

Monthly newspaper covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest

The Fig Tree
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Hospitals heal Arabs, Jews

By Mary Stamp

Julie Morris of Temple Beth Shalom is hopeful from her 22 visits to Israel that peace is possible.

She has seen how Arab and Jewish doctors, nurses, social workers, staff and patients at two Hadassah-subsidized hospitals in Jerusalem provide and experience healing side-by-side.

When there is a suicide bombing, survivors are brought there with similar injuries from poisons in their lungs, shrapnel wounds and injuries leading to paralysis or loss of limbs.

Whether Arab or Jewish, they reach into a reservoir of inner resources and resilience, sharing a common dream of going on with their lives and returning to a new sense of normal, said Julie Morris, a member of Temple Beth Shalom who has been involved for more than 30 years with Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America.

As a member of the national board for the hospital, she has visited Israel every year or every other year.

Julie said that when Arab doctors

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Clown lightens the healing process at a Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem.

Photo courtesy of Julie Morris

Fig Tree plans June speaker

The Fig Tree is recruiting people to help plan a breakfast and dinner in the first week of June, featuring the Rev. Peter Storey, Methodist bishop of the Johannesburg/Soweto area for 13 years and church newspaper editor during apartheid in South Africa.

Peter is in the United States teaching on the practice of Christian ministry during the spring semester at Duke Divinity School in North Carolina.

He is also a past president of the South African Council of churches. Former President Nelson Mandela appointed him to help select the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Fig Tree progresses on website

The Interactive Website Advisory Team continues to meet monthly—reviewing technology and design dynamics for changing the website so it can present and receive input from more sources in its journalistic-storytelling communications approach.

The next meeting is at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 16, at Weyerhaeuser Hall on the Whitworth College Campus.

For information or to volunteer to participate in either, call 535-1813.

Businessman drops career to study economic divisions

In the "Joshua generation," priests and politicians are to lead the way, to "stand in the river," risking their lives in dangerous currents for the sake of the people, said Spokane's Martin Luther King remembrance celebration speaker Tawan Davis.

Born in Tacoma, he grew up in the inner city of Portland with a single mother and a sister. His mother divorced early. He did not meet his father until he was a teen.

Tawan did not let those credentials hold him back. He preached his first sermon at the age of seven and was ordained a minister in the Church of God in Christ at 18.

He was student body president at Lincoln High in Portland and the first African American student body president at Georgetown University, where he graduated with honors—the first member of his family with a college education.

After earning a master's degree in business at Howard University in Boston, he worked two years at a financial firm in the World Trade Center, but left after surviving Sept. 11, 2001, to study for a master's degree in social and economic stratification at Oxford University in England.

NBC and Newsweek have featured him as a national leader, said the Rev. Ezra Kinlow, introducing Tawan as a friend he knows through the national Church of God in Christ.

Tawan, 25, is "a young man who dared to dream when circumstances of his home meant that at times he had nothing to eat, but he learned to sing songs and ask God for help," said Ezra, pastor of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ where about 300 gathered for the annual Martin Luther King, Jr., remembrance service in Spokane.

"Without God, I would be nothing," Tawan opened his address in song. Turning to the third chapter of Joshua, he

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Local people here aid local people there

Relief network links people globally

Through Inland Northwest churches and organizations, local people reach across the globe to survivors of the earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean rim, serving through local people in local churches and organizations linked through an international network of relief and development agencies.

Four people representing agencies and faiths were recently interviewed for The Fig Tree Show on Comcast Channel 14 about the response following the Dec. 26 disaster and the years, even decades, of response to come.

Kekandure Dhammasiri, a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk who is serving the Vietnamese Buddhist

Temple in Hillyard, and Doug Bean, a retired representative of Church World Service (CWS), who oversaw work in Southeast Asia for many years, are on a show to be broadcast on cable Channel 14 at 5 p.m., Tuesdays, Feb. 1 and 15.

Scott Cooper of Catholic Charities, which channels funds

to Catholic Relief Services, and Steve Downer, communications director at the Partners International headquarters in Spokane, reflected on their agencies' responses on a show that will air at 5 p.m., Tuesdays, Feb. 8 and 22.

Each told of the power of initial response going as cash to local agencies, which have access to material supplies in the communities or regions affected—helping local economies rebuild.

The Fig Tree Show will be broadcast at 5 p.m., Tuesdays in February.

Dhammasiri (Siri), born in 1954 in Madara on the southern coast of Sri Lanka, was worried, when he could not reach his mother for weeks. From teaching in several communities for 40 years, he knows many people who were washed away.

"Now people who enjoyed living by the sea and fishing fear the sea. Previously, 16 percent were employed—25 percent of young people. Now, 95 percent of fisheries are destroyed," he said.

Siri will collect funds for scholarships, so 500 students can attend school. While some schools need

to be rebuilt, others are being used as shelters for a while.

Doug was first in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. After leaving the Navy, he worked eight years in Thailand, serving with Lutheran World Relief, the Mennonite Central Committee and Church World Service through a consortium of agencies with programs in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka.

From 1977 to 1983, he traveled in the Indian Ocean area, overseeing CWS relief and development programs carried out by local people of different faiths.

After working with CWS in Indianapolis, he went in 1997 to oversee refugee projects in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Both agree that helping through people who know the language and culture is most effective. Because people trust them, they readily come, express their feelings, report their needs and accept emotional, psychological and spiritual care.

Doug said CWS helps regardless of race, religion or ethnicity.

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Religion News Briefs Around the World

Ecumenical News International, PO Box 2100
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African churches not 'winning war' on AIDS

Nairobi (ENI). Church leaders in sub-Saharan Africa, the world region worst-affected by AIDS, say they are failing in endeavors to communicate about the disease. "We don't seem to be winning the war," said the Rev. Mvume Dandala, general secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches in Nairobi. The United Nations' program on HIV/AIDS estimates that, while sub-Saharan Africa has more than 10 percent of the world's population, it is home to two-thirds of people living with HIV.

Churches back ban on billboard ads

Nairobi (ENI) - A rise in drug and alcohol abuse among youth in Kenya worries church and civil groups, which have warned the situation could expand if no immediate action, such as a proposed ban on billboard ads, is taken. "Many people have become addicted," the Rev. Wellington Sanga, conference secretary of the Methodist Church of Kenya said, adding: Churches have to continue to teach against drug and alcohol abuse. "We don't want people to say the church never told us the truth."

U.S. bishops offer guarded apology

New York (ENI). Episcopal bishops have offered a guarded apology for the controversy surrounding the consecration of openly gay Bishop Gene Robinson but have refused to back down from the action that has threatened to split the worldwide Anglican Communion. Responding to a call by an Anglican commission to apologize for his election and consecration, the bishops at a January meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, said they understood the actions "contributed to the current strains in our Communion" and had caused "pain," "hurt" and "damage."

Orthodox see hope for reform in WCC

Sofia (ENI). A meeting of Orthodox churches that are members of the World Council of Churches has taken a positive view of proposals to reform WCC worship and decision-making procedures to accommodate concerns of Orthodox churches. The proposals were drawn up by a special commission set up by the council in the late 1990s to deal with Orthodox concerns that the Geneva-based WCC was too dominated by Protestant theology and decision-making styles.

Germans want churches open during the day

Bielefeld, Germany (ENI). An opinion poll in Germany has found that almost three-quarters of those surveyed would like to see church buildings open during the week, not only at weekends and during services. The survey comes when many of Germany's Protestant churches are looking at ways to keep their sanctuary doors open during the week. They are often closed because of fears of burglary or vandalism.

Episcopal bishop rocks for Alaskan mission

Cincinnati, Ohio (ENI). Bishop John Bryson Chane has swapped his mitre for drumsticks to produce a rock and blues compact disc that has already made \$6,000 in sales towards the church's youth missionary work in Alaska. "I hope we can make money out of it for the kids," said Chane, Episcopal bishop of Washington, D.C., and a former rock and blues drummer.

Sudan church leaders elated at peace accord

Nairobi (ENI). Sudanese church leaders have expressed happiness at the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in Nairobi in January, but warn the actual work for holding in check decades-long racial, religious and economic conflicts has just begun. "Many people in southern Sudan are joyful about this signing of peace," Archbishop Joseph Marona of the Episcopal Church of Sudan told Ecumenical News International. Marona, however, challenged churches to take a lead in reconciling a traumatized community, and he noted the real work for peace was just starting. The Sudanese church is ready to receive millions of refugees returning home, aware that "huge resources" will be needed.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Council plans 'Ending Domestic Violence'

The Interfaith Council's Circle of Caring program is sponsoring a conference about "Ending Domestic Violence: Why the Entire Community Must Be Involved" Tuesday and Wednesday, March 15 and 16, in Spokane.

The event will feature a reception and talk, the Spokane City Forum, a workshop and an evening presentation with the Rev. Al Miles, coordinator of the ministry department and ethics consultant at Honolulu's Queen's Medical Center.

