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Stories connect people

By Mary Stamp

Through stories and hospitality, Urban Plunges connect people on the streets and in single-room occupancy apartments downtown with people in congregations and community leaders.

Stories *told* by people, whose lives are bound up in homelessness, addictions and abuse, empower them to move from being victims and survivors to gaining a voice on behalf of others. As their stories progress from their own alienation to how decisions, relationships and policies that affect their lives affect others' lives, they gain power and momentum toward recovery, relationships and community.

Stories church people *hear* during Urban Plunges at the House of Charity stir new awareness, caring and concern that move them out of their middle-class comfort zones and world views, said Jerry Schwab, who organizes plunges as part of his work to develop community relations with social service providers, among people in neighborhood apartments and with congregations.

The stories, he said, turn tables on expectations about who is help-

Continued on page 4



Jerry Schwab facilitates story sharing as part of Urban Plunge experiences.

Plans underway for Fig Tree's benefit breakfast

"Stories of Everyday Heroes" will be the theme for the Fig Tree's 2007 Benefit Breakfast from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., Wednesday, March 14, in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

The program for the event will recognize 2006-2007 stories of people who make a difference, overcome differences and celebrate differences in the Inland Northwest, said editor Mary Stamp.

The planning committee seeks table hosts to help expand participation and is seeking other people interested in joining in preparation tasks.

In addition to celebrating the unique coverage The Fig Tree brings to the Inland Northwest, the breakfast provides an opportunity for people to help support the publication's expansion and its website development.

"We continue to progress toward the interactive website connecting the faith and nonprofit communities of the Northwest, toward wider coverage of urban and rural communities in the region and in our efforts to educate our audience about media justice," she said.

For information, call 535-1813.

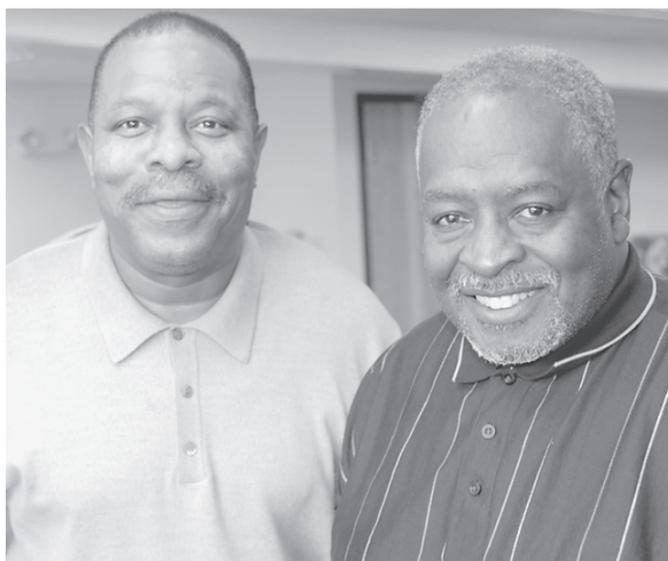
Martin Luther King Day organizers seek to boost participation of congregations

With the vision of "every congregation marching with a banner" in the 2006 Martin Luther King, Jr., Day March, Ivan Bush exclaimed in his call to the faith community: "It would be beautiful!"

The Martin Luther King celebrations in Spokane span two days, beginning with the commemoration service at 4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 14, at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana. It will feature reflections and perspectives from faith, government and business leaders on the theme, "Rekindle the Light."

The march begins with a rally at 10 a.m., Monday, Jan. 15, at the INB Performing Arts Center (former Opera House) and ends at Riverpark Square, where there will be guest speakers, performing artists and a community resource fair.

Ivan, who is equal opportunity officer for the Spokane School District, and the Rev. Percy "Happy" Watkins, pastor at New Hope Baptist Church, were both among the founders of the commemoration and march in 1984.



Ivan Bush and the Rev. Happy Watkins help plan events.

That year, 300 people overflowed Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and 49 joined in a march from the Public Safety Building to the Federal Building.

For three years the service filled First Presbyterian Church and then moved to the Lair at Spokane

Community College. A few years ago, it returned to First Presbyterian to reconnect its location with the faith roots.

The last few years, it has been held at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ.

The march and rally have grown

Continued on page 3

Jo Hendricks' editorials compiled into a book

In her more than 23 years of writing editorials for The Fig Tree, Jo Hendricks covered concerns about war and peace, justice, race relations, social concerns, health and environment from a spiritual and interfaith perspective.

The Fig Tree has compiled her editorials into a 168-page, spiral-bound book, *One Woman's Words of Wisdom*, which was published in late December.

One of her primary concerns and mission emphases has been to develop awareness in Inland Northwest churches about both global and community needs—the needs people have for justice and for church involvement.

Whether it is environmental visions for preservation of Alaskan wilderness areas or as a whistleblower regarding asbestos in Idaho, her Fig Tree editorials covered a wide variety of issues of the times.

"I have sought to touch the timbre of our times in both awareness and involvement in legislative action by faith communities," she said. "Writing about such issues keeps me alert to the world. With the message of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, we can make a difference in both people's attitudes and their actions."

Jo grew up in Wenatchee, the daughter of an attorney and a teacher. Her father's early death led her mother to move back to her family in Seattle, where Jo graduated from high

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Jo Hendricks

Religion News Briefs

Around the World

*Ecumenical News International, PO Box 2100
CH - 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland Tel: +41-22 791 6111
Fax: +41-22 788 7244 Email: eni@eni.ch*

More displaced people arrive in Darfur camp

Otash camp, Darfur, Sudan (ENI). The heart sinks as the brain tries to make sense of the scene, a strange field of bamboo canes and sticks covered with pieces of plastic sheeting, matting, sacks and cloth. The semicircular and square mounds, just big enough to shelter a few people, have become a refuge for thousands with more than 10,000 arriving over two months in Otash camp, fleeing attacks on their homes in Sudan's South Darfur province.

Church leaders urge inter-religious dialogue

Brussels (ENI). European church leaders meeting in Brussels called for a dialogue with other religions about the future, underlining the need for European integration to be based on shared values and a common vision. "As people from different cultures and traditions in Europe come closer together, we want to highlight inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue," the Christian leaders said in a statement.

Swedish churches move closer

Uppsala, Sweden (ENI). The (Lutheran) Church of Sweden, the national church, and the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden, the second largest denomination, signed an ecumenical agreement in Uppsala Cathedral. "The churches recognize each other as apostolic churches, participating in the Church of Christ, holding the same confession of the apostolic faith" and "the same understanding of the sacraments," said the Church of Sweden.

Anti-terrorism law revival called regressive

New Delhi (ENI). Churches in Sri Lanka denounced revival of a draconian anti-terrorism law aimed at hobbling support for ethnic Tamil rebels with whom government forces are in almost a fully-fledged war despite an official cease-fire. "The decision to introduce the new regulations is worrying," Anglican Bishop Duleep de Chickera of Colombo said.

Christian Dalits become a little less unequal

New Delhi (ENI). India's constitution may have outlawed the caste system, but Dalits, as the lower castes are known now, still have to fight for equal treatment in a society in which they face being shunned and discriminated against. In Uttar Pradesh, churches and Christian activists welcomed the decision to recommend official Scheduled Caste status to Christian and Muslim Dalits. It makes them eligible for free education and for government jobs that had been reserved for Dalits of other faiths.

Churches denounce renewal of nuclear weapon

London (ENI). Church leaders in Britain are concerned about plans to renew Trident, Britain's submarine-launched nuclear ballistic missile system, at an estimated cost of up to \$39.2 billion. "These are weapons that are intrinsically indiscriminate in their lethal effects and their long-term impact on a whole physical environment would be horrendous," said Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Malawi uranium mining angers Catholic body

Blantyre, Malawi (ENI). The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Malawi condemns the government and the Australian company Paladin Africa on uranium mining scheduled to start in 2008. The Catholic group and civil organizations have questioned the scientific basis of an Environmental Impact Assessment that paved the way for the operations.

Polish coal output counts more than lives

Warsaw (ENI). Polish church leaders criticized conditions in their country's collieries after 23 miners were killed in a gas explosion in November. "It's still coal output that counts, with the person taking second place," said Damian Zimon, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Katowice. "Mining must develop a worthier approach to people—human dignity must be valued." The archbishop spoke as services were being held nationwide for miners who died in a methane explosion 1,030 meters underground at Halemba colliery in Silesia.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Legislative Conference will be on Jan. 27

"Faith and Advocacy" is the theme for the 2007 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 27, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Fort Wright Dr., in Spokane.

It will open with a presentation on the ethics of faith and advocacy related to what faith traditions say about adherents speaking as citizens to influence public policies.

At 10:30 a.m., there will be policy briefings on issues before the current state legislature,

presented by Paul Benz of the Lutheran Public Policy Office, Richard Wells of the Washington Association of Churches and Tony Cube, the new legislative director of the Washington State Catholic Conference.

After lunch, rather than breaking for workshops, participants may gather more information on issues by visiting a variety of displays on advocacy issues such as health care, living wage, mental health, welfare reform, tax fairness, environmental justice and

affordable housing.

