22 788 7244 www.oikoumene.org

#### Swedish archbishop apologizes to Sámi people

A year ago, Archbishop Antje Jackelén made an official apology from the Church of Sweden to the Sámi people in Uppsala Cathedral. "It is important that the apology is also made in Sápmi," said Jackelén. Ságstallamat, a conference held Oct. 21 and 22, concluded with worship in Luleå Cathedral, where the Church of Sweden's apology was made again. "Ságstallamat" means dialogue or conversation in Northern Sámi.

"Reconciliation is a long process in which the apology is a necessary milestone. Those receiving the apology must be given time to respond. This is another reason why it makes sense for the apology to be made on two occasions, almost a year apart," said Jackelén.

The Church of Sweden at the national level, the Sámi Council of the Church of Sweden and the northern dioceses cooperated to develop the process. The Church of Sweden made eight commitments. Five different areas to be developed by 2026. include influence and participation, Sámi ecclesiastical life, Sámi children and young people, indigenous rights and land management and forestry.

#### WCC's German moderator seeks unity of world

Reporting to the newly elected World Council of Churches (WCC) executive committee meeting in November, moderator Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm said that the world's grave challenges are not God's last word. He affirmed that the WCC's witness of unity helps the world more toward more unity.

At the 11th Assembly, he found the prayer services an opportunity to feel "how the Holy Spirit brings us together as people with completely different backgrounds and yet united as brothers and sisters in Christ." He added, "If we are in relationship with Christ, in prayer, reflection and action, we will always be in relationship with our fellow human beings and with our sisters and brothers in Christ all over the world. We can only live the mission of God when we not only speak of the love of Jesus Christ but also radiate it with our lives."

#### WCC shares in action against gender violence

As a global campaign "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" kicked off, the WCC, Lutheran World Federation and other ecumenical partners call people to "UNITE! Act to End Violence Against Women and Girls."

The annual campaign that runs from Nov. 25—International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women—to Dec. 10—Human Rights Day—includes prayers, Bible studies, exhibitions, learning and action. Based on the UN Women's theme, "UNITE" stands for Urgency, Networking, Intervention, Training and Empowerment to break the cycle of violence against women and girls. Events in the campaign raise awareness on violence against women and girls and highlight work by organizations across the world.

The WCC is holding an online Thursdays in Black Bible study from 5 to 6:30 a.m. (PST), Monday, Dec. 5, with Karen Georgia Thompson, associate general minister for Wider Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ. The study on "Exorcising the Silence in David's House" is based on 2 Samuel 11-13 and Psalm 51 with registration at us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZE1f-2qqj0pHtMorlRktqz-Kyco2Yme-1f.

The World Association for Christian Communication at 5 a.m. (PST), Thursday, Dec. 8, will report on findings on women's representation in media, particularly around gender-based violence, the increasing online violence, and steps to monitor and advocate for an end to online violence.

"These days of solidarity and prayer will help strengthen our resolution and our hope that we can in fact move forward on the path toward a world without rape and violence," said Isabel Apawo Phiri, deputy general secretary, World Council of Churches. "We will resolve to take concrete actions together."

## REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

### Events help fund newspaper and directory

As The Fig Tree went to press on Friday, Nov. 25, sponsors had contributed \$11,538 toward the 2022 Fall Festival of Sharing campaign goal of \$18,000.

"We hope much of that gap is filled by Giving Tuesday," said editor Mary Stamp.

This year for the first time, our board of 15, with the help of a former board member, raised \$4,500 as a challenge grant and invited sponsors to double their gifts by matching that amount. The match has been met.

Mary expects that with a year-end appeal letter, announcing the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference and 2023 Benefit Lunch, more will respond with gifts that will help The Fig Tree meet and surpass its 2022 budget goals for donations.

The 2023 spring benefit events include an in-person Benefit Lunch beginning at 11:30 a.m. with a program at noon, Friday, March 3, at Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University. There will also be an online "Breakfast-Time"

Benefit from 8 to 8:45 a.m., Wednesday, March 17.

Both events will feature a video and speakers celebrating the 50th anniversary of the annual Resource Directory on the theme, "Sharing Resources: Transforming Lives."

Organizers are recruiting hosts to invite guests to join them at their tables to hear how the region's unique media impact lives.

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

### Sarah Lickfold is new Transitions director

Transitions, which works to end poverty and homelessness for women and children in Spokane, has named Sarah Lickfold as its next executive director, as of February 2023. She follows Edie Rice-Sauer, who has served in this role since 2012.

As Transitions' development director since 2018, Sarah builds on a career serving in education, banking, nonprofit and social services, including two years in Peru as a Peace Corps Com-

munity Economic Development Volunteer.

Sarah, who grew up in Eastern Washington, has a master of public administration degree from Eastern Washington University.

She is committed to working toward a more just society for underserved and marginalized populations.

Transitions' Board of Directors expressed their gratitude for the service of Edie Rice-Sauer, who retires to spend time with

family, gardening and volunteering.

Transitions operates the Women's Hearth, Miryam's House, Transitional Living Center, Education, New Leaf Kitchen and Cafe, and the Home Yard Cottages to help women move from homelessness and poverty to hope and self-sufficiency.

For information, call 994-9580, email slickfold@help4women.org or visit help4women.org.

### NW Fair Housing offers resource brochures

Northwest Fair Housing Alliance (NWFHA) has new fair housing brochures available in multiple languages. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funding has helped NWFHA create a variety of brochures on fair housing topics and translate many into the common languages spoken in the Spokane area.

Three new brochures address forms of sex discrimination: Fair Housing and Domestic Violence Survivors, Fair Housing for Gender Non-conforming People, and Fair Housing for All Genders.

These are available in English, Spanish, Arabic and Russian.

Another new trifold that fo-

cuses on fair housing rights for households with minor children. Fair Housing for Families with Children is also available in English, Spanish, Arabic and Russian.

In addition, the brochure, Fair Housing Rights for Protected Classes Adversely Impacted by COVID-19, is now available in English, Korean, Swahili, Marshallese, Spanish, French, Russian, Arabic, Vietnamese and Chinese.

Other topics include Assistance Animals and the Fair Housing Act, How to File a Fair Housing Complaint with HUD, Guidance for Health Care Providers for Reasonable Accom-

modations in Housing, Reasonable Accommodation Guidance for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing, Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications in Housing, Fair Housing Rights for Renters, Women and Fair Housing, LGBT Fair Housing Rights, American Indians / Alaska Natives and Fair Housing Rights, and Fair Housing for Veterans and Active and Reserve Military.

Several brochures are available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, French, Korean, Laotian, Marshallese, Russian, Swahili and Vietnamese.

These and other fair housing brochures are available at nwfairhouse.org/library.

### Tree of Sharing will run through Dec. 11

Through Sunday, Dec. 11, The Tree of Sharing will have tables located at Spokane Valley Mall, NorthTown Mall and River Park Square for its Annual Christmas Gift Campaign.

Members of the public can pick up physical gift tags that show the needs of specific clients from about 8,000 gift requests that have been gathered from various nonprofits in Spokane County.

Participating agencies decide which clients need Christmas gifts and share each recipient's age, gender and gift request. People can choose a tag from the tree, buy the requested gift

or gifts, and return them to the tables in the malls.

Gifts then go to a warehouse where they are sorted for participating agencies, which then pick up, wrap and deliver the gifts to their clients before Christmas.

Tree of Sharing is a nonprofit which relies on sponsors to provide in-kind support services.

For information, call 808-4919 or email TOSSpokaneDirector@gmail.com.

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#### Deadlines:

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**Fairmount offers memorial events**

Fairmount Memorial Association is offering three memorial events to help families who have lost loved ones cope with grief during the holidays. The following are the events:

- Heritage Holiday Remembrance Service, at 1 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 3, at Heritage Funeral and Cremation, 508 N. Government Way in Spokane.
  - Pines Tree Lighting with Santa, 1 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 3, at Pines Cemetery, 1402 S. Pines Rd., in Spokane Valley.
  - PNW Holiday Remembrance Service, 5 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 8, at Fairmount Memorial Park, Sunset Chapel, 5200 W. Wellesley Ave. in Spokane.
- For information, call 326-6813 x 221.

**Latinos en Spokane hosts Christmas Posada**

Latinos en Spokane will host a Christmas Posada from 5 to 8 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 10 at West Central Community Center, 1603 N. Belt St. The annual event includes local vendors, a COVID vaccine clinic, Christmas gifts for children, photos with Santa Sanchez, a potluck and traditional posada activities. For information, call 326-9540.

**Outreach Center holds Children's Christmas Joy**

Mission Community Outreach Center is hosting its Annual Children's Christmas Joy, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 10, at Stevens Elementary School Gymnasium at 1717 E. Sinto Ave.

Parents shop without their children for their children. Clothing is available for infants through sixth grade. Because the quantity of clothing is limited, parents should arrive early and be prepared to line up outside. For information, call 536-1084.

**Concordia Choir sings German Christmas songs**

Familiar Christmas sounds of home are what ethnic Germans come to hear at St. Mark's Lutheran Church at 3 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 11, at 24th and Grand Blvd.

This annual German Christmas Service features the Concordia Choir singing traditional Christmas selections. The Scripture readings will be in German, the language that Reformation initiator Martin Luther spoke. The sermon in English will be given by Lori Cornell, pastor of St. Mark's.

Following the service, which is open to people of all denominations, the German American Society will serve coffee and cake at the Deutsches Haus, 25 W. 3rd Ave. For information, call 747-6677.

**MOW provides gift bags for homebound seniors**

The Christmas Wish List for Meals on Wheels returns. Community members can share donations for gift bags with items to be delivered to homebound seniors.

Purchases can be made through Amazon Senior Holiday Wish List and delivered to 1222 W. 2nd Ave. from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays to Fridays until Dec. 15.

Requests are for gloves, nail clippers or sets, lip balm, socks, razors, shave cream, foot brushes, loofah sponges, small lotions, combs, deodorant, emery boards, Lifesaver candy and individually-wrapped chocolates. For information, call 456-6597.

**Terrain presents annual BrrrZaar**

Terrain presents its annual BrrrZaar from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 17, at River Park Square, 808 W. Main Ave.

It will feature hundreds of vendors' handmade items and artwork from all-local artists.

For information, call 624-3945 or email team@terrainspokane.com.

**Family Promise seeks beds and bedding**

Family Promise of Spokane is seeking donations of twin and queen beds, box springs, bed frames and sheets.

At this time its most urgent need is for beds because they are "graduating" so many families to permanent housing—around 10 families in the last two months.

They also seek items for Welcome Home Kits, which include 10-gallon bins filled with cleaning supplies, office supplies, bathroom supplies, kitchen basics or kitchen essentials.

Groups or individuals can put together these kits based on lists

of specific items on the website and deliver to the Family Promise administrative office at 2322 E. Sprague Ave.

Other major needs are for the Family Promise shelter: toilet paper, baby wipes, food and winter clothing, specifically winter boots. Donations can be delivered to 2002 E. Mission Ave.

Volunteers are always important, said Hannah Higgins, volunteer recruiter.

"Any community help is vital. With more volunteers, the more we are able to accomplish and serve our families. Volunteers

are needed to help with the outreach team, with the stabilization crew and with families as they enter and stay in permanent housing," she said.

Another way to volunteer is at the shelter helping with activities and making sure things are going well in the shelter.

Hannah added that Family Promise also needs help from volunteers who are knowledgeable in construction and maintenance.

For information, call 747-5487 or 867-8102, or visit familypromiseofspokane.org.

**2023 Hate Studies Conference seeks proposals**

Ryan Turcott, the proposal chair for Gonzaga University's 7th International Conference on Hate Studies in 2023, calls for proposals on the theme "Challenges of Hate in the 21st Century," to be submitted by Jan. 4, 2023.

The hybrid conference will be held April 20 to 23 in Spokane and online.

"In this time of political divisiveness, racial inequity, extremism and climate injustice, the importance of understanding how the processes of dehumanization and othering harm communities and the world in which we live

is as critical as ever," he said.