He speaks around the nation to clergy, lay leaders and other pro-

fessionals dealing with domestic violence and teen dating abuse.

An ordained Church of God pastor, Al is author of *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know* (2000) and *Violence in Families: What Every Christian Needs to Know* (2002).

His latest book, *Ending Violence in Teen Dating Relationships: A Resource Guide for Parents and Pastors*, will be published by Augsburg Books in 2005.

He is a member of both the National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women and the National Corporate Alliance

to End Partner Violence.

There will be a reception and talk, at 6:30 p.m., March 15, at the Berachah Church at St. John's Lutheran, 2 W. 3rd Ave. On March 16, he leads an 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. workshop at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 314 S. Spruce, and a presentation on his latest book at 7:30 p.m. at Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, 411 S. Washington.

He will also be the speaker for the Spokane City Forum at 11:45 a.m., March 16, at First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar.

For information, call 329-1410.

Church schedules Season for Peace events

As part of the Season for Peace and Nonviolence sponsored by Unity Church, there will be a Nonviolent Communication Workshop Friday and Saturday, Feb. 11 and 12, at the church, 29th and Bernard in Spokane.

Kathleen Macferran, a nonviolence certified trainer, will lead sessions from 6:30 to 9 p.m., Friday, and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, on the theme: "Authentically Speaking: Partnership skills to bring love and intimacy into your relationships and peace into the world."

The sessions, based on the book, *Nonviolent Communication*, and the work of its author, Marshall Rosenberg, will help participants understand their needs and the needs of others as a means to change the world.

"Nonviolent communication—also known as compassionate communication—allows us to re-frame how we express ourselves, how we hear others and resolve conflicts by focusing on what we observe, feel, need and request," said organizer Bret Stein.

The Season for Peace and Nonviolence runs from Jan. 30 to April 4, 64 days beginning with the anniversary of the death of Mahatma Gandhi and ending with the anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. Now in its eighth year, the season has been embraced by the Gandhi and King families, as well as the United Nations.

Other local events include a study of the book, *The Compassionate Universe*, by Eknath Easwaran—author of *Gandhi the Man*—meeting at 7 p.m., Wednesdays, beginning on Feb. 2, at Unity Church.

At 7 p.m., March 23, the movie, "Ethics and the World Crisis: A Dialogue with the Dalai Lama," will be shown, and at 7 p.m., March 30, there will be a re-

view of principles of nonviolent communication in a program on "Practicing Peace-Filled Communication" at the church.

For information, call 838-6518.

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Thomas Doyle, OP, JCD

'Facing the Ongoing Crisis in the Church'

Thursday, March 31

7:30 p.m. - Cataldo Globe Room

Charles E. Curran - Southern Methodist University

'Religion and Politics: Catholic Moral Analysis'

Thursday, April 7

7:30 p.m. - Cataldo Globe Room

Gary Macy - University of San Diego

'Misogyny and the Catholic Church'

For more information, contact Patrick McCormick (509)323-6715 or mccormick@gonzaga.edu

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Spokane Alliance Assembly negotiates on jobs, health care

By engaging in his first public action through the Spokane Alliance when he testified for preserving service of the Spokane Transit Authority, Mark Bohe of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ said his life gained new meaning.

Similarly, Nancy Gillespie of St. Augustine Catholic Church said her participation in the alliance makes her realize that she needs to do "the bit I can in a positive way to help my family, my church and my community. I have learned that by working with others, I can make a difference doing justice here."

Tom Robinson of Covenant United Methodist Church, who co-led the Jan. 16 Spokane Alliance Assembly of more than 300 people at the Spokane Ag-Trade Center with the Rev. Joanne Coleman Campbell of Liberty Park United Methodist Church, said the alliance helps move pri-

vate persons to be public persons, influencing public decisions.

Joanne said, "We can accomplish anything when we use the relational power of people from the faith, education and labor communities coming together on common values."

Paul Bramsman of St. Ann's Catholic Church reported that the Sustainable Jobs: Green Building and Green Learning Action Team's research on legislation related to renewable energy, job creation and green building.

On behalf of the team, Cathy Gunderson of Highland Park United Methodist drew a commitment from Joanne Murcar of the Spokane Community College's IEL program to consider the aging work force and engage new generations in new green-building construction vocations. She agreed to having alliance representation on the SCC-IEL board.

Steve Reichard of St. Mark's



Members of Covenant United Methodist discuss plans for action.

Lutheran Church introduced work of the Health Care Access Research and Action Team, which recommended several priorities: 1) reducing administrative barriers to Medicaid reimbursement, 2) advocating mental health coverage parity and 3) counting

time in Project Access as part of the pre-existing conditions waiting period for the Basic Health Plan, so clients can transfer more quickly, opening Project Access to more people.

During the event, Jim Minard of Veradale United Church of Christ

and Karen Hyvonen of Westminster UCC negotiated with Spokane City Council president Dennis Hession to explore a legislative agenda related to Medicaid barriers and mental health parity.

They proposed the idea for applying Project Access time to the Basic Health Plan waiting period to Peter Cutler, director of finance and policy with the Washington State Health Care Authority. He said he could not give an "easy yes-no answer" because of the need to wait for bids for rates for the plan and his belief that the proposal would lead to higher rates. He did agree to meet with the health access team.

Tom then described to participants the alliance's action alert network to encourage members to write letters and emails or call legislators when there are bills requiring action related to the alliance's agenda.

For information, call 532-1688.

Anuak Justice Council team visits refugee camps in Sudan in February

A pastor, a photojournalist and two Anuak will visit refugee camps in Sudan from Feb. 7 to 17 as part of the Anuak Baare Hope Ministry of Immanuel Urban Ministries (IUM) in Spokane.

Lawrence Hudson, pastor of First Covenant Church and chair of IUM, and photojournalist Rachel Havercroft will join Obang Metho, director of international advocacy for the Anuak Justice Council (AJC) and Agwa Taka, vice chair of the AJC.

The AJC, an international human rights advocacy organization, was formed in September in Spokane. While it works toward its non-profit status, the Spokane contingent is sponsored by the Anuak Baare Hope Ministry.

The Anuak are a persecuted ethnic minority residing on long-held territory in Ethiopia. On Dec. 13, 2003, the persecution escalated to genocide with the murder of 425 people, mostly men.

Murder, rape and the burning of Anuak villages and homes have continued since that date, according to Doug McGill's freelance reports in *Worldplace News*.

The death toll may now be more 2,500 out of a total population of 100,000, according to a field report by Genocide Watch and Survivors' Rights International human rights groups.

Displaced Anuak and their friends have been working since the genocide to force the Ethiopian government to end the persecution and to provide relief to the survivors.

A group of mostly widows and children live in Gambella Town, the site of the initial killings. The city is now a militarized zone. Residents live in fear. Outside agencies and human rights organizations have been refused entry by the Ethiopian government.

"Another group, consisting of more than 10,000 Anuak, fled to refugee camps in Kenya and southern Sudan. Their plight is bleak," said Lawrence. "War-torn Sudan provides little refuge. Anuak are segregated and receive little of the foreign aid coming to the area. They die from hunger and hunger-related disease, forced to eat leaves to survive."

While Anuak in Africa suffer,

the world gears up to help them. According to the Dec. 16, 2004, report by Doug, an international human rights campaign is underway to bring justice to the perpetrators of the massacre.

A memorial service and legal conference was held Dec. 12, 2004, at a Baptist church in Vadnais Heights, Minn.

Lawyers from international law and human rights groups announced plans to bring legal proceedings against the Ethiopian government for crimes against humanity and genocide, according to the McGill report.

About 200 Anuak, including Agwa, joined the memorial service for lost relatives. Some experts on Anuak history, culture

and politics came from the University of California at Santa Barbara, Osaka University in Japan, and Genocide Watch in McLean, Va., Doug reported.

Among the international human rights lawyers who spoke was Elisabeth Dallas of the Public International Law and Policy Group in Washington, D.C.

She said that "murder, rape, forced displacement and destruction of property were committed not just individually but systematically against the Anuak in Gambella. We need to inform the world."

As forces gather to help the Anuak, the Spokane contingency prepares to travel to Sudan with aid and words of hope.

"We will tell the refugees the world is watching. They are discouraged, believing no one knows or cares," said Lawrence.

Rachel will record the conditions and stories to spread word about the plight of survivors.

The group will fly to Nairobi and purchase relief items to distribute at the camp.

"Agwa's spiritual clarity is profound," said Lawrence. "This cause has become his life. He won't allow anyone to become discouraged."

First Presbyterian Church continues to provide support through their Gambella Relief Fund, "a lighthouse of hope for the Anuak," he said.

For information, call 747-2818.



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Working side-by-side in trust, medical staff dispel victims' hate

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and nurses have difficulty some days going through security at the crossing points, Israeli doctors and nurses will embrace and comfort them.

"Specialists work together, side by side in trust. Patients are healed side by side," she said, telling of those coming in filled with hatred for the other side.