At 1:30 p.m., state and federal legislative staffers in local offices will lead a training session on effective means of advocacy.

The Interfaith Council of the Inland Northwest, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Spokane, the Lutheran Public Policy Office, the Washington State Catholic Conference and the Washington Association of Churches are sponsoring the event.

For information, call 329-1410 or 358-4273.

Gonzaga presents exhibit on book burnings

The exhibition "Fighting the Fires of Hate: America and the Nazi Book Burnings," organized and circulated by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, will be on display at Gonzaga University's Foley Center library from March 10 through May 5.

The exhibition is sponsored by the Foley Center library, Gonzaga University and the Gonzaga University Institute for Action Against Hate.

The traveling exhibit focuses on a symbol of the Nazi Party less known than the swastika or the jackboot: fire.

"Flames and fire accompanied the Third Reich from its begin-

ning to its end. On Jan. 30, 1933, torchlight parades led the way at the beginning of the Nazi Revolution, and within months flames had destroyed the Weimar Constitution," said Jerry Shepard, director of the Institute for Action Against Hate. "On May 10, the same year, German university students sympathetic to Nazis launched the 'Action Against the Un-German Spirit,' turning works by Sinclair Lewis, Karl Marx, Ernest Hemingway and scores of others into ashes."

The nationwide book burning, called a "holocaust of books" and "bibliocaust" by Newsweek and TIME magazines, respectively,

offended Americans because it violated the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, she said. As World War II progressed, President Franklin Roosevelt continually evoked the memory of the fires fueled by books.

The exhibition, developed by Stephen Goodell and co-curator Guy Stern, features reproductions of artifacts, photographs and video. It also examines how Nazi book burnings affected American life, politics, literature and popular culture in post-World-War-II years, said Eileen Bell-Garrison, Gonzaga's dean of library services.

For information, call 323-6532.

Speaker addresses Spokane's slogan

Raymond Reyes, associate vice president for intercultural relations at Gonzaga University, will speak on "Near Nature, Near Perfect: Spokane's Passion for the Possible" at 11:45 a.m., Wednesday, Jan. 17, for the Spokane City Forum at First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar St.

He will address how far "near" is in Spokane's community development slogan "near nature, near perfect." He will also discuss the "Four E's" of sustainable, robust community development: Environment, Equity, Education and Economics.

He proposes "a spiritual architecture for building our city's common good around such tensions as economic competition, environmental collaboration, ethnocentrism, ethno-relativism, living-wage-regulated business, market-defined-unregulated business and educational uniformity without intellectual conformity."

For information, call 777-1555.



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- Policy briefings from Washington Association of Churches, Lutheran Public Policy Office and the Washington State Catholic Conference
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Conference Fee: \$15, or \$12 per person for groups of 5 or more (includes lunch) - \$20 after Jan. 19 - Send to:
Interfaith Council, 1620 N. Monroe, Spokane, WA 99205
For more information, contact
Richard at the Interfaith Council
(509) 329-1410 or director@interfaithnw.org

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Museum exhibit depicts Sudan's land and people

"Sudan: The Land and the People," an exhibition of 70 photographs depicting life in this land plagued by armed conflict, drought and famine, will be presented Jan. 20 to May 20 at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures (MAC), at 2316 W. First St. in Spokane.

The photos are from a book of the same title written by U.S. Ambassador Timothy Carney and his journalist wife Victoria Butler. The photographer Michael Freeman spent more than two years compiling the images of the ethnic, cultural and geographical diversity of Sudan's more than one million square miles.

The MAC will offer an educational program on Sudan at 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 20. John Yoder of the political science department at Whitworth College will speak on issues facing Sudan and then moderate a panel discussion with authors Tim and Victoria, and Jack Lewis, a Spokane advocate in African relief efforts who helped reunite a Sudanese family who immigrated to Spokane.

Armed conflict, drought and famine have plagued Sudan since its independence in 1956, organizers said. A peace agreement in January 2005 ended the civil war between the Arab north and African south, putting people in both regions on a path to help create a nation in which all Sudanese can live and prosper.

The exhibit shows how the traditions of migrants and invaders from the Mediterranean and the Middle East mix with African ethnic groups, who speak hundreds of languages and follow diverse religions.

The death toll from the conflict in Darfur, where more than 2 million people have been displaced, continues to climb while negotiators seek to find a solution.

For the Family MACFest at noon, Saturday, Feb. 10, the museum will offer family activities related to Black History Month and the Sudan exhibit.

The museum is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday to Sunday.

For information, call 456-3931.

Editorials give insights into times

Continued from page 1

school. The Depression cut short her studies at the University of Washington, and she worked in a local store.

She married her husband, Frank, in 1935, and two years later they moved to Spokane, where Jo reared their four children and also worked as manager for a medical office.

In her 45 years as a member at Manito Presbyterian Church, Jo was active in missions and the church's refugee resettlement program, helping settle 80 Hmong and Vietnamese refugees.

She was also active in Church Women United, the United Nations Association and Westminster Food Bank—among about 10 denominational, ecumenical, civic and social justice organizations she participated in for many years.

Jo has been an avid reader and legislative activist for peace and social issues she found rooted in biblical history. In addition to writing as The Fig Tree's contributing editor since 1984, she has written articles for interfaith and church publications, along with numerous letters to the editor in the local newspaper.

"I want to alert people to be public minded, to know change comes through involvement in the church and society," said Jo, who now attends Hamblen Park Presbyterian Church.

"The Fig Tree transcends the usual media. Its logo, from Micah 4:4, offers the vision of each person sitting under his or her own fig tree in peace and unafraid."

For information on the book, call 535-1813.

As we celebrate with Jo on this book, we grieve with her on the sudden death of her son, Charles Hendricks, 58, on Dec. 23.

2007 Fig Tree Benefit Breakfast



**Wednesday,
March 8,**

Globe Room - Cataldo Hall
at Gonzaga University

Buffet begins at 7:15 a.m.
Program ends by 8:45 a.m.

Celebrating recent stories of faith in action

The breakfast is complimentary.

Guests will be invited to donate* to move The Fig Tree ahead

- to build our capacity to share the stories of the region
- to connect the diverse people and communities
- to promote volunteerism and action with the vulnerable
- to explore alternatives to violence, including media violence
- to learn about people who live their faith and values

*SUGGESTED DONATION \$100 • SUGGESTED MINIMUM DONATION \$40

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The Fig Tree, 1323 S. Perry St., Spokane, WA 99202

Resource fair builds awareness of programs

Continued from page 1
from the few dozen to more than 2,000 in recent years.

For new and long-time clergy and nonprofit leaders, congregational leaders and other members, the resource fair provides an overview of community services and resources for outreach, referrals, volunteering and other connections.

Schools from Spokane, Spokane Valley and as far away as Colville, Walla Walla and even Canada, send groups, Civic leaders also participate, said Ivan.

So for 2007, planners seek to "rekindle" the participation of the faith community.

"The victory in civil rights relates to goals of the faith community for people to love their neighbors and enemies, to work for peaceful resolution of conflicts and to believe in the positive power of prayer.

"It's important for those who have been committed to civil rights over the years to bring their children," said Happy.

"The commemoration service and march are a reminder about King's belief that children should have three meals a day to nourish their bodies, culture and educa-

tion for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits," he said

"It's a time for us to recognize everyone—young and old, black, white, Indian, Hispanic Asian, Catholic, Protestant, Jew, babies in strollers, children holding hands, people from outlying communities," said Happy, who goes around the region to give King's "I Have a Dream" speech—from Lewiston, Idaho, to Cashmere, Wash.

Reaching school children, said Ivan, is particularly important, because young people were the leaders of the civil rights movement.

He added that the march is "a symbol of our collective journey, regardless of race, gender or circumstances. It's a journey of people coming together and laying aside differences to discover the likenesses we share and to celebrate our differences.

"To save the dream for one is to save it for all," he said.

Happy said that he and others

involved with the Martin Luther King programming are called on for assistance throughout the year.

"In addition to our going to schools, companies call us for conflict resolution related to hidden racism and name calling so we can help them with positive pressure," he explained. "We bring people together to the table to see how we can resolve tensions so they do not grow into fights."

Happy said that Ivan has often said: "We are involved in working to make a difference until making a difference will not make a difference any more, because we won't see white or black, man or woman, rich or poor."

Ivan reiterated the importance of having every congregation participate.

"We are making calls, sending out fliers and contacting regional offices to increase the participation of the faith community," he said.

For information, call 455-8722.

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**Martin Luther King, Jr.
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4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 14

Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana

10 a.m., Monday, Jan. 15

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For information, call 455-8722

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Urban Plunges are short-term mission trips downtown

Continued from page 1
ing and who is helped.

Those who are usually hosts and helpers become the guests, served with the food of stories—at mealtimes, in apartments or at the Spokane Transit Authority (STA) Plaza—and insights into people and their lives.

Growing up with his family in Spokane, Portland and Northern California, he attended Mass often and went to Catholic schools. He later learned of abuse in his family that left members hurting, unwilling to speak up until a granddaughter was affected.

