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# Genocide toll now 1,100

By Deidre Jacobson

Every morning, Agwa Taka wakes up in Spokane asking, "What is one thing can I do for my people, the Anuak, today?"

Of the 150,000 Anuak, 1,100 have been killed during and since a December 2003 massacre in western Ethiopia. Many are in refugee camps over the border in Sudan.

One thing Agwa did was help form the Anuak Justice Council (AJC) in November 2004 in Spokane. Another thing he did was join an AJC team visiting a refugee camp in Southern Sudan in February.

Overwhelmed by the plight of the people there, he apologized to them for not coming sooner.

Agwa joined photojournalist Rachel Havercroft; Lawrence Hudson, pastor of First Covenant Church; Bill Nixon, videography teacher at the University of Saskatchewan, and Obang Metho, who lives in Saskatchewan and heads international advocacy for the AJC, for what Lawrence described as "a dangerous trip to a war-torn county."

The Anuak people are a persecuted ethnic minority residing on long-held territory in Ethiopia. In the 1990s, about 150 were killed in a massacre at Gambella in western Ethiopia near the Sudanese border.

Continued on page 4



Anuak refugees spend much of their time waiting in lines. Photo by Rachel Havercroft

## Donations make coverage possible

Whether through giving to support The Fig Tree as part of the June 3 Faith in Action Dialogue with South African Peter Storey or through giving in response to an appeal letter, individual donations and donations from local, regional and national church bodies make publication in print and on the web possible.

Many will participate in breakfast, lunch or dinner gatherings to see perspectives of U.S. life, media, human rights and church-state relations "Through South African Eyes." Just as The Fig Tree brings this speaker, so The Fig Tree in its newspaper, website and cable TV show brings readers, visitors and viewers perspectives often overlooked in the daily barrage of information.

The Fig Tree presents stories in a context that invites reflection over snap judgments and simplistic thinking.

The Fig Tree seeks to build awareness, relationships, understanding, connections, networks, cooperation and action, so that words on paper, air waves and the internet become inspiration for involvement—stories of action leading to more action to create better communities.

For information on opportunities to support and participate in this venture, see pages 2 and 12.

For Human Rights Education Institute director

## Teachers' insights overcame bullying

Despite scars from fighting, taunts and hammer blows in his school years in East London, England, Rhys Johnson decided at age 17 to hone the skills of dialogue and debate by entering education, politics and law.

After 10 years of human rights work around the world, the story of what Coeur d'Alene, Kootenai County and the Inland Northwest did to promote human rights drew his interest. Their next steps fit his goals.

As the executive director of the Human Rights Education Institute with an office at 505 Front St. in Coeur d'Alene, Rhys visits schools and community groups to meet people and stir ideas for teaching children to become responsible citizens.

He believes the heart of strengthening human rights is to educate people to participate in democratic society—in schools and in life experiences.

Growing up a mixed-race child of an Indian mother and English

father, he lived in poverty in East London ghetto project housing.

"Poverty led to racism and violence," said Rhys, but "some incredible teachers helped give me a sense of myself, even though I didn't fit in. My brothers and I were not accepted in either of my parents' communities."

Despite bullying and being bullied, he heard those teachers' message of the importance of knowledge and learning.

At 16, two days before an exam, he was sitting outside studying. When he asked his "racist neighbors" to turn down their music, they came out of their home with fists flying and hit him on the head six times with a hammer.

"It was amazing. I'm glad I didn't die—for my sake, my family's sake and their sake. They would have spent their lives in prison," said Rhys.

A teacher advised him: "Don't put yourself in a dangerous situation. If you have a problem, turn to someone more powerful."

Rhys has turned his anger from that situation into a passion to fight for human rights, to help the underdog and challenge the rich and powerful through face-to-face conversations.

"The rich need to know what it's like to be poor, and whites need to know what it's like to be black," he said. "What better place to do that than in schools and organizations of Idaho and Eastern Washington!" he said.

He knows what it's like for school children to feel lost, needing to know about more than the Revolutionary War, Civil War or World Wars.

"They need to know how to deal with abuse and violence, so no one else will be brutalized," he said.

After high school, Rhys studied law, earning degrees in 1994 from the University of Westminster in the United Kingdom and in 1995 from University College in London. In addition, he studied international law, human rights,

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## 'God's surprises' bring bishop responsibilities

By Mary Stamp

God's surprises, daily prayer and personal relationships sustain Bishop William Skylstad for ministry in troubling, often divisive times.

After deciding in the seventh grade to become a priest, he left his home in the Methow Valley and spent 12 years in high school, college and seminary studies at the Josephinum Pontifical College in Ohio.

As bishop of the Diocese of Spokane for 15 years, he travels from Omak to Colville to Pullman to Walla Walla, visiting parishes. Previously, he was Bishop of the Yakima Diocese for 13 years.

This year, he became president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), presiding at national meetings and traveling throughout the United States as spokesperson for the bishops' statements. As president and previously as vice president, he has related with the Vatican, meeting seven times in the last three years with the late Pope John Paul II and several times with the new Pope Benedict XVI.

Such experiences are among God's surprises in his life, surprises that carry responsibilities to address the issues of the church, society and world.

Bishop Skylstad, who sees Benedict XVI as "a bright theologian with humility and a good sense of humor," anticipates a continuation of Vatican II's and John Paul II's support of ecumenical relationships, ties with Jewish and Muslim communities, and commitment to peacemaking.

Continued on page 11

**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*

**Churches helped write UN human rights script**

London (ENI). As the world celebrates the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, a new book retrieves the story of how churches helped create the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a key achievement from the wreckage of the conflict. Author John Nurser was part of the team mobilized through the then newly born World Council of Churches and its Churches' Commission on International Affairs.

**Move South 'not matched by power shift'**

Geneva (ENI). Churches are growing fastest in the Southern Hemisphere but power remains in the hands of the North, a global gathering of leaders from most Christian traditions has said after an eight-day meeting near Athens of the World Council of Churches' Conference on World Mission and Evangelism.

**Groups nervous about food aid to Zimbabwe**

Canterbury, England (ENI). Christian emergency response groups in Britain are concerned that food supplies sent to Zimbabweans will be used for supporters of President Robert Mugabe's ruling party rather than for more than 5 million people who may face starvation later this year.

**Former child soldier raps gospel chart toppers**

Nairobi (ENI). Few former child soldiers are turning machine gun sounds into gospel music tunes. Emmanuel Jal, a former South Sudanese child soldier is rocking music charts in Nairobi and beyond, with his debut gospel music album "Gua." "Gua," in his native Nuer language, means peace, good or power. In a staccato rapping in Arabic, English, Kiswahili and Nuer, the singer thanks God and tells of his traumatic experience as a child soldier.

**Global migration challenges faiths**

Athens (ENI). An increasingly globalized world marked by religious diversity and tensions among faiths means Christians need to reconsider how they relate to other believers. "We are living today in a situation of global migration, cutting people from their religious roots," said Christine Lienemann, professor at Switzerland's Basel university, to the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism meeting near Athens.

**Catholics seek to fix immigration system**

New York (ENI). U.S. Roman Catholic bishops and Catholic humanitarian and advocacy groups initiated a national campaign to reform immigration laws, "Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope—Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform." It aims at both legal reform and tempering what church officials called an increasingly hostile attitude toward immigrants.

**China's Protestants show faith as beneficial**

Athens (ENI). The mission of China's 16 million Protestant Christians is "to show God's love and to benefit all people" in a society that once saw their faith estranged from the national identity, said the Rev. Cao Shengjie, general secretary of the China Christian Council at a world mission conference.

**Religions launch interfaith investment group**

London (ENI). Representatives of seven world religions and various nonprofit foundations have met to promote interfaith strategies for ethical investment. The International Interfaith Investment Group, known as 3IG, includes Buddhist, Christian, Daoist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faiths.

**Interfaith dialogue needed to rebuild Asia**

Baguio City, Philippines (ENI). Interfaith dialogue is needed to remedy harm inflicted over centuries to traditional knowledge systems in Asia, say delegates at a United Nations' meeting on biological diversity, in the Philippines. "Foreign religions damaged traditional knowledge systems. Interfaith dialogue should be promoted to encourage mutual respect," delegates from Asia said after the meeting in Baguio City, northern Philippines.

**REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS**

**Scout directs Lent offerings to CROP Walk**

A 12-year-old Boy Scout contributed nearly one-third of the \$2,050 proceeds 34 walkers raised in the Prosser-Grandview CROP Walk on March 19.

Scout Troop 641 urged the communities to participate in the walk as a way to raise funds to help with recovery from the Dec. 26 earthquake and tsunami, said the Rev. Gary Wolfer, pastor of the United Methodist Church in Prosser.

Early in Lent, Randon Fairchild of Emmaus Lutheran Church in Grandview began asking people at his church to sponsor him. Several suggested he go to the church council.

The council decided that they would sponsor him in the CROP Walk, using offerings collected for weekly Lenten services. In that way, he raised \$603.

Linda Carter of the Northwest CROP Walk office reported on preliminary proceeds from other spring walks and on walks scheduled for the fall.



About 240 people joined in the Spokane CROP Walk.

• About 240 walkers raised more than \$26,000 in the April 25 Spokane CROP Walk.

• On April 23 in Sunnyside, 37 walkers raised \$4,400, up from \$1,040 last year.

• Milton Freewater drew 67

walkers on May 22.

Fall CROP Walks include Okanogan County, Pullman-Moscow, Yakima, Mid-Columbia/Tri-Cities and Wenatchee.

For information, call 888-297-2767.

**Unity in Community becomes AHANA outreach**

Planning for "Unity in the Community" has been transferred from Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church to the African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American Business and Professional Association—AHANA.

The Rev. Lonnie Mitchell, who helped found both Unity in the Community and AHANA, said that the idea for Unity in the Community arose in a church planning session in 1985.

"We sensed there was fragmentation in the Spokane community,

that there was more ethnic diversity than people knew, but the people weren't coming together," he said.

Aware that racial and cultural barriers hinder economic development, Bethel AME Church decided to find a way to celebrate diverse races and cultures, so they started Unity in the Community at Liberty Park.