"One Jewish victim survived when two friends were killed. He came in saying he hated Arabs. The act had just destroyed his life," Julie said. "One nurse who helped him heal and regain his life was Arab. Learning that he said, 'It's opened my heart.' His heart had been closed because of the violence, suffering and wrongdoing, but an Arab nurse helping bring him back to health opened his heart."

Once there were TVs in the waiting room, but they were removed because families of victims would watch reports and boo or cheer, creating tension.

When there is a suicide bombing in a public place, the people killed and injured are a microcosm of the population, the mix of Arabs and Jews who associate peacefully every day going to work, to school, to stores, to restaurants, to hotels, on busses and doing the activities of their everyday lives, as people do in Spokane, she said.

"Hadassah" means "myrtle," Julie explained. The organization was named after both the mother of the founder and the myrtle branch carried in the beak of a dove as a symbol of peace.

"People of both sides are hopeful and cautious," she said about prospects for peace she has observed on many visits, particularly on her November 2004 visit when Yassir Arafat died. She remembers looking over the border at Eilat into Jordan and seeing a flag flying at half mast. She also remembers the joy of Israelis hoping that the next leader would be more open to peace.

"Israel has had so many ups and downs. President Clinton nearly achieved peace," she said.

"Below the level of politics, no one wants war," she said. More than one million Arabs live in Israel and many are citizens. People want peace."

Most of life there is like life in Spokane, with isolated acts of violence, she said, in contrast to media coverage, which focuses on the violence every day.

Julie, who taught 12th-grade English literature for four years at Shoreline High, moved to Spokane from Seattle with her attorney-husband, Jeff, about 34 years ago. A mother and grandmother, she became president of the local



Julie Morris

Hadassah chapter 30 years ago.

She became regional president 20 years ago and since then has been on the national board. In 2004, it raised \$90 million to supplement support of the hospitals, which are subsidized by the government's national labor union.

Hadassah sponsors many trips, drawing leaders from all ages, so they can discover their roots.

After she went on two Renaissance Mission tours through Hadassah, Julie led one last fall with 20 people from the Pacific Northwest and 10 from other areas.

On the nine-day trips she has taken to Israel, first annually and now every other year with Hadassah, she had time to visit people and sights after the four days of board meetings and visiting the medical center.

"Unless you read about Israel, you misunderstand about how safe and wonderful it is in Israel. We just hear of conflicts and random acts of violence that can happen and cannot be controlled anywhere," she said.

Tours include Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Museum, where in addition to museum exhibits, people listen to a Holocaust survivor.

She has heard Rena Quint, a Polish survivor who now lives in Israel, tell her firsthand story of living through suffering but emerging with a positive attitude. Her mother was killed before

Rena went to the concentration camp as a young girl.

Five women who one by one became her "mother" in the camp were killed. When she was liberated, the family of her last mother took her to New York. That woman died there.

"She could have been devastated, but she decided to make her life positive by finding love, marrying, having children and grandchildren, and now telling her story at the museum," Julie said. "That way Holocaust perpetrators did not win."

Survivors have also honored gentiles who helped save Jewish people by planting trees around the museum and placing plaques on them with the names of those who helped.

Julie has been to tourist, desert, industrial and historic areas. She has dined in homes of Israelis and met with Arabs.

She is impressed that stone walls of buildings in Jerusalem—preserved for historical purposes—still stand after centuries. She said a friend from Portland lives near Jerusalem in a home that is hundreds of years old. The thick walls keep it cool in the summer and warm in the winter, she said.

She joined a Christian tour on one visit, "not something I would automatically do as a Jewish woman." She followed the stations of the cross, saw where Jesus was buried and rose, saw

sacred sites churches are fighting over.

"I was touched. I saw another perspective: how sacred and special the land is to Christians. Although Jesus is not my savior, I recognize he was a great prophet who has had much impact on the world. I saw where he lived and learned about what he did.

"I sense the awe at how those parts of the country's history, biblical stories and background have been preserved," she said.

Julie has also visited the Dome of the Rock and heard Muslims talk about Islam.

"Israel is a spiritual place," Julie said. "I feel spiritual there, like I'm coming home, welcomed and connected through time to the holiness there."

Julie also finds a sense of the spiritual in the many people she sees and meets, the different faces and dress, the sense of diversity of the world—a microcosm of the hopes and dreams for peace.

"I have visited a suicide bombing site and areas that were rebuilt with memorials. I heard a soldier at the crossing to Gaza tell and re-enact how he was wounded. I have seen the 'fence,' which is only a thin wire in some areas," she said.

"The Israeli army prevents more acts of terrorism than suicide bombers succeed in doing. Now young girls and boys are trained to blow themselves up near Jews—near hotels, pizza parlors, nightclubs, schools and busses where innocent women and children are killed," she said.

She was horrified by billboard tributes to suicide bombers as martyrs and by families' being re-

warded for sacrificing children.

"We need to retrain children to have it end. It's more complex than who has what bit of territory," said Julie.

Speakers holding opposing views speak to Hadassah visitors and so they understand the varied perspectives. She said that it's important to avoid being political but to understand politics.

Israelis are suffering economically from the drop in tourism. She estimates that more than 100 members of Temple Beth Shalom—from about 300 families that belong—have been to Israel. More went before suicide bombings made people afraid.

"People do not need to be afraid," she said. "Israel values tourism and prevents many suicide bombings. There is heavy surveillance in hotels and restaurants, but at times we were the only ones in our hotel."

Previously, 150 to 200 would go on Hadassah trips. Now there are 30 to 60 on the average trip.

Julie travels to many major U.S. cities to talk about her experiences and promote the hospitals.

"Americans want to know what is going on there and learn about the people," she said.

She often tells of those who most impress and inspire her with their resilience: the patients. Many come back to volunteer at the hospitals to help other survivors. Survivors continue to ride public transportation and go out in the community.

"Their courage is inspirational," she said.

For information, contact Julie @morrisandmorris.com.



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Rural hospital relies on volunteer chaplains to serve patients

By Jeannette Solimine

As many people in health care begin to recognize the importance of prayer in the healing process, fewer hospitals are able to afford paid chaplains on staff.

Larger hospitals, which at one time could afford paid chaplains, are starting to take their cue from hospitals in smaller communities and many smaller hospitals in larger communities, which have rarely had paid chaplains.

A growing number of hospitals and communities have volunteer chaplains. One such hospital is Whitman Hospital and Medical Center in Colfax. Whitman Hospital offers in- and out-patient surgical and other services, a 48-bed acute care facility, services of 50 doctors and three nurse practitioners, and a new outpatient surgery center.

The Colfax Ministerial Association saw a need for chaplains at the hospital and several of the local pastors began volunteering their time.

Kami Raymond, the hospital's social services manager, saw that a need was being filled by the volunteers and formalized the program. Training is required, and lay people are encouraged to volunteer as well.

Kami developed the informal volunteers into a regular group who underwent training in being a hospital chaplain, including instruction on disease transmission, tuberculosis tests and Health Insurance and Portability Act (HIPA) regulations regarding patient rights and privacy. This consists mostly of reading, watching videotape and following a current chaplain on several visits.

The chaplains meet twice a year for lunch at the hospital to discuss policy and law changes, give feedback to one another and the hospital, and set the schedule for the next six months.

Katie Evermann Druffel, who was hired in September 2004 to replace Kami, currently oversees the program.

Katie, whose family is from the Palouse, came to Whitman Hospital with previous social services experience at Seattle Mental Health, University of Nebraska Medical Center and Father



Statue of Jesus that was outside Colfax's old hospital is near the entry of the current Whitman Hospital.

Photo by Jeannette Solimine

Flanagan's Boys Town.

Katie's father, Jim Everman, a researcher at Washington State who attends Sacred Heart Catholic in Pullman, is part of the volunteer chaplaincy program there, a program made up of lay people rather than pastors.

Katie intends to carry on where Kami left off. She says that her role in the hospital is to "coordinate discharge plans for patients who meet high risk criteria and those referred by medical staff or patient/family request.

"I collaborate with the patient, the medical staff and the patient's family to determine appropriate placement, community referrals and follow-up," she said.

The chaplaincy program is one part of that role.

"The chaplaincy program is an integral part of our holistic interdisciplinary team approach to treatment," said Katie, who attends St. Gall in Colton.

Her goal is to expand and improve the program. She seeks to increase the number of volunteers serving as chaplains, focusing on involving more lay people.

The volunteer chaplains sign up for one to five weeks—in a row or spread out over six months—and

This can come from a simple conversation about a person's home, job, family, hopes and dreams.

Through prayer, conversation and a gentle touch of the hand, chaplains often alleviate the stress and anxiety many patients feel while confined to a hospital bed. Patients often express appreciation to the chaplain.

One patient told a chaplain, "Thank you for holding my hand and praying with me. I didn't know how much I needed it until you did it."

Because most of the chaplains in Colfax have been pastors, little training has been given in the area of spiritual comfort and discussion. Training in this area may need to be added as more lay people become involved.