While his five siblings have excelled and are public figures, he said each still struggles. Broken relationships continue because of different ways each makes sense of what happened.

Moved by interest in the underdog—people in rough times—Jerry completed a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1976 at Gonzaga University. He went on to earn master's degrees in psychology and school counseling, and a doctoral degree in educational leadership.

"My work with House of Charity helps," Jerry said. "I deal with, accept and love people who are self destructive and angry. My own healing ties to their stories. I now can speak about my family experience, although much remains unresolved," Jerry said.

"In conversations that open people's vulnerability and honesty, I have been able to form some trusting relationships with people downtown. God's presence here in strangers is profound," he said. "The Gospel is about brokenness—about the last being first."

Jerry has also worked as a foster care caseworker, a sexual assault therapist, a mental health counselor and a school intervention specialist. A year with the Reardan School District and his ongoing work as a therapist in Washtucna and Kahlotus on Thursdays and Fridays make him aware of common strains in rural and urban life.

When his daughters, now 17 and 20, were young, he worked half-time to have time at home.

By 1998 when he was needed less at home, he discovered the Dining with Dignity program of Shalom Ministries at Central United Methodist Church, when its founder preached at First Presbyterian Church, where Jerry was then a member.

"Central had few resources and First had many, so I began going with my daughters to help at the Monday evening meal," he said.

When Jerry began volunteering at House of Charity, he proposed his work be an urban mission for the Presbytery of the Inland Northwest, which continues to give support, along with Hamblen Presbyterian Church. In June 2006, House of Charity hired him as community relations director.

There he nurtures the hospitality he experienced at Shalom Ministries among people who had received little hospitality in their homes or lives. Jerry said many people abused or neglected cannot trust, leading some into unhealthy, abusive, damaging relationships.

"My mission is to give hospitality that leads people to hope and healing," he said.

"In my 30 years in social services, I found that social services fall



Jerry Schwab, center, works with church team on cleanup project.

Photo provided by Hamblen Park Presbyterian Church

short in providing hospitality for clients. We provide and dispense services, but our professional relationships with clients may lack trust-building to develop the relational piece critical for human beings to progress," Jerry said.

In his relationships with people downtown, he hears their news of marriages, visits to grandchildren and new relationships—things people share as friends.

"People need healthy connections with others. Many who depend on drugs, alcohol or sex are unable to trust people, because some people let them down," he said. "To leave poverty, homelessness or addictions, people need a significant relationship with someone or with God."

Jerry believes social services, case managers, therapists and caseworkers are instrumental, but maintain a distance that may hinder progress.

"Services alone are not enough. Healing happens in relationships. People need mentors to take them by the hand and help them move forward. Early in life, we need recognition by adults to shape us and connect us in our families—to lay the groundwork for future relationships of give and take, negotiation and trust," he said.

When families betray members, they may turn to violence against themselves or others, said Jerry, now involved at Knox Presbyterian. "In some cases, the harm will never be undone. I meet people who are 65 and never trusted anyone, held a job or kept a relationship because they did not have the ability to trust."

As urban missionary for the presbytery, Jerry involves Presbyterian, as well as other churches, in plunges. Hamblen Park Presbyterian has been on three Urban Plunges, involving 90 members, plus having Jerry teach a four-session adult class.

The Urban Plunge is a short-term mission trip downtown—a pilgrimage to a strange land. Participants meet a few of the approximately 6,500 people home-

less in Spokane. Jerry began leading plunges five years ago with Shalom Ministries and has done them three years with the House of Charity.

Once a month, 12 or more plungers—from area universities, churches, nonprofits and government—arrive at 7 p.m. on a Friday to begin 20 hours of learning about people and their culture.

In an orientation, Jerry reviews stages of human development and the necessity of trust.

"I tell them whether people are homeless or live in a gated community they can be stuck in me-centered selfishness and greed—like in the "terrible twos," in being too independent or in parallel play," he summarized.

After discussing causes of homelessness, he takes people on a night-time tour downtown. Plungers see how people live, learn about services and observe the range in housing options.

They go into the Otis Hotel to see the living conditions and meet residents. On the way back, they go into the Davenport Hotel. Jerry contrasts commercial with transformational hospitality.

"Any time people experience welcome can be transformational," he noted.

The plungers talk, walk and share. Back at the House of Charity, Jerry invites plungers to "check in," sharing how they feel to be in a homeless shelter. They often express discomfort in being out of their comfort zones.

At the end of the experience, they "check out," sharing the impact of what they saw, heard, felt and learned.

"Groups often ask what patrons feel for them to be on their turf. Do they feel gawked at, imposed on? At the end of the plunge, they realize they were received with hospitality," Jerry said. "Patrons feel gratitude that people took time to visit their home."

Plungers stay overnight on the main floor. Patrons sleep upstairs, in two dorm rooms with 108 beds.

"Most middle-class people today no longer experience being guests and being vulnerable. Many prefer to be givers, hosts and the ones in charge of resources. Those on the margins often feel they are receivers, helpless and dependent," Jerry said. "It's powerful for patrons to be the hosts and providers—the ones with the resources."

Jerry finds the Gospel full of such contradictions and challenges: "Much is required of those with wealth. Those having little are winners. Strangers and the poor may be Christ or angels. We creatures of habit surrounding ourselves with the familiar are called to be aliens and sojourners, to go into unfamiliar territory."

He observes often that the faith of middle-class and wealthy people in gated communities can be under-nourished.

"On mission experiences, we see people with little or nothing happier than we are. It's a jolt, because it seems that the more we have, the less happy we may be," Jerry noted.

On Saturdays of Urban Plunges, plungers eat breakfast and lunch with patrons and have time for mingling. At 9 a.m., they attend the chapel for a Lectio Divina—reading a Psalm, reflecting in silence and reading it aloud again several times before they talk.

"Psalms present the human condition—akin to the angst and suffering of people living on the streets," Jerry said.

The sharing evolves into personal sharing. Some homeless or formerly homeless people share their stories.

"Stories are powerful," he said. After lunch, plungers visit a few people in single-room-occupancy apartments before returning to the House of Charity to check out.

The Rev. Ken Onstot of Hamblen Park said his group picked people at random in the STA Plaza, saying they were part of a church doing an urban mission project, wanting to meet people downtown and hear their stories.

He met a woman sitting in the STA Plaza because she had just run away from an abusive boyfriend and didn't know what to do. She knew of Hope House

and Ogden Hall, but didn't want to pursue those options.

"It was intimidating at first, but now church members are going to chapel services at House of Charity and building long-term relationships," Ken said. "By going there, we overcome hesitation about people based on dress, grooming, demeanor, race or ethnicity. Connecting with people downtown softens our hearts and helps us realize some of the reasons for homelessness."

Down the road, plungers tell Jerry their view of homelessness changed. He also sees some return to volunteer.

While problems people face downtown seem to be urban problems, Jerry knows from work in rural schools that rural communities face similar challenges.

Some meth addicts move to rural towns for access to anhydrous ammonia, one ingredient. Some people move there to escape scrutiny of Child Protective Services or to find low-cost housing. Multi-generational, rural families deal with abuse and neglect.

"Some rural communities are like tough urban neighborhoods that lack policing and have people struggling with poverty," Jerry said. "Community and human development issues span both urban and rural life."

"Anywhere human beings live, breakdowns in community infrastructure and family relationships that betray trust can lead to poverty, crime and other struggles," he said. "In both areas, cuts in government funding translate into decreases in social services, mental health services and police, and more human isolation."

Jerry said the sense of community has declined in urban and rural areas in part because TV and computers reduce face-to-face contact: Fewer affiliate with clubs, fewer volunteer and fewer attend churches.

He senses, however, a turn-around since Sept. 11 and the hurricane and earthquake disasters last year. People are pulling together.

"Feeling vulnerable is healthy as we come out of crises, opening us to pull together," he said.

For information, call 624-7821.

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Simple kindness and challenging policies both help homeless people

By Deidre Jacobson

Sheila Morley has learned the power of looking homeless people in the eye, smiling and granting the simplest of human kindnesses.

She also knows the power of coordinating services and challenging government to assure funding and resources to protect people who lose their homes.

Sheila, who is emergency assistance case manager at the Spokane Valley Community Center and Food Bank, joined the leadership team of the Homeless Coalition in June to work with others in the community to meet the needs of the homeless in Spokane.

"Homelessness has worsened because of cuts in mental health services and the increase in need," she said. "House of Charity, Hope House, Union Gospel Mission and Anna Ogden Hall are full to overflowing."

Sheila developed her passion for the homeless while volunteering at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church as host church coordinator with the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN). She started in 1998 shortly after joining the church and served four years while working from her home as an account manager.

In 2002, she joined the IHN team as aftercare case manager, assisting families in moving to and succeeding in permanent or transitional housing when they "graduate" from IHN.

At the Spokane Valley Community Center and Food Bank (SVCC&FB), she manages the emergency assistance program, providing Spokane Valley residents with food, clothing, financial aid and referrals to agencies providing various services.