Attendance has grown from 500 to 2,500. The event includes multicultural music, food, children's activities and other programs.

Businesses, government, churches, schools and community organizations that support the event will have display booths and activities.

The 2005 Unity in the Community will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 6, at Liberty Park.

It will include a Job and Health Fair and an Art Walk.

Organizers are recruiting volunteers, display vendors, program sponsors and participants.

For information, call 838-1881.

**Whitworth Institute of Ministry is July 11-15**

The 2005 Whitworth Institute of Ministry July 11 to 15 will be its 30th year.

Under the theme, "My Peace I Give to You: Embracing the Ministry of Shalom," speakers will explore shalom theology for churches as they engage in the world, reflecting on wholeness, goodness, restoration, restitution, reconciliation, justice, renewal, healing, salvation and righteousness.

Worship and workshop leaders include John Perkins, president of John Perkins Foundation in Jackson, Miss.; Jin Kim, of the Church of All Nations in

Minneapolis; John Huffman of St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Newport Beach, Calif.; Ray Bakke, professor of urban/global leadership at Bakke Graduate University of Ministry; Amy Sherman of the Sagamore Institute for Public Policy in

Charlottesville, Va.; William Robinson, president of Whitworth, and Terry McGonigal, dean of the Whitworth Chapel.

The event is for nurturing ordained and lay leaders and their families.

For information, call 777-4345.

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**Faith in Action Dialogue 2005**



**Through South African Eyes**  
featuring  
**Peter Storey**



- retired bishop in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa
- teaching at Duke University Divinity School—spring 2005
- was chaplain to Nelson Mandela at Robben Island Prison

**Friday, June 3**

**'Where in the World Is the Media?'**  
*Deepening our Roots Benefit Breakfast*  
7:30 a.m. - Central United Methodist Church - 518 W. Third - Catered by Christ Kitchen - RSVP

**'Without Truth, No Healing; Without Forgiveness, No Future'**  
*The Story of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*  
Noon - Highland Park United Methodist Church, 611 S. Garfield, Spokane  
Catered by women of Highland Park UMC - RSVP - \$12

**'From the Fringe of an Empire: Issues of Church and State'**  
6 p.m. - Dinner at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 24th and Grand  
Catered by Christ Kitchen - RSVP - \$18

**TALKS ONLY - \$10/EVENT**  
**Call 535-1813**

## Pentecost worship opens six churches to what the Spirit has next for them

African- and European-American music, prayer and preaching styles blended in a six-church Pentecost service, celebrating a year of interaction in an eight-month urban ministry study program offered by the Weyerhaeuser Center for Faith and Learning at Whitworth College.

"God understands. We don't," preached the Rev. Ezra Kinlow of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ to those gathered on May 14 at Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ.

The 24 study participants brought along their choirs and other members to involve them more in the spirit of what they had experienced.

Other participating congregations are Bethel African Methodist Episcopal, Calvary Baptist, Central Lutheran and First Presbyterian churches.

"We six congregations dared to spend some time together. We did not know where we were going, and now the official program has

ended, we do not know where we are going, but we are committed to continue our relationship and mutual support," Ezra said, voicing the sentiments of other participants.

"God only knows where we will end up as we continue in fellowship," he continued, likening their experience to that of the disciples on Pentecost who suddenly were speaking different languages so people could understand them. "We speak Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, Pentecostal and United Church of Christ 'languages.'"

"Pentecost changed the way people related and worshiped," he said. "The Holy Spirit has filled us so we try to understand our brothers and sisters."

The Rev. Andy CastroLang of Westminster UCC observed: "We sing, pray and worship in different ways and in different houses, but we have one Lord."

The Rev. Kevin Finch of First Presbyterian expects heaven to



Kevin Finch, Tim Dolan, Andy CastroLang, Tara Barber and Pat Maddox celebrate Pentecost.

look "more like today than like any one of our churches." He prayed for God to create something from the experience beyond what participants might imagine.

Facilitators Tim Dolan and Peter Dual of Whitworth said their approach encouraged informal connections so participants would form relationships that would lead

to ongoing interaction, support nurture, reflection and common action in addressing issues of urban ministry in Spokane.

For information, call 777-4676.

## Veradale church presents a one-man comedy performance on depression

Veradale United Church of Christ will present performances of the comedy, "Side by Side: A Journey with Depression," at 7:30 p.m., June 23 and 24.

Brian Wetzel, who is touring with his one-man show, brings together in this performance 15 years of experience as a comedian, speaker and lecturer, and 20 years of experience with depression. In 1995, he did another 10-state stand-up comedy tour.

A member of Community United Church of Christ in Sebastopol, Calif., he leads camps, conferences and retreats for youth and adults, and lectures on public safety, personal responsibility, social justice and personal growth.

Brian's personal struggle with depression and suicidal thoughts is the basis for the play that "offers healing through comedy," said the Rev. Linda Crowe, pastor at the Veradale church.

The Rev. Lizann Bassham, a United Church of Christ (UCC) pastor and daughter of the Rev. Sandy Sparks of Zion Philadelphia UCC in Ritzville, directs a small performing arts company in Sonoma County, Calif., through which she produces this show and others.

Lizann is author and director of the play, "Stories Seldom Told," a feminist retelling of biblical stories that toured Northern California in 2001. She has taught graduate courses on religion and the arts, adolescent spirituality, and spirituality and sexuality. She has a master's of divinity degree from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif.

Brian and Lizann are touring Washington and Oregon, with plans for a national tour.

Brian's years of experience with clinical depression, which

once nearly took his life, now give him meaning, as he uses comedy to bring light to the darkness of depression. He takes an audience on a journey of laughter, through

painful truth toward hope.

Veradale UCC is offering the comedy aware that clergy and laity need to understand more about chronic, disabling mental

illnesses of people in their midst, to help break down their isolation, Linda said.

For information, call 926-7173 or 707-829-1872.

# 'Effective Preaching in a Postmodern World' Preaching Conference

## July 7-9, 2005

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In our increasingly post-modern society, a myriad of voices competes for the hearts, minds, and allegiance of men and women. Seldom before has the need been greater in our culture to hear the truth of the Gospel preached with power, conviction, and authority. Please join us as we gather on the Whitworth campus to explore the dynamics of good preaching, examine how to make our preaching more passionate and relevant, and encourage one another to more faithful proclamation in the 21st Century.

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# Anuak Justice Council plans to provide books and wells

*Continued from page 1*

On Dec. 13, 2003, 425 people, mostly educated men, were killed in a massacre. Despite efforts of individuals around the world and the involvement of international human rights organizations, Genocide Watch and Human Rights Watch, the killings have continued, said Lawrence.

"While it is genocide at it's worst," he said, "we have caught it early, so we can do something. We're involved here in Spokane because we are one of the few communities in the United States with Anuak residents."

John Frankhauser of First Presbyterian Church—which sponsored Agwa as a refugee 15 years ago—Agwa, Lawrence and others in Spokane were instrumental in bringing Anuak and their friends from around the world to Spokane to form the Anuak Justice Council.

The AJC rallies international support to put pressure on the Ethiopian government to end the persecution and bring the perpetrators to justice.

More than 10,000 Anuak are now in refugee camps in Kenya and Southern Sudan.

The refugees in Sudan have formed the Alari camp. It is not recognized by the United Nations because it is close to a Sudanese Anuak village and is not far enough from the Ethiopian border.

The people there receive little international assistance, Lawrence said.

The goal of the mission team was to bring hope to the refugees, by letting them know that the world is aware of their plight and by offering some concrete aid, he explained.

"We arrived to find the situation grave," he described. "Refugees in the camp use World Food Program bags or anything they can find to make their shelters."

"Contaminated water is a serious problem. Many illnesses the refugees endure are related to the water. They suffer from parasites, diarrhea and intestinal problems. One well serves 10 to 15 thousand people," he said.

Lawrence saw that the refugees spend much of their time waiting. With only one well, people come and wait hours for their turn to draw water.

The group concluded that a new well would provide clean water, end suffering from water-borne diseases and allow people to grow crops.

"Fixing one problem such as that can fix other problems. Restoring the people to their land, however, will require a change of heart by the Ethiopian government," he said. "If you pull a blade of grass out of the ground there, everything comes with it."



Agwa Taka meets the Anuak king.

It's political, economic, religious, geographic, tribal and racial."

The local health center is overwhelmed. It serves more than 2,000 patients a month. Again, the refugees must wait, standing or sitting in long lines to be seen and treated.

The AJC team learned about the daily lives of the Anuak. Their meals are simple—beans, rice and meat. Children use clamshells for spoons.

Rachel learned that in Africa, people find out what the people's needs are by sitting a while under a tree and talking with them about "everything under the sun" before they discuss their needs.

She was impressed with the

strength of the women she met, reporting, "Women marry young, work hard from early morning to late at night just to feed the family. They often carry loads of up to 80 pounds on their heads. They are strong and tenacious."

Lawrence felt the isolation of the region.

"This is an area of the world where people travel by walking or flying. The good road has eye-level grass, and you can't see the tracks. There is no consulate or embassy near. We were told to go to an air strip if trouble occurred," he said.

Worship at the refugee camp was lively and crowded. The Anuak give generously to the

church in spite of their poverty. One woman put a handful of corn into the offering gourd.

While there, the team had an audience with the Anuak king. He told then that he yearns for peace, opportunity and service in the government. He dreams of a time of restoration, when the Anuak will be treated as equals.

The team used part of the money they had collected in Spokane to help build a tuberculosis treatment clinic and a storage building for grain.

One day, Obang invited Lawrence to meet someone under a tree.

The person was the wife of the governor of Gambella, who heard

that Americans had come and decided to walk to the camp in the heat with her five children.

Her husband is in Norway. He had stood up against the government, when everyone was encouraged to say that "nothing happened" in Gambella in December.

The governor was unwilling to say that at a meeting. On a break, he called a contact in Norway, who told him to leave immediately, Lawrence said.

If the governor had gone back to the meeting, he would have been killed. He had to leave without his wife and children.

The team offered her some of the funds they brought, so she and the children could fly to Nairobi and complete paperwork to join her husband in Norway.