The Gonzaga Center for the Study of Hate invites persons to share their work to counter hate and promote hope by submitting a proposal to present at the conference.

The multidisciplinary field of hate studies stirs new understandings to address hate in any of its manifestations—such as racism, antisemitism, homophobia, religious intolerance, extremism, white supremacy, anti-immigration animus or ableism.

The International Conference on Hate Studies is a leading interdisciplinary academic forum on hate, related social problems and ways to create socially just and inclusive communities. It helps educators, researchers, advocates and others analyze and combat hatred in its many manifestations to lead communities to strengthen their commitment to peace, human rights and justice, said James Mohr, conference co-chair.

For information, call 313-3604 or email turcott@gonzaga.edu.

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# SCAR promotes and seeks to be the change they want in the community

*Continued from page 1*  
 present. The defendant was out on bail for the trial that took more than a year. In August 2019, he was sentenced to 28 years.

Court Watch attended the 2019 trial of a former policeman for the 1980s murder of a black prostitute. The semen sample, which had disappeared, was found. SCAR is still following this case.

SCAR, which started as a for-profit organization, is forming as a 501(c)(4) organization early next year. This will change SCAR's tax status, but will keep its political voice active. It will continue to be member driven, said Justice.

In the last political cycle, SCAR expanded to include a separate Political Action Committee, which sent mailers in the Spokane County Prosecutors race.

**“Our mission is to address racial disparities in multiple ways, helping people educate themselves, each other and the community,”** Justice explained.

Walter, who is now chair of the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs, said SCAR confronts racism “in every shape and form, and facilitates addressing it as our bandwidth allows, bringing together churches, society and government.”

“Wherever I sit, I am there on behalf of SCAR and as a pastor, advocating for civil rights for everyone,” he said.

**Building community is** “essential to counter the ways white supremacy infiltrates society,” Walter said.

“Having a strong, intergenerational community where people feel comfortable and welcome impedes efforts by the alt-right to recruit,” Justice said.

Walter said SCAR expects volunteers to represent a community spirit with no sexism, racism or homophobia.

**Through Burritos** for the People, SCAR has given out 300 burritos from 9 to 10 a.m. every Sunday. Justice said they have served 19,093 since starting. Burritos for the People is now hosted at Compassionate Addiction Treatment, 168 S. Division St.

“It’s both to build community and fight food insecurity,” they said.

“It may seem strange for a civil rights organization to give out burritos, but we give them to people who may have no meals or homes but are part of our community,” said Walter.

**“SCAR values everyone.** We try to be the change we want,” he said. “Everyone is welcome at Burritos for the People, even racists, because anyone can grow, and we all need to eat. So we create opportunities and spaces for people to meet and learn from each other.”

Justice said there are many ways to volunteer with SCAR.



Jac Archer is coordinating the Platform for Change.

The Writers Room produces social media memes and blogs.

The Research Team tracks Spokane city and county agendas and meetings

Direct action teams work on tabling events, doing Burritos for the People, light projector activism and various forms of direct outreach.

Others come to Game Nights, book groups and Sunday Dinners.

“Systems work can be exhausting, so we have activities to buoy people up,” Justice said.

**“We do both grassroots advocacy with neighbors and grassroots advocacy connecting organizations,”** they said. “We have held protests against gun violence, for Missing Murdered Indigenous Women, Indigenous People’s Day, Pro-Choice and our unhoused community. We have held press conferences on police reform. We also train people how to plan actions.”

“Our board is small, but our reach is wide,” said Justice, “We support volunteers as peers to do actions they have passion to do.”

“We try to make the community a better place,” Walter added.

**Justice, who grew up** in San Diego, started activism in high school and internalized the need for it when working in minimum wage jobs and struggling with food and housing insecurity after graduating. Six years ago, when they were 24, they moved to Spokane where their sister had a restaurant. Justice began to study computer science but decided to switch to political science in 2019, when COVID interrupted their studies.

Justice’s involvement with SCAR began with volunteering at events.

After George Floyd’s murder, Justice was also involved in supporting the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests and began connecting with other organizers and groups in Spokane.

At events and going door-to-door, they have listened to

people’s perspectives, sought common ground and left the door open, knowing people can change. They value a quote from Malcolm X: “Don’t be in a hurry to condemn because he doesn’t do what you do or think as you think or as fast. There was a time when you didn’t know what you know today.”

**That approach is important** for the Platform for Change, Justice said.

At the Nov. 13 Peace Action Conference, Jac said the Platform for Change grew out of 2020 BLM protests that drew more than 15,000 people to Spokane streets.

**SCAR realized people care** and decided to use the energy from BLM events on the streets, Jac said. Adding to that, the recent national Mapping Police Violence Report ranked Spokane the second deadliest city per capita of 100 cities, and with 12 to 18 incidents a year, the 12th deadliest city.

“In Spokane County, we struggle against racial injustice in every part of our criminal-legal systems—with high rates of stops, arrests, court cases and convictions. We choose punishment in lieu of restoring victims,” said Jac.

**So SCAR invites people** to re-examine crime and “criminalized” behavior, violence and the roots of harmful behavior—such as landlords raising rents in low-income housing and putting more people out on the streets.

To foster shared prosperity, SCAR has gathered agencies to develop the Platform for Change 2.0, to promote “holistic change” that envisions a community of safety and wellness with “robust, diversified, integrated, holistic and community-centered care.”

“Integrated care” means if a doctor knows a patient is sick because of black mold, the doctor can ask the landlord to remove the mold so the renter can be healthy, work and pay rent.

“Holistic” means knowing homeless women may begin us-

ing meth to stay awake at night to avoid sexual assault and use downers to sleep in the day. When housed they stop using drugs.

**“Politics are about how we treat each other,”** Jac said. “Government is about how we distribute power in society.”

Jac said the Platform for Change 2.0—the latest version—is “a living document, subject to change based on growing needs, knowledge and wisdom to envision a community where all have needs met so all thrive.”

The Platform for Change 1.0 and the list of supporting organizations are online at [scarspokane.org](http://scarspokane.org).

**SCAR seeks input** from the cross-disciplinary coalition of agencies that brings different education, expertise, professional and lived experiences related to root causes of the inequity.

Organizers are gathering feedback on proposals in three areas:

- **Transferring funds** from police to invest in mental, behavioral and physical health care, addiction treatment, domestic/intimate partner violence intervention, homeless services, tenant protections, public schools,

early childhood intervention and services for people in transition from incarceration, homelessness and foster care.

- **Holding current policing structures** accountable through civilian oversight, empowering the police ombuds office, holding independent investigations of police behavior, demilitarizing police, decertifying officers in extremist groups, and disciplining/firing police guilty of a crime, misconduct or abuse.

- **Transforming** the existing criminal-legal system to end policies that criminalize poverty, homelessness and addiction, ending cash bail, not building a new jail, reforming pretrial procedures, funding public defenders, releasing sentencing data on the judges’ and defendants’ demographics.

“We want the Platform for Change to be a springboard for social justice for the whole community,” said Jac, inviting others to join in the process.

For information, email [admin@scarspokane.org](mailto:admin@scarspokane.org), visit [scar.spokane.org](http://scar.spokane.org) or call 596-9750. Registration for the fifth anniversary gathering is at [bit.ly/scar5year](http://bit.ly/scar5year).

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# Jewish team helps settle Muslim refugees from Afghanistan in Spokane

By Marijke Fakasiieiki

The Spokane Jewish Community (SJC), which includes members of Temple Beth Shalom, Congregation Emanu-El and those with ties to Judaism, responded to news about Afghan refugees with a desire to help.

Many identified with the plight of these refugees because their parents or grandparents were refugees or immigrants.

They are also motivated because of the Torah's call to welcome the stranger.

Members of Temple Beth Shalom and Congregation Emanu-El hold services and often holiday celebrations under the same roof.

**The Jewish community** acknowledges their responsibility of Tikkun Olam, "repairing or helping the earth."

They practice that in many ways, including through environmental projects, with food distribution at Second Harvest Food Bank and in other outreach.

Initially trained by World Relief, the group contacted Refugee and Immigrant Connections Spokane (RICS) in late winter 2021. That agency accommodated their desire to help Afghan families.

RICS trained and assigned SJC volunteers to three families, one in Spokane Valley and two in Spokane. In addition to working on the teams, some volunteers help independently.

**The SJC connects** the refugees with agencies like the Martin Luther King Jr. Food Pantry, CHAS Clinic, Second Harvest, local schools and International Rescue Committee.

"I focus on one family. It has been a rich and rewarding experience so far," said Dale Severance, a retired Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) social worker and one of the co-coordinators of the SJC Afghan Teams. "It has touched me in surprising ways."

**For Afghan families**, so much in the U.S. is culturally different from what they have known, she explained.

"From furniture and food to religion and gender roles, it's all so different and a huge adjustment," Dale said.

Some volunteers help families receive food boxes.

Hilary Hart has organized weekly deliveries to 30 families of culturally appropriate foods,



Afghan family served hosts a welcome dinner.

Photo courtesy of Dale Severance

including fruits, vegetables, rice, lentils, beans, halal meat and other products that are less accessible in Spokane.

"By bringing food every week or every other week, we build a trusted relationship. Once we have a relationship, we can help with reading their bills, so they understand how much is due and how to pay them. Banking issues and financial literacy are issues," said Hilary.

**"Sometimes just visiting** with women at home with the children is a blessing," she said.

"When we arrive, families are more comfortable sitting on the floor. Tables are optional. Furniture can be confusing, but gradually more furnishings have arrived," said Dale.

Transportation is another challenge. Teams help the families with transportation until they have learned how to navigate the bus system so they can shop for food and clothing, or visit a doctor or the bank.

**Teams connect** with families three to four times a week.

In one family with six children, the father is working, and the mother is home taking care of the younger children. Going shopping for groceries is challenging, Dale said.

Having a team of volunteers means one can stay with the children while another takes the mother to the store.

For employment, navigating the U.S. system can be trying.

In their traditional system, one parent would seek work, while the other would take care of children until they are older, Dale noted.

A single parent family must balance between children's needs and financial needs.

"During Ramadan, we worked with interpreters to explore their needs so they could practice with their community," said Dale.

"Their observance and attention to religious practices are beautiful. Families, especially adults, are devout. Teens participate in Ramadan and fasting. Faith gives them strength to deal with the challenges they are experiencing," she said.

"Afghan families always offer tea, nuts, dates and sweets, sharing with generosity and hospitality," Dale added.

**One family invited** SJC members to Iftar, a meal to break the fast for Ramadan, with 10 team members and family there. SJC members brought food, too.

"I prepared extra, thinking it was a lot of people for the family to feed. As it turns out, we didn't have to bring food. There was so much food for the feast. They wanted to honor us. They served lamb in pilaf, a goat dish, pastry over a filling, and yogurt dip. They laid it out on a tablecloth on the floor. We sat on the floor and ate," she said, amazed with how welcoming, appreciative and grateful they were.

**For the Jewish community**, during the first two nights of Passover in the spring, there were several Seder meals, so the teams were not able to visit as often during that time.

The Afghan families understood that they were preparing a big meal.

"They were curious, asking us by putting their hands together

in prayer if it was a religious observance," said Dale.

**For her, this Passover Seder**, the themes of slavery and freedom in the Exodus story of the Israelites fleeing the oppression of Pharaoh in Egypt took on new meaning.

She reflected on what freedom means and how to promote it in her personal life and in the world.

"I reflected on what it is like for the refugee families we are working with to feel freedom and what their experiences were," she said.

Now here, they struggle with language. Pashto and Dari languages are not on Google Translate, so it is hard to communicate without a translator. Translation with the Tarjimly app is also hard.

Atia, a translator and case manager with RICS, helps with important matters. If the team has issues, they call her.

**As families learn** more English, it becomes easier to help with their needs.

It's often hard for women to learn English, because they need to stay with the children and cannot go to ESL classes in person.