The center's building at 10814 E. Broadway houses the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC), a health and nutrition services for pregnant women and mothers with young children; a high school re-entry program; Career Path Services, education services for teens and teen parents, and the Spokane Neighborhood Action Program, offering federal energy assistance and staff from the Homeless Outreach and Alight Counseling Services.

Spokane's Homeless Coalition is part of the Washington State Coalition for the Homeless.

According to the State 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, there were 20,222 people reported as

homeless in a statewide point-in-time count in January 2006.

Based on Housing and Urban Development 2000 and Community Health Association of Spokane data, there are also about 99,000 renter households at risk of becoming homeless because the household's income is less than 30 percent of the area's median, and the household's need to spend more than 50 percent of that income on rent.

Sheila said the statistics do not reflect the actual level of need.

"We see many families who are doubling up, staying with friends or relatives, trying to share homes as roommates. People do whatever they can to get a roof over their heads," she said.

Concerned individuals and agencies, plus city and county governments have been studying the issues and in 2005 developed a 10-year strategy to end chronic, street, emergency-sheltered and long-term sheltered homelessness in the Spokane region.

The strategies are:

- **Move people** into appropriate housing with supportive services: Providing long-term and stable housing requires matching individuals with services such as case management, mental health services and medical care. A range of housing options is needed to address the range of needs.

- **Fully use existing resources:** In the Spokane region, there are partnerships and collaborations among homeless-service organizations, such as the Spokane Homeless Coalition and the Spokane Low-Income Housing Consortium.

- **Prevent homelessness:** Risk factors such as poverty, illness, disability and violence need addressing before homelessness occurs. The homeless-service system must be able to aid individuals and families with pending eviction or utility shut-off notices because of financial crisis.

- **Coordinate** among regional jurisdictions: The planning process involves coordinating conversation with Spokane County, the City of Spokane and the City of Spokane Valley.

- **Develop a community** response to homelessness: Aware that homelessness is not an easy issue to address, planners try to create avenues for citizens to

become aware of issues of homelessness and create opportunities for individuals, groups and organizations to take action.

- **Advocate for changes** in public policies: Some policies inhibit the community's ability to address chronic homelessness.

- **Develop funding sources:** Budget tightening is prevalent within federal, state and local government sources.

Statistics do not reflect the actual level of need.

The Spokane Homeless Coalition has developed a plan to address the need for expanded options to those who are homeless in extremely cold weather.

The City/County Coalition has provided additional funds for the House of Charity, the Salvation Army, Volunteers of America's Crosswalk and Volunteers of America's Hope House to be designated as warming centers. These sites will be open on days when temperatures will drop to 5 degrees or lower with or without wind chill and each of the shelters was full the previous night.

"Spokane providers work well together, helping clients with complex needs, but the problems are great and the needs are increasing," said Sheila, who finds that her faith gives her strength to advocate for those who are suffering.

"Faith gives me the ability to be compassionate. The people I work with inspire me. We are joining together to do what we can for this community," she said. "We need the help of everyone to solve this complex problem."

She urges people to support legislation to fund programs and services aiding the homeless.

The 2007 legislative agenda of the Washington State Coalition for the Homeless includes:

- **Increase funding** and expand eligibility criteria for programs providing short- and longer-term tenant-based rental subsidies, support services and flexible cash assistance, such as the Transitional Housing Operating and Rental program, which rapidly houses those who became homeless, including victims of domestic violence, and prevents at-risk fami-

lies from becoming homeless.

- **Support increased fees** to fund the Homelessness Housing and Assistance Act of 2005. The state and counties have adopted 10-year plans to end homelessness and need to implement them.

- **Increase** the Housing Trust Fund, which Sheila considers the state's "largest, most effective tool" for creating affordable homes for low-income families and individuals.

- **Strengthen discharge** planning and temporary housing assistance for individuals released from state and local institutions, such as the criminal justice facilities, foster care and state mental hospitals. Failure to ensure that these vulnerable individuals are linking to housing and services on discharge means many end up homeless and cycled back into state institutions or systems.

- **Improve access** to and quality of mainstream services.

"We must maintain or increase funds for programs such as the emergency shelters, food assistance, temporary assistance

to needy families, subsidized child care, domestic violence prevention, mental-health and substance-abuse treatment, job training and Medicaid. We must also support living wage jobs, if we are to eliminate homelessness in the state," Sheila said.

"We have the power to make a difference," she said. "When you see a homeless person, look him or her in the eye and smile or say hello. The homeless are often invisible and don't receive even the smallest of human kindnesses."

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Family's mission 'bug' leads them to spend Christmas in Ethiopia

Jack and Cheryl Lewis' family exemplifies how one mission experience begets another. Opting for short-term opportunities means they return with insights from other parts of the globe to share in their congregation.

They, their sons Andy and Ben, daughter and son-in-law Kristin and Kevin Lehman, and daughter Beth spent this Christmas with the Anuak in Gambella, Ethiopia.

That location arose from their at-home mission of sponsoring six refugee families from such areas as Rwanda, Kosovo and Iraq through World Relief.

Their assisting a family from Rwanda in 1995 led to their meeting Agwa Taka, an Anuak Ethiopian refugee, sponsored by First Presbyterian Church. They continued connections in the Africa Support Group formed by World Relief.

Jack, who attended Hamblen Park Presbyterian and Fourth Memorial churches growing up in Spokane, studied business administration at Central Washington University, where he met Cheryl. He worked as an insurance adjuster before earning a master's degree in theology in 1982 at Dallas Theological Seminary.

He served 14 years as pastor at Medical Lake Community Church and Newport Baptist Church. He also began to teach at the Inland Empire School of the Bible, later Spokane Bible College and now operating as a branch of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

With a "burden" to teach pastors, Jack came on the faculty full time in 1997. In 2000, he finished doctoral studies in educational leadership at Gonzaga University. In 2005, he became associate dean of faculty and head of Biblical Studies at Moody in Spokane.

The Lewis family first stepped into missions in 1992, when they went for three weeks to Bolivia, where Jack taught at a field conference for New Tribes Mission.

That sparked his desire to help pastors in developing countries. In 2000, he taught courses for eight weeks at the Ethiopian Theological College in Addis Ababa. In 2001 and 2002, he and Cheryl traveled to Indonesia where Jack taught modular courses in four seminaries.

On a 2003 trip back to Ethiopia for Jack to teach at a pastors' conference, his son Ben accompanied him, taking computers and training people there to use them.

In 2004, Jack also taught at a pastors' conference in Khartoum, Sudan, where he and Cheryl made contacts to help reunite the son of a Sudanese refugee, Eliow, with his family in Spokane. That re-



Cheryl Lewis with an Anuak baby Photo by Andy Lewis

union occurred in July 2006.

In 2005, he spoke at a pastors' gathering in India.

Other family mission ventures have included Kevin's living in South Africa for a year with Reaching and Discipling, and Kristin's serving with the African Children's Choir in 2001.

Most of the mission trips of Jack and Cheryl, who attended Valley Fourth Memorial many years and now attend Crossover Baptist in Mead, have been for three to four weeks. They arranged their outreach through various mission organizations, and their congregations have backed them.

Jack and Cheryl knew of the genocide of more than 400 Anuak men on Dec. 13, 2003, through Agwa's continued help with refugees and the Africa Support Group. One day, they asked how things were going in Gambella.

Agwa told of his efforts to build an orphanage for children of those killed through the Anuak Baare Hope Ministry (ABHM), originally started in partnership with First Presbyterian Church and now becoming an independent nonprofit organization. The name means "hope for all Anuak."

Jack asked what he was doing for public relations. Q-6 TV had recently made a video of Agwa's daughter, Abang, telling of the needs and of writing U.S. government leaders, asking them to help. They said they could not help.

Jack sent a copy of the video to his sons, who were working with the Pearson Foundation in New Orleans and at Pass Christian, Miss., where they went two weeks after Hurricane Katrina.

Andy watched the video and

said he decided to go there in November with his boss at the Pearson Foundation, who seeks to help children in poor countries access technology.

Andy, who earned a bachelor's degree in international affairs at Eastern Washington University in 2005, needed more overseas experience before beginning a master's degree in forced migration.

As Andy, Jack, and Cheryl talked with Agwa about needs of 415 widows, Cheryl decided to go to Gambella. She left Nov. 22 with Andy, his boss, Agwa, Abang, Achol Omot and Ojullu Aballa to help with the orphanage and with widows' needs.

The orphanage opened Dec. 5 to serve 20 children.

Jack, Ben, Kristin and Kevin arrived in mid December with Jodie Hetzman, a nurse and student at Moody-Spokane who has gone on several mission trips herself. She went to assess health problems and possibilities for treatment.

On arriving in Addis Ababa, Jack bought sewing machines, beads, tie-dyeing materials, seeds, medicines and other supplies on behalf of ABHM, with the help of pastors he had taught there.

They also helped him arrange ground transportation, helping even though Anuak are poorly treated in the capital, Jack said.

Kristin and Cheryl taught women to use the sewing machines. Tie-dyeing materials and beads were brought to help women earn a living. Seeds meant they could plant their own gardens.

They also took four laptop computers to use in school, the church office and the orphanage.