Training also includes what chaplains may not do: Chaplains are not to tell others that a patient is in the hospital without the patient's permission. They are not allowed to pray for people who ask them not to, and they must leave the room when asked.

Chaplains are also not to proselytize. They are not there as pastors. Patient rights and privacy are at all times to be protected and no advantage is to be taken of someone in a weakened state of physical or mental health, Katie said.

Though it rarely happens, the

chaplain for the week would also be expected to come in at the specific request of a patient or family if it appears that the patient is dying.

Usually people prefer their own pastors, but if the pastor is not available or the family does not regularly attend church, a chaplain will be called.

Occasionally, chaplains provide transportation for patients leaving the hospital if other forms of transportation are unavailable.

"Being a volunteer chaplain in a rural community hospital is not a demanding job, but it is a valuable one for both the volunteers and the patients," Katie said. "The need for prayer is growing, but many who are not regular church-goers are still embarrassed to ask."

A chaplain provides patients with the opportunity to agree nonchalantly to have the chaplain visit and pray for their healing.

Katie believes that "chaplaincy addresses the spiritual needs of patients and families."

As acceptance of the need for prayer in the healing process grows, the possibility of staff chaplains in small hospitals may grow. Until that time, smaller, rural communities and hospitals, and even larger ones such as the one in Pullman, will continue to use volunteers.

For information, call 397-3435.

are expected to "make rounds" of all non-confidential patients. In order to protect patient privacy—part of the HIPA regulations—chaplains are not allowed to visit "confidential" patients, those who are not on the list the nurse gives them. This list includes the patient's religious affiliation, if they gave it to the hospital when they checked in.

Chaplains are at the hospital to offer spiritual comfort to the patients and their families during a specific time of stress. They will pray with and for those who desire it. They will attempt to draw out the patients and families to help them talk about subjects that frighten them or comfort them.

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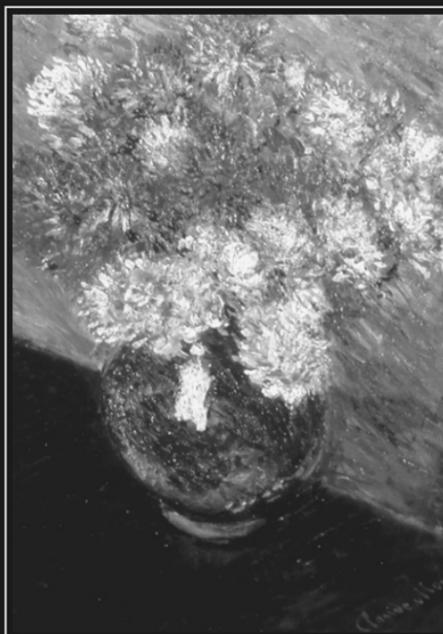
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Faith leaders discuss their traditions' teachings about caring, justice

Inviting reflection on the connection of faith and advocacy at the opening of the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, Interfaith Council director Kateri Caron asked representatives of four traditions: "Is the work for the wellbeing of all members of society, especially the poor, extra or integral to living the Abrahamic faith traditions of Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam?"

Elliot Fabric of Reform congregations Beth Haverim and Ner Tamid, Rita Waldref of St. Aloysius Catholic Church in Spokane, the Rev. Bill Peterson of Pullman Presbyterian Church and Mamdouh El-Aareg of the Spokane Islamic Center presented reflections on their traditions' calls for involvement.

Jews called to heal the world

Jewish law was not codified until the rabbinic period from 200 BCE to 200 in the common era, Elliot said, but it is based on the Torah, the first five books of Hebrew Scripture.

"Judaism is based on oral tradition of the Pharisees and written law of the Sadducees. When Moses was on the mountain 40 days receiving the 10 commandments, he likely spent time building the basis for the oral interpretations," he said. "The Talmud has the basic Jewish law with the interpretations written around the edges."

Elliot said Judaism emphasizes that it is better to be humane than follow a law that humiliates someone: Caring supersedes a harsh law. For example, Jewish law has capital punishment, but it is almost never imposed because of the requirements needed to impose it, even in a case of murder.

"The overriding theme of the Torah, Talmud, Prophets and Psalms is *tikkun olam*, which means to heal or fix the world, usually through social justice. We are judged by how we treat those who have the least and are considered the least desirable—the poor, the sick and the elderly," he said.

So that means Jewish people are to be concerned about the health, economic, educational, environmental and social service delivery systems.

"We are to see what needs to be changed in the world and work to fix it," Elliot. "My belief in social justice is directly from Judaism."

Catholics teach justice

Rita suggested, as a song by Howard Thurman goes, that when the celebration of the feast of Christmas is past, the work of Christmas begins.

That work is to "find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry



Rita Waldref

and to bring peace," she said.

"The work of the Gospel is to be compassionate, to love our neighbors and to promote the common good. Catholic commitment has two feet: direct service to help the poor survive their crisis and social justice to change the political and economic structures that cause poverty."

About 100 years of Catholic doctrine rooted in Scriptures uplifts seven themes. Rita followed each with quotes from *A Century of Social Teaching*:

1) Life and dignity of the human person: Each person has dignity from God.

2) Call to family, community and participation: Each person is sacred and social, realizing dignity and rights in relationship with others.

3) Rights and responsibilities of the human person: Each person has basic rights to and responsibilities regarding life, food, clothing, housing, health care, education, security, social services and employment.

4) The option for the poor and vulnerable: The church is to be the voice for the voiceless.



Elliot Fabric

these requirements, what a better place this world would be," he said.

Coming from the Reformed Protestant tradition, he clarified that "to reform something does not mean to abandon it." Prophetic voices call people "back to the basics of faith, but often they are kicked out of the tradition they want to reform, so people have formed separate bodies that move them away from their roots."

He finds some Protestants resist awareness that they are *protestants*, seeking to bring changes to make the world a better place.

Out of the history of Christians moving apart because of differences of sacraments and governance, he affirms ecumenical and interfaith cooperation on peace, poverty and social justice.

"God informed Abram that he was blessed to be a blessing, but often we believe we are blessed because we have been faithful, are special to God or are righteous,"

5) The dignity of work and rights of workers: Work is a form of participation in God's creation, and people have the right to decent and productive work, decent and fair wages, private property and economic initiative.

6) Solidarity: People are one human family, whatever their national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences.

7) Care for God's creation: People are to form sustainable communities and develop sustainable livelihoods in creative communion with the land, forest, water and air.

"In Catholic tradition, we are engaged in the work of Christmas as we promote the work of justice, so that all might walk and live with dignity," Rita said.

God requires doing justice

Bill commented that whatever points might divide people who represent "Religions of the Book," the bottom line of the Abrahamic faith is captured in Micah 6:8: "And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God."

"If all of us were to adhere to

Bill said, challenging the idea that the blessing is something to grasp rather than to share to make the world better.

Presbyterians through the years have sought to be a blessing through medical missions, starting hospitals in this nation and around the world, and through eradicating illiteracy—one of the root causes of poverty—by starting schools, academies, colleges and universities.

"Presbyterian schools and colleges were often among the first to serve poor children and youth, the first to accept women as students and to educate blacks along with whites," he said. "Presbyterians still seek to make a difference in the lives of those Jesus called 'the least of these.'"

Last year, a Presbyterian church in Chicago formed the Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness, which is now spreading in the denomination. The denomination's General Assemblies have periodically reaffirmed commitments to end world hunger as a priority in the life and mission of the church.

A summer camp in Texas recently exposed children and youth to economic realities and decisions in the life of a poor mother with two children.

In addition, a youth group in North Carolina, appalled by the money spent on the Super Bowl began a "Souper Bowl Sunday," collecting food or dollars in soup

Continued on next page

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Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Muslims share Abrahamic roots

Continued from previous page
 pots. It spread nationally and the program expects to raise more than \$5 million ecumenically this year to invest in local charities, tsunami relief or other projects.

"We have a humble Messiah and need to be humble people, reminded we are called to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly," Bill concluded.

Islam establishes values

About 1,400 years ago, the Prophet Mohammed came to a society that was corrupt and misguided, said Mamdouh.

"Wars started without reasons or for minor differences. Slavery was widespread. Women had no rights. Infant females were buried alive. Theft, cheating and lying were customary," he said, "and indecency was normal."

Islam came into that time and established principles and values for people to achieve felicity, tranquility and success, to cleanse society from its illnesses.

Mamdouh said that Islam honors women as mothers, wives and daughters, protecting their rights, educating them and making them equal to men in worship, inheritance, obligations and reward.