Since returning to Spokane, the group has chosen two projects to support.

1) They have collected funds and purchased schoolbooks for children in four schools in the region. The schools have teachers but no books.

2) They will raise \$20,000 of the estimated \$60,000 needed to provide new wells in Algi. The remaining amount will come from the United Nations High Council for Refugees and other groups.

The council continues to raise funds for Obang's efforts to build international support to pressure the Ethiopian government to stop the persecution and genocide.

Members of the mission team are available to speak and show slides to congregations and organizations interested in learning more about the Anuak.

For information, call 747-2818.



Rachel Havercroft takes photos of Anuak children in a refugee camp. Photos with this article were taken by Rachel.

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# Human rights educator empowers people for democratic action

*Continued from page 1*  
and humanitarian, environmental and economic law.

He worked eight years in London with programs advocating for homeless families, mentally disabled criminals, immigrants and refugees.

While visiting a friend in Gaza in 1993, he found a job promoting human rights and then worked with the United Nations Human Rights Capacity Building program. From 1997 to 2002, he was assistant director of a Palestinian human rights non-governmental organization in Jerusalem.

Before coming to lead the Human Rights Education Institute in November 2004, he worked with the Judicial System Monitoring Program in East Timor and in various short-term human rights and justice advocacy programs in Australia, New Zealand, Cambodia, Bosnia, Switzerland, France and South Africa.

**Rhys decided the best place** to live in order to change U.S. policies he saw having impact on lives of people in those countries was the United States.

"I wanted to be where democratic decisions are made, to help Americans who are divided understand dynamics of their conflicts and seek new ways to move into democracy," he said.

So he came to Coeur d'Alene to walk with people and educate them to live effectively in a democratic society.

He is impressed that the region used the tools of democracy to challenge and close a neo-Nazi group and to educate the community to value diversity.

**Despite the area's homogeneity**, because some fled multi-cultural California, Rhys is amazed that the neo-Nazis were unable to infiltrate the area and gain power over it.

"The community came together to deal with the threat of a fringe group," he said. "Even the area's homogeneity was not sufficient for the Nazis to succeed when the people in the region joined forces to work against that system of ideas."

"Community efforts are the best way to promote human rights, acceptance, justice, community, freedom, democracy and prosperity."

"Education does not begin at five and end at 25. Great teachers learn all their lives," Rhys said. "They challenge and are challenged, so democracy is about more than voting for representatives and handing over power to them."

"It needs a vibrant community to decide the content of education, the care at hospitals and



Rhys Johnson

provisions for social welfare. Democracy does not end with being partisan," he said. "We need teachers to teach children so they will be able to eradicate poverty when they grow up, rather than abusing others because they have experienced physical, emotional and verbal abuse."

**Human rights issues** are about more than political arrests or torture of prisoners, Rhys pointed out.

Having spent years working against the negative side of human rights, he relishes the chance to work on the positive side, to promote human rights this region's communities exemplify.

For him, water rights are human rights, so decisions about the aquifer and access to water are human rights issues.

"Water is fundamental to life, health and a healthy environment. If water were oil, we would protect it with armed guards. Threats to health and drinking water happen around the world. For example, Bhopal, India, let a chemical plant be built "with shoddy labor rights and safety standards, polluting the water and lands, killing and injuring hundreds of thousands of people," he said.

Rhys wonders why three County Commissioners were allowed to let Burlington Northern Railway build a refueling depot over the only source of water for the region's 500,000 people, when it could poison the water forever.

"We should not risk ruining the natural wealth that assures our health," he said.

**Simple, practical lessons** can be effective ways to teach in classrooms and in life, Rhys believes.

In this society with too many consumption choices diverting people from political issues, he suggests an object lesson to teach that a small amount of money here is a large amount elsewhere.

A teacher asks children bring \$1, what some people live on for a day. Then they learn about world issues and choose a cause to receive their dollars.

"Youth need to become engaged in the world and in service in their community," he said.

Recognizing that "together our dollars can make a difference," the Lake City Human Rights Club is using that idea and collecting dollars on June 1, World Dollar Day, to give to Heifer Project International, St. Vincent de Paul, Doctors without Borders and a teen community center. Rhys has been working with youth for six months. Their website is [worlddollar.com](http://worlddollar.com).

**To foster democracy**, Rhys seeks to spark "lively, engaging

dialogue and free thinking" to remind leaders that power lies with the people.

"Voting for someone does not mean we endorse or should accept all they do," he said. "We all have something to say. When we can say it, we move democracy forward."

**In Gaza, he saw that justice** issues there had a global sense, connected to justice issues in London and here. There, he encouraged Israelis to respect Palestinian human rights and need for a secure place to live, as much as their own need for a secure place.

"To achieve peace both sides need to respect each other's human rights," he said, including religious differences.

"Eight years in a war zone became part of my spiritual journey. My apartment in Jerusalem overlooked the Western Wall. I saw a sea of humanity and spirituality from my window and on the streets, passing pilgrims coming around the world," he said.

**That spiritual energy** gave him to a new sense of spirituality, unlike abuse he experienced attending a mosque in London. His mother was Muslim, so his father converted, but essentially was Christian, he said.

While he felt disjointed as a Muslim in a Christian world, he finds the today's multi-cultural and multi-religious reality erases that alienation, enriching everyone.

Rhys believes in the connection of people who share belief

in God, even though that belief may be manifested in different people in different ways.

**So he promotes respect** of all religions: "It's not about our differences, but about our similarities," especially given that "for too many people, *capital* is religion, because it correlates with power."

He sees that the separation of church and state protects religion from government interference, from infringing on freedom of religion.

"Because respect of human rights can build better communities, we need to shift from money driving politics under the cloak of religion that secures narrow interests for narrow groups."

"Human rights reflect the human desire to be free to make choices," he said.

"Because my justice is connected to everyone else's justice, if we can make changes here, we can make changes around the world. Leaders in a democracy need to consult with the people," Rhys pointed out.

**The Human Rights Education Institute** seeks to empower people to work together and challenge present and future threats to human rights, including health, safety, freedoms and voice.

"A well-informed society keeps democracy in the hands of the people," Rhys affirmed.

For information, call (208) 292-2359 or email [rhysjohnson@hotmail.com](mailto:rhysjohnson@hotmail.com).

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## Gardens create community and put food on poor families' tables

By Elise Peterson

Running through her grandmother's tomato patch as a four-year-old, Pat Munts fell in love with gardening.

The experience instilled a life-long desire to be outdoors.

"I love dirt," she said.

"When I pull a weed and throw it in the garbage, it stays there. It doesn't argue with me or send me bills. It might send out a few cousins, but I can pull those later," she added.

Pat is active in the Spokane gardening community, working four days a week at South Hill's Tower Perennial Gardens, writing a monthly column for the Spokesman Review's Home and Garden section, and heading Plant-a-Row for the Hungry, the holistic wing of the Garden Writers' Association.

Second Harvest recently appointed her director of Spokane Community Gardens, her newest undertaking.

"Community gardening is poised to take off here," Pat said. "Many people in the urban areas recognize that having a plot to garden would be helpful."

Spokane Community Gardens began in the 1990s under the leadership of Lori Steiner. Over the next decade, volunteers planted four-by-eight-foot raised vegetable beds in backyards of low-income families.

In addition to providing food, community gardens give struggling families a sense of ownership and pride in maintaining self-sustenance, Pat said.

Second Harvest Food Bank acquired the organization in 2002. Since then, the group donated about 75 garden beds to 37 families—providing seeds and matching them with volunteer mentors—and joined with three local organizations to create larger gardens.

The smaller gardens grow vegetables needed to provide healthful foods for individual families while larger plots provide food to other families through Second Harvest Food Bank.

Pat is recruiting volunteers to mentor families with Community Gardens' backyard plots.

"I would like to see a network of people helping people who want to learn how to grow food," she said.

Her passion for reaching others stems from her desire to build tighter communities.

A Spokane resident for 28 years,



Community Gardens volunteers prepare raised bed gardens.

Photo by Tom Kliever

Pat stayed through the city's recent economic hardship. Her husband lost his job at the Bureau of Mines when it closed and a travel agency laid Pat off after the 9/11 attacks.

"We didn't have any reason to stay, but we chose to stay because of the sense of community," she said.

With nearly 14 percent of Spokane's 197,400 residents falling below the federal poverty level, Pat seeks to reach these people through both Plant-a-Row for the Hungry and Spokane Community Gardens.

For her, responsibility to "look after each other" builds community.

In addition to providing garden beds, Community Gardens connects families to the Spokane Master Gardeners Association, which provides garden clinics and educational materials to help people grow their gardens organically.

Typical crops include tomatoes, beans, corn, peppers, potatoes, peas, radishes, greens of all kinds, pumpkins,

squash, onions and zucchini.

Vegetables and meat are typically the most expensive food items at the store, Pat said, so the ability to grow their own vegetables "helps families significantly reduce their grocery budgets."

Besides, Pat added, children love gardens, as she did as a child and still does as an adult.

In addition to supporting individual gardens, the program encourages those involved with the organization-maintained gardens, such as Avista Employees' Community Garden. Overseeing that garden are Avista's Green Thumbs and limited-income program specialist Tom Kliever.

"That our garden exists says something good," Tom said as he paused from pulling weeds in the 48-bed plot behind Avista's headquarters on Mission Street.

A sign by the garden reads, "Avista Employees' Community Garden: Growing Ties to the Community."

The garden originally donated its vegetables to Second Harvest, but now works directly with Women's and Children's Free Restaurant at St. Paul's United Methodist Church.

Avista Garden also works with Pat in Plant-a-Row for the Hungry, which encourages local farmers and private gardeners to donate excess harvest or intentionally to plant one extra row for distribution at Spokane food banks.

"If each of us takes just a little bit of our own over-abundance and shares it with a few others, we would actually build a stronger community," Pat said.

The Urban Forestry Program donated four young plum trees at the Avista garden's front gate. Avista contributed a garden shed, which the Green Thumbs painted a muted green with a bright red door.