While there, Jack preached at the local Bethel Mekene Yesus Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia and offered a course for young people to begin their training as church leaders to replace pastors and lay leaders who were killed.

Anuak Baare Hope seeks to complete the project with indigenous materials, labor and community involvement to instill a sense of ownership. They will set up a child-sponsorship program to support orphans. They also plan to drill a well to provide clean water for Anuak refugees in Sudan, although needs are changing as some refugees return to Gambella from the refugee camps.

Jack said they joined the effort because the needs were compelling, and "we have the ability to address certain needs."

"With the harshness of racial tensions between the darkest of the dark Anuak and the reddish-brown skinned Highlanders, we believe anyone should help any way they can," he said.

Jack explained that connections with the world help move people "out of their own petty issues."

By helping people in need, he said those helping learn and can then help others see "what matters in life. If people see needs, they ask what they can do to help. The bug for missions is infectious."

Jack is humbled by the hospitality he has experienced in Ethiopia with "people who have nothing but give everything to guests."

Andy helped create a 60-minute documentary on Gambella. By spreading the word, they hope to protect the people from any further genocide. They started a website, too, at <http://pearson-foundation.org/Projects/Anuak-BaareHopeProject/>.

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Church backs ministries to meet needs of Anuak widows and orphans

To assist Anuak widows and orphans, who are victims of genocide, HIV and AIDS, and poverty, First Presbyterian Church formed the Anuak Meer (Love) Ministry.

Mary Frankhauser, a member who helped organize the ministry, said they have moved slowly, working with organizations in Gambella, such as Partners in Africa, which will offer sponsorships so children can receive family-based care, educational support, Christian nurture, counseling and medical care.

Ariet Oman and Alock Nyigow, two Anuak women involved in the ministry, said part of healing from the massacre will come by keeping children with their mothers or placing them in families, where they can ask questions and talk about what happened to their fathers or parents.

The work of Anuak Meer Ministry complements that of Anuak Baare Hope, which is building an orphanage, because both approaches are needed.

The Anuak Meer Ministry hopes to provide scholarships and small business microfinance loans for women to make traditional baskets out of local grasses.

Alock and Ariet formed the ministry with Carolyn Holmes and about 20 others at First Presbyterian.

Alock, Karlene Arguinchona—a physician—Debbie Stimpson—a physician's assistant trained in HIV and AIDS care—Carolyn and her physician-husband, Ed, will visit Gambella Feb. 7 to 20.

In preparation, Ed attended a conference on microfinance.

First Presbyterian sponsored the



Carolyn Holmes, Ariet Oman and Alock Nyigow wear African women's dresses and form the symbol of the Anuak Meer Ministry with their hands intertwined.

Anuak when they arrived in Spokane as refugees in the 1990s.

"Over the years, our church has come to know Ariet, Alock, Agwa, Akway and Achol, and to care about what was happening to the people, particularly since the genocide," Mary said.

Alock came to Florida in 1996 and to Spokane in 1997. She had left Ethiopia in 1993 because her husband, who worked with the governor of Gambella, was killed in 1991. She works at the Sacred Heart Medical Center laundry and as a caregiver at Harbor Glen.

Knowing what it is to be widowed, she said, "I know God sent me here to help. Now I need to go back there to help my people."

In 2004, she and Carolyn went to Addis Ababa to visit Alock's

parents. There, they formed a partnership with church leaders to bring baskets woven by Gambella women to the United States to sell, so the women can earn a living.

"At home, women do not have a voice. As a U.S. citizen, I have a responsibility to speak," Alock said. "It's good God sent me away so people here can hear what is happening and how they can help the widows and children."

Ariet came to Spokane in 1989, having left Ethiopia in 1986. She, too, has gained confidence to speak out. She earned a bachelor's degree in business at Eastern Washington University, and works at Bank of America and the Waterford retirement residence.

Because her mother died in childbirth and no one wanted to

take care of Ariet, she was almost buried alive with her mother.

"I was told later that as they put gravel and dirt in the grave, a woman grabbed me and ran to Pokwo, the Village of Life, and gave me to Marie Lusted, a Presbyterian missionary and nurse.

"Marie gave me to a woman whose five babies died at birth," Ariet said. "I went to school in a culture that does not encourage women to go to school. Most drop out in grade school and marry."

After high school, she went into business making local wine, hoping to save gold to go to college. Eventually, she fled Ethiopia and went into Sudan, where she was in the bush for four months, until she came to the United States.

"When I first arrived, I was shy

and didn't speak much. I knew little English. I came to Spokane, thinking I was going to Minnesota, where most Anuak were resettled," said Ariet.

She completed studies at the Adult Education Center. The first of her daughters, Gilo Taka, 16, was born her last day of class. Her second, Abang Taka, is now 13.

Knowing Gambella's culture and now living in Spokane, she hopes to be a bridge between women in the two cities.

"I hope to help Anuak women know what the outside world has to offer and urge them to forgive so they are not bitter toward those who killed their fathers, husbands and brothers. Our ministry is about peace and love."

Carolyn said people in First Presbyterian Church care about and pray for the people there.

"We can't change what happened, but we can try to prevent it from happening again," pointed out Carolyn, who had tried to go to Gambella in 2005, but could not go because of violence and a disputed election.

The logo for the Anuak Meer Ministry is hands together in prayer with fingers and thumbs touching to form a heart.

"We are 'nyiwara,' daughters of the same Father—children of God regardless of our shape, color, height or different educational or social status," said Ariet.

In that spirit, the Anuak Meer Ministry's brochure quotes Psalm 146:9, saying God "protects the foreigners among us, cares for the orphans and widows, and frustrates the plans of the wicked."

For information, call 448-8589 or contact meer@spokaneffc.org.

Anuak Justice Council challenges human rights violations of other ethnic groups, too

Along with concern about needs of the Anuak, the Anuak Justice Council advocates worldwide to challenge the human rights violations against the Anuak.

It has a website and produced a DVD documentary on the genocide and what has followed. The professionally produced DVD, "Betrayal of Democracy: Ethiopia," tells of the suffering and genocide not only of the Anuak but also of other ethnic/racial groups in Ethiopia.

Obang Metho of Saskatoon, the director of international advocacy, has shown the DVD in 22 U.S. and Canadian venues since September. He speaks to Anuak and other Ethiopians, urging them to work together.

Along with testifying at hearings in Washington, D.C., in the European Union Parliament and

before a committee of Canadian policymakers, he has met with the World Bank representative for Ethiopia.

"When he speaks, he speaks on behalf of all Ethiopian ethnic groups," said John Frankhauser, treasurer and webmaster for the Anuak Justice Council.

"Ethiopia is divided by ethnic turfdoms. Although the Anuak are the lowest of the low, the smallest of the small ethnic groups and the darkest skinned, they are providing the message and leadership that identify the pain all ethnic groups suffer," he said.

"The Anuak call for all to work together for national healing. The message is being heard, because the Anuak are so small and powerless they are not a threat to other ethnic groups in Ethiopia.

"Those groups are benefitting

from our advocacy work," said John, who is motivated by his compassion for people and by his love for the local Anuak.

John adds new stories every week to the website at anuakjustice.org.

"Through our website, one-tenth of a percent of the population of Ethiopia has become a source of information for all ethnic groups through testimonies, speeches and links to other websites, such

as Genocide Watch and Human Rights Watch," John said.

A recently released Harvard University Law Clinic report of its investigation of the continuing violence is on the website.

"We cover the Anuak genocide as part of our overall concern about genocide and human rights

violations and have as many as 14,000 visits to the site each month," John said.

The Anuak Justice Council is independent but supported by churches, private donations and grants from foundations.

For information, call 448-0805 or visit www.anuakjustice.org.

See www.thefigtree.org for color photos and additional photos with articles.

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At theological school in Chengdu, China

Seminary teacher focuses on balancing pastoral care with evangelism

Considering the last 30 years of growth in Chinese churches “a blink of the eye in God’s divine plan,” the Rev. Yuan Shi Guo (Peter), general director of the China Christian Council in Sichuan, presented an overview of missionary and church life while talking in June at Chengdu with visitors from Cheney and Spokane, including Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp.

Peter teaches contemporary Christian thought and English at the Sichuan Theological Seminary in Chengdu.

While growing, the church is still at an early stage facing several problems:

- The imbalance between the level of evangelization and the level of pastoral care needs—with one theologically trained church leader for every 5,000 believers—creates divisions and concerns.

- Globalization creates pressure for a leadership style that “promotes success in terms of more new members but neglects developing discipleship and servant leadership,” Peter said.

With few ordained ministers, the priesthood of all believers prevails through an emphasis on developing lay leadership, he continued. The lack of trained church workers is a problem, particularly in rural China, where 70 percent of the people live.

“The Chinese church lost many pastors in the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, so grassroots lay training is important,” he said. “So the China Christian Council and local churches offer hundreds of classes—from elementary and intermediate Bible studies to advanced theology.”

The Commission on Rural Church Work provides teaching materials, preaching teams, financial support and lay training centers.

“People need lessons on how faith is relevant in their daily lives,” said Peter, who is concerned that lay leaders who lack training may spread wrong teachings.