Allah says that those who do righteousness and have faith will have a good life, he said, adding that "the Prophet eliminated all



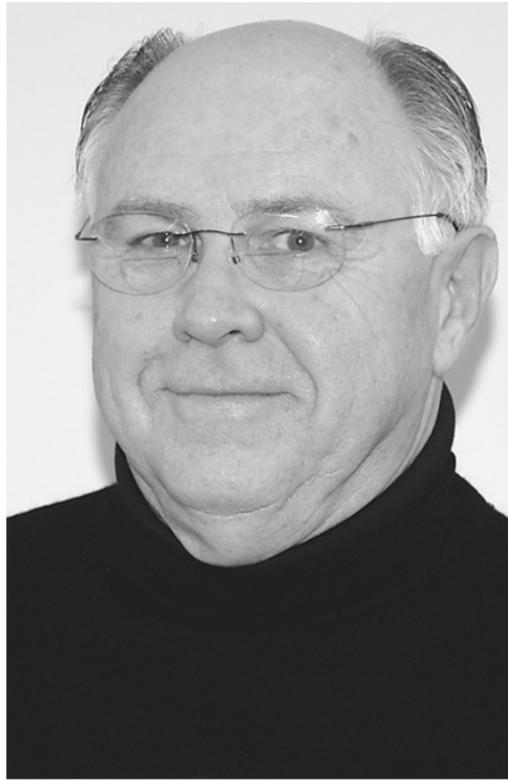
Mamdouh El-Aareg

kinds of prejudice and racism," pointing out that everyone is descended from Adam and that people's color, wealth, position and lineage are no matter in evaluating a person.

Islam prescribes mandatory charity—particularly by the rich—called Zakat. It is the third

pillar of Islam, Mamdouh said. Either the government collects the charity and gives it to the poor, or people give it directly to the poor.

It is a means of purification for one's health and wealth to make them increase and to protect oneself from calamities, crises, illness



The Rev. Bill Peterson

and other troubles, he said.

"Zakat is a means to bridge the gap between rich and poor, and to build a bridge of bonds, mutual understanding and mutual protection," he said.

Thus, wealthy people decide if the poor will suffer. It is their responsibility to care for the poor.

If they do not, it is basis for punishment.

"Obligatory charity is due on all types of wealth. There is also voluntary charity, which promises those who give great rewards," he said.

"If these principles are followed, you will not find a needy person," Mamdouh said. "A true Muslim community is a community where the rich care for the poor, the strong protect the weak and youth help their elders. It is a community full of mercy, love, care and prosperity.

"We ask God to guide us all to the right path and to help us always in doing good," he said.

Kateri then pointed out that half of the 6 billion people on earth are Jewish, Christian or Muslim, descendants of Abraham, sharing the common call to do good works on behalf of the poor.

"Blessings are promised to those who care for the needy," she said.

"If we struggle against ignorance and misery, the world will be blessed," Kateri said, concluding that work for the wellbeing of all members of society is integral to living these faiths.

For information, call 329-1410.

Two advocates present issues before legislative session

Two legislative advocates, the Rev. Paul Benz of the Lutheran Public Policy Office and Alice Woldt of the Washington Association of Churches (WAC) gave overviews of some of the issues before the 2005 session of the state legislature during the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference in Spokane.

Although the state has dropped from second to eighth highest rate in the rate of hunger, Paul said he promotes policies that would put it the eighth lowest. Given the concern of the community of faith about hunger, he urges support of 1) the Act for Hungry Families to have more schools provide breakfasts, along with free and reduced-cost lunches, and 2) the

Farmers Market Nutrition Program for people on the WIC and senior nutrition programs to have vouchers to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.

To alleviate poverty, he advocates support of 1) Individual Development Accounts to encourage savings for low income people; 2) maintaining or increasing the Child Care Reimbursement Rate; 3) providing a cost of living increase in TANF grants, and 4) keeping the General Assistance Unemployable rate in place.

Alice presented the WAC's endorsement for changing the tax structure in order to assure the economic health of the state. The tax system was designed in a time when products and sales

were a greater portion of the economy. Now the economy is more service oriented, but the state relies on sales and property taxes. As a result, it has a growing budget deficit, estimated to be about \$1.8 billion for the next biennium, she said.

"The current system is unfair, with the poorest people paying 18 percent and the wealthiest,

3 percent. Several bills call for transparency so those receiving tax breaks verify using them as intended to provide jobs.

Health care issues include prescription drug prices, the Basic Health Plan, Medicaid premiums, mental health parity and health care for immigrants.

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Faith groups commit to long-term post-tsunami recovery

Continued from page 1

"The main thing is to find which groups have integrity and have the capacity to respond," he said.

"As media attention drops and people become tired of the story, the faith community must continue to educate people to be concerned about the suffering of our brothers and sisters. Life was bleak for many of them before the tsunami," Doug said.

Growing up in Sri Lanka, Siri had limited knowledge of the world beyond Sri Lanka, India and Malaysia.

"The tsunami helps us understand we are part of one family—a global village," he said. "The challenge for educators is to build relationships."

Siri wants to educate Sri Lankans to see the world "in a wider way" and know the world cares. By 1977, literacy was 94 percent, but it has since declined.

"Education is a bridge to reach community to community, country to country," Siri said.

While disasters draw much attention and money initially, Doug finds that "compassion fatigue" sets in and media attention shifts when the hard work that follows relief begins: rebuilding houses, cleaning salt water from fields, replacing fishermen's boats and re-establishing people's lives.

"We have to do the emergency phase well, because people need food, shelter and clean water. We also have to stay the course long-term to help people rebuild," he said. "That part requires faith."

Siri said it takes three months to build a house, but years to deal with the emotional and psychological trauma from the loss of family members, friends and community. He believes training he has had in clinical pastoral education in the United States will be of use when he returns.

"I want to help people find hope in awareness they have friends around the globe," he added.

Generosity impresses agencies

Scott and Steve discussed the "overwhelming" responses they have had from generous people offering to help.

Partners International (PI) operates through indigenous agencies in nations. PI identifies locally led ministries to provide holistic response in word and deed through local people and entities, Steve said.

It supplies funds for use by people who understand the culture, language and local resources.

Similarly, Catholic Relief Services is present through CRS agencies and partner agencies around the world, while it simultaneously keeps people in donor nations aware of needs.



Kekandure Dhammasiri and Doug Bean at the end of the taping.

"Our job year-round regardless of disasters is education, so our constituents in the Christian community are aware," he said. "They are keenly interested in knowing about ministries they help fund."

"When a disaster hits headlines, it's an opportunity to expand our education, reaching people in the network and new people who want to learn what we are doing," he said.

"People were quick to respond to the tsunami. The disaster happened on Sunday, and Monday morning the phone rang with people asking what they could do. People's response helps redeem the sorrow about the tsunami."

Scott described ongoing education through Catholic churches. Through the liturgical seasons of the year, CRS resources help people learn about different areas of the world. CRS and Catholic Charities constantly orient families with children to concerns and programs through activities families can do at home.

"We weave it seamlessly into our normal calendar, so people here understand that folks around the world are our brothers and sisters," Scott said.

Beyond ongoing awareness, he is gratified by the people's generous response to tsunami relief—people not part of the normal donor base.

"The solidarity piece of our faith says everyone is our neighbor—someone in line at a soup kitchen downtown or someone in line for relief supplies in the Indian Ocean rim. There is no distinction between them through my faith lens," said Scott.

In the midst of an overload of information, he provides simple ways to disseminate small, digestible bits of information and models for response. Beyond facts, he said, people need to know how to associate the in-

formation with their faith values and how to integrate it into their prayer lives, their understanding of scriptures and their everyday living of faith.

Scott said with so many traumatic images shown over and over, it's easy to reach a point of "enough."

"The faith community's response, however, can be an opportunity to regroup us and redeem our relationships with other parts of the world, as we reach out for generations," he said.

"Our challenge is to overcome our short attention span when media move to the next bright shiny object. We need to commit ourselves as the faith community calls, recalls and reminds us to reach out to meet needs of people for years," he said.

Both said crises continue for refugees in Sudan, as AIDS wipes out generations and as hundreds of thousands of people die in floods in Bangladesh.

Steve, who has worked with PI five years, said most nonprofits have a core of committed people.

"It's nice when the core grows, but it's often as a result of a disaster. We always work to expand the number of people supporting, praying for and lending a hand in our mission. We need to hang in and not just be victims of whatever is on the front page," he said.

The ongoing work makes organizations trusted vehicles for constituents. Many know their gifts mean that funds are on hand for immediate response to the next disaster and that designated funds go where intended, Steve said.

Scott said several callers have asked "good questions" about overhead, use of funds and options. He appreciates careful giving, because it makes organizations accountable to donors.

While giving rises in days,

weeks and months after a disaster, Steve said when it drops it does not fall below where it was, because the donor base broadens.

Faith-based organizations also help address non-material needs.

In any social service, Scott said that presence and attention are as valuable as material assistance.

"Obviously people need clothes, shelter and food," Steve said, "but people I have met in refugee camps and war situations are asking the life questions: What is the meaning of my loss? Why did this happen? How can I handle this? Is there a God? What does God have to do with this?"

"We are spiritual as well as material beings, so we have questions," he said.

He added that donors ask such faith questions as: "Are we being good stewards? What are we called to do and be in the world in which we live where there is suffering, difficulty and disaster?"

