

42ND YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest  
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# ‘God’s kingdom is something we live’

Preaching for the Sunday, Jan. 18, Martin Luther King Jr. Day worship service at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ in Spokane, the Rev. Benjamin Watson Sr. reminded those gathered by the Spokane Minister’s Fellowship that they gathered “not simply to remember a man but to remember a movement, a movement rooted in the Kingdom of God.”

They were not gathered to honor a holiday but to honor a holy calling.

“We gather to remember a man, yes, but more important to remember the Kingdom that shaped him,” said Benjamin, pastor of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and executive director of Emmanuel Family Life Center.

“Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. did not begin with marches or microphones. He began with a Kingdom conviction. Before he stood before presidents, he knelt before the King of Kings. Before he spoke to the nation, he listened to the voice of God. Before he dreamed of a better world, he surrendered to a better Kingdom.”

Benjamin pointed out that Dr. King’s life teaches what Jesus



Pastor Benjamin Watson preaches for Spokane Ministers Fellowship Service.

taught, that “the Kingdom of God is not just something we wait for, it’s something we live.”

When people live the Kingdom, seek the King and surrender to his reign, they discover that “there’s a King in you.”

In Luke 17:-20-21, Jesus said, “The Kingdom of God is within you.”

“It’s not around us, not some day, not after we die, but within us,” Benjamin affirmed.

For him, that means Kingdom courage, compassion, justice, dignity and purpose are within each person.

“Dr. King believed, preached and embodied this. He understood that the Kingdom is God’s reign breaking into human reality through human vessels,” Benjamin continued. “That’s why he could stand against hatred without becoming hateful, face violence without surrendering to violence and love his enemies without losing his identity.”

Dr. King said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that,” because he knew that “the King lives in me.”

“When we seek the Kingdom as Dr. King did, we seek justice,”

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## Domestic violence survivor works to help other victims find healing

By Marijke Fakasiieiki

A plaque hanging over the desk of Taffy Hunter in her office at Spokane Regional Domestic Violence Coalition (SRDVC)/ End the Violence shares words from Isaiah: “We are called to break the chains of those who are in prison and set free the captives.”

As a reminder that she was once captive and set free, it has hung in other offices where she has served. She is now called to serve those who are captive and

to move them to the joy of release from bondage to violence.

Taffy, who has been executive director since April 2024, previously worked with the SRDVC, bringing skills from her education and her commitment as a survivor of domestic violence.

“Because I was that captive, I have the skills to help others escape captivity with compassion, care and humility,” she said.

“My favorite color isn’t green!” was what she yelled out the window when driving

away, fleeing with her children, because during her 15-year marriage, her husband assumed her favorite color was green.

“One of my first acts of agency was to say that. I then searched for what my favorite color was and realized I love all the colors, so I’m often dressed like a rainbow,” she said.

After gaining the courage to leave an abusive marriage, she returned to school and began to learn about abuse and domestic violence.

Taffy earned an associate of arts degree in early childhood education from Lethbridge Polytechnic in Canada, a human services degree with a focus in domestic violence at Walden University in Minneapolis, Minn., and later a master’s degree in human services with a focus on nonprofit leadership from Touro Worldwide University, a Jewish-sponsored university in Los Angeles.

“Being a survivor and a violence preventionist, I created a trauma-informed and trauma-responsive workplace for my

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## Persist Together: Inspire Miracles is theme for 2026 Spring Benefit

The 2026 Spring Benefit speakers will frame their comments around how The Fig Tree story and resource sharing reflect the theme, “Persist Together: Inspire Miracles.”

**The Fig Tree is recruiting people to host tables** of eight guests for the Benefit Lunch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, March 14, in the Hemmingson Ballroom at Gonzaga University. The program will be from noon to 1 p.m.

**Speakers for the annual fundraiser** are David Gortner, pastor at St. Luke’s Lutheran in Coeur d’Alene and a Fig Tree Board member; LaRae Wiley, founder and elder at the Spokane Salish School; Luc Jasmin III, Eastern Washington representative of the Governor’s office, and Laurel Fish, organizer with the Spokane Alliance, sharing how their efforts intersect with The Fig Tree.

**Hamilton Studio is preparing** a promotional video featuring eight community leaders and Fig Tree supporters: Jeff Ferguson, Jennifer Compau, Rusty Nelson, Betsy Wilkerson, Jillian Joseph, Andre Dove, Rob McCann, Pat Castaneda and Katie Thompson. Hamilton Studio will include video clips from the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference in the background.

**The livestream** from the Benefit Lunch and the promotional video will be shared for the Breakfast-time Benefit from 7:30 to 9 a.m., Wednesday, March 18, on Zoom.

The events are the major fundraisers for supporting The Fig Tree’s monthly newspaper and the annual Resource Directory.

“We have 45 tables to fill and already have 25 hosts. Last year the compelling presentations shared all year helped us raise more than previous years from sponsors, with more than \$73,500 in the spring, fall and year end,” said Mary Stamp, editor. “It’s crucial to raise \$78,000 this year.”

To attend, call 535-1813 or visit [thefigtree.org/donate.html](http://thefigtree.org/donate.html).

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