Barton School at First Presbyterian offers some Zoom classes. One mother zooms into a class to practice English while SJC volunteers watch her children. Some are now comfortable and can converse in English, and others are in classes, but not yet using it.

Dale, who is working with a teenage girl who had never been to school before coming to the U.S., gathered documents, such as vaccination records, to register her for school. The girl,

who had started school before spring break, was excited about going to school. Now she is on a sports team. Dale continues teaching her English 45 minutes a day, sometimes talking while walking along the river.

**"It's awesome to see** the growth the kids make and listen to their English skills improve," Dale said.

"When I realized she knew the alphabet, I found a Dick and Jane book and asked if she wanted to learn to read," Dale said.

Once she read that book, Dale found 12 more Dick and Jane books. Even though the books are for young children, the teen was excited to be reading them.

**"Everyone on the team** has "aha" moments with the families. There is no way for the experience not to impact our lives," Dale reflected.

By October, most families had connected with attorneys to pursue legal asylum.

The team made a poster for a Jewish community picnic to share the work they have done. They were shocked to learn that there were so many participants.

Forty-nine SJC volunteers help regularly with food distribution, family teams, organizational connections and other tasks.

**The regular contact** with Afghan refugees has transformed Dale's faith journey.

"We have shared experiences and helped each other. None of us can go through life without the help of others," said Dale.

For information, call 747-3304, email administrator@spokanejbs.org or visit refugeeconnections-spokane.org.



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# Growing Neighbors is a small group that has multiplied through town

Continued from page 1

One Tuesday a month the church offers workshops on preparing and preserving foods the church and neighbors grow.

**John grew up in** the Reformed Church in America in Sacramento and came to Spokane to study communication, theology and music at Whitworth University. After graduating in 2002, he was youth minister for a year at Whitworth Presbyterian. Then he did marketing for three years with a Spokane Valley manufacturer of pesticide-free pest control products, before returning to youth ministry at Shadle Park.

In 2008, John joined Whitworth's first master's in theology cohort, completing it in 2011. In 2021, he earned a master of divinity at Portland Seminary and now seeks to be ordained by the Inland Northwest Presbytery for his ministry with Growing Neighbors, which he sees as a new way to be the church.

**"We seek to grow** relationships between people, between people and the world, and between people and our Creator," he said. "We do not force or expect participants to have any particular faith connection, but embodying Jesus' love for all things motivates our core team."

John said Growing Neighbors builds bridges with all sorts of organizations. Its mission is to help neighbors grow and share healthy food and relationships.

GN encourages people to use organic and regenerative gardening practices.

"We avoid using chemicals, amending soil naturally with compost, mulch and minimal disturbance—leaving roots in the ground at the end of the season," said John, who helped in his family's garden, but had little passion for growing food until he was married and had two children.

**"I learned by** experimenting, trying new plants and talking with other gardeners," said John.

He became a master gardener after starting GN and now offers training with the Washington State University Master Gardener program, incorporating Growing Neighbors values.

As there are already many community gardens, John collaborates with them to share resources.

GN helps people to put in drip irrigation to reduce water use and weeds. It provides training and resources like seeds, soil amendments, plant starts, tool sharing and gardening advice. It teaches gardeners how to reuse kitchen and garden waste as compost.

**John sees the effort** as a way to improve food security. It challenges the U.S. food system



**John Edmondson shows one of the compost buckets.**

that relies on big agriculture, and uses pesticides and herbicides. Transporting food long distances uses fossil fuels and contributes to climate change. He promotes food grown as locally and as healthily as possible because "eating food closer to the time of harvest means the food retains more nutritional value."

He said more than 90 percent of food eaten in Spokane is imported, but "a hyper-local food system is healthier for people and the planet."

While John has a small greenhouse for plant starts, he suggests creatively using structures already in place. For example, the church grows plant starts in a large room with big windows. Now local libraries with big windows are offering space to grow plant starts.

**Several teams started** around growing and sharing food.

- One offers sustainable food delivery in seven neighborhoods—West Central, Emerson-Garfield, Shadle/Northwest, North Spokane, East Central, Central Valley and East Valley.

"We share produce we grow as well as a variety of foods from local food bank partners. Volunteers deliver it in their areas to people whose mobility challenges hinder them from growing or accessing food," he said.

"Some volunteers deliver by bicycle. Any means of transportation is okay," John said, noting the need for more volunteers.

- **Another effort** is Little Free Pantries. Since 2019, GN partners with groups like Caritas in Northwest Spokane to share food through more than 60 Little Free Pantries set up across the county beside homes, churches, schools, nonprofits, YMCAs and Transitions Home Yard Cottages. Teams have built and installed cases on posts that are like the Little Free Libraries.

"The little pantries are used regularly, stocked by GN volunteers and partner organizations,

and by people we don't know who see the need and take up the cause," John said. "Our dream is to inspire and equip neighbors to own the mission, rather than relying on our organization to coordinate it."

For example, while he was on a mini sabbatical last year, people on their own initiative stocked the pantries and started a Facebook group informing people which pantries were stocked and which needed food.

Several little pantries were funded by Northwest Harvest and other partners have funded food and building materials for other pantries.

When someone wants to set one up, Growing Neighbors checks if the site is accessible and not too close to another.

**John described some** of the other teams:

- Special Mobility Services is a key partner for food deliveries.

- Some teams set up booths at farmers' markets—Emerson-Garfield, West Central, Garland, Millwood and Hillyard—where they share excess produce, tell people about Growing Neighbors practices and invite them to become involved.

"At farmers' markets, community events and neighborhood councils, we build relationships, share produce and spread our mission of helping neighbors grow healthy food and relationships with those they already live, learn, work, play and pray near," John said.

- Some teams expand garden plots on city land, in parks, on school playgrounds and

beside churches. At Garfield Elementary School, where his children went to school, John helped staff build eight raised beds in a fenced area of the play field. Parents, staff, students and neighbors tend it.

- **A Community Composting** team in Shadle/Northwest Spokane invites people receiving food deliveries to save kitchen and yard waste in buckets for compost to feed plants.

To compost the waste, volunteers built compost bins with pallets. The team collects two- to five-gallon buckets from grocery stores, bakeries and Whitworth dining services and labels them with instructions on what to include. Those delivering food plan to collect full buckets and leave empty ones.

- With Empire Health Foundation funding, a strategic planning team is helping GN be as equitable as possible. A team member on the Carl Maxey Center staff, wants to start a garden and collaborate in East Central Spokane.

- Another team is working with public library branches not

only to grow plant starts, but also to offer trainings, plant gardens and install little free pantries.

- A Growing Neighbors team is establishing relationships with members of Native tribes and learning from indigenous wisdom on caring for the land and growing more native edibles.

- Still another team is exploring a proposal to develop sustainable communities with urban farming and tiny homes for mixed use including displaced peoples and those experiencing homelessness so people can build healthy relationships as they care for the land and increase food resources.

**"GN does what is needed** to help neighbors treat each other and all creation like a loving family. All we do with Growing Neighbors is an ongoing experiment and effort to partner with and follow the guidance of the Spirit in seeking shalom, peace, harmony for the whole community of creation," said John.

For information, call 327-5522 or email jedmondson77@gmail.com.

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# Marie Osborn pioneered nurse practitioner care for rural Idaho

By Mary Stamp

Idaho's first licensed nurse practitioner, Marie Osborn, practiced emergency care and family medicine from 1972 until 1999 at the Salmon River Clinic in Stanley, Idaho, the sole medical provider for 6,000 square miles.

She also did occasional veterinary services and was the county coroner.

**Practicing rural medicine** 60 miles from the nearest doctor or clinic was a 24/7 commitment, requiring a strong sense of ethics and the ability to keep her cool in tragedies.

In May 2022, the College of Idaho in Caldwell recognized her contributions to rural medicine by awarding her an honorary doctorate.

In October 2022, Marie, 91, joined volunteer EMTs and clinic staff to launch a \$500,000 campaign to support the rural ambulance service on the 50th anniversary of Stanley buying its first ambulance.

After a 1971 car accident, the two-and-a-half hour wait for the ambulance to come from Hailey for four badly injured teenage boys sparked her career.

With community backing, Marie pioneered improvements in rural medicine by raising funds to buy an ambulance and build the clinic.

She advocated in the state legislature for funds to support rural clinics and ambulances, and for appropriate standards for nurse practitioners.

**Marie grew up in Muncie, Ind.**, in a low-middle class family whose parents were gung-ho about education. They attended a Southern Baptist Church. Living across the street from Ball State University, Marie decided to study nursing. After earning a bachelor's in nursing in 1953, she married Cal, a graduate of Indiana University in business.

They headed west with a small trailer, expecting to live in it near the University of Washington in Seattle, where Cal began graduate studies. Soon after starting, he met an IBM recruiter. IBM hired him to sell office equipment out of Bellingham.

Cal was later promoted to Boise, where he worked the rest of his career. Marie reared their five children and was involved in the community.

At an IBM employee campout and barbecue at Redfish Lake, Marie and Cal fell in love with the area. They bought property



Marie Osborn sits between David Kimpton and Tom Kovalicky, who used Forest Service vehicles and a station wagon as make-shift ambulances to take people to the Sun Valley Hospital before the clinic. They gathered Oct. 15 for the 50th anniversary of the first ambulance. Photos by Jim Stark



15 miles from Stanley—then with 37 residents—and built a log cabin for summer use.

When some of their children worked at a local restaurant and gas station, they sent people needing medical care to their mother because she had nursing skills.

**Stanley grew to 50 people.** Thousands more came in the summer to campgrounds in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. By 1999, 99 lived in town and 400 lived in the surrounding area as people with cabins retired and families moved there, plus more than a million rafters, anglers, hikers and campers came.

"Originally, the Forest Service put anyone who was injured in the back of their station wagon and drove 60 miles over Galena Summit to the Sun Valley Hospital," Marie said. "Military Air Safety Transport flew people from the backcountry to hospitals before Life Flight began."

**After the 1971 accident,** Marie realized her three sons, Cal Jr., Jerry and John, would soon be driving. She insisted *someone* had to help the remote rural community with health care.

A local garage mechanic had been a medic in the military, but turned down a training program for former medics. She was the

only other person in the community with a medical background.

"So that *someone* turned out to be me," said Marie, who was then 41.

She contacted the Idaho Hospital Association and the Idaho Boards of Medicine, Pharmacy and Nursing. They suggested she do more training to staff a clinic, to be able to suture wounds and splint broken bones.

**To be certified** as an emergency nurse practitioner, Marie completed a one-month program in Harborview Hospital at the University of Washington and a three-month internship at St. Alphonsus Hospital in Boise in 1971. With her, Idaho became the first state to license nurse practitioners. Now there are 355,000 in the U.S.

She continued to improve her skills. In 1976, she was certified for family practice, working with Bryan Stone, M.D., of Ketchum as her preceptor.

As Marie's patient care responsibilities increased, the Boards of Medicine and Pharmacy wanted to limit what she did. The Board of Nursing and Stanley community defended her work. When a Sun Valley doctor objected to her caring for patients, another suggested he take her place. No one did.

In 1976, she completed the first class in the University of Utah's three-month Family Nurse Practitioners Program and 800 hours of internship in Salt Lake City and Sun Valley Hospitals, plus a month of independent study in lab work and radiology.

"Nurse practitioners were ideal for Idaho because there were so many isolated rural areas with few physicians," Marie said.

What started as a solution for underserved rural communities spread to urban areas as doctors hired nurse practitioners to expand their practices.

**Action to provide** an ambulance, nurse and clinic in Stanley began with election of a board of directors in 1971.

The board's president offered a three-room house he owned beside the post office. In May 1972, Marie started seeing patients and responding to emergency calls. On June 19, the clinic formally opened as the Salmon River Emergency Clinic.

Marie expected to return to Boise at the end of the summer, but after three months of non-stop ambulance runs and clinic patients, community leaders asked her to keep the clinic open year-round.