Eagle Scout Greg Braybeck made picnic benches volunteers use on sunny days. Avista retiree Bob Boyd built birdhouses hanging from various trees.

Tom wants volunteers to feel inspired to create their own community garden as they become involved with Avista Garden and the surrounding community.

Harvest day is popular for volunteers because that's when they gather the produce and deliver it to the food bank or, this year, the restaurant.

"I feel I'm facilitating fulfillment of a basic need," Tom said.

Eventually, Tom wants to involve more of the community. He hopes to see more local senior citizens garden and have children show up to learn about gardening from volunteers.

Passing on gardening knowledge is also one of Pat's goals.

She remains committed to helping others discover that love while creating self-sufficient sources of income and strengthening their ties to each other and the greater Spokane community.

"By building healthy bodies, we help build healthy minds and healthy communities. We don't have to be rich to grow veggies."

For information, call 534-6678.

*Elise Peterson wrote this story for The Fig Tree as an assignment in a Whitworth College public relations class.*

## Catholic Charities schedules Caring for Kids event

The 2005 Caring for Kids Speaker for Morning Star Boys' Ranch and Catholic Charities' St. Anne's Children and Family Center is Kent Hoffman, a psychotherapist and educator.

He will speak at a benefit luncheon at 11:30 a.m., Tuesday, Sept. 27, at the Red Lion Hotel at the Park.

Kent, co-founder of the Center for Attachment and Clinical Intervention at Marycliff Institute in Spokane, works with parents, children, adults and couples.

He is involved with at-risk parents and infants at Crosswalk, a program for street-dependent youth. He has worked with preschool children in Head Start/Early Head Start and in prevention of child abuse and neglect. He volunteers with Catholic Charities Childbirth and Parenting Alone (CAPA) mothers.

His "Circle of Security" model helps parents strengthen bonds with their children. He leads workshops around the United States for therapists, educators, social workers, clergy and parents on development needs of infants and children, which he considers crucial for social change.

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Holocaust Remembrance and Monument - 60 Years Later

# Holocaust monument passes remembering to future generations

The Holocaust memorial that was once a dream for Temple Beth Shalom in Spokane is now a reality.

It stands by the entry to the offices and the education wing, visible through a window from the inside.

Support from the community, as well as from Temple Beth Shalom, made possible the physical memorial to 19 Holocaust survivors who have lived in Spokane and the spiritual reminder it represents, calling people to prevent future acts of genocide.

Four Holocaust survivors—Miriam Abramowitz Ferszt, Ruth Izakson, Eva Lassman and Carla Peperzak—attended the May 5 dedication Holocaust Remembrance Service, Yom Hashoa, at Temple Beth Shalom.

The proclamation by Governor Christine Gregoire—read by her husband Mike Gregoire—said the monument would be a reminder of “the darkest chapter of history,” when Hitler perpetrated “systematic state persecution and murder of 6 million Jewish women, men and children.

“Jews suffered atrocities. Relocated to ghettos, they faced starvation and disease, were lined up and shot, or were herded into trains to concentration camps, where they were in forced labor and often subjected to medical experiments.

“Survivors had no families or friends to welcome them home.

Their stories are difficult to hear but tell of both the toll of unleashed discrimination and the resilience of the human spirit in moments of extreme crisis,” her message concluded.

Pam Silverstein of Temple Beth Shalom said the idea of the memorial grew from the efforts of Holocaust survivors. She said Eva has spoken throughout the region to educate people about hatred and bigotry, so people never again commit such atrocities.

Simon Kogan, the Seattle artist who created the monument, told those gathered about the development of the abstract copper sculpture, representing a body covered by a tallit—prayer shawl.

“It invites people to reflect on the 6 million lives lost, people who did not live their lives, but whose spirits live on and “ensure that Jews have a future,” he said.

“The memorial is not a grave-stone but a means to pass on meanings so future generations will own them,” he said.

Simon found it hard to put the Holocaust theme into a physical shape. He started several times and quit, overwhelmed.

“I decided to do a simple piece to transcend the horror—that would remind us without scaring us. The sculpture represents a person not with us who is in prayer and stays in prayer,” he said.

The space between the prayer shawl and the body lets light in, a reminder that “light is the spirit



Seattle artist Simon Krogan describes the symbolism that he incorporated in the Holocaust monument.



of people,” he explained.

“The tallit covers and protects,” said Simon, who chose copper, because it is a tough material that symbolizes resilience.

Handprints embedded in the front represent the hands of survivors. By seeing them or touching them, he said, people can tap into the energy of survivors, experiencing renewal. The hands represent the generations who died and the generations never born to 1.5 million children.

Letters of the Hebrew alphabet in the form of a flame remind that each Jew who lost a life or who survived had a name beginning with one of those letters, he said.

The monument sits on broken stones, which represent order broken forever, Simon said, but from the dirt in the cracks, new life will come “as a symbol of ongoing order.”

The piece came from the foundry on a large concrete base. The first time it was placed, it

did not sit right, so “we had to manipulate it until we found a place it stopped and found its niche in the rocks,” he said.

While it appears small and dark, Simon said that the darkness reminds of the Holocaust, but “when one stands right beside it, it appears enormous.”

He made the monument so, from a distance, it seems like a dove, a symbol of peace, a symbol of the Jewish people and a symbol of struggling and growing.

## Despite years under Nazi cruelty, survivor considers her life blessed

Even though she lived six years “under the unbearable cruelty of the Nazis,” Eva Lassman considers her life has been blessed. Since she was liberated 60 years ago, she married and gave birth to three sons who now have families.

“By staying alive, I defied Hitler and I have seen my lifelong dream of the birth of the state of Israel.

“I lost my family in the Holocaust and, 29 years ago, my husband. I am here to dedicate the Holocaust Memorial for the 6 million and for other victims Hitler deemed undesirable.

“I hope it will be a beacon against hate, an honor to those no one cared for and a reminder so future generations will live in peace,” Eva said.

During the Yom Hashoa service, she said that on Sept. 1, 1939, she was forced into “a life of cruelty, hatred and evil that no



Eva Lassman, Rabbi Jack Izakson and Jody Zellman read names of 19 Holocaust survivors who have lived in Spokane.

one should have to endure.”

She was subjected to beatings, torture and other dehumanizing cruelties.

“I lost all I had and loved—belongings, home and family. Despite the pain and suffering, I persevered until liberation on Jan. 17, 1945. Liberation did not end the suffering. I was left with no family, no home and a community still filled with hate,” Eva said.

In a displaced persons camp, she met her late husband, Walter.

They immigrated to the United States in 1949, arriving in Spokane.

Because few would rent to a family with two children, the Lassmans stayed the first months in a hotel, until people in the temple found an apartment for them.

Their third son was born here.

They learned English, he established a business, and they reared their sons.

“Other children had grandparents. Eventually, one of my sons asked a woman to be his grandmother,” she said.

“With the blessing of the Almighty, I have reached 60 years since liberation. The journey has not been smooth. There have been bumps, detours and challenges.”

Plagued by flashbacks, she dedicated her life to teaching about the Holocaust and tolerance.

“We need tolerance more than we need love,” she asserted.

“My late husband always encouraged me not to give up. It’s sad he is not here to share this day,” Eva said.

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# Third generation accepts obligation to prevent hate from spreading

Representing the third generation of Holocaust survivors in Spokane, Jody Zellman, said he was exposed early to “the ghastly and appalling truth surrounding” his grandparent’s early lives.

“I often wonder how those who do not have any Holocaust survivors in their lives think about the events from 1939 to 1945. It is unfathomable to image the systematic slaughter of 11 million human beings, with no distinction between infants, mothers or grandmothers.

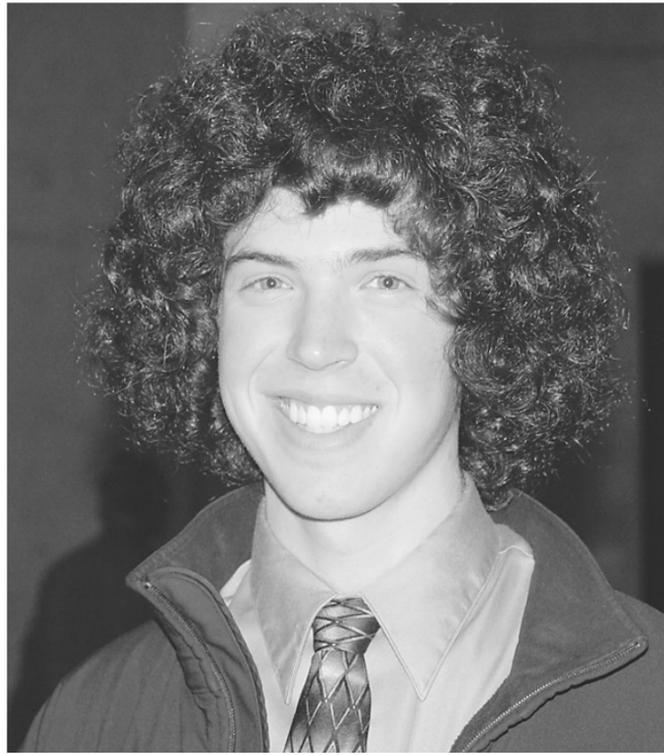
“It is more unfathomable to realize people like you and me committed such murder,” he said, recognizing that more than Jews lost their lives in the Holocaust.

He does not blame those who want to separate themselves from the atrocity, but he realizes separation is the problem humankind faces.

“We are too apathetic and we forget too easily,” Jody said, noting that few even know the number of people murdered last year in Spokane.

People without personal connection to the people involved may know only the statistics.

“What difference does the Ho-



Jody Zellman

lococaust make to you or me?” he asked. “It is a question we have to ask ourselves next time we say we believe in world peace or even in a safer community.”

Memorials help people remember, he said, wondering if more people would take a more active role in their community if there were memorials for every school

shooting, drunk-driving fatality or assault.

For him, the memorial represents “respect and gratitude we have for those who survived a hell we cannot begin to imagine. The memorial is a testament to those who perished at the hands of fellow human beings,” Jody continued.