"With the loss of life among

foreign tourists, the wide region affected and that area's dependence on tourism, we realize we are in a global community," Steve noted.

For information, call 888-297-2767 (CWS), 484-4331 (Siri), 358-4273 (CRS) or 343-4044 (PI). For a list of agencies responding, visit www.interaction.org/sasia/.



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Entering 'promised land' of freedom requires sacrifice

Continued from page 1

described himself and his peers as the "Joshua generation," following the modern Moses, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Tawan said King's words on April 3, 1968, tie him with Moses: "I have been to the mountain top and seen the promised land." Like Moses, King knew he would not enter the promised land.

"Some in my generation are unconscious of what King did. We never met Jim Crow laws. We never marched, fought or sat in for freedom. We are the Joshua generation."

Tawan reminded listeners that Africans survived crossing the ocean in slave ships in the 1600s and spent 300 years in bondage. When they could not cross their Red Sea, they had the Civil War that won full freedom and citizenship through the 13th and 14th amendments to the Constitution.

"For 100 years, we wandered in the wilderness of Jim Crow laws that made us feel of less value because of our skin color," Tawan said, reminding African Americans they were not alone in the wilderness.

Others excluded and oppressed included Irish Catholics who left British oppression and a potato famine, Polish, Jewish, Italian, and Native Americans. Asian Americans were profiled and forced into internment camps.

"They all wandered in the wilderness," Tawan said.

"The Joshua generation needs to pause and thank those who brought us to the Promised Land. We need to thank those who went before: Nate Turner who led a rebellion; Harriet Tubman who left her home in the North 19 times and went to the South to bring slaves to freedom; Quakers who risked their lives with other abolitionists, and Fredrick Douglass, who advocated abolition."

Tawan then thanked those who started and carry out the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), the Legal Defense Fund, the Black Panthers, the civil rights movement and civil rights marches, and all people who took a stand, like Rosa Parks.

"We thank King for marching from sea to sea so we can join hands. Most of all we thank God for seeing us through the difficult times—the dark days of history—and for intervening in the miracle of life to make a

difference," Tawan said.

God visited Joshua after Moses died and told Joshua to lead the way into the Promised Land, crossing the Jordan River when it was flooded.

"God was not going to part the river—representing the conflicts and contradictions of life," he said. "While the United States is more open than it once was, minorities still have the highest drop-out rates; minority schools often fail; minorities may no longer be chased by dogs when they march, but many march with gangs, and the cycle of poverty passes on from generation to generation.

"Doors have opened in sports that once kept blacks out, but some sports have turned into brawls. Some black singers celebrate the worst in us—violence, sexual lasciviousness, using people and abusing drugs. Some drive fancy cars and live in fancy houses, but are caught in a blame syndrome. Some put diamonds on their fingers before they invest in their children's education.

"We may have Condolezza Rice in Washington, D.C., and Barak Obama in Chicago, but who in Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, California, Tennessee, Oregon or Spokane speaks for voiceless people?" he asked, concerned that young people with too little love become parents, young people cycle through the criminal system and people are intimidated at voting booths.

"The Moses generation brought us to the water's edge. What are we to do? We are to do what God told Joshua to do: to go and stand in the river, to gather the priests and the Ark of the Covenant and go into the river. To carry the heavy box into the swift river would mean they would drown," Tawan said.

What did God mean?

"**First, God wanted them** to do something sacrificial and selfless for someone else," Tawan said. "God wanted the people to be where they needed to be—in danger and ready to sacrifice for all the people.

"God didn't tell preachers and politicians to wait until they had power and prestige in their denomination or community. God told them to risk their lives.

"Sometimes preachers, who are central figures in their communities, have squandered their role. It's time for them to sacrifice something for someone else—to fund a drug rehabilitation center,



Tawan Davis speaks at Martin Luther King, Jr., service.

talk with school leaders, go where people need them, visit someone in jail, feed a hungry child, pick an issue and advocate, not to stand by, but to go stand in the river."

It's difficult and dangerous to enter the currents of poverty, violence, drugs, poor education, joblessness and brokenness, Tawan said. "God did not tell me to be important, but to stand in the river to help someone."

Second, to stand in the river means to do amazing things together.

"Sometimes one man like Moses or King leads a generation, but ultimately, we are all to work together, to stop scrambling for position and power," said Tawan, who sees that some in the King generation lost their fire by living in the success, sickness and comfort of suburbia.

"My generation cannot cross the river alone. We need to grab someone, look him or her in the face and say, 'Let's go together!' I may achieve and make a difference, but I can't do it alone."

Third, going into the river means having the faith to do something radical and risky.

"If God is with you, who will

be against you?" Tawan reminded from Scripture. "God will renew your strength so you will open a community center, start a program, embrace a young person.

"Why should I stand in the river?" he again asked rhetorically, "Because I believe. I have not always believed. As a young man, God helped me. I understand what it means to see God in a hummingbird, a flower, mountains, the ocean—in everything all around us," he said, listing many common scenes. "I see good all over me. The first thing I need to believe in is God."

Some people know God exists without reading theologians or philosophers.

"We may not believe all the complex tenets of our denominations or may not memorize the Bible, but we know we believe," he said.

"Once I was blind, but now I see," he said, telling of his experience Sept. 11, 2001.

Tawan arrived for work by subway. Smoke surrounded him as he stepped onto the platform. On the street, people, were running. Over his shoulder, he saw the World Trade Center on fire.

He headed to his office, but it was closed. Outside, a woman told him to come with her to the river. They crossed the Hudson River by boat as the second tower went down.

"The boat dropped me five blocks from my house. You ask me why I believe? My life was not worth any more than any of the 3,500 who were lost. I knew I couldn't have a spared life and spend it on a bank!"

Now studying in England, he realizes "America exists so the many do not trample on the few. America is the hope of the world. Let's not be confused by what is happening in Washington, D.C., or Olympia.

"Yes, there are moral issues, and I am with you on them, but moral issues also include educating people, making jobs available, keeping people off the streets, providing access to health care and assuring benefits for senior citizens," he said.

"Nothing can disqualify anyone from sharing in the dream," he said.

"In my neighborhood, I often went with the pastor to pray over those shot down in the 1980s by drug dealers. I don't care if it's poverty, family issues, your past—you cannot be disqualified from the dream," he assured.

"You are part of what God is trying to do, so go stand in the river: Do something brave, bold and beautiful to make a difference for someone else.

"Go stand in the river," he said. "When we realize the dream for ourselves, we can then sing: 'Free at last! Free at last!'"

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Tsunami presents challenge to all who care about suffering in world

Reflection by the Rev. Kenneth Fernando, retired Anglican Bishop of Colombo, Sri Lanka and former co-president of the Christian Conference of Asia. He recently shared these thoughts in an email to his friend, Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp:

The recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean presents a challenge to all who reflect on our world and events that take place in it.

Tsunamis have taken place in many parts of the world and we know of about 298 of them—some very small and some very large, but none of them larger than that of Dec. 26. The occurrence of tsunamis is a possibility any time and in any coastal area.

The world knows much about tsunamis—where they have occurred and how they are caused. Sadly, many of us did not know much, learning the word only after Dec. 26.

While much effort has been put into space research and making weapons of mass destruction, not enough has been done to save the world from tsunamis and other such natural disasters. Indeed they cannot be prevented but we could have had more efficient early warning systems in place, if only we had our priorities right.

Against that context, what do we make of this terrible disaster?

It poses a special challenge to all those who believe in a Creator God and in transcendental powers, as I do.

If there is a Creator God and if we are under the control and influence of transcendental meta cosmic powers, how could such a thing have been allowed to happen?

Let us learn to approach this and other

such problems scientifically, that is, using the best scientific knowledge at our disposal.

Many people in Sri Lanka, for instance, still believe that angry gods need to be placated, human sacrifices need to be offered and that it is best to trust in astrology. Beginning in secondary schools, all of us need to be educated about natural phenomena and the need to think scientifically and act accordingly.

Those who attribute the tsunami to Karmic forces could not have studied what Buddhism and Hinduism teach about the way in which the laws of Karma operate. We simply cannot attribute all that happens in our world to Karma.

Most theists will attribute the tsunami to God, as an act of God.

Do we really believe, if we ever did so, in a cruel wicked God who can destroy so many innocent thousands in one fell blow? I simply cannot believe in such a God. The God in whom Christians, like me, believe is a God of infinite compassion and love, who loves all people at all times under all circumstances.

God desires the well being of all and does not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that the sinner should turn away from evil ways and live.

Some may believe that God is deliberately punishing an evil generation. Can a God of justice punish the good with the evil and give vent to wrath in such a dreadful way? No, this is not a punishment from God. No one can believe in such a vengeful God.

In fact, we have experienced this deadly

disaster and we simply have no explanation. The world continues to be a well ordered and well governed place, this disaster notwithstanding.