The clinic space was also the house for Stanley's teacher. So the kitchen was the treatment room, and the living room, the reception room and morgue. The teacher had the bedroom.

Whenever someone died, the teacher had to wait to return until the mortician came from Hailey to pick up the body.

"We knew we needed a building just for the clinic," Marie said. "People also came for non-urgent medical care."

In October, a resident offered half price for a lot to build the clinic and an ambulance garage.

**In 1971, Stanley bought** its first ambulance, a 1958 Pontiac hearse-style ambulance for \$300 from Mountain Home Air Force Base military surplus. It had holes in the floor, filled with exhaust fumes and had electrical failures causing the lights to go out. They replaced the military colors with white and orange, and painted "Stanley Ambulance" in blue.

In 1973, Stanley started raising money to buy a new ambulance. The community placed jars in the stores and bars, and sent letters to people in the permanent and summer communities.

"People were generous, raising \$70,000, knowing they might someday need to use the ambulance themselves," Marie said.

She drove one volunteer ambulance driver to Spokane to pick up the new, fully equipped ambulance. He drove into Stanley with the sirens blaring.

Later, former Idaho Sen. Frank Church told Stanley's ambulance story to the U.S. Senate to pass increased federal support for rural ambulances.

**Marie likened building the clinic** to "an old-fashioned barn raising." In October 1973, a company poured the foundation just before a snowstorm buried it for the winter. On St. Patrick's Day, everyone showed up with hammers. They removed the snow and started building. Electricians from Boise volunteered to wire it. People from across Idaho donated labor and materials to build Stanley's clinic.

The clinic, which had two  
*Continued on page 8*

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# Through advocacy with legislature, clinic gained funds, standards

*Continued from page 7*  
treatment rooms, a lab, pharmacy and X-ray room, was dedicated June 15, 1975.

**In the early years**, Marie said, "My generous husband and patients' fees supported the clinic."

Marie lobbied the legislature to pass a bill to allow Stanley and other rural communities to form clinic hospital districts to raise taxes to fund clinics.

"Then we became self-supporting," she said.

At first, insurance companies did not recognize nurse practitioners and would not pay for their services. Then one day the mother of the director of Blue Cross was fishing and slipped on a rock in the Salmon River and broke her ankle. After that, Blue Cross covered treatment, and soon Medicare and other insurance companies also covered treatment, she added.

**Marie's testimony** before the legislature in Boise also helped define nurse practitioners' roles.

When the clinic was open just three days a week, she commuted 130 miles from Boise. In the winter, with Highway 21 closed by snow and avalanches, it was nearly 250 miles, until Gov. Cecil Andrus committed to keep the highway open all winter.

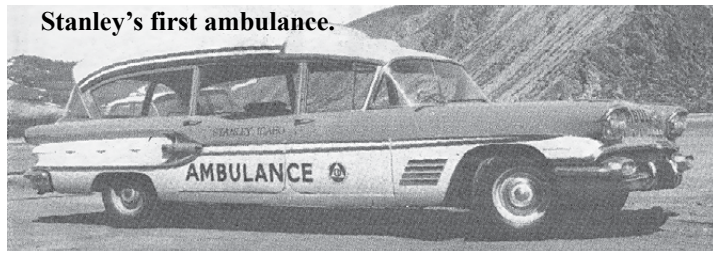
Eventually, Marie lived in the family cabin, on call 24/7. In the winter, she "commuted" 14 miles to Stanley by snowmobile, or 12 miles by car.

**"I was surprised how many** came out of the woods for care. The first time we camped at Redfish Lake, a woman who fell and broke her arm walked out of the woods with her husband. I splinted it and sent her to Sun Valley," she said.

"A young man hiked out of the mountains and stopped me at an intersection. He had cut his hand with an ax and tried to sew it up. It was infected. He said he had no money. I said if he didn't let me treat the infection, then the funeral director would not get paid. I treated it and wrote off the charge. Ten years later, he came, no longer a scraggly, long-haired hippie, but wearing a white shirt and tie. He paid me in full and made a donation to the clinic. He showed me the scar."



**Digging out the clinic foundation.**



**Stanley's first ambulance.**



**Marie Osborn at the clinic.**  
Photo by Rolland Miller

"People are better than you think. A few skipped out on their bills, but not many," said Marie, who also did the billing and cleaning.

**"I did all I could to preserve lives** and never had a lawsuit. I knew what I could do and what I could not do," said Marie, who was attentive to details.

In 1975, she and her son, John, set up the Salmon River Medical Internship, a three-month summer program for pre-med students from the College of Idaho to give them immersion into rural health care.

To mark the 50th year of the program the college established the Marie Osborn Salmon River Medical Internship Fund.

John, who is now a physician, completed residency training at Sacred Heart and Deaconess Medical Centers in Spokane and joined the staff of Spokane Veteran's (VA) Medical Center in 1986. He now provides care at the Seattle VA emergency department.

Marie's daughter, Debbie, is an ER nurse who provided care for COVID patients in New York City, Los Angeles and Southwestern Idaho.

Her other children, Calvin,

Jr., retired from sales, Jerry is an architect, and Melinda runs a cleaning business in Stanley.

**Marie cared for people** from cradle to grave, starting with well-baby checks and following children as they grew up, giving shots, doing physicals, suturing, and treating colds, earaches, pneumonia, chicken pox, measles, poison ivy rashes

and everything else.

The emergency-room care included fish hook injuries, heart attacks, strokes, emergency deliveries, and broken bones and head injuries from skiing, snowmobiling, falls while hiking and climbing, and auto and bike accidents.

She told pregnant women not to plan to deliver babies in Stanley. It was too far to go if anything went wrong.

Marie also treated some animals, because the closest vet was 75 miles away. She stitched up dogs and horses, pulled porcupine quills from dogs' noses, but sent fractures to the vet in Ketchum.

**Marie, who recruited** and trained about 50 volunteer EMTs, taught them never to lose their cool.

Once, early on, she realized it didn't help when she threw her bag in anger after a teenage boy working at a ranch borrowed a motorcycle with defective brakes. He drove fast, crashed and was killed.

"The owner should have fixed the motorcycle. It still upsets me," she said.

Marie also became coroner of Custer County. As the only medical person around, she started as deputy coroner. After training at Cook County Hospital and Morgue in Chicago, she signed death certificates and investigat-

ed unattended deaths, accidents and deaths by gunshots, suicide and hanging.

Marie retired in 1999 from the Stanley clinic. She then saw patients in other rural communities before caring for low-income patients in Boise.

Losing her eyesight from macular degeneration, Marie took off her stethoscope and white coat for the last time shortly after she turned 80. Now she lives in an independent living center in Boise.

"If you wait long enough, things happen for the best, but you need to work for it," she said.

For information, email [osborn1956@gmail.com](mailto:osborn1956@gmail.com).

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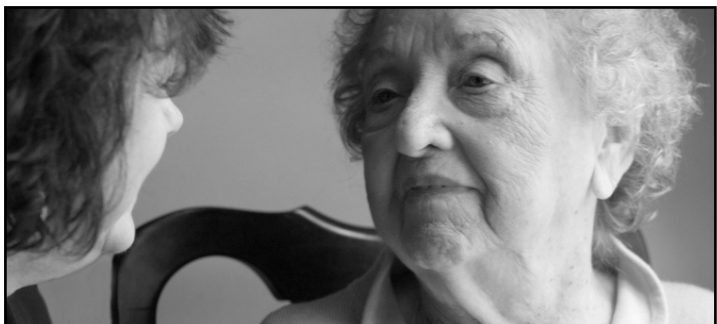
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# WCC plenary explored justice for women, races, youth and disabled

A presentation on “Affirming Justice and Human Dignity” explored gender justice, racial justice, and justice for youth and people with disabilities as part of a plenary at the World Council of Churches (WCC) 11th Assembly in September in Karlsruhe, Germany.

The session was based on the Mark 7 story of the faith of a Canaanite woman who persisted in asking Jesus to heal her daughter—until he changed his mind.

Plenary moderator Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang, a delegate from the Toraja Church in Indonesia and one of eight new WCC presidents, invited speakers to discuss how the church is complicit with perpetuating injustice, and how churches can help bring transformation and reconciliation amid injustices based on gender, race, youth and disabilities.

The speakers were Adele Halliday of the United Church of Canada; Dora Arce-Valentin, a pastor and general secretary of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Cuba; Maria Mountraki of the Orthodox Church of Finland, and Samson Waweru Njoki of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa in Kenya.

**Adele, who is moderator** for the WCC Advisory Group on Overcoming Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia, said churches often ignore or minimize voices of indigenous people and racial minorities, and ignore the urgency of prioritizing racial justice.

Churches were complicit in the transatlantic slave trade, indigenous residential schools, Japanese internment camps, legal racial segregation and other systemic racial injustices.

“While some of the practices have ended, we cannot be complacent or congratulate ourselves for coming so far,” she said, calling for ongoing advocacy for racial justice in housing, food and health care.

**She also calls for** wrestling with the impact of post-traumatic slave syndrome, residential schools, benefits to descendants of those who profited from the slave trade, ongoing racist policies and the need to respect the human dignity of all.

Adele said systemic racism seeps into church structures, policies and practices that uphold a white supremacist system, perpetuate colonialism and use theology to justify racial superiority and exclusion.

She called for global prophetic witness on racism because racial injustice today means racialized



**Adele Halliday of Canada**



**Dora Arce-Valentin of Cuba**



**Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang - Indonesia**



**Maria Mountraki of Finland**



**Samson Waweru Njoki of Kenya**

and indigenous people live with high rates of underemployment, incarceration and poverty. They also face hate crimes, immigration barriers and police brutality that create disparities in access to housing, education and jobs.

**“The church is complicit** when it is silent about disparities. It is also complicit when it ignores the urgency of addressing racial injustice,” Adele said.

She believes transformation and reconciliation are possible when people see God’s image in all people, apologize, make amends, demand justice and redirect resources.

To bring reconciliation, Adele called churches to move beyond statements into action: “We need to move from talking about being different to *being* different.”

**Dora discussed how churches** in Cuba and Latin America perpetuate prejudice against women. She said Cuban women have developed creativity and wisdom in their struggle for survival. Liberation theologies, especially in Latin America, affirm that God prefers to be with those on the margins, because they need hope.

“From our reality, we need to challenge, like the Canaanite woman did, the discourse of churches and leaders—who are almost always men and whose agenda of exclusion limits God’s love and solidarity. We should always be part of a strategy of resistance to a church that is not open to God’s embrace of all creation,” she said.

**Dora said some distort** Jesus’ message, changing it to classify people according to patriarchal, hegemonic, sexist and racist powers that decide who merits God’s grace.

She urges the ecumenical movement to recover its prophetic character.

“We need reconversion to justice,” she said. “We are challenged to persevere in seeking justice and called to break courageously with comfortable spaces where churches may be passive

in the face of violence, greed and double standards in discerning how to deal with those in power today who shape the world according to what suits them.

“Development predators continue to seize control of the world, including the church, and all God created and called good,” Dora said. “It is time to demand health and justice for all creation, because it belongs to God.”

**Maria, a member** of the WCC Commission on Young People in the Ecumenical Movement, said the strong, willful Canaanite woman is considered a nuisance, because “she represents how women are seen today—to act willfully is to be angry, to be strong is seen as being unkind, and women who are strong need to be stronger than men to succeed,” she said.

“Too often women theologians do not have positions or equal say in the church,” added Maria, who sees pressure growing among young people for space to speak. She acknowledged she was able to represent her church at the assembly because she had support.

“Some people gave me opportunities, despite social norms and patriarchal hierarchies. Sometimes social norms are in our heads, and we the people can change structures and break bar-

riers. It’s for us, not for someone else to do,” said Maria, calling for a change of hearts, minds, perspectives and attitudes to challenge structures that exclude young people, women and people with disabilities.

“We can find new perspectives with prayer, opening our eyes to suffering and breaking corrupt hierarchies of church and society,” Maria said.