“It was not just *my* grandparents who eluded death’s icy grip but it was *your* grandparents, too—*your* brother, *your* sister, *your* mother, *your* father and anyone you ever knew, who was murdered by the Nazis.

“Until we recognize that the only barrier between you and me, between us and them, is the hate we foster in our hearts, we will continue to be apathetic toward atrocities we allow our fellow human beings to commit,” he said.

“This memorial is a call to action. The Holocaust could not have occurred without the cooperation of ordinary citizens who operated the cattle cars and gas chambers. This memorial is a reminder of how vulnerable we are.

“We can never erect enough memorials or hold enough remembrance services to accom-

plish our goal of tolerance,” Jody said. “This memorial represents an idealistic mission that will never be fulfilled in our lifetimes.

“However, through the pursuit of this potentially unachievable dream, real progress is made. While those who hate will continue to hate, it is up to us, the open-minded and accepting, to educate those who do not know history’s tragic nature. This memorial will be useless unless its existence is used as an inspiration for education and action.”

Jody hopes that in the future, his grandchildren will not feel detached from the Holocaust, but will feel the same obligation he feels and will open their minds and hearts to those who suffer and have suffered.

“It is *our* obligation to do everything in our power to prevent hate from spreading and to finance, promote and support more education, observances and memorials,” he said. “We can shout ‘never again’ 6 million times, but without action, we will accomplish nothing.

We must learn from the past to improve the present and protect the future.”

## Articles share reflections of Yom Hashoa speakers

The Yom Hashoa service included statements by three government officials and representatives offering recognition of the days of remembrance to honor the victims, survivors, rescuers and liberators and to call for individuals, societies and governments to reflect on their moral responsibility.

The voices of speakers are in related articles.

The service also had the traditional candle-lighting ceremony in memory of survivors, second and third generations, servicemen who liberated camps, the call to peacemaking and the righteous among the nations.

Joel Lassman, the son of survivor Eva Lassman, said, “We must remember all who were slaughtered in the name of racial purity. We must remember and our children must remember. Those who survived did not give up hope in the darkest hours of their lives. Survivors give us a light of hope in honor of fighting injustice and intolerance wherever it occurs.”

Joel expressed gratitude for the love, support, wisdom and strength the grandchildren have received from grandparents, “so generations to come will remember and strive for a more peaceful world.”

He said the fourth candle honors servicemen who die so others may be free and the fifth candle reminds people to fight hate and discrimination in order to build bridges of peace.

The sixth candle recognizes those who through the ages ignore the lies and risk their lives to save the lives of others and who work today “to promote tolerance, education and harmony, inspiring us to erase hate from our country and world.”

The service closed with a prayer for remembrance of those who have died; a Kaddish reading remembering those who suffered at concentration camps, and a prayer for ending war, starvation, prejudice, despair and disease.

For information, call 747-3304.

## Beyond statistics of millions of lives lost, second generation knows personal loss

Rabbi Jack Izakson, a child of a Holocaust survivor and husband of a child of a Holocaust survivor, reflected on the words of King David in Psalms and the prophet Jeremiah, each speaking of the destruction brought on Israelites by their enemies: “Pour out your wrath. They have devoured Jacob and laid waste his habitation.”

Recalling the destruction of the families he and his wife represent, he echoes those sentiments.

“This memorial represents the dignity of our family members who were murdered—including 67 members of my mother’s family and 79 members of my father’s family.”

It also represents 1.5 million Jewish children, 3 million of Poland’s 3.5 million Jews, 6 million “Jewish souls ripped from their bodies, incalculable future generations that will never be, dreams that were never fulfilled and a way of life we’ll never see again,” he said.

“Their mortal remains lie somewhere in Europe, in unconsecrated ground, unadorned by even the most primitive of markers. May this memorial give them the dignity in death they were denied. May they rest in peace and may



The Holocaust Monument, left, honors Miriam Abramowitz Ferszt, David Ferszt, Kay Fragner, Frieda Gelb, Manuel Gelb, Abe Hornstein, Jolan Hornstein, Ruth Izakson, Seigmund Izakson, Eva Lassman, Walter Lassman, Jack Matzner, Leo Matzner, Lucia Matzner, Stella Matzner, Betty Meier, Carla Peperzak, Herbert Steinberg and Elly Weiglein.

their memories always be recalled for a blessing,” said Jack, adding, “The monument will stand long after we are gone.

“We dedicate this memorial and hope that never again shall such things happen to other human beings. We pray for peace for the souls of all who have gone to their eternal home and pray the memorial will inspire people to do deeds of good,” he said.

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Holocaust Remembrance and Monument – 60 Years Later

# Jewish teen sees Holocaust as more than just a Jewish concern

For Maggie Yates, 17, remembering the Holocaust is no longer just about being Jewish or a minority. To help her generation connect to it and become responsible today, she said, "we need to understand it's about being a human being."

Speaking at the Yom Hashoa service on May 5, she knit the generations of survivors and everyone else together.

Some of her insights come from spending February and March at a boarding school near Tel Aviv and traveling throughout Israel to visit sites her class studied.

At Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem, she saw a quotation on the wall: "I'm tired. Maybe I should sit on one of the benches that says 'Jews only.'"

Beneath the quote is a life-size print of a woman sitting on a bench marked "Jews only." She covers her face in humiliation.

"Never again can we allow ourselves to be humiliated. Never again can we cover our faces in shame. Humiliation leads to dehumanization for those who commit the evil acts, as well as those who suffer from them," said Maggie, a junior at Lewis and Clark High School.

"Every year at Yom Hashoa, we are told to remember, but how do we remember?" she asked.



Maggie Yates

"We must look at images of starving children and dying grandparents. We must see the pain in their eyes and force ourselves to connect with that pain," she said, recognizing that even though it hurts, "we must carry a little of our own suffering in order to remember their suffering."

Maggie realizes remembering is not enough to prevent the next genocide, because she knows that there have been attempts at mass murder around the world since the Holocaust in World War II.

"We remember what Hitler did, the pain he caused, but what has it done? It has not stopped the

newest tyrant from annihilating the newest guinea pig.

"Those lives are as valuable as Jewish ones," she asserted. "How can we speak of remembrance when our brothers and sisters are slaughtered in Darfur? When our nieces and nephews are tortured in Bosnia? When machetes are tools of ethnic cleansing in Rwanda?"

Maggie recognizes that remembering does little good in an age that calls for action.

Proud of those who survived or resisted the Holocaust, she suggested that their survival was mostly luck, not from heroic feats to save themselves or others.

"How many more could have survived if action was taken!" she challenged. "Passive resistance is never enough. No one did enough then. No one is doing enough now. At times it is necessary to resist actively, politically and militarily to save lives."

Maggie called for honoring those who died by both remembering and acting to protect humanity, Jews and Gentiles.

"It is no longer about being Jewish. It was never about being a minority. It is about being a human being. We can all connect to it, and we are all responsible for it," she said.

When her class in Israel studied about an escape attempt by 1,200

people in the Treblinka death camp, they learned that at the end of the war only 40 of the 600 who escaped were still alive. When the teacher asked if it was worth it, a student said that 40 lives that would have been lost were saved, so 40 people went on to have children and grandchildren.

"We agreed it was worth it," Maggie said. "Every life is the world to someone. Every person has a mother and father. Every person is someone's son or daughter. Every person has value."

"Numbers are not significant. Every life is as important as the next. The loss of one life is or should be as painful as the loss of millions," Maggie said. "Each person should count, not just be counted. We should shed 6 million tears, one for each person who was unjustly murdered. I hope these tears of remembrance will motivate us to act, so future tears can be prevented," she said.

"We may be the last generation to hear the voices of survivors, so we must listen to them well. We must carry their voices into the future and retell their stories through our actions every day, not just once a year," Maggie said. "Remembering is not enough now. It hasn't been for a long time. Reminding is now our responsibility."

# Bestselling author writes poem on the universal nature of suffering

Michael Gurian, a social philosopher and New York Times bestselling author, was in Spokane on May 5 for the Yom Hashoa service, reading an original composition he wrote at the request of Spokane Holocaust survivor and educator Eva Lassman.

In the piece, "I Am a Jew," he expresses the pains and sufferings he and others, as Jews, experience now and have experienced in history. He also expresses recognition of the universality of suffering, a reality calling Jews to identify with all people around the world who suffer, and a recognition of all who suffered and suffer with and for Jews then, through the years and now.

"Every day, I feel great sorrows and joys. This is a Jew," he said.

From seeing ghosts in trains to wondering about the Nazi role in making a Mercedes Benz, Jews encounter reminders of the horror of the Holocaust.

He ponders: "Jews have forgiven the world, but has the world forgiven the Jews?"

Michael "discovered" he was a Jew and what that meant when he visited Dachau, walking in remembrance of that cruel time, thinking of the piles of spectacles, bones and teeth, aware that gypsies, homosexuals, Catholics and other people considered undesirable were swept away, and "became Jews, too."

Sixty years ago, he writes that



Michael Gurian

people like Eva Lassman, Ruth Izakson, Miriam Abramowitz Ferszt, Carla Peperzak and Jacob Gurian looked to the stars for guidance from cages.

He posed some questions: "Jews, you have nearly died out, why should you again decide to live? You were forsaken, why should you again believe? I am a Jew. Should I sit in silence in a locked house? Should indifference be my vocation?"

He asks about forgotten street children, Buddhists beaten in Tibet, Hindus drinking fecal water, knife gashes across eyes of Sudanese and Iraqis weeping for lost children.

With wars ravaging the earth

each declared "the sacred wishes of a wizened master," he wonders who will speak for or embrace men coughing blood, women whose children are torn from their arms, Saudi youth enraged by their poverty, Jewish Israeli children riding a bus toward a suicide bomb, and daughters of meth, prejudice and no goals.

"I am a Jew, and I ask you, Why are we here, if not to make an identity and then give it to those who need?" he said.

Jews knowing "the severity of life and its mission," he believes, can "make a journey through grief, joy and forgiveness" and through their experience, ideas and song can sew "ever-new seams of hope into the world's woes."

For him, being a Jew means being "chosen to know in the face of extinction the permanence of G-d." So he will love, and he asks others to join him in "a garden of memory and affection we have grown together in 60 years of courage and spirit."