The exception does not disprove the rule. As long as we live on this earth we shall have to put up with such terrible phenomena as earthquakes, floods and tsunamis, and we shall never know why. The human-made disasters are indeed another matter. We do know why they happen.

Some Christians want so say that God's ways are mysterious and that somehow God will make some good to issue from this disaster. What a terrible way in which to make some good to result, when one thinks of the terrible suffering the tsunami has caused.

We humans never can explain these terrible events, but we can turn even the most terrible disaster into something beneficial to humankind if we want to.

This seems to be the only way we can live through this disaster and retain our sanity.

One day around 32 A.D. an innocent person, Jesus Christ, was killed by people. That Jesus was the example of millions of others who have been made to suffer, be punished and be killed through no fault of their own.

We have been able to turn Jesus' death and deaths of others like him into a source of inspiration and benefit for humankind.

The great martyrs—and I do not mean just the people of religion, but all people who have died standing up for justice, truth and peace—have inspired even the most cynical among us. If that is so, then they have not died in vain.

The thousands of people who have been made to suffer so much and to die on Dec. 26 may perhaps bring at least a few of us to our true senses.

How could we have killed one another in internecine conflicts for so long? How could we have killed so many of our own fellow country people by simply ignoring the death-dealing poverty in which they languish? How could we have wasted our own resources and the resources of our countries in wars or in extravagant, wasteful lifestyles when so many of our own people did not have the basic needs of life, like clean water, food, clothing and shelter?

Perhaps the tsunami will make us give up quibbling and begin yearning for justice and peace with greater sincerity.

Perhaps it will impel us not just to send back the displaced to their hovels and their grinding poverty, but to make it possible for all of them to live decent human lives which is their birthright.

If we wish, we can learn from the tsunami that, just as it did not discriminate between rich and poor, Sinhala and Tamil, male and female or any other such thing, so we too must live as one human family, all subject to the many changes and chances of this life.

Are any conflicts or divisions justifiable any longer when just one tsunami can finish up the lives of us all in a matter of minutes?

If the tsunami will teach us this lesson, the many thousands who have died would not have died in vain. It may be that God still continues to reign.

Outpouring to disaster contrasts with response to suffering during war

The force of the natural disaster of the tsunami was unparalleled, with the exception of earthquakes and floods in China and Peru in past centuries. This one was preceded by a seismic 9 point earthquake in the bowels of the Indian Ocean and accompanied by a tidal wave that swept thousands of people from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia into a roaring sea.

The questions followed: "Where was God in all this? Was it God's will, or even God's permissive will? No, God does not will natural disasters.

The Bible is clear on that subject. There is no answer for the sudden occurrence of most natural disasters. They could occur with no more than 15 minutes of warning according to the U.S. Geological Survey, and this one did.

The number of lost souls—more than 200,000—is heart-breaking and the lines of survivors with stretching, begging hands and pleading eyes has touched the world with unprecedented compassion.

Nations compete with one another in an outpouring of aid. Our U.S. military sent helicopters to remote areas to unload cartons of supplies, including precious bottled water. One positive factor is that nations have joined hands in the global effort, now under the direction of the United Nations.

Faith communities and individuals in our country continue sending relief and especially the requested cash donations where suitable aid articles can be purchased locally.

Among the questions under discussion are: How does this disaster compare in numbers of fatalities with the loss of lives in the perpetual wars of the 20th and now 21st centuries? War produces an even greater toll of deaths than natural disasters.

At present, a tragedy that borders on genocide is happening in Sudan. Numbers there exceed those of the tsunami. Millions of innocent people are the victims in many areas of African conflict.

It is reported that approximately 150,000

children die every day in Africa. The plight of refugees in war areas is a critical global concern. Less than one percent of our U.S. budget goes to foreign aid. The point here is that victims of war exceed those of natural disasters, as horrible and unpredictable as the disasters are.

With the former, we do have the choice to pursue the paths of peace as a first priority when conflict threatens. In natural disasters, we have no choices.

Other questions surface: Are we ever justified in attacking a sovereign nation? Pre-emptive strikes are usually made with questionable or false information. What is a just war according to St. Augustine? Does the nuclear factor in the 21st century give sufficient cause for "pause"? Is the "unthinkable" fast becoming an option?

The paths for peace are thorny at best. Do we fight war to make peace? What about the U.S. accumulation of un-signed peace treaties awaiting Senate ratification? The United States and other nations can

always opt for peaceful settlement as first consideration in arbitration.

These questions are not meant to mitigate the sudden horror and loss of precious life.

The point is that we, via the leaders of the world and our own government, can choose the peace process over the "drum beat of war."

Stories keep coming to light. I think of a mother rushing toward the hills in the wake of a huge tidal wave. She carried a baby and clutched the hand of a young son. Finally, knowing she couldn't save both, she left the baby on the beach. What agony prompted her decision!

Life is a matter of decisions, from those on the personal level to those related to peacekeeping and influence of public opinion regarding the policies of our leaders. In each scenario, let us listen to Christ's mandate: "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Jo Hendricks - contributing editor

Newsletter Excerpts

Sounding Board

Reflections

We are divided into denominations and that often has us comparing ourselves to other churches and arguing over who is better. This denies our essential unity and robs us of spiritual power as a church community of believers. So I am a proponent of ecumenism. I believe much more unites us than divides us as Christians, and I celebrate ways we can witness to our oneness in society.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and Hamblen Park Presbyterian will come together for an evening Ash Wednesday service on Feb. 9 and again for a Maundy Thursday service of foot-washing and Eucharist on March 24.

We Christians have our preferences in worship styles, and our disagreements over doctrine, but the abiding hope is that we pray after communion, "may we all be one."

This does not mean we must all do things the same way or emphasize the same things, but we can share in the one body as we jointly minister to the world.

I treasure Anglican and Episcopalian liturgies and ethos. To engage in ecumenical activity or to pray for unity in Christianity does not mean to give up our identity as Anglicans but rather to celebrate the different gifts that each of our faith traditions offer our people and the world.

Promoting a spirit of reconciliation among Christians is the model that the church can offer to a world that desperately needs to recognize the unity of our human family, even while treasuring the gifts of diversity.

Father John Shepard
St. Stephen's Episcopal

I am tired. Often my "to do" lists

are longer than my energy. There is not enough time in a day. Seminars, books and programs on time management offer such time-saving strategies as: "Don't work more; work smart." I've tried some, and they seem to work—briefly—but they are cosmetic and don't reach the heart of my weariness.

My need is almost always focus. When I am tired, I need to refocus—setting priorities, cutting back on my "to do" list—but engaging a time management technique doesn't work long if I am unable to refocus my heart, mind and life.

I am tired when I forget that my life, work and play are gifts from God. When I focus on myself and what I must do, I forget God has all things in hand, even my demanding, often chaotic life.

I remember a prayer from French priest Michel Quoist. It always reminded me that

God has given me the gift of time, that my time is in God's hands, and that there is always enough time to do what God wants me to do.

I am called to focus on what God wants me to do. It's not easy, because God's ways are not often our ways. Sometimes, more things get done when I do nothing.

The church has given us Lent as a time of refocusing, focusing on God's call to us and God's life in us; on our baptism and new life, and on the daily death and resurrection of life in Jesus Christ. Lent is a time for going back to the basics of our faith and life as God's people, so we can be led by God's grace. Then the rest of our needs, responsibilities and time will find their place.

The Rev. Tom Soeldner
Salem Lutheran

CROP Walk set April 24

The Spokane CROP Walk plans are underway with the annual Recruitment Meeting set at 7 p.m., Thursday, March 3, at the Mission Community Presbyterian Church, 2103 E. Mission.

Planning meetings will be at 7 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 10, March 10 and 24, and April 21, at Manito United Methodist Church, 3220 S. Grand, and April 7, at St. Paul's United Methodist, 1620 N. Monroe.

For information, call 326-5656.

Lecture series features priest

"Facing the Ongoing Crisis in the Church" is the theme for a lecture by the Rev. Thomas Doyle, a Dominican priest, canon lawyer and former Air Force chaplain, at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 10, at the Globe Room of Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

His presentation is part of the Catholicism for a New Millennium lecture series co-sponsored by the religious studies department and the honors program.

For information, call 323-6715.

UNA to hear talk on Russia

Kevin O'Connor, professor of history at Gonzaga University, will speak on "Enlightened Despot? Politics and Power in Putin's Russia" at the United Nations Association meeting at 7 p.m., Monday, Feb. 7, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Fort George Wright Dr.

He will assess the state of democracy in Russia and Russia's role in the world in light of the recent elections in the Ukraine.

He is author of two books on the history and culture of Baltic States and a soon-to-be published book on Russian nationalism and conservative opposition to perestroika.

For information, call 624-3608.

Environment focus of talk

Alan Durning, author of *Cascadia Scorecard*, the Northwest Environment Watch's project to track the long-term health of the region through seven key indicators, will speak on sustainability at 7 p.m., Wednesday, March 9, at the Spokane City Council Chambers, 808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.