**Samson faces discrimination** as a pastor who is blind. He urged Christians to address structures that neglect and discriminate against people with disabilities.

“We can adapt our hearts. We need practical ways to deal with disability,” said Samson, stressing the importance of ensuring human dignity. “We need to think about what we can do to make our churches more inclusive.”

Samson, who works in digital technologies for the blind, calls the church to bring people with disabilities into the mainstream.

**Historically, he said,** people with disabilities are excluded and stared at. In Africa, some are sent to special communities. Sometimes people urge those with disabilities to find medical intervention, even if their disability cannot be reversed.

Samson builds awareness that people with disabilities have

brains and can contribute if they have education and opportunities. “We need to see a person with disabilities as someone God created,” he said. “Orthodox believe we are to use our abilities to make the world better.”

**He advocates for assistive** technology and universal access.

“Phones allow us to communicate and participate. We can translate documents for the blind into Braille and for the deaf with sign language, just as we translate documents into different languages,” he said.

“The biggest struggle for people with disabilities is societal attitudes,” Samson said. “I urge churches to be places where persons with disabilities can have reasonable accommodations and experience dignity.

“We need to be seen, not as part of the problem or recipients of charity, but as part of the solution,” he said.

**Henriette noted** that Scriptures say all are one in Christ, but males predominate as church leaders, racial inequalities continue, youth remain on the margins and the needs of persons with disabilities are overlooked.

Participants called for radical transformation and practical action to overcome barriers and attitudes.

To view the full plenary, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JNGfoBUYgI>.



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# With no funds for operations, Hope House will be closing shelter

With no funding available from the City of Spokane to support the annual gap of \$1.5 million in its operating budget, Hope House Women's Shelter of Volunteers of America (VOA) will stop accepting new women on Jan. 1 and close Jan. 31, 2023.

The Sisters of Providence started the shelter in 1997 because a serial killer was preying on women in downtown Spokane. In 2001, VOA took over operating the shelter, at 111 W. Third Ave., said Rae-Lynn Barden, communications director.

VOA still owns that building and operates it as permanent supportive housing with case management for women.

In 2021, Hope House 2.0

opened in a new building at 318 S. Adams St., because the original low-barrier shelter had space for only 32 women and was turning away 10 to 15 women a night.

The new building, built with federal and private funds for respite beds and permanent supportive housing, has had 80 beds for the 24/7 low-barrier shelter for women from 18 to 79 years old and 60 apartments for permanent supportive housing for single women and men. The apartments and medical respite beds will continue.

"The shelter averages 77 each night and is often full. Occasionally it has turned women away," said Rae-Lynn, who has worked

two years with VOA.

In the past 12 months, it provided emergency shelter and housing services for more than 500 women and helped 108—18 percent of them—find stable, permanent housing, she reported.

The shelter space is organized in cubby rooms with bunk beds. There is a commercial laundry, a kitchen serving three meals a day, a communal living space for activities, church services, knitting groups, art groups, garden boxes, card games and reading.

There is onsite case management to help women find housing, Rae-Lynn said. VOA's 15 programs offer case management.

Even though the community needs more low-barrier shelter

beds for single women, the shelter will close because of no funding.

"The city has only \$2 million competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) funding," Rae-Lynn said. "We would need most of it and could not continue with partial funding."

She said VOA raises \$700,000 of its operating budget through fundraising and providing contracted respite beds.

Rae-Lynn said Hope House shelter staff have been notified and will be transferred to other programs in VOA and partners.

"We are working to help women in the shelter find housing and reunify with family," she said. "We do not want to see the women on the streets. We would

love to keep the shelter going."

Meanwhile, the VOA is looking at other ways to use the space. One idea is to increase to 20 medical respite beds for women with lower needs for care.

The permanent supportive housing has separate funding and will continue.

"This announcement comes with immense sadness," said Fawn Schott, VOA president and CEO. "We will move forward to identify and meet a different community need. We have been honored to do this work of supporting these women on their path to reach their full potential."

For information, call 710-8944 or email [rbarnden@voaspo-kane.org](mailto:rbarnden@voaspo-kane.org).

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# Crosswalk moves into a neighborhood

Beth McRae, who began volunteering with the Volunteers of America (VOA) of the Inland Northwest Crosswalk Youth Shelter five years ago to provide meals for homeless youth downtown, now raises funds for its programs as director of development since 2020.

About 20 percent of those funds are raised through the community.

Beth, who first used her skills from 25 years working with restaurants to prepare meals for Hope House and Crosswalk, was drawn to work with Crosswalk “to give back to the community because I was homeless for three months as a youth in Spokane before Crosswalk started.

She had a support system to help me through that time, so she completed high school and studied fine arts at Spokane Falls Community College.

**Another focus** of fundraising is what she called Crosswalk 2.0, a new building planned at 3002 E. Mission near Spokane Community College. By the summer of 2023, VOA will break ground on that building which will offer space to provide resources to help young people accomplish their goals and because of safety concerns downtown.

In the new location, Crosswalk will continue the original emergency, night-by-night shelter and wrap-around services on the first floor and offer longer-stay shelter rooms for youth ages 16 to 20 who are engaged in educational programs at high schools, community colleges or four-year universities.

**“It will take youth out** of downtown, where they are exposed to too much activity and danger related to sex trafficking, drugs and other problems that are rampant downtown,” said Beth.

“It will take them into a neighborhood where they can focus on finishing their education, building healthy relationships, developing life skills for when they exit the program and strengthening their mental and physical health,” she continued.

When VOA began talking about building a new shelter, they gathered youth to identify their needs and priorities.

The top priority was to move out of downtown, Beth said.

**Because the program serves** youth ages 13 to 17, many grow up in Crosswalk.

“Downtown we have no grass. The living, dining and sleeping areas are the same space,” she said. “In the new building, the classrooms, sleeping area and dining room will be separate spaces.”

The main floor will be a daytime drop-in center. There will be college-style dorms with 20 beds. The second floor will be 16- to 20-year-olds enrolled in education or working.

Next door to the new Crosswalk building, CHAS is build-



**Architect's rendering of inside of new Crosswalk building.**  
Photo courtesy of Crosswalk

ing a clinic to serve the youth and low-income people in the neighborhood.

“Many of the youth lack access to health and dental care,” said Beth.

VOA raised \$14.5 million for the Crosswalk 2.0 building from state, county and city, plus about \$2 million from private donations. Ongoing operating costs are covered by grants, government funding and private donations.

**Beth said congregations** continue to bring meals, even though that slowed during COVID because volunteers couldn't cook at the shelter, currently located at 525 W. Second. Congregations with commercial kitchens have cooked and delivered food.

Five congregations—including the Cathedral of St. John and Garland Church Journey Group—are meal providers. Creston Christian and Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ give funds and provide in-kind services.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints raises funds and gives gifts for Crosswalk and Hope House. St. Peter's Catholic parish has a blanket drive.

Other congregations and churches with women's groups that provide food, funds or in-kind donations are the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Aloysius, St. Francis Of Assisi, St. John Vianney and St. Joseph's Catholic; Country Homes Christian; St. Andrew's Episcopal; Christ, Emmanuel, Holy Cross, St. Luke and St. Mark's Lutheran; Covenant, Manito and Spokane Valley United Methodist; Emmanuel, Hamblen Park and Millwood Presbyterian; Wilbur and Lincoln Heights Community; Unity Spiritual Center and Unity Church of Truth churches.

**Since 1985, Crosswalk has** become one of two licensed emergency shelters serving runaway and homeless youth in Eastern Washington, Beth said.

Case managers, teachers, health care workers and chemical dependency counselors help the teens end their homelessness and connect them to stabilizing

and supportive services.

**Crosswalk services** include clothing, showers, meals, transportation, job training, job placement, a computer lab, life skills, medical advocacy, GED tutoring, college preparation, behavioral counseling, recreational activities, scholarship opportunities, family reconciliation and access to transitional housing.

Crosswalk also has a Youth Reach Team of three that talk with youth who are living on the streets to build trust and relationships so they will use Crosswalk services.

In 2022, the GED program graduated 19 students.

**“Those who earn a GED** gain momentum, realizing they are capable of making things happen and changing their lives,” Beth said. “One who earned a GED went to an East Coast college this year. Some youth move back with their families. Some past participants work for us.”

For older graduates and those who age out of foster care at 18, there is also Youth Transitional Housing. For those 18 to 24, there is an overnight emergency Young Adult Shelter.

For pregnant unhoused youth, VOA offers Alexandria House.

Beth said Crosswalk welcomes gifts for the teens, such as coats, blankets, warm socks, hats, gloves, scarves, hand warmers, gift cards, deodorant, personal hygiene products, men's boxers and briefs, and hygiene wipes.

“The Crosswalk Youth Shelter has served 13,166 individuals since January 1998, when we started electronically collecting data,” she said.

For information, call 321-6401 or email [crosswalk@voa-spokane.org](mailto:crosswalk@voa-spokane.org).

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# Pastor reviews some of the 'halo value' of St. Luke's in Coeur d'Alene

By Kaye Hult

While St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, celebrated 130 years of worshipping in its historic sanctuary on Oct. 16, David Gortner, the rector, pondered about the "halo value" of the church over that time.

By that he meant the effect on the community that goes beyond specific church-related activities.

"What happens in this community simply because we're here?" he asked. "What are the ripple effects of this church being here?"

**"St. Luke's has influence** in the community because of members, through their careers and social engagement, who are in this church because this is where their faith is expressed and rooted," he said.

"Unlike some other big box churches that have a more separatist, Christ-against-culture sensibility, thinking they have to build everything needed in society with a brand imprint on it, we're among the set of churches that believe we work with society," he said. "That's how the gospel meets the world, by rubbing elbows with others around us in the marketplace, schools, hospitals, industries."

**David sees it as Christ** transfiguring the culture, "when we participate directly with the love of Christ informing us, and trusting those we work with are also made in the image of God with gifts and insights to bring.

"We don't seek to be a separate city on a hill," he said, "but leaven in the dough. Yeast disappears in the dough but changes the dough, so it will rise."

David said that members believe St. Luke's is likely the oldest continuous-use building in more or less original form in Coeur d'Alene. First Presbyterian Church and St. Thomas Roman Catholic Church were built around the same time.

**When the church was built** on the corner of Wallace Ave. and 5th St., it was on the outer edge of town.

Officers at Fort Sherman in Coeur d'Alene were instrumental in founding the church. For several years before there was a church building, they held worship in officers' homes on fort grounds. They also held prayer services in the fort's chapel.

Circuit-riding bishops like Daniel Sylvester Tuttle and Ethelbert Talbot would stop at Fort Sherman from time to time during the 1880s and lead worship in the Fort Sherman Chapel.

Fred Sellick, a candidate for the priesthood, was sent to organize and build the church. It was officially chartered on Sept. 6, 1891. Building started quickly, and the congregation held its first service in the church on March



David Gortner, rector at St. Luke's, stands outside the door, out of which flows a church's "halo value."

13, 1892, after only six months. **"In 1892, when we held** the first service here, in this region, the first Silver Valley Mines strike happened. It became violent enough that owners called on Fort Sherman troops to intervene. The troops sent were heavily African Americans stationed here at that time. Other soldiers were engaged in border wars with Mexico.

**"My question is:** How did the Episcopal Church at that time engage with the heated questions of that day, with mines and increased diversity in the area?" David said, admitting, "I don't know. Our parish history is thin on such subjects. The written history focuses on names of priests, when they served and the changes to the building, but not so much on key lay people or involvements."

The parish house, a building now used for offices, was completed in 1912. It became the center of considerable social service work.

"Social services at the time consisted of providing food and clothing, and helping people in need," he said.

In the 1910s, the nave or sanctuary was enlarged. In the early 1950s, the parish hall was built. The youth group met in the basement. There are still graffiti-type decorations on the walls there.

**David then lifted up** church members whose work was influenced by their faith walk and who made a difference in Coeur d'Alene in recent decades.