The only shame is the absence of love, he said, calling people to pray for the pain of the centuries,

and see "G-d's breath make even of death a loud light."

Michael invites others to "become a Jew, for this moment," to care for people in the world, to remember and love. While "any trembling hand can pray," he adds: "Let us be a human pack that makes words, talks and laughs together, and sings."

"Let there be nothing more horrifying to you than morality without a conscience," he said. "The Jews know of this."

He calls for people to join in a dream of courage, "where our minds can envision ever-greater freedoms because our feet already walk free." He calls for people to "waste no more time, waste no more fervor on lies."

As a Jew of 47 years of "no special courage," Michael said he has lived a human history. On facing death, he hopes people can look into their children's eyes

and murmur: "I have done what I came to do."

He urges people to find a quiet place where they can hear the eternal voice.

"Give bravely, whatever small gifts you have right now, so that even when you are old, and tottering is your only grace, you'll cry out, 'Come at me, Life, I'm still here!'"

"No matter how heavily you fail nor how terribly you foresee the worst, be a person who cares, be the new human for whom hate is no feast—merely a flavor we once tasted—be a gardener who grows life from ash and tells ancient stories of love and mercy, even in the most evil hours."

He challenges people to "be a sweetness on this earth, a flaming word—an unrelenting Jew."

For the full text, visit [www.michaelgurian.com/holocaust\\_speech.html](http://www.michaelgurian.com/holocaust_speech.html).

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## Changing face of Quincy changes the shape of ministry

As the faces and numbers of Quincy residents have changed through the years, new ministry issues have emerged in the community.

Since the Rev. Ginny Johnson came to serve St. Paul Lutheran Church eight years ago, the community has grown from 3,500 to 5,000 and shifted from about 60 percent Anglo to about 60 percent Hispanic.

The church is also changing. The early European immigrants settling there were Germans from Russia who came about 100 years ago as dry-land farmers. They started St. Paul's as a preaching point about 1903 and formally organized it in 1907, the year the town also incorporated.

After World War II, there was an influx of Asian and Japanese farmers.

Dams brought irrigation to the Columbia Basin in the 1950s, and the community grew from 300 to 1,000 people. Children began to take over their family's irrigated farmlands.

Hippies and older people with RVs came to pick fruit. In the late 1960s, the seasonal workers came from Mexico. At first they migrated from area to area following the harvest opportunities. Then they began settling and building new lives in Quincy.

**The Lutheran congregation** built a new church in 1953 and added a wing with an office and Sunday school rooms by 1963.

"Like Lutheran churches in other communities then, it was the center of community social life, along with the Presbyterian, Catholic, Congregational and other churches," Ginny said.

Now attendance averages 75 at Sunday worship. In the summers, families are working on the farm or playing. In the winter, the older people—snowbirds—leave for warmer climates, and families are in church. In the fall and spring, about 100 attend worship, because both families and older members come.

**As the daughter** of a Lutheran army chaplain, Ginny had "lived around ministry in small towns and large cities coast-to-coast from the first grade to college years." Her family moved to Tacoma in the 1960s when her father went to Korea and Vietnam. Then her grandparents moved there, and Washington became her home.

After studies at Pacific Lutheran University in 1977, she married and worked as a secretary. She went to seminary at Vancouver School of Theology after divorcing. She completed theological studies in 1994 at Lutheran Northwestern University in St. Paul, Minn., and worked as an associate pastor in Tacoma before she was called to serve in Quincy.

**Her first goal in Quincy** was to establish trust.

"Before I came, it had been



The Rev. Ginny Johnson discusses a letter to her secretary, Rachel Sanchez.

years since the congregation had a long-term pastor," Ginny explained, noting that she faced hurdles and quizzing initially as the first full-time woman pastor in the community.

Accepting that testing, she found that once she showed up when someone was sick or helped someone in crisis, the questions ended.

Now she encourages the congregation to discover what it means for them to be in ministry there.

Recently, when area Lutheran rural pastors and others in Rural Ministries Resources visited Quincy, she took them on a walking tour of the community to see the changing faces of stores and of people on the street—to see the setting for ministry.

**When she moved** to Quincy, Ginny faced one of the community's ministry issues: housing.

Landlocked by farmland, housing is limited, but some farmland has been converted for development, she said.

Ginny moved into newer housing on the outskirts of town. New low-income housing near her home stirred controversy at first.

"We needed new housing, but everyone said, 'Not near me,'" she said. "Even though people did not want the six four-unit low-income housing buildings near them, the related crime many had feared has not materialized.

"The housing is monitored well," she said. "The buildings are kept up, and people are trying to move up the economic ladder."

**The language barrier** is another ministry issue in Quincy.

Ginny, who wants to learn Spanish, said it's hard for people to become acquainted across the English-Spanish barrier.

So when the church offered to transport children by bus to Sunday school, it was hard to break

through the mistrust.

"We passed out fliers in Spanish and English, but few came. I rarely see adults. Neighborhood children play together, come on Halloween or to sell things for school projects.

"We are still a small community, so because we have some teachers in our church, I can chat with children on the playground, letting them know I know their teacher. They speak English."

When some church members questioned why the new residents did not more readily drop Spanish and learn English to fit in, some members of Ginny's congregation said they remembered when services were in German. They changed to English during World War II. Minutes of church meetings in the 1940s and 1950s were in German or English, depending on who recorded them.

"People remember grandparents who never learned to speak English," she said. "It takes immigrants a long time before they speak English. Their children and grandchildren learn English. Some speak no Spanish."

Until recently, the Lutheran church housed an after-school program and a summer camp for children of Hispanic families.

Quincy First Presbyterian and the Spanish Assembly of God churches build bridges among their churches by offering a joint vacation Bible school.

**Racism, another ministry issue**, relates to the language barrier.

While there are a few mixed families in the Lutheran church, many are cautious about the new residents, Ginny noted.

"For some, it does not matter. For others, it is hard. As a church, we want to welcome anyone, but we worship and conduct our meetings and gatherings in English, so it is hard to be welcoming," Ginny said.

"How can we be God's people

and extend God's grace into a community that is changing? What does it mean? We are much like an inner city church looking out its doors and seeing the neighborhood changing," she said. "Some are in denial. Some are in pain because the church and community are not what they used to be."

Some church and community members have participated in recent "Dismantling Racism" workshops hosted by the Presbyterian pastor, the Rev. Ann Hinz.

"The church is not as large as it once was, so it's important to equip people to do ministry here, to deal with racism, to minister to the community that is here," Ginny said.

**Cultural and economic** dynamics also affect ministry.

Quincy is 39 miles from Moses Lake and 35 from Wenatchee. A few people come from there and some go there for work, but the community has jobs for most people in town.

Quincy is still an agricultural area with orchards and farms, despite the "crunch" on farms. There are processing plants for potatoes, apples and vegetables, plus a fertilizer plant. Other businesses include a bank, an insurance agent, a real estate agent and a financial advisor.

There are Mexican businesses in the downtown core. While some stores cater specifically to Mexicans, most carry items for Mexican shoppers and many have

Spanish signs and staff.

The street looks like both a small U.S. town and a small Mexican town," Ginny said, "with a mix of shops, signs, languages and products. One shop specializes in white dresses for Mexican girls' 15th birthday parties.

"These celebrations are held in the Catholic Church, which is a mixed congregation. Recent priests have been from Colombia, serving both the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking congregations," she said.

**Farm economics** also influences ministry.

While some farm children do not return after college because of farm economics, other children come back to teach, she said.

"Many farmers are struggling, caught between the rising costs of fertilizer and labor, and falling prices for their crops," Ginny explained. "Many farmers who employ Hispanic workers seek to be just employers and give them fair wages.

"Many face turnover in workers, because they do not know if those they hire have legitimate Social Security numbers. In picking season, they hire those who come. Occasionally, the Immigration and Naturalization Service sweeps through the community, taking illegal workers.

"Mexican families have settled here to build a better life for themselves and support their families here and in Mexico. While there are still many single migrant men, those with families settle in the community and find better jobs," Ginny said.

Many go to Mexico in the winter when they are not working, so it's hard on the school system. Children begin school, leave for two or three months and return for the end of the year, she said.

**Ecumenical relations** are another factor in ministry.

Many larger churches have two congregations—Spanish-speaking and English-speaking.

There are 22 churches in Quincy. The Ministerial Association includes the United Church of Christ, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Assembly of God, a nondenominational church, the Free Methodist, Four Square Gospel, Spanish speaking Assembly of God and Catholic Anglo and Hispanic congregations.

They cooperate to identify and address the ministry issues.

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# Bishop suggests proactive efforts to deal with complexities, violence

*Continued from page 1*

Ecumenical and religious dialogue are also priorities of the U.S. bishops, said Bishop Skylstad, who co-chaired Catholic-Methodist dialogue until he became the USCCB vice president.

"While many assume people are backing off, in fact, ecumenical relationships are strong in local communities," he said, noting that when he is in Spokane he meets Wednesday mornings for breakfast with other bishops and regional church executives.

"We forget how far we have come in the last 40 years. Priests now have Protestant pastors as friends, which was unthinkable 50 years ago," he said.

**Polarity and divisiveness** from political and ethical differences, Bishop Skylstad said, run across society and within churches.

"The Gospel says we are one. Often lesser values come in the way of loving our neighbors and our call to unity. We must be respectful of each person, because each person is made in God's image," he pointed out.

Asserting that the church's role is both to form individuals to be gifts to society and to advocate for the common good, he said that the Catholic Church interfaces with society and government, advocating policies that uplift respect for life, human dignity and social justice.

"It's not a choice of personal responsibility or government responsibility. It's both/and," Bishop Skylstad explained. "Politics is about moral issues, so it should be influenced by values of the community. We need to connect both.

"Jesus said to love our neighbor. We are responsible for each other. It's easy to label someone an enemy and build walls, but the church is to build bridges so we can love neighbors and enemies. It's a radical initiative to love everyone, no matter who he or she is."

**Respect for life and people** permeates Catholic and Christian teachings. It is taught in parish education programs, homilies, liturgies, counseling and advocacy.