The Sichuan Theological Seminary is one of 18 seminaries and Bible schools in China. Peter said more seminaries are needed to equip enough church leaders.

Established in 1984 for students from the Sichuan and nearby provinces, it now has more than 70 students—60 percent lay leaders—including 28 from eight minority groups. More than 350 have graduated and serve local churches.

In five years, he hopes the seminary will be able to train more than 500 lay leaders and graduate 150 pastors a year.

Peter, who spent 1997 to 2000



The Rev. Yuan Shi Guo goes by the English name, Peter.

at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., and earned a master’s of divinity degree, invites exchanges with churches overseas so Christians can learn from and pray for each other. Some North American churches provide scholarships for students from poor areas.

He also wants more native-English speakers to come to teach English, even for a few weeks or months. To qualify to enter a university, students must pass an exam in English, as well as exams in Chinese and math. English skills open doors to higher education.

Peter grew up in a Christian family in Nanchong, less than three hours—once more than 18 hours—northeast of Chengdu by bus. His family is part of a church founded by Anglican missionaries from England.

His family supported his decision to be a pastor. In the 1980s, he took a long-distance course from Nanjing Theological Seminary. His wife, who graduated from that seminary in 1989, worked 10 years with YWCA and now works with the Sichuan Christian Council.

Peter did not believe in God until 1981 when he was 17 and in high school. He was the first young person to join his church, which then had 40 members, most over 55 years old.

When Peter was ordained, he became pastor of his home church, the only one in that city of 500,000. It now has more than 5,000 members who gather at many meeting points. In October, the congregation dedicated a new church building.

The Chinese church is in a post-denominational era, he said,

with churches united in 1949 under the China Christian Council. Then there were 700,000 Protestants. Now 16 million Christians worship in 50,000 churches and meeting places under the China Christian Council.

During civil wars before 1949, western cultures supported Chiang Kai-shek, who later ruled in Taiwan. That is one reason the government forced overseas Christians to leave, Peter said.

He listed some other factors, which he said had been embellished because “bad news” tends to spread.

1) Many Protestants arrived in the 1820s during the opium war on military ships that brought opium, so many Chinese connected Christians with opium, which was bad for society.

2) Some missionaries were said to be spies, seeking economic and military secrets.

3) Disparities in pay between Chinese pastors and missionaries created resentment. A missionary might earn 200 Chinese yuan a month, and a Chinese pastor, 30 yuan a month, less than the 50 yuan needed to support his family.

4) During the Boxer Rebellion in 1860, missionaries stayed inside churches because of the danger. Chinese people were angry that doctors and nurses did not come out to treat Chinese people, letting many die.

5) A Chinese proverb says one bad element in the pot makes the whole pot bad. So many thought all missionaries were bad, even though there were many sincere missionaries, even martyrs.

6) A slogan used to help shake colonialism was: “One more Christian, one less Chinese.”

Now attitudes have changed, Peter said.

Most Chinese Christians realize more than 95 percent of missionaries were real Christians and visionaries—and only three to five percent were complicit with colonial powers, he explained.

From 1950 to 1954, the government encouraged churches to be independent because it still feared Chinese churches might be controlled by western powers, seeking to penetrate the government. So the Three Self Principles of the China Christian Council—which came from missionaries in the 1880s—were promoted, encouraging churches to be 1) self-supporting, 2) self-propagating and 3) self-governing.

From the 1950s into the 1970s, China persecuted people in political movements and government leadership, as well as those in religious faiths, he said. After China reopened in 1977, the door reopened for Christians.

“My grandparents’ generation was in tears and praising God,” Peter said.

Today, Christians are seen as contributors to society. So the phrase is now: “One more Christian, one more good Chinese,” he said.

Now the government encourages Chinese churches to grow, he pointed out. Regulations adopted in March 2005 require the Religious Affairs Bureau to help churches with land and licenses, as well as building repairs, expan-

sion and construction.

“The government encourages people to contribute to society through their work,” he said. “It sees churches as part of society and encourages Christians to contribute through both their work and social outreach.”

Recognizing that economic globalization has created a spiritual vacuum, especially for young people, the government seeks to promote social values and people caring for people—basic values of all faiths, he added.

Peter said the greatest challenges for churches in the next 20 years are to train lay leaders, offer pastoral care and do social outreach.

Along with helping churches grow, the government now welcomes overseas churches’ sending funds, offering training and coming for visits.

Peter believes that visits help people learn about each other beyond what they see on TV or in movies.

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Resettling Hurricane Katrina evacuees slows but continues

Amy Isaacson thought she was taking a three-week job last October to help resettle some people who had come to the Inland Northwest, displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

When Catholic Charities Immigration and Refugee Services received a 22-month Katrina Aid Grant from Catholic Charities USA, she agreed to stay in Spokane.

Immigration and Refugee Services has assisted more than 80 people who left the Gulf Coast and came to Eastern Washington. While fewer are coming now, she still has about 15 cases and expects more will seek assistance after Feb. 28, the 18-month cutoff for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Some just called for the phone number of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) or FEMA. Some came for referrals. Some have needed full wrap-around services for long-term recovery as they resettle.

Wraparound services include housing, employment, medical assistance, enrolling children in schools, helping establish or re-establish government services, or advocacy with FEMA, DSHS or Social Security.

So Amy has learned about the network of resources in the area for referring people. She has also taught evacuees how to navigate the system to find energy assistance, winter clothes, furnished housing and other necessities.

On top of their losses, stresses of resettling and difficulty dealing with bureaucracies, many experience post-traumatic stress disorder and depression that affect other pieces of their recovery, Amy said.

For example, she may help someone find a job, but the person may be depressed and unable to get up in the morning to go to work or arrange child care.

"The psychological and emotional impact of the disaster lasts months if not years," she said. "Many evacuees from New Orleans were highly vulnerable to begin with."

Some organizations and individuals adopted families for Christmas gifts, but most who came to this region had family connections, had lived here previously or have friends here.

"Many had lost documents they need to prove their eligibility for programs or were unable to understand letters telling how to apply for assistance," she added.

Amy has also been involved in Catholic Charities Spokane's disaster response planning in case of ice storms, power outages, chemi-



Greg Cunningham and Amy Isaacson

cal spills, an earthquake in Seattle or a pandemic disease.

"My liberal arts background gives me ways to analyze as I enter new fields. I have learned about emergency response, homeland security and public health," she said. "I know the players."

After completing studies in history at Boston College in December 2000, she worked in marketing for KREM-TV. Then two years of teaching English as a second language in the Marshall Islands stirred her awareness of the unjust disparity in material wealth and led to a commitment to find work that will "make the world more fair, compassionate and just."

Her work with Catholic Charities helps her clarify her values.

"I love working here where the emphasis is on need not creed," she said. "While not Catholic, I'm proud to be part of this Catholic agency. The heart of what Christ taught is to open our arms to everyone. It's part of my values from my family connections to Gonzaga University,

where my mother was a professor in the graduate school of education and the doctoral leadership program."

Her supervisor, Greg Cunningham, has been director of the program for more than five years. He had helped resettle refugees from the former Soviet Union until Sept. 11. Since then, there have been fewer refugees to resettle, so they have dropped that part of their work, but had the skills to help resettle people after Hurricane Katrina.

For 27 years after the fall of Saigon in 1975, Immigration and Refugee Services resettled refugees. Initially most were Vietnamese. In the mid 1990s, there were Bosnians, followed by people from the former Soviet Union, Afghanistan and Cuba.

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Now World Relief does the only refugee resettlement in the area, he said.

The Catholic Charities' program provides immigration services, helping people determine and access immigration benefits—including legal residency and citizenship—through programs at St. Patrick's in Pasco, St. Patrick's in Walla Walla, Sacred Heart in Othello and on human trafficking in the Okanogan.

While studying for a master's degree in teaching English as a second language, which he earned in 2001 at Eastern Washington University, Greg contacted his predecessor, Sean Stone, to help run the ESL program for immigrants, initially as a volunteer. When Shawn left, Greg, who has also taught in Catholic schools, took over as director.

Some evacuees from New Orleans resettled in Royal City, Lewiston and Brewster, as well as Spokane.

"Some who lived in New Orleans all their lives decided snow would be better than hurricanes," Greg said. "A few have gone

back, but most have stayed. If people make connections in communities, they are likely to stay."

Because snow, cold and pine trees are new to many refugees as they are to Gulf Coast evacuees, the refugee orientation program has been the foundation of the evacuees' orientation.

"Recent response has been phenomenal, raising funds for the tsunami, the earthquake in Pakistan and for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, plus resettling people here," said Greg.

Amy is impressed that "individuals, businesses and agencies came through, helping set up homes, transport people and provide furniture. People reached out to offer things to us."

For information, call 455-6190.

February issue will include an overview of individuals and faith groups who have gone to the Gulf Coast to help with long-term hurricane recovery.

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Fig Tree recognizes contributions of Jo Hendricks' editorials

There have been some influential women journalists over the years, but few have made their debut as editorial writers at the age of 70 and continued into their 90s, as Jo Hendricks has done with *The Fig Tree* since 1984.