One such couple is John and Phyllis Albee. John touched many through pastoral visits and building improvements. He was in-

strumental in procuring Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grants for affordable housing in rural Idaho and helping St Vincent de Paul obtain and manage affordable housing.

Phyllis played a significant role in Panhandle Health for many years.

Former member Georgianne Jesson helped found Hospice of North Idaho and is on the board.

Wanda Quinn helped in community institutions like United Way, North Idaho College and local charter schools. Recently she has been exploring the health of Lake Coeur d'Alene.

"Her husband, Tim, is one of several area physicians, along with Jeff Wilson, who led the COVID unit at Kootenai Health," David said.

Deacon Bob Runkle, known as "Beacon Bob," teamed up with another member, Dave Peterson, to beef up the church's social engagement and social service.

**"Bob won for St. Luke's** recognition as a Center for Jubilee Ministry in the wider Episcopal Church," David said.

That designation documents for the wider church how St. Luke's touches people's lives through recovery groups, tutoring in an elementary school, job assistance, involvement with St. Vincent de Paul, food bank contributions, take-away meals and opening its building to become the home for Family Promise of North Idaho.

Other St. Luke's members are on the St Vincent de Paul staff or are counselors with other area organizations. Some lawyers do pro bono work.

Several have had significant public impact through teaching in public schools or in school district administration.

"That is just a small list of people making a difference in our region. Members are making a difference in our forests and lake, regional development, healthcare and elder care, scouting, professional networks like P.E.O and Rotary and in informal parenting networks," he mentioned.

**"We're trying to document** more clearly the full 'halo value'," David said. "The vestry will ask people in the next couple months about their involvement not just at St. Luke's but also in the wider community."

David, who became rector of St. Luke's in September 2018, reflected on what he has brought to the mix that is this church.

He learned that a prior rector, Bob Hasseries, served the church in the 1990s when Coeur d'Alene struggled with the presence of the Aryan Nations. He made sure St. Luke's was part of the solution. When Bill Wasserman stepped down from leading the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations, St. Luke's became its meeting place.

**"I come with an orientation** of the gospel toward care and uplifting the poor, marginalized, despised and neglected. This also means holding up a mirror to the society that allows this to happen," David said.

He is willing to have challenging conversations that need to happen for change to occur.

In 2021 and this fall, St. Luke's joined with the Human Rights Education Institute and the Museum of North Idaho to hold a documentary and discussion group called "Finding Our Place in the Inland Northwest."

This series creates opportunities for thoughtful public discussions about some of the realities, challenges and opportunities of life in the Inland Northwest.

**Small group discussions** after viewing documentaries help participants think together and share their experiences and insights to find wisdom together.

The final discussion is at 6 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 8, at St. Luke's and will address: "Who is my neighbor?" The discussion is about citizenship and civil discourse in times of confrontation.

"I bring a spirit of vigorous engagement with the community," he said, "because I believe that's what it means to follow Jesus and bring the transforming love and truth of Christ."

**David connects that** with St. Luke's vision statement: "To share, celebrate, and embody Jesus Christ's overflowing, unconditional love in North Idaho."

He also lifted up St. Luke's mission statement: "To cultivate life-giving relationships in Christ with all, through deliberate discipleship, courageous conversations, purposeful partnerships and authentic action across North Idaho."

He finds St. Luke's a natural expression of what the Episcopal Church is and how it follows Christ.

For information, call 208-664-5533 or visit [stlukesca.org](http://stlukesca.org) or register for Dec. 8 at [events.humanitix.com/finding-our-place-in-the-inland-northwest](http://events.humanitix.com/finding-our-place-in-the-inland-northwest).

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# Faith communities brought challenges to COP27 participants

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

All aspects of climate change were on the agenda Nov. 6 to 18 at COP27, the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. This climate summit brought together global leaders and members of civil society to try to deliver some action to combat Earth's climate emergency.

The umbrella term "civil society" covers a myriad of actors who represent varied interests and approaches to finding solutions to the climate crisis: social movements, corporate business, local governments and faith-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Some 2,000 NGOs submitted the names of 10,000 individuals from civil society groups to attend the COP27. At least 10 percent of them were faith-based.

Many faith-based groups began their advocacy at the event by describing how they see the link between their faith and the climate crisis.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) noted: "When faith communities come together, we realize that this climate crisis isn't a tribal concern or just a regional issue. Rather, it is a global distress, and it affects the entire global family which includes all animals, plants and the earth."

Henrik Grape, a pastor and WCC climate consultant at COP27, said, "We need to make an impact, and it's hard to know when we have an impact. We cannot remain silent as we will leave the floor to everyone else. Faith communities are worldwide and are acting together."

A Catholic social movement that takes its name from Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical "Laudato Si'" highlights the effect of the climate crisis on the lives of people. It connects faith and the climate crisis by bringing testimonies in a series of documentaries from people of faith whose lives have been affected directly through loss and damage, human rights violations and their need to become environmental refugees. A documentary film "The Letter: A Message for Our



Seven women from the global south led hundreds of protestors staging a flood at COP27. Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

Earth," shows video clips from four protagonists who share their witness about the consequences of climate injustice in their communities and lives.

Under the auspices of Hazon, a national Jewish environmental organization, the Jewish Youth Climate Movement (JYCM) sent a group of university students from various institutions in the United States with the hope that they will apply their learnings from COP27 to long-term strategies of holding Jewish communities accountable for developing climate action plans.

Members of Islamic Relief Worldwide were also present at the COP27 with the hope of providing impetus to save life on the planet from the untold destruction of a two-and-more-degree temperature rise by eliminating greenhouse gas emissions. They are also vitally interested in issues related to climate adaptation which reflects their work of insisting that adaptation takes its proper place in the priorities of negotiators and those who seek to influence them. They find hope that this year's COP is in Africa and next year's will be hosted by the United Arab Emirates.

Several faith-based groups from the United States identified some hoped-for outcomes from the negotiations:

- Shifting from "net" zero solution to "real" zero. A "real zero" agreement means moving away from fossil fuels, the root cause of the climate crisis. So-called "net zero" strategies have been used by the world's great polluters to continue their status quo operations while seeking to use land-based "off-setting"

carbon credits.

- Reducing the debt burden of vulnerable nations to allow climate action. Developing countries are suffering from the triple crisis of debt, climate change and nature loss. Reducing the debt burdens of vulnerable nations can free resources to implement climate solutions to directly benefit their peoples.

- Addressing the issue of loss and damage. Climate change is not just the future, it is the present for many of the world's most vulnerable citizens who have lost their homes, their livelihoods and their cultures. Wealthy nations have fiercely resisted providing financial support for these losses. COP27 should create a Finance Facility of Loss and Damage guided by the polluter paying principle that is needs- and rights-centered,

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public- and grant-based, and gender-responsive.

Adopting agro-ecology as an effective climate adaptation strategy. A quarter of the globe's greenhouse gas emissions come from forestry and industrial agriculture. Agroecology, a system of food production that nourishes rather than destroys nature, offers a solution. It should be promoted and funded as an adaptation strategy to climate change and a pathway to greater food security.

Also during the summit, religious leaders gathered in many places to "offer their voices as a contribution" to the work of politicians and negotiators. In one gathering in London, representatives of the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh faiths joined their voices together in prayer saying that people must confront the "destructive habits" that limit their efforts to tackle climate change.

Faith communities were hopeful that their presence at COP27 will inch the event closer to making this a sustainable world.

**WCC shares observations**

In a Nov. 12 statement, the World Council of Churches Ex-

ecutive Committee said communities and nations already are facing catastrophic impacts of climate change because the international community has failed to heed urgent appeals.

They expressed concern that there were limited opportunities for civil society to speak.

Faith communities were at the front of the traditional COP march—normally in the heart of the host city but this year confined around the COP27 venue.

At a Nov. 13 ecumenical prayer service at the Coptic Orthodox Church's Heavenly Cathedral in Sharm el-Sheikh representatives from various church traditions spoke of repentance and forgiveness, and prayed for guidance in caring for the Earth.

For more information and statistics on U.S. climate change efforts, see [oikoumene.org/blog/faith-communities-at-cop27](http://oikoumene.org/blog/faith-communities-at-cop27), [laudatosimovement.org/exhibit-cop-27](http://laudatosimovement.org/exhibit-cop-27), [theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/nov/14/cop27-global-south-world-leaders](http://theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/nov/14/cop27-global-south-world-leaders), [maryknollogc.org/resources/special-event-resource/cop-27-two-pager](http://maryknollogc.org/resources/special-event-resource/cop-27-two-pager), and [ccpi.org/wp-content/uploads/CCPI-2023-Results-2](http://ccpi.org/wp-content/uploads/CCPI-2023-Results-2).

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## Faith Action Network works in solidarity across Washington

Across the state, Faith Action Network (FAN) works to build just what its name says, multi-faith communities acting together through networks of solidarity, people uniting to have a positive impact on people's lives across the state.

As faith communities welcome immigrants, serve people food, help people find housing, visit people in hospitals and prisons, they not only express their faith's mandates to care, but also learn what's happening in people's lives and the societal and political inequities and injustices that impact their opportunities.

Over 11 years since the Faith Action Network formed, bringing together the Washington Association of Churches and Lutheran Public Policy Office as an interfaith advocacy movement, more than 160 congregations have become part of its Network of Advocating Faith Communities in 52 communities, including 10 in Central and Eastern Washington.

The faith communities are Baptist,

Buddhist, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, Friends, Jesuit, Jewish, Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian, Sikh, Unitarian Universalist, United Church of Christ and United Methodist. They include people of African, Asian, European, Indigenous, Latin American, Middle Eastern and Pacific Island descent.

Although they are from diverse races, cultures, faith expressions and life experiences, they collaborate to bring their voices in solidarity to advocate for the common good, not just for themselves, but for people in their communities who face poverty, food and housing insecurity, gun violence, unequal opportunities and environmental injustice.

Throughout the year, staff and teams related to FAN hold Summit Meetings and Cluster Meetings to hear stories and gather information on issues to decide priorities to address.

In 2022, FAN advocated for free lunches for all students, a statewide

multilingual tool for low-income students, sustained and expanded safety net supports, working family tax credit fixes, digital equity and racial equity in community and technical colleges. FAN continues calls for reforming the state policing and criminal justice systems, creating housing opportunities to prevent homelessness, promoting environmental justice, protecting immigrant rights and expanding health care access.

As one of 22 regional faith bodies in the Interfaith Network for Indigenous Communities, FAN seeks to create greater understanding to strengthen common action to confront injustices and uphold the rights of tribal communities.

At its Annual Dinner on Nov. 20, FAN executive director Elise DeGooyer spoke on the theme, "Pathways if Solidarity," reflecting on the power of acting together and of seeing solidarity as a process, recognizing that there are many ways to work in solidarity in a multi-faith movement.

Kristin Ang, the policy engagement director, spoke of sharing values and looking out "not just for ourselves" but for everyone. The economy, environment, housing, criminal justice, transportation and health care are all related, she pointed out. Quoting Martin Luther King, Jr., that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," Kristin affirmed, "We are stronger together."

Board member Aneelah Afzali of the Muslim Association of Puget Sound said solidarity is about pooling resources, raising voices and transforming communities. She also knows the value of solidarity in face of recent incidents of racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism and xenophobia.

Each year, the Fig Tree partners with FAN, Catholic Charities, Earth Ministry and others to share information, hear voices and build solidarity at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference. For details on the 2023 gathering, see page 1.

Mary Stamp - Editor

## Censoring books is counterproductive to a free and open society

This column offers one word of unsolicited advice to those indignant Christians caught up in the current wave of seeking school library censorship: Stop.

I'm talking about an outright ban on books, not the sensible arrangement where librarians and concerned parents come to an agreement that a child needs permission to access a controversial book. Achieving such an arrangement is a smart way to move forward. It addresses the concern to protect a child from what someone believes is unsuitable material, while also honoring the rights of those who view things differently.

Pushing for outright bans on books is a bad idea. It's one Christians and all of society should resist and reject.