"The challenge is for teachings to go from the head to the heart," Bishop Skylstad said. "We live in dramatically changing times. We are to be faithful to Catholic traditions and teachings over the centuries and to teachings that evolve today."

**Recognizing changes** that come from instant communication around the world, he said: "We saw tsunami destruction in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, minutes after it happened. That was not possible 25 years ago." Plus, billions of people around the world watched news when Pope John Paul II died, "attended" his memorial service by TV, waited as voting was underway and saw Pope Benedict XVI installed.



**Bishop William Skylstad**

"We are a world community," Bishop Skylstad said.

With news providing information on problems around the world—be it AIDS or terrorism—he believes people must find ways to come together to end poverty, human rights abuses and genocide.

**While supporting the idea** of spreading freedom, he said the Vatican and the bishops opposed the U.S. going to war in Iraq. They favored cooperative action through the United Nations.

"Now that we are there, we can't just pull out without creating more chaos, but we in the church must proclaim that we are to seek peace and to respect, help and protect each other," he said.

Dealing with the war in Iraq and the call to peace can be "dicey" in parishes, so he finds prayers of intercession a way to both care for those in the military and pray for peace among the nations.

**Spiritual support for troops**, to him, also means helping returning soldiers process their experience. Just as people returning from the Vietnam War suffered post-traumatic stress, he finds people returning from Iraq troubled.

"We need to be sensitive about what happens to people in war, when they see people killed and kill people. We have an innate sense of our need to respect the dignity of human beings, even enemies," he commented.

Monsignor William Van Ommeren from Holland, who is now at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, has told him that churches in Europe are struggling, even now 60 years after World War II, with

"the scandal that Christians killed Christians and Catholics killed Catholics."

"What witness do we give if we do not live the Christian life?" Bishop Skylstad asked, challenging people to have "God's words written in our lives."

"We have a long way to go to live in justice and peace, to be responsible for our neighbors," he said.

**Rugged individualism** undermines the common good, he said, calling for balance.

"As the nation with the highest standard of living, we sometimes base our identities on what we have rather than on who we are. Sometimes less is better, so we can assure the economic wellbeing of all people."

He advises balancing concern about over-consumption with awareness that purchases support livelihoods. He used to tease the late Bishop Bernard Topel who often said he was "wearing a dead man's shoes" to express his simple lifestyle. Bishop Skylstad would reply, "I bought my shoes so I could support the person who makes shoes."

He also encourages people to remember that the inexpensive food on their tables is available because of the "sweat of people who work in fields."

"They need fair wages," he said, noting progress in housing, wages and conditions for farm workers from efforts of bishops and the Washington State Catholic Conference meeting with state legislators and educating parishioners to voice concerns, examine prejudices and change attitudes.

Following a recent education

campaign by the national church and the pope, he has observed, a "significant drop" in the number of Catholics who support the death penalty.

**While media can help** educate, he finds coverage of clergy sexual abuse clouds that issue.

Bishop Skylstad said media have neglected to cover guidelines and training in place for years to prevent abuse and protect children and youth—workshops for clergy and laity, print and video resources and codes of conduct.

The diocese teaches priests and parishioners to create a safe environment, to know appropriate and inappropriate behavior, to set boundaries and to look for and report signs of abuse, he said.

"We have a zero tolerance policy. While we have training and policies, we continue to address the many dimensions of this issue. I hope media will see those aspects and help us help society be more healthy."

Bishop Skylstad is concerned that explicit coverage of sexual abuse in the church or by public officials passes the abuse on to readers and viewers.

**"Media tolerate** an unacceptable level of promiscuity and a compromise of healthy values," he said, adding that media trivialize sexuality, assuming they cannot sell publications or broadcasts without unnecessarily explicit presentations of sex outside of marriage and for self-gratification.

"We need to continue both to work to create a safe environment for ministry and to voice concern about trivialization of human and sexual relationships in media," Bishop Skylstad said.

U.S. bishops are commissioning a study of causes of abuse to facilitate effective ministry.

"As we have encouraged people to come forward—and women have come forward, too—we seek to listen so we can understand causes," he said.

**Based on current** understandings, the bishop said, the emphasis is on respecting boundaries—respecting someone else as a unique person, rather than using someone as an object of gratification or control. He said control arises from machoism and fear.

"We need to encourage people to seek the common good, living humbly and gently on the Christian journey," he said.

The bishop also believes the church must be more assertive about standing by women and children—to prevent teen-

age pregnancies, trafficking of women and children, and child abuse by live-in boyfriends of single mothers.

"By being sensitive to people's need for dignity, we hope better human relationships will emerge from the complex situations in our community and world," he said.

"People's desire for intimacy and love leaves many vulnerable to endure abuse, hoping a husband or boyfriend will change.

"The church allows for the annulment of a destructive, dehumanizing marriage that is not a sacramental, covenantal relationship, not a community of life," Bishop Skylstad said.

**Expressing concern** about the prevalence of familial and other violence, he said: "We accept a level of violence in films that disconnects us from respect for human life, desensitizing us to violence."

He sees that disconnection when media report the number of U.S. troops killed—50,000 in Vietnam and more than 1,600 in Iraq—but not the millions of Vietnamese or the 10s to 100s of thousands of Iraqis killed.

**Through the power** of the Gospel and sacramental life, he believes, the church has impact.

"Today, much of what once happened below the surface has come to the surface, so we can see and deal with it," he said. "Previously, accepted in silence and secrecy, it could not be addressed."

Bishop Skylstad believes people can be hope-filled and joyful even in the midst of the complexities of the world, because the Gospel is humanizing.

"We need to live it and help the world assume its values. It calls us to humanity. It will make us free," he said, affirming that in encounters with Catholics and other people from the local to global levels he finds many good and holy people who inform and inspire him.

"They are holy, but human. Saints are not antiseptically holy. They struggle with being human. Many faith-filled people help each other on the journey," he said.

"Our challenge is to deal with our divisions as Christians. Whatever we do we need to ask, 'Am I helping society or another person to be better?' If someone is angry at me or criticizes me, I need to ask how I can help that person be more fully human."

Despite divisions in churches, communities and society, he sees hope.

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# Pastor's missed opportunity becomes a lesson for another time

The Rev. George Abrams of Cheney United Methodist Church sat with his Volunteers in Mission (VIM) team on church pews and choir chairs in Cayes, Haiti, a town of 8,000 about 150 miles west of Port au Prince.

They ate their lunch.

Behind the team sat Haitian construction workers, waiting for their chance to eat.

The team had not packed enough lunch, so the plan was to feed the VIM team first and let the other construction workers finish the rest of the food.

George saw a woman, sitting on the end of one of the front pews. She was about 40 years old, and clothed nicely in a simple, flowered dress.

"She sat straight and stoically with an immobile expression on her face as she watched us eat," he continued. "Without checking with the team leader, someone had told her she could eat with us. Her presence reminded me of the story about Jesus and the woman at the well.

"A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water at noon, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.'" George told the story. "Jesus saw that this woman was in need, because drawing water from the community well was a morning or evening task, and not normally done at noon.

"Jesus used the request for a drink as a way to open a conversation with her. In the course of their talking, Jesus saw not just her immediate need for a smoother relationship with the other women of her village, but also her deeper need for the 'water of eternal life,'" he continued.

As George sat and munched on his crackers and peanut butter, he also thought about St. Paul's words from Hebrews 13: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, because by doing that you may have entertained angels



The Rev George Abrams works with Haitians.

Photo provided by George Abrams

without knowing it."

He realized how often, when people meet people in need, it is easier to see the need than to figure out a loving response.

"I wanted to take some of the leftover food and give it to the woman, but I knew that if I did I would be taking food from the construction workers who had worked side by side with us all morning, pouring concrete on the third floor of the school in the 95 degree heat," he said. "I was unhappy with the person who told her to come and share our food without checking to see if we had enough food to go around."

George wishes he had realized sooner a way to respond to her need. He went to the team leader, who also did not know how to

respond, given the arrangements made for the food.

After they and the Haitian construction workers finished their lunch, the food was gone. The woman gracefully walked out of the church.

"I felt I had failed her," George said.

Later he learned that one of the team members did respond, using Jesus' example of feeding the 5,000.

"Leonard Ellis, our Haitian interpreter, gave half of his lunch rations to the woman. It was such a simple response," said George.

"To respond to hunger or other needs, we first must see the problem," he said. "Unfortunately, many of us never see the need.

"After we see a problem, we

need to discover a graceful, sensitive response. Then we must act in time," George said. "It is easier said than done. While I did not respond this time to this woman's needs, I learned from the situation what to do next time.

"If the woman was a messenger—an angel—from God, with Leonard's help, I heard the message."

George encourages members of his congregation to participate in the United Methodist Church's Volunteers in Mission programs, where they may experience encounters and moments with "angels" as they put Christian love into action.

Some teams go abroad to build churches, hospitals, camps, parsonages, houses or barns, which may be needed because of fires, floods, hurricanes or poverty.

Others share skills as dentists, doctors, teachers or mechanics. Individual opportunities are longer term than the team visits of 10 to 14 days, designed to instill interest in global connections.

The January trip was George's third visit to Haiti. He has been to more than 25 other countries—including England, Israel, Turkey, Greece, Singapore, Russia, Estonia, Finland and Brazil—with VIM and other programs. He plans to go to Haiti again next year.

Three other mission teams went from Cheney UMC this winter and spring.

Ronda Cordill went with a med-

ical mission team to help for three weeks in March at a hospital in Liberia, along with some people from St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Cheney.

Chuck Kreigh took a group of 15 to Chihuahua, Mexico, in April.

The Rev. Jeff Wallace, the student intern, took about seven college students to work on a Habitat for Humanity house in Edmonds during spring break.

George said Chuck introduced him to VIM.

"His trips help our congregation connect with Mexicans. We help with building, but trips are more about establishing relationships, reaching out in love, making personal connections with people who live elsewhere."

Many trips involve youth, George said, because they "are life-changing."

"The mission trips are not about bricks and mortar. They are about people and relationships. They are about loving our neighbors. They are about learning and changing our lives and actions, as happened to me in January in Haiti," George said.