She has brought a consistent, resolute voice on issues people of faith hold in common, and she doesn't hesitate to connect the call to heal the world, to make peace, to eradicate poverty, to care for the vulnerable and to protect the environment with the words and traditions of faith. Prophetically, she ties faith to the "paradigms," "paradoxes," "oxymorons" and "caveats"—some of her favorite words—of

these decades of history.

Her more than 20 years of editorials provide an overview of what has been happening in the world, the nation, the state, the region and the community—a summary of the history of caring related to the issues of the day.

In a book of her editorials, *One Woman's Words of Wisdom: Commentaries on the Timbre of Our Times*, we have presented her editorials organized chronologically under their themes to give the sense of the historical developments, the stories in the news and the issues before people over the decades.

Her insights into peacemaking and war-

making, justice and injustice, oppression and democracy, faith and secular values shatter typical excuses for giving in to the ways and whims of power.

Her reflections are based not only on knowledge of theology, history, literature, poetry and economics, but also on her experience among the poor—serving at a food bank, assisting at voting polls and helping to resettle refugees.

Jo shared her editorial reflections as a volunteer, seeing *The Fig Tree* as an outlet for expressing her wisdom, love, passion, compassion and sense of urgency for peace, justice and sustaining creation—common themes of ecumenical life and action.

We are proud to give voice to a woman who has been a voice for so many more than herself. Jo has given us new eyes to see, new ears to hear and new motivation to act, to join her in writing letters, speaking out and knowing that caring can motivate change in the way we do things, the way the world does things.

We are pleased to be able to give her voice again by compiling her editorials in one volume, available for reference and reflection on issues. We hope her voice will inspire more people to give voice to alternative ways of thinking and acting.

Mary Stamp
Editor

'Truthiness' already muddies world of policies that affect people's lives

"When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less," Humpty Dumpty told Alice.

"Truthiness" is the word of the year for 2006, according to John Morse, president of Merriam-Webster. A coinage of Stephen Colbert of *The Colbert Report* on Comedy Central was that truthiness is "truth that comes from the gut, not books."

There need not be substantiating facts, just the gut feeling that something is true because it should be or someone says it is. Humpty Dumpty would like truthiness.

There's plenty of it going around these days:

- Eliminating Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations regarding work injuries caused by repetitive stress protects both workers and employers.
- Great Britain's building a new genera-

tion of submarine-launched nuclear ballistic missiles will increase world security.

- Resuming uranium mining in Malawi will be safe for the environment and the miners.

- Taking one purple pill will take care of whatever ails you.

- Allowing more mercury to be released into the air under the Clear Skies Initiative will result in a healthful environment.

- Going to war against a country that hasn't attacked us will promote democracy and end terrorism.

Along that line of action, in 2005, Congress passed a highway bill, the title of which forms the acronym SAFETEA-LU. That should have something to do with highway safety. Right?

The full name of the law is the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Trans-

portation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users. It authorizes something ingenious called saddle-mount vehicle combinations, which are made up of four semi-trailer trucks and are up to 97 feet long. Each of the three trailing trucks has its front tires resting on the truck ahead of it.

According to experienced drivers of big rigs, this vehicular monstrosity sways dangerously. An image of giant snap-the-whip arises here, and it's difficult to think of a situation in which anyone would want to share the road with it.

The only indication that this law might have something to do with public safety is that strained title which appears to have been composed solely for its acronym.

There is one way that it might be possible to believe that this law has something to do with public safety. As the Queen told Alice,

believing the impossible only requires practice. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

The Federal Highway Administration has not yet issued the rules under which this law will be administered, so it is still possible for the endangered public to send their views to the Federal Highway Administration.

At least in this democratic society we have the opportunity to consider the implications of mushy truthiness that weasels into policies. With that opportunity, we have the obligation to reflect on related realities and make our voices heard in the halls of government.

Nancy Minard
Editorial team

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

Thanks for all the good work you do, especially for those whose needs need to be heard.

The Rev. John Hay
Retired Episcopal priest

When we are confronted with danger, our instinct tells us we have two choices: fight or flight. The most difficult thing is to do neither. It takes courage to stand one's ground without fighting. It takes strength to resist the urge to flee. In fact, it takes a word from God!

Running away from our difficulties does not always mean we literally "run away." We run away when we refuse to face the realities before us: racism in our community, dishonesty in the workplace, trouble in our marriages and families. We run away when we are too busy to be present for one another. We run away with those who are also busy, running away. We even run from the One whose word comes to us as we stand in the dark.

A word from God gives us the courage and the strength to stand and face the difficult struggles in our lives and in our world. When we face them we discover God at work through Jesus Christ to bring healing and hope.

The Rev. Ginny Johnson
St. Paul Lutheran – Quincy

There is an old tendency to separate personal morality from social morality: murder is wrong, war happens; prostitution is wrong, poverty happens; lying is wrong, propaganda happens; rape is wrong, environmental damage happens.

The teachings and core values of Jesus, however, cannot be so conveniently compartmentalized. Jesus calls us to tell the truth, to be peacemakers, to forgive personal sin, to care for the poor. There is no dichotomy in Jesus' teachings between personal and social morality. To emphasize one and ignore the other is to deface Jesus' teachings.

The Rev. John Temple Bristow
Country Homes Christian

How shall we love God and love our neighbors in a world of violence, religious, ethnic and cultural? Family systems theory suggests that leaders can aid a system by being well-defined, meaning that we take a stand in the middle of an anxious system and thereby aid it in finding its own stability and calm. In discerning about violence, consider how it affects you, your family, your church and your community. We need to examine our own hearts for the violence that may be there.

It won't be easy, because those who gain from violence manipulate gospel messages, even those about the one who is announced as the Prince of Peace.

If our compromising entanglement with empire is over and gone, shall we be open to the witness of the earliest church, a non-violent community for the first 300 years? It's a hard question, but the world may depend on us to take a stand of non-violence in order to stabilize itself.

The Rev. Martin Wells, bishop
Eastern Washington Idaho Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

As the daughter of a Methodist minister, I learned what I could about Christian faith, but still argued with my parents about why we had to have a faith. In Chicago, my brothers and I met people of many different beliefs—Baha'i, Shinto, Hindu, Muslim and Jewish faiths—and visited many churches—Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopal, Mennonite and others.

I continued my faith journey in college, learning about Roman Catholic, Russian, Greek and Armenian Orthodox churches. I attended an African Methodist Episcopal Zion church with a friend whose father was an African missionary to America.

As an adult, I learned that the silent service of the Friends (Quaker) church was not so quiet and the UCC church embraced service and joy as essential. I discovered my birth mother's Congregational roots and my father's Episcopalian upbringing.

By church-hopping, I learned faith strengthens us. Our world view and ability

to thrive depends on our beliefs. A more important message came through, though. Our choice to believe must be free. Our spiritual self must thrive. If a religion harms people, controls their thoughts and weakens them, it limits the God-given human spirit.

May we explore our faith and deepen our commitment to service that we may overcome cynicism, fear and confusion by welcoming the joy and healing power of God's promise to all people.

Mary Caton Armantrout
of North Bonneville - Newport
United Church of Christ Advent Book

Truly we are blessed, but does that mean that I am more important to God or to this world than someone in Sudan or Baghdad? Does God love me more? I don't think so. It is easy to forget about the rest of the world—even the rest of Yakima—and be self-centered. My recent thinking has led me to reflect that God loves all people equally. Some of us happen to be born in an affluent society while others of us happen to be born in a struggling country, yet God loves us all the same.

Should this put some guilt trip on me? Maybe, but at least I need to realize that I am part of a global community, a community whom God loves.

The Rev. David Helseth
Englewood Christian – Yakima

My mother, wonderful as she was, boiled spinach to a green goo and never added vinegar, crumbled bacon, boiled egg or salt. When I refused to swallow this unsavory sludge, my parents reminded me "the poor starving children in China would be thankful to have such a meal." Had there been a way to ship my dinner there, I would have done so. The premise seemed to be that I should be grateful my misery was not as great as someone else's. That brand of gratitude smacks of "feeling lucky," rather than genuine thankfulness.

When Jesus told of the man robbed and beaten on the road to Jericho, a Priest,

a Levite and a Samaritan saw the man's condition. One thing that separated their behavior was gratitude. The priest and Levite avoided the situation, glad they were not "like that miserable bloke," a lucky me type of thankfulness with no compassion or intent to remedy the situation.

I often hear: "Thanks be to God I was born in America, not Darfur or a ghetto." True gratitude reaches out in compassion, seeks to right the wrong, not just celebrate the good fortune. The Samaritan was glad he was not the victim, but reached out to one who was—more than "feeling lucky."

My parents could have taught me better about gratitude had they had me start a piggy bank for the starving Chinese.

The Rev. Wilbur Rees
Shalom United Church of Christ
Richland

How is God working with and through you? Do you recognize that you're doing ministry when you help with a fund raiser or make a donation? Whether you're moving furniture, writing a check, making music, marking prices for a rummage sale or making pralines for a mission meal, you're doing mission and ministry. Are you aware of God's presence with you?