Here are five reasons why seeking to ban books from school libraries is counterproductive.

First, with few exceptions, such as the need to protect national security secrets, an aversion to censorship is ingrained in

this country's political DNA for good reason. The U.S. is passionately committed to freedom in various forms, especially freedom of expression. We live in a plural democracy, alongside people whose political, social, economic and religious views differ from our own.

A key principle of our life together is that we honor each other's freedoms. Christians are not exempt from that civic responsibility.

Given the benefits that come from free expression, Christians should be upholding, not undermining, it.

Second, there's the payback danger. If someone packs a school board with like-minded Christians, seeking to ensure the school district's libraries will be free from what offends them, it may work only until the next election turns them out of office in a few years.

Based on their censorship, they cannot count on successors to have a forgiving spirit. They may choose to strip anything

Christian from library bookshelves.

A third reason is that the book one finds offensive today may be regarded tomorrow as excellent literature that our children will without qualms read to our grandchildren. There are countless examples of once-banned books that are now regarded as cultural treasures.

The reasons given so far apply to anyone seeking to play censor, but number four applies specifically to Christians.

Far from serving the cause of Christ by seeking to ban material that offends them, they are more likely to reinforce the stereotype secular neighbors may have of Christians as killjoys, curmudgeons or bigots.

Rather than coming across to the public as noble champions for morality, a Christian who seeks to ban books may be seen as a narrow-minded reactionary, not as courageous or faithful.

Finally, censorship efforts will almost certainly lead to a "backfire" problem.

Seeking to ban a particular book will likely further, not hinder, its reach. For example, Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn" has a long history of making banned lists. Historian Arthur Schlesinger pointed out that Concord Public Library banned it in March 1885. When Twain heard what the library had done, he remarked, "That will sell 25,000 copies for us."

Censorship should be the last resort of a free and open society, reflecting a move that has broad support—such as the need to protect this country's national security information. For censorship generally, it may be that even God has limits. As Joseph Daniels, an early 1900s newspaper editor, said, "God never made a man [or woman] who was wise enough to be a censor." Or a Christian.

Gordon Jackson

Retired journalism professor  
Compiler or author of 18 books,  
the most recent being  
*The God Who Blesses*

Letters to the Editor

## Sounding Board

Commentaries

## New WCC Executive Committee adopts several action statements

At its November Executive Committee meeting, the World Council of Churches (WCC) adopted statements on technologies being for people, global health-promoting churches and action for human dignity and human rights.

The WCC believes that "technologies are placed at the service of people rather than governments or corporations."

The statement says new technologies raise ethical challenges as they transform the world and the spaces where people live, work and witness. Technologies offer new ways to create, heal, communicate and navigate the world, but also have social, environmental and ethical impacts.

Digital communication platforms have become prevalent in daily lives worldwide, but because laws of many countries fail to be updated fast enough, injustices result.

The WCC calls on churches and ecumenical partners "to equip themselves with knowledge on technologies that are shaping our common future," so they can inform communities and engage in the public discourse.

It challenges the idea of fully autonomous weapons systems, and urges action to counter misuse of social media and digital communications platforms when they spread misinformation, promote hatred and encourage distrust and division. It calls for communication spaces that are inclusive, accessible, interactive

and participatory.

In the "Global Health and Wellbeing" statement, the WCC executive committee noted how COVID-19 awakened the world to the real threat of pandemics "in our hyper-connected and over-exploited world."

It points out that challenges to health and wellbeing have been "masked or exacerbated by the pandemic," which brought pressures on "the physical and mental health of overburdened, under-supported frontline medical and health workers, many of whom suffered burnout and health consequences while seeking to care for so many others."

COVID-19 also highlighted obstacles to health and wellbeing for all, including the need for churches and healthcare professionals to have greater interaction.

The statement notes that population growth is outstripping socio-economic development in most countries. It points out that "increasing expenditure on military and armaments by many countries continues to reduce public investment in health and other social sectors." It adds that "neglected tropical diseases, sometimes called diseases of the poor, still serve as an example of persisting lack of equity and justice in health."

The statement calls for establishing an ecumenical commission on health and healing, and invites WCC member churches to be "health-promoting

churches" by 1) running evidence-based health promotion ministries, 2) evaluating their national health systems to identify areas where they can intervene to ensure comprehensive, inclusive health services, 3) assessing their health programs related to community needs and gaps in services, and 4) revitalizing ecumenical commitment to primary health care for all.

A third statement by the executive committee urges "Christian witness and action for human dignity and human rights." The WCC body recognizes "our unfulfilled responsibilities to protect and lift up those whose God-given dignity and worth is not respected."

It acknowledges that the current global context is marked by escalating conflicts, divisions, inequalities, racism, xenophobic attacks on migrants, antisemitism, violations of the rights of women, threats against human rights defenders, plus authoritarianism, populist nationalism, and religious and other forms of extremism that threaten physical security, human dignity and human rights of diverse communities and individuals around the world.

Today recalls the time the WCC was founded after World War II when there was widespread revulsion against the violations of God-given human dignity during that conflict. The international ecumenical movement then committed to and engaged with other members of the international community to develop inter-

national legal frameworks to promote and protect human rights, including freedom of religion or belief. The statement notes that, "in recent years, the universality of human rights has been increasingly called into question, not least because of obvious double standards in the application of international human rights law."

States misusing these principles for political purposes have damaged the credibility of the standards for some. Differences of opinion on the relationship between Christian faith principles and the principles of international human rights law have grown, despite the WCC's role in developing international human rights law as a framework for accountability.

The statement affirms the need for a universal framework of legal accountability. It also calls for the WCC global fellowship to "listen to the victims of human rights violations and stand in solidarity with them" and to "rediscover the biblical narratives that affirm human dignity, justice and the rule of law."

"We affirm that advocating for universal human dignity and rights is part of striving for justice, peace and integrity of creation, a means of reconciliation, and a witness for unity," it reads. "We commit to continuing to work towards common recommendations for churches to recognize and affirm the biblical roots of human dignity as the basis of the modern codification of human rights."



# Calendar of Events

Phone area code is 509 unless listed

- Dec 1** • **Silent Eve of Prayer for Men and Women**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr, 5 to 9:30 p.m., 448-1224, ihrc.net
- **A Movie Night of Remembrance: The Woman King**, honoring the legacy of Sandy Williams, Magic Lantern Theatre, 25 W. Main, 7:30 p.m., 209-2383
- To Dec 3** • **Land Acknowledgement**, Native art, Gonzaga University Urban Arts Center, 125 S. Stevens, Fri 4 to 7, Sat 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., facebook.com/GUUAC
- To Dec 4** • **The Nutcracker**, Spokane Symphony with State Street Ballet, Martin Woldson Theater at The Fox, 1001 W. Sprague, Thurs to Sat 7:30 p.m., Sat and Sun 3 p.m.
- To Dec 11** • **Christmas Tree Elegance** for Spokane Symphony, River Park Square, 808 W. Main, and Mezzanine of Historic Davenport, 10 S. Post, spokanesymphonyassoc.org
- **Christmas Tree Farm**, Fundraiser and Market, Hutton Settlement, 9907 E. Wellesley, Mon to Fri 12 to 6 p.m., Sat and Sun 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., 838-2789 or 926-1027, huttonsettlement.org.
- **Tree of Sharing**, NorthTown Mall, River Park Square and Spokane Valley Mall, pick up tags with gift requests and return gifts.
- To Dec 18** • **The Sound of Music**, Spokane Children's Theatre, 2727 N. Madelia, 328-4886
- **A Night in Bethlehem**, Findlay Stadium Stalene Speedway, 1349 N. Beck, Post Falls, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
- To Dec 23** • **A Christmas Carol**, Spokane Civic Theatre, 1020 N. Howard, Thurs to Sat 7:30 p.m., Sun 2 p.m., 325-2507
- Dec 2-Jan 1** • **Northwest Winterfest**, Spokane County Fair and Expo Center, 404 N. Havana, Fri 5 to 8 p.m., Sat 4 to 8 p.m., Sun 3 to 6 p.m., 477-1766
- Dec 2** • **Live Native Art Auction, The Philanthropy Center**, 1020 W. Riverside, 5 to 8 p.m., 315-1323, fb.me/e/3EKVmK6co
- **EWJ Choral Concert**, Central Lutheran Church, 512 S. Bernard, 7:30 p.m., 624-9233
- Dec 2-4** • **Deck the Halls Festival**, Cutter Theatre, 302 Park, Metaline Falls, Fri 5 to 7 p.m., Sat 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sun 2 to 3 p.m., 446-4108
- Dec 3** • **Regional Youth Leadership Conference**, New ESD 101, Talbot Center, 4202 S. Regal, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- **Winterfest**, Cofax, 12 to 6 p.m. explorecofax.com
- **Heritage Holiday Remembrance Service**, Heritage Funeral & Cremation, 508 N. Government Way, 1 p.m., 326-6813 x 221
- **Pines Tree Lighting with Santa**, Pines Cemetery, 1402 S. Pines, Spokane Valley, 1 p.m. 326-6813
- **Celebrating Seasons Greetings**, Coeur d'Alene Symphony at Schuler Performing Arts Center, 1000 W. Garden, CdA, 208-769-7780, cdasymphony.org
- **A Home for the Holidays, Multicultural Celebration and Fundraiser for Thrive International**, 110 E. 4th, 6 to 9 p.m., thriveint.org/a-home-for-the-holidays
- Dec 5** • **Gonzaga Symphony Orchestra Concert** Featuring Violin Soloist Schlomo Mintz, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, 7:30 p.m., gonzaga.edu
- Dec 6** • **Silent Advent Day of Prayer**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., ihrc.net
- **Growing Artists** benefit for Growing Neighbors, 5 to 8 p.m., 5508 N. Alberta, 327-5522, growingneighbors509@gmail.com
- **SCAR Fifth Anniversary Gathering**, Carl Maxey Center, 3114 E. 5th, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., bit.ly/scar5year
- Dec 6, 7** • **Christmas Tree Elegance Holiday Luncheons**, Historic Davenport Hotel, 10 S. Post, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., 800-899-1482
- Dec 7, 14, 21** • **Riverfront Market**, Pavilion at Riverfront, 574 N. Howard, 3 to 7 p.m., 625-6000
- Dec 8** • **Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony**, Hospice of North Idaho, 2290 W. Prairie, Hayden, 4:30 and 6 p.m., 208-772-7994
- **PNW Holiday Remembrance Service**, Fairmount Memorial Park, Sunset Chapel, 5200 W. Wellesley, 5 p.m., 326-6813 x 221
- **Finding Our Place in the Inland Northwest**, St. Luke's Episcopal, 501 E. Wallace, Coeur d'Alene, 6 to 8 p.m., 664-5533
- Dec 8, 22** • **Showing up for Racial Justice**, PJALS, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., slichty@pjals.org
- Dec 9, 10** • **Come Quickly, Lord Jesus: Coeur d'Alene Chorale**, Trinity Lutheran Church, 812 N. Fifth, Coeur d'Alene, Fri 7 p.m., Sat 2 p.m. 208-664-5743, choralecda.com
- Dec 9-22** • **Traditions of Christmas**, Kroc Center, 1765 W. Golf Course, CdA, 208-667-1865
- Dec 10** • **Taste of Gingerbread**, The ISAAC Foundation, 6607 E. Broadway, Spokane Valley, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 325-1515
- **Holiday Illuminated Manuscript Workshop**, Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture, 2316 W. First, 12 to 4 p.m., 456-3931
- **Unto Us a Child is Born: Christmas Concert for Vocations**, with Our Lady of Lourdes Choir and Diocesan Youth Choir, Saint John Paul II Society, Kubiak Theatre, Gonzaga Prep High School, 1224 E. Euclid, 1 p.m., sjp2society.org
- **Spokane Tuba Christmas**, Spokane Transit Plaza, 701 W. Riverside, 2 to 3 p.m., 994-4342
- **Awakening Wonder, Spokane Area Youth Choirs December Concert**, Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, 411 S. Washington, 3 p.m. 624-7992
- **Christmas Posada 2022**, Latinos En Spokane, West Central Community Center, 1603 N. Belt, 5 to 8 p.m., latinosenspokane.org, 326-9540
- **Handel's Messiah**, First Presbyterian, 518 S. Cedar, 3 to 5:30 p.m., spokanefpc.org/messiah