For information, visit www.northwestwatch.org/spokane.

Project eases access to help

With 10 community agencies, Transitions has helped develop the Portfolio Project to make housing more attainable for people who have worked to overcome difficult circumstances.

The project provides a system of documentation for low-income, homeless and disenfranchised people in Spokane to validate their progress towards self-sufficiency in working with any participating agency.

Agencies have taught skills but not had a system for tracking an individual's progress. The project will eliminate duplication. It will also market to local landlords and

rental agencies that would give a second chance to someone with poor credit or prior evictions.

The curriculum deals with money management, finding a home, renter responsibility and protecting self and property.

Participating agencies are St. Joseph Family Center, Hope House, Anna Ogden Hall, Life Skills Women's Programs, Spokane Housing Authority, Spokane Neighborhood Action Programs, House of Charity, St. Margaret's, Interfaith Hospitality Network and the Inland Empire Rental Association.

For information, call 328-6702.

Priest speaks on Iraq War

Father Simon Harak, S.J., a Christian scholar on the Iraq War, will speak at 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 6, at the Gonzaga University Law School on "Iraq: An Ethical Analysis of Ends and Means."

He is the founder of Voices in the Wilderness and has been to Iraq three times with that organization. He is on a speaking tour of the Northwest representing the War Resisters League. His speech

in Spokane is sponsored by the GU Peace and Justice Club, Pax Christi and the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane.

A former ethics professor, he has written and edited several books and articles. Since leaving Fairfield University in 1998, he has given thousands of presentations on Iraq in the United States and abroad.

For information, call 838-7870.

Calendar of Events

- Jan 30- April 4** • Season for Peace and Nonviolence focusing on philosophy of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., see p. 2
- Feb 5** • Sixth Annual AHANA Anniversary Dinner, "Prosperity and Possibilities—Building Your Dreams," Ali Tarhouni, University of Washington business economics lecturer, Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University, 6 p.m. - call 838-1881
- Feb 6** • Fr. Simon Harak, SJ, presentation on Iraq War, see this page
- Feb 7** • United Nations Association, see this page
- Feb 8** • VOICES, Salem Lutheran, 1428 W. Broadway, 5:30 p.m.
- Feb 9, 23** • "Nurturing Cultures of Peace" study series, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS), Community Building, 35 W. Main, 6:30 p.m.
- Feb 10** • Spokane CROP Walk Planning, see this page
- Feb 11, 12** • Catholicism for the New Millennium Series, see this page
- Feb 11, 12** • "Authentically Speaking," workshop on nonviolent communication, see p. 2
- Feb 12** • Twilight Retreat for Married Couples led by Kathy and Mitch Finley, St. Aloysius Parish Center, 300 E. Boone - call 323-7006
- Feb 14, 28** • Spokane Citizens for a Living Wage, 35 W. Main, 5 p.m.
- Feb 16** • Fig Tree Interactive Web Advisory Team, Whitworth, p. 1
- Feb 24** • Draft Workshop, PJALS, 35 W. Main, 6:30 p.m.
- Feb 28** • Anger Support Group begins, St. Joseph Family Center, p. 4
- March 3** • Fig Tree distribution, St. Mark Lutheran, 24th & Grand, 9 a.m. • Business Diversity Leadership Breakfast and Seminar, p. 7 • CROP Walk Recruitment Meeting, see above
- March 4** • Fig Tree Board, Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand., 1 p.m.
- Mondays** • PEACH Safe Food Orientation - call 455-2552
- Tuesdays** • The Fig Tree Show, cable channel 14, 5 p.m.
- Tues-Sats** • Habitat for Humanity work days - call 534-2552
- Fridays** • Peace Vigil at Army Recruiting Office, Colville - call 675-4554
- 1st Sats** • Interdenominational Ministerial Fellowship Union - call 624-0522
- 2nd Sats** • Sacred Harp Shape-Note Singers, 2929 Waterford Dr., 7 p.m. • Stevens County Fellowship of Reconciliation, First Congregational, Colville, 6:30 p.m. - call 738-4962

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Preschool teacher sees beginnings of spirituality in children's awe

By Deidre Jacobson

Observing children abandon their faith as they grew older inspired Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church member and Montessori instructor, Elizabeth White, to write a book about nurturing spirituality in children.

A mother of three and grandmother of two, she also draws from experience as an educator and creator of a Sunday school curriculum for children.

Elizabeth knows that a child's beginning spirituality is often based on everyday experiences.

She has observed children filled with awe as they witnessed nature and the beauty of the world.

Reared in Spokane by a Methodist mother and Episcopalian father, Elizabeth searched different faiths in her early teens. She visited many churches in her searching years.

While attending nurses training in Spokane, she was invited by a roommate to an Orthodox Church and began to attend.

When her husband, Carl, died in 1972, the priest reached out to her with compassion. She had found her church home.

After her husband's death, Elizabeth, then a single mother with three boys, returned to college and changed her focus to education, operating a day care for seven years. Her two youngest children had attended a Montessori school, and she loved the method.

There was no local training for it, and it was not feasible for her to relocate.

Shortly after selling her day-care business she saw an ad about a Seattle program offering training. She and several local Montessori teachers brought a trainer from Seattle one weekend a month to conduct classes in Spokane.

Twenty years of Montessori teaching have prepared Elizabeth for the position she now holds, director of the Spokane Montessori School, 9009 N. Wall St.

The similarities within her understanding of the Orthodox tradition—with its rich liturgical worship, savoring of sensory experiences of sight, sound, smell and feeling—and the Montessori program's emphasis on the same elements blend into Elizabeth's



Raymond Wallen reads a book to Elizabeth White at the Montessori School on North Wall.

book, *Walking in Wonder*.

Completed recently, it was accepted for publication by Conciliar Press and was available at bookstores in November 2004.

The book focuses on aspects of spirituality not usually recognized in religious education.

Elizabeth believes children are capable of stillness and watchfulness and have a capacity to grasp religious concepts.

"In many ways children are closer to God than adults," she said.

Elizabeth writes: "Children enjoy a natural, spontaneous relationship with God and do not entertain the doubts that creep into adult thinking. The spark of divine grace given at baptism is waiting to burst into full flame.

"If we consider all of life as sacred, all of life as a spiritual journey, then every moment assumes supreme importance. Each act, thought and word offers an opportunity to step forward toward God.

"Look for beauty all around you," Elizabeth advises. "It might be found in the water drops on a sidewalk after a rain or in a spider's web."

"Walking in wonder is opening

our hearts to God. Children do not need to be taught how to wonder, they only need opportunities to walk in its path. Wonder is an attitude of life moving a child toward faith," she said.

The book gives parents and caregivers' techniques to help children develop stillness.

Elizabeth believes quiet is a natural state for children and our culture's constant noise and stimulation inhibits their movement toward spirituality. She has learned that children will seek out nooks and crannies where they can be alone and collect their thoughts.

"Holiness is a gift of God," she said. "Children learn to obey God most naturally in their warm relationship with adults."

One chapter on obedience provides sound principles for positive discipline allowing a child to develop self-control and responsibility.

Compassion can also be encouraged and supported by simple acts. Children can role-play the expression of feelings with dolls or puppets. They can also play family games involving kindness or help for others, and they can share stories of compassion.

The child will not "be a self-centered person who demands the immediate satisfaction of every whim without thought of anyone else, but one who cares and shares from the heart," Elizabeth said.

"Children who have had at least three years of Montessori are more independent learners. They seem to be more excited about finding out things. When they are in their teens, they aren't as likely to succumb to peer pressure. I have been teaching long enough to see some of my first students become young adults. They seem to be more mature and responsible than many other people their age," she said.

Elizabeth found writing the book to be a personal journey in her faith walk.

"I struggled at times to cultivate the stillness required to write. I received much help from God's Spirit and could not have done it on my own," she said. "There were times I looked back in amazement at what I had written, and couldn't believe I had written it."

Walking in Wonder can help parents, teachers and caregivers provide an environment that nurtures a child's spiritual attitudes toward self, others, the world and Christ, Elizabeth said.

"I hope it will help parents and caregivers be more thoughtful and aware of the little experiences that affect children in large and meaningful ways," she said.

For information call 328-4344.

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Interfaith Council - Circle of Caring hosts nationally known speaker, writer, activist

The Rev. Al Miles

Ending Domestic Violence: Why the Entire Community Must Be Involved

March 15 - 6:30 p.m. - Reception and Talk

Berachah Church at St. John's Lutheran Church - 2 W. 3rd Ave. - Community Gospel Choir

March 16 - 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. - Workshop

Emmanuel Lutheran Church - 314 S. Spruce - registration required - lunch at City Forum

March 16 - 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m. - Spokane City Forum

First Presbyterian Church - 318 S. Cedar

To register for lunch, call 777-1555 - Walk-ins welcome to hear speaker

March 16 - 7:30 p.m. - Lecture on Teen Dating Violence

Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ - 411 S. Washington

For all events, call

329-1410

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