The Rev. Linda Crowe
Veradale United Church of Christ

Everything we—individually and collectively—do, say, give generously to, take for granted, keep silent about, react negatively to, pray on, celebrate, belittle, offer up, express gratitude for, pay attention to, resist, take responsibility for, share in, commit to, neglect or explore more deeply within ourselves has impact on the whole. We are connected, you and I, for better or for worse. Your daily intentions and actions impact my life, as mine do yours. It is an awesome responsibility of accountability and care we have been given by the Great Weaver of the Web of Life.

The Rev. Tammy Bell
First Congregational United Church
of Christ – Colville

Week of Prayer calls for breaking silence

Christian communities in South Africa who prepared the resources for the 2007 Week of prayer for Christian Unity call for churches to "Break the Silence" by expressing their unity in response to human suffering.

Jointly prepared since 1968 by Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Roman Catholic Church, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is usually celebrated around Jan. 18 to 25 or, in the Southern hemisphere often near Pentecost.

This year's Week of Prayer has its origins in the experience of Christian communities in the South African region of Umlazi,

near Durban, a region affected by unemployment, poverty, and HIV and AIDS with about half of the residents infected with the virus.

The theme challenges cultural norms wherever matters relating to sexuality are "not to be spoken about" or are taboo, because reluctance to break the silence is costing lives. For churches in Umlazi, the "visible unity of Christians" is more than a theological concept. Churches become agents of healing when they are healed as the one body of Christ.

Suffering from HIV, AIDS and other dehumanizing forces threatens to overwhelm churches, unless churches speak with one

voice and reach out as one body with compassion, say planners.

Week of Prayer resources include an introduction to the theme; a suggested ecumenical worship service which churches can adapt for their own liturgical, social and cultural contexts; biblical reflections and prayers for the "eight days," and additional prayers from the ecumenical situation in the country that prepared the material—in this case, South Africa.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2007 resources are available on the WCC website at: <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/wop-index.html>.

Middle East peace is high on agenda for churches

By Juan Michel – WCC media

With the urgency of peace in Israel and Palestine at the top of the agenda, a World Council of Churches (WCC) meeting began setting up an international forum to galvanize world-wide church advocacy for the Middle East.

A Palestine/Israel Ecumenical Forum, endorsed by the WCC Central Committee in September,

will be part of a multi-year peace program of member churches.

Seeing the forum as a way to face challenges, overcome fear and help end the conflict, 16 people from 13 countries debated plans that include ensuring a Christian presence in the region.

While participants agreed on the urgency of ending 40 years of conflict, some insisted that

short-term goal must be linked to long-term reconciliation, confronting divisive theologies and other peace building.

Some expressed concern that long-term efforts might result in meetings to soothe consciences: "Don't forget the urgency," one said. "People are dying. Hatred is increasing."

On the forum's purpose, one participant said church-related advocacy "had reached a 'glass ceiling' with his government." To go further, "we need to be part of an international critical mass."

Another pointed out that with all parties to the conflict implicated in religious dynamics, religion has to be part of the solution.

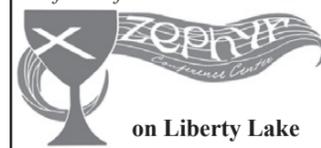
Planners include people from Middle Eastern and other WCC member churches with expertise in advocacy, theology, religion, political analysis and conflict transformation, plus a Roman Catholic scholar, a church youth leader and a veteran of an ecumenical forum for Sudan.

Calendar of Events

- Jan 7** • Spokane CROP Hunger Walk Planning Committee, Interfaith Hospitality Network, 2515 E. Sprague, 1:30 p.m.
- Jan 8** • United Nations Association-Spokane Annual Meeting and Luncheon, Gonzaga University COG, Washington-California Room, noon - RSVP 534-5253
- Jan 10, 11** • "What Should We Do With All Our Trash?" East Central Community Center, 500 S. Stone (10th), Center Place at Mirabeau Point, 2426 N. Discovery, Spokane Valley (11th) 6 to 10 p.m. each day - call 625-6800.
- Jan 12** • AHANA Business and Networking Monthly Luncheon, 1003 E. Trent, Riverview Thai Restaurant, noon - 1:30 p.m. - RSVP 838-1881
- Jan 14** • Martin Luther King Jr. Day commemoration service, "Rekindle the Light," Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 806 W. Indiana, 4 p.m. - call 455-8722
- Jan 15** • Martin Luther King Jr Day March and Rally, INB Performing Arts Center to Riverpark Square, 10 a.m., Resource Fair to 3 p.m. - call 455-8722
- Jan. 16, 23** • Muslim World View, a two-part lecture by Nabeel Jabbour, a Christian Palestinian working for Campus Crusade, Seeley Mudd Chapel at Whitworth College, 7 p.m. - call 777-4345
- Jan 17** • "Near Nature, Near Perfect: Spokane's Passion for the Possible," Raymond Reyes, Spokane City Forum, First Presbyterian, 318 S. Cedar, 11:45 a.m. - RSVP 777-1555
- Jan 18-25** • Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/wop-index.html>
- Jan 20- May 20** • "Sudan: The Land and the People," Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. First - call 363-5330
- Jan 27** • Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Ft. Wright Dr., 9 a.m.-3 p.m. - call 328-1410 or 359-4273
- Jan 31** • Fig Tree Distribution, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m.
- Feb 1** • Fig Tree Board, Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 1 p.m.
- Tues** • Need to Know, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 314 S. Spruce - call 848-4409
- Tues-Sat** • Habitat-Spokane work days - call 534-2552
- Fridays** • Colville Peace Vigil - call 675-4554
- 1st Sat** • Ministers' Fellowship Union - call 624-0522
- 2nd, 4th Weds** • Pax Christi, St. Joseph's Catholic, 1503 W. Dean, noon
- 3rd Mons** • NAACP - call 467-9793



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In memory of and gratitude for someone who made a difference:
John Olson, who helped Spokane's faiths bend its history, died Dec. 3

The Rev. John Olson, who connected, implemented and initiated many programs now in place in the region during his 22 years as executive director of the Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries, died on Dec. 3 at LaConner, Wash., where he and his wife, Marie, moved after he retired in 1998.

When he began in 1977, the Spokane Christian Coalition, the council's name then, did the legislative conference, Thanksgiving service, Easter sunrise service and a directory of churches and agencies, which he continued.

John acted as an at-large minister to the community, organizing programs through the coalition.

For a while, he worked half time with the coalition and half-time with the Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council, which he helped start. Other times, he worked half time as pastor at St. Mark's Lutheran, interim at Millwood Presbyterian Church, interim at Westview United Church of Christ and then 11 years as pastor at Grace Lutheran Church.

He was involved with the Interstate Task Force for Human Relations, which brought together representatives of Jewish, African-American and Hispanic organizations, law enforcement and concerned citizens. They worked in collaboration with the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations to challenge the Aryan Nations, formerly in Hayden, Idaho.

The Interstate Task Force sponsored educational forums on racism and helped create the Spokane

Human Rights Commission.

John also helped start and lead Camp PEACE (People Everywhere Are Created Equal), anti-bigotry training for teams of youth from area high schools. The Interfaith Council continues this program.

Through Nightwalk Ministry, John interacted with people in downtown Spokane at night.

As human services for low-income people were cut in the 1980s, John helped organize churches and agencies to form Love Church Services to pool churches' emergency funds.

He was among those who helped form Friend to Friend for visiting and befriending lonely people in long-term care facilities, the Calling and Caring program for training teams of church people to visit church drop-outs, and Childwatch tours to inform church leaders of programs dealing with child abuse.

Through the Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries, John helped form the Greater Spokane Coalition Against Poverty (GSCAP) to address economic justice by drawing together community and business leaders to meet with low-income people to share stories that developed into programs of mutual awareness and benefit. John became part-time staff for GSCAP and helped organize the Spokane Low-Income Housing

Consortium and two "Roof Over My Head" conferences.

John also supported the early efforts to start The Fig Tree, to cover religion news, which was then being neglected by mass media. He was clear that it was to have that independent function—not be the public relations arm for the ecumenical council.

"The council was originally designed to be a behind-the-scenes facilitator, not an out-front prophetic ministry," said John, who often drew from an ecumenical understanding expressed by British Bishop Leslie Newbiggin, who spoke of the local church "being truly united when it becomes for its place what Christ is for the world."

John believed the "place" included a community's economic, cultural, political, social, educational and religious life.

He also believed that if "the church sees the world as God sees it," the church will help revitalize

communities and neighborhoods, and will have an influence to reduce poverty.

Cards may be sent to his wife, Marie Olson, 612 Wanapum, LaConner, WA 98257.

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Faith-Environment Network moves to Salem Lutheran

The Faith and Environment Network, which has become independent of the Interfaith Council, will have an office at Salem Lutheran Church at 1428 W. Broadway.

The program's advisory board seeks a volunteer with flexible, part-time hours to work with a student intern from Gonzaga University and with the board to connect people of faith and congregations with conservation advocates and opportunities to further environmental stewardship.

The main responsibility is to help coordinate outreach to congregations, said Derrick Knowles of Conservation Northwest and a member of the advisory board.

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