- **Pages of Harmony**, barbershop chorus, Christmas Concert and Auction, Millwood Community Presbyterian, 3223 N. Marguerite, 6 to 7:30 p.m., 847-3723
- **Spokane Folklore Society** Christmas Dance, East Spokane Grange, 1621 N. Park, Spokane Valley, 7 to 10 p.m., 928-0692
- Dec 10, 11** • **Bing Crosby Holiday Film Festival**, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 12 to 9 p.m., 842-8664.
- **The Nutcracker Suite, Ballet Arts Academy**, Spokane Community College, 1810 N. Greene, Sat 3 and 7 p.m., Sun 3 p.m., 533-7000.
- **Sounds of Christmas**, North Idaho College Concert, Shuler Performing Arts, 100 W. Garden, CdA, Sat 7:30 p.m., Sun 2 p.m., 208-769-3300, 208-769-3424
- **Whitworth Christmas Festival: Nowell Sign We**, Martin Woldson Theater at The Fox, 1001 W. Sprague, Sat 8 p.m., Sun 3 p.m. 624-1200.
- **Candlelight Christmas Concert**, Gonzaga Choirs and Music Dept., Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, 211 E. Desmet, Sat 7:30 p.m., Sun 3 p.m.
- Dec 11** • **German-American Christmas Service** with the Concordia Choir, Mark's Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th, 3 p.m., 230-5017
- Dec 13** • **Music Matters Christmas Concert**, Panida Theater, 300 N. First, Sandpoint, 6 to 8 p.m., 208-263-9191
- **Peace and Justice Action Committee**, PJALS, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., jarcher@pjals.org
- Dec 14** • **PJALS Winter Party**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., pjals.org
- **Hispanic Business Professional Association** Monthly Meeting, Fiesta Mexicana, 1227 S. Grand, 6 to 7:30 p.m., hbpaofspokane.org
- Dec 17** • **Winter Palaza**, Spokane Valley Farmer's Market and Le Catering, 2426 N. Discovery Pl., 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Sat with the Symphony**, CdA Library, 702 E. Front, 11 a.m. to noon
- **BrrrZAAR**, Terrain at River Park Square, 808 W. Main, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., 624-3945
- **Spokane Jazz Orchestra**, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 7:30 p.m., 227-7404
- Dec 17, 18** • **Spokane Symphony Pops 3: Holiday Pops**, Martin Woldson Theater at The Fox, 1001 W. Sprague, Sat 7:30 p.m., Sun 3 p.m., 624-1200
- Dec 17, 18, 19, 20, 21** • **Campbell House Holidays**, Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. First, 12 to 4 p.m., 456-3931
- Dec 18** • **Blind Boys of Alabama Christmas Concert**, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts, 211 E. Desmet, 313-2787
- Dec 19** • **NAACP General Membership**, Community Building, 35 W. Main, or virtual, 7 p.m., spokanenaacp@gmail.com
- Dec 21** • **Homeless Candlelight Ceremony**, Human Rights Education Institute, 414 Mullan, CdA, 4 to 5 p.m.
- Dec 31** • **Spokane Symphony New Year's Eve: Beethoven's 9th**, Martin Woldson Theater at The Fox, 1001 W. Sprague, 7:30 p.m., 624-1200
- Jan 4** • **Fig Tree mailing and deliveries** 631 S. Richard Allen
- Jan 5** • **The Fig Tree Benefit and Board Meeting**, 12 to 3 p.m. 535-4112, mary@thefigtree.org
- Fridays** • **Interfaith Prayers for Racial Justice**, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 1 p.m. and hybrid, 863-4461
- December Meals and Community Outreach**
- To Dec 5** • **Signup for Christmas Gifts for Cheney Kids**, Cheney Outreach Center, 616 3rd, 235-8900
- To Dec 15** • **The Salvation Army Red Kettle** hiring bell ringers. Alison 329-2759
- To Dec 24** • **1 to 3:45, M, W, F Greenhouse Community Center**, 211 N. Fir, Deer Park, pick up food and gifts, 276-6897
- Dec 7** • **Healthy Little Foodies, Women and Children's Free Restaurant**, 1408 N. Washington, groceries, prepared meal and gingerbread houses, curbside and walk-up services, adult female must be present, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., FB or Instagram
- Dec 8-10, 12, 13-15** • **Christmas Bureau**, Spokane Fairgrounds, 404 N. Havana, 10 to 2 p.m., but Dec 12, 4 to 8, grocery vouchers and books/toys
- Dec 9** • **Christmas Brunch**, Sinto Senior Activity Center, 1124 S. Sinto, 11 a.m., 327-2861
- Dec 10** • **Children's Christmas Joy**, Mission Community Outreach Center, Steven's Elementary gym, 1717 E. Sinto, 10 to 5, 536-1084, parents shop for clothing for infants to 6th grade
- Dec 10, 17** • **Southside Community Center**, Breakfast and Photo with Santa, 3151 E. 27th, 9 to noon, 535-0803
- Dec 13, 15, 20, 21, 22** • **Christmas Gifts for Children**, New Hope Resource Center, 4211 E. Colbert, 21st 5 to 7, other days 9:30 to 1:30, gifts for only North Spokane County, 467-2900
- Dec 14** • **Christmas Dinner Distribution**, Women and Children's Free Restaurant, 1408 N. Washington, 11 to 1, curbside and walk-up, adult female must be present, FB or Instagram
- Dec 21** • **Blessings Under the Bridge Winter Event**, Trent Shelter, 4320 E. Trent, 12 to 4 brunch, treats, clothes, gifts, resources, music, Santa and more, 294-7265
- **Women & Children's Free Restaurant**, 1408 N. Washington, 11 to 1, curbside and walk-up services, adult female must be present, 324-1995
- Dec 22** • **Cup of Cool Water**, 1106 W. 2nd, 6:30 p.m., ages 14-24, sit down 747-6686
- Dec 23** • **Union Gospel Mission Christmas**, 1224 E. Trent, 5 to 6:30, singles and families (service animals welcome), clean and sober facility, in-person meal, to go if unable to come in, 535-8510
- **Shalom Ministries**, 200 S. Howard, 10 to 11:30 a.m., 455-9019
- **City Gate Christmas Dinner**, 170 S. Madison, 12 to 2, in person, 455-9670

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## The Sounds of the Season.

Spokane Public Radio will ring in the holidays this December.

Hear festive programming  
December 24-31  
on KPBX 91.1 FM.





# National church leader finds local and global issues interconnect

By Gen Heywood

Karen Georgia Thompson, associate general minister and vice-president for Wider Church Ministries and co-executive for Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ (UCC), brought her expertise to the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in September.



**Karen Georgia Thompson**

Having served the national UCC since 2009 as the minister for racial justice, then for ecumenical and interfaith relations and since 2019 as one of its three elected officers, Karen Georgia's education and experience engages and strengthens the denomination's ministry.

**Her insight guided** the church as the world entered the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic, even though she felt like she was "constantly in the weeds."

During these uncharted times, she envisioned something new, helping create the UCC's online General Synod in 2021, moving national staff to a hybrid model, and packing up and letting go of the former Church House to move into a new, smaller location, also in Cleveland, Ohio.

Karen Georgia sees the dust of COVID settling and the door opening for visionary ministry, considering how best to do UCC wider church ministries in this time of change.

**"I envision global ministry** moving us beyond the walls we create. Our mission is both local and global because those levels are connected," she said.

"For example, for the issues we have at home—homelessness, racism, discriminations of all kind, women's and children's issues—there is a global component. These are not isolated nor unique to us," she pointed out.

"So, our ability to name the things in concert with what is happening overseas empowers us to do a better job of connecting the dots," Karen Georgia said. "Recognition that what is happening here is happening in the wider world moves us to become global advocates."

In Wider Church Ministries, the UCC has more than 290 partners in more than 90 countries. These partners are on the front lines of what is happening with global

conditions that have no borders.

As an example, Karen Georgia raises climate change issues happening in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa that affect the whole Earth.

"When we talk about climate issues in North America, we see how South and Central America experience impact from overuse of resources by the United States and Canada," she observed.

**Part of Karen Georgia's** work supervising ecumenical and interfaith relationships includes rebuilding the UCC's presence at the United Nations.

Global Ministries also deals with partner relationships, many of which are from historic ties.

"This means we need to reimagine what ministry means in the 21st century," said Karen Georgia. "We are all in the image of God, so God's people are one."

"The issues we face converge with the struggles of our partners. Our mission partners all over the world are facing sustainability issues," she said.

When Karen Georgia visited Bangladesh in February 2020, climate change was affecting rain cycles and eroding the coast. The sea water was pushing inland over farmland. The soil had become so salinated that it could no longer support traditional crops.

"The realities on the ground mean people don't have the food they had before," she said.

**Considering what she sees** on the global scale, Karen Georgia reflected on the UCC campaign, "A Just World for All," commenting: "If we are going to talk about a just world for all,

we need to mean a just world for all. Our ministry must have an intentional global component, so we need to be actively involved with the United Nations (UN)."

The U.S. relationship with the UN was severely weakened by the last U.S. President, she said.

**"After George Floyd's death,** U.S. advocates and activists could not join with ease UN hearings where they were invited to see the U.S. human rights violations, because racism is a major human rights violation," she said.

Karen Georgia believes faith communities can be part of global advocacy to make people aware that U.S. poverty and racism are human rights violations. UN reports documenting that truth do not make it into U.S. media.

In his 1964 speech, "The Ballot or the Bullet," Malcolm X said African-descended people in the U.S. went to Washington D.C. expecting change, but found that the people telling them "no" at home were the same people sitting in the seats of power in Washington D.C.," Karen Georgia said.

"Malcolm X said that if we

are going to get anywhere, we need to be talking about human rights and appealing to the UN, not civil rights and going to Washington D.C.," she said.

Karen Georgia said the most difficult part of her work is not the long days and hard work.

**"I'm a Black woman** and the most challenging part of doing this job has been living in this body," she said, explaining how people, especially white people, even those in churches, make a judgement when they see her enter a space. Her skin color and gender trigger questions about her expertise and authority.

What keeps her committed to her ministry is the certainty that God is bigger.

**"The faith component allows** me to get up every morning and step back into these places of trauma," Karen Georgia said. "Because living itself is traumatic, no one cares how educated I am or that I am a wonderful person, they just see me coming, and the color of my skin triggers the thought that this person doesn't know anything."

"The church has work to do.

We have the work of confession and owning where we have gotten things wrong," she asserted.

Karen Georgia sees a future where faulty theology is overcome not just through the works of liberation theologians and others from the margins, but also from white people doing their own theological work to take responsibility for the abusive theology of the past and present, and do the work that will bring a healed church of the future.

**Before joining** the national UCC staff, she was a pastor in Florida and minister for disaster response and recovery for the Florida Conference.

She has a bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College in New York, a master's in public administration from North Carolina Central University in Durham, a master's of divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York and a doctorate in ministry at Seattle University. She also studied public policy at Duke University and worked 10 years in nonprofits.

For information, visit [globalministries.org/about-2](http://globalministries.org/about-2).

# HOLIDAYS

## AT THE FOX

SPOKANE

# SYMPHONY

JAMES LOWE, MUSIC DIRECTOR

## THE NUTCRACKER

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Jake Bergevin, JAZZ SINGER  
The Spokane Symphony Chorale  
Spokane Area Youth Choirs

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Mark O'Connor's

# APPALACHIAN CHRISTMAS

## December 21

SPOKANE

# SYMPHONY

JAMES LOWE, MUSIC DIRECTOR

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