People coming back are more alert to problems in the community, he finds, and are "good supporters" for Cheney Outreach, Cheney Food Bank and Cheney Clothing Bank.

"We become more sensitive to the poor and marginalized in our community," he said.

For information, call 235-4600.

without knowing it."

He realized how often, when people meet people in need, it is easier to see the need than to figure out a loving response.

"I wanted to take some of the leftover food and give it to the woman, but I knew that if I did I would be taking food from the construction workers who had worked side by side with us all morning, pouring concrete on the third floor of the school in the 95 degree heat," he said. "I was unhappy with the person who told her to come and share our food without checking to see if we had enough food to go around."

George wishes he had realized sooner a way to respond to her need. He went to the team leader, who also did not know how to

respond, given the arrangements made for the food.

After they and the Haitian construction workers finished their lunch, the food was gone. The woman gracefully walked out of the church.

"I felt I had failed her," George said.

Later he learned that one of the team members did respond, using Jesus' example of feeding the 5,000.

"Leonard Ellis, our Haitian interpreter, gave half of his lunch rations to the woman. It was such a simple response," said George.

"To respond to hunger or other needs, we first must see the problem," he said. "Unfortunately, many of us never see the need.

"After we see a problem, we

need to discover a graceful, sensitive response. Then we must act in time," George said. "It is easier said than done. While I did not respond this time to this woman's needs, I learned from the situation what to do next time.

"If the woman was a messenger—an angel—from God, with Leonard's help, I heard the message."

George encourages members of his congregation to participate in the United Methodist Church's Volunteers in Mission programs, where they may experience encounters and moments with "angels" as they put Christian love into action.

Some teams go abroad to build churches, hospitals, camps, parsonages, houses or barns, which may be needed because of fires, floods, hurricanes or poverty.

Others share skills as dentists, doctors, teachers or mechanics. Individual opportunities are longer term than the team visits of 10 to 14 days, designed to instill interest in global connections.

The January trip was George's third visit to Haiti. He has been to more than 25 other countries—including England, Israel, Turkey, Greece, Singapore, Russia, Estonia, Finland and Brazil—with VIM and other programs. He plans to go to Haiti again next year.

Three other mission teams went from Cheney UMC this winter and spring.

Ronda Cordill went with a med-

ical mission team to help for three weeks in March at a hospital in Liberia, along with some people from St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Cheney.

Chuck Kreigh took a group of 15 to Chihuahua, Mexico, in April.

The Rev. Jeff Wallace, the student intern, took about seven college students to work on a Habitat for Humanity house in Edmonds during spring break.

George said Chuck introduced him to VIM.

"His trips help our congregation connect with Mexicans. We help with building, but trips are more about establishing relationships, reaching out in love, making personal connections with people who live elsewhere."

Many trips involve youth, George said, because they "are life-changing."

"The mission trips are not about bricks and mortar. They are about people and relationships. They are about loving our neighbors. They are about learning and changing our lives and actions, as happened to me in January in Haiti," George said.

People coming back are more alert to problems in the community, he finds, and are "good supporters" for Cheney Outreach, Cheney Food Bank and Cheney Clothing Bank.

"We become more sensitive to the poor and marginalized in our community," he said.

For information, call 235-4600.

## Habitat plans Blitz Build June 1 to 22

Habitat for Humanity-Spokane's Congress Building America Blitz Build 2005 will take place from June 1 to 22 at 1700 E. Boone Ave.

U.S. Congresswoman Cathy McMorris, Sterling Savings president Bill Zuppe and Habitat volunteers gathered for a kick-off on June 1.

Blitz Builds are focused construction efforts designed to complete building several homes in designated periods of time.

Habitat affiliates throughout the United States host Blitz Builds to generate energy, enthusiasm and awareness while providing decent homes for families in need, said Dennis Reed, community relations director of Habitat-Spokane.

Sterling Savings and Providence Health Care are sponsors of two homes that will be built. Other homes under construction will be completed, too.

Congress Building America is

a partnership with Congressional leaders helping promote and build homes.

Dennis said Habitat needs more volunteers and home sponsors.

For information, call 534-2552.

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## Daughter inspires father's commitment to build homes in Mexico

Participation in Volunteers in Mission building teams in Chihuahua, Mexico, has stretched Chuck Kriegh's friendships, family ties and gratitude.

After his daughter returned from a project, she said, "You should have gone. You have building skills and love children."

"I said I didn't have the time, money or desire to go," Chuck said.

About six months later, he woke up one morning and felt compelled to go—called.

Chuck has worked 30 years as a counselor with the State of Washington at Lakeland Village since moving to Cheney in 1959. He became involved in a Methodist church during junior high years in Southern Idaho, but for years, he said, he worked on Sundays to avoid going to church.

Now he attends Cheney United Methodist Church every Sunday, sometimes twice—especially when he gives a presentation on his experiences with a Volunteers in Mission (VIM) team.

Chuck has gone eight times with VIM teams. The congregation has been involved about 10 years, often connecting with joint teams in the United Methodist District.

He has gone to Mexico with people from Lewiston, Olympia, Rosalia, Moscow, Sandpoint, Spokane, Bonners Ferry and Orofino. Those people have become part of his family, as much as the people in Chihuahua. Ron Finch of the United Methodist Church in Bonners Ferry has also led and joined VIM teams for about 10 years.

Chuck has been a team leader five times, including one in April.

"The experiences have made me less oriented to want the finer things of life. Helping other people is my priority now," Chuck said.

He finds that Mexican people seem happier even though they may have fewer material possessions and homes with dirt floors.

"They have more love and appreciate more what little they have than we who have \$200,000 houses, boats and



In addition to building, volunteers play with children in Mexico.

Photo provided by Cheney United Methodist Church

cars," he said, repeating: "They genuinely appreciate what they have, while we take for granted we will have three meals a day, flush toilets and electrical power. They do without running water or power parts of the day."

What little building goes on for a house, church or facility, pales to him in contrast with what he finds has happened to "my relationship with myself, my God, Americans on the team and people there. They are family," Chuck said.

"People don't know what it's like until they have gone. While someone may talk about a vacation in the Bahamas, I talk of going and eating taquitas and salsa with people who have little, but share it out of the goodness of their

hearts because we are there doing something for them," he said.

People young and old come back home aware of how people in Chihuahua appreciate what they have. He finds that the experience changes people in a short time, whether they were close to God before they went or have never been in a church.

"It's phenomenal to see people's eyes, ears and hearts opened to feel they are part of the wider world," said Chuck, whose goal is to take every member of his family, including his three-year-old grandchild.

All it takes is the kind of connection Chuck said he made "with another bald man" on his first trip. Despite the minimal amount of English and Span-

ish—each of the other's language—they attempted to speak, they concluded that they were on the "same team." They also discovered their first grandchildren were both born on August 3.

Last summer, Jorge Carillo called from Colorado, where he and his wife were visiting their son, who was extremely sick and in the hospital. Eventually, the son died and the Carillos returned to Chihuahua, where Chuck saw him in April.

"Jorge had thought he would move to Colorado, but he found no work," Chuck said. "He called me, because we said if ever he needed anything, we wanted to provide it. He called to ask us to pray for his son.

"I can't imagine being in a foreign country, having my son dying and not knowing the language. Who would you reach out to? He reached out to us," said Chuck.

Friendships and connection have motivated both to improve language skills and keep seeing each other each year.

Chuck picked up building skills from his son, who is a contractor, and his father-in-law, also a contractor—and by figuring things out on his own.

"When you go to another country you do things at their speed with their tools in their ways of doing things," he said. "I go there to build something and end up building relationships with myself, my God and people around me."

Once when shopping for cowboy boots, he conversed with the clerk about his jewelry and told why he was there. That shop did not have the boots, but a clerk went up and down the street to find them for him. When Chuck paid for the boots, the man gave him his wristwatch as a gift because of the gift he was giving to his country. Chuck goes back to the store every year.

"It's awesome to have those things happen," he said. "The interconnection is beyond words."

Each time he returns to Cheney, he gives a presentation, so his church community can share in his experience.

For information, call 235-6943.

## Church's concert raises funds for visit to Zimbabwe

Covenant United Methodist Church's will hold a benefit concert, "A Celebration of Musical Gifts," at 7 p.m., Sunday, June 12, at their church, 15515 N. Gleneden Dr.

The event, which will feature their marimba bands, handbells, choir, and praise and worship team, will support the church's music ministry and missions in Zimbabwe, including a visit in 2006.

An area mission team will take the parts for hand-built marimbas, like the ones they have, to St. Peter's Methodist Church in Mutare, Zimbabwe, through the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission program.

Nathan Kennedy-Gibbons,

the music director at Covenant, said there are 12 in the Covenant Marimba Band and 12 in the beginning Tatenda Marimba Ensemble.

"We hope to have a team of 12 take the instrument parts for assembly there, he said.

The group will also do a recording project, "Africa Praise 2," using Zimbabwean praise music written by Patrick Matsikenyiri, choir director at St. Peter's.

Patrick, who recently retired as music department chair at Africa

University in Mutare, will be at the June 12 concert, as well as at Cheney United Methodist on June 19 and Audubon Park United Methodist on June 26.

For information, call 466-1768.

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## Fig Tree seeks to foster wider participation in public discourse

While media have made some progress to include voices of women and ordinary people, stereotypes from mindsets focusing on prominence and power continue. There is still more to do to have a press independent from economic and political control that sidelines the lives of ordinary women and men.

A recent article in *Media Development*, the journal of the World Association of Christian Communication (WACC), reported on progress in the South African press since the 1991 Windhoek Declaration. That document affirmed the need for an "independent, pluralistic and free press" if democracy is to be maintained.

Several articles in this issue of *The Fig Tree* raise concerns about educating people to claim their role in the U.S. democracy, empowering women to have a full role in decision making, and recognizing what aspects of clergy sexual abuse media cover and what they ignore. The journal report

offers some insights and reminders about what *The Fig Tree* seeks to model.

What are images of women and men in media? Who has access to media as sources, writers and subjects of news? Who is silenced and who is invisible?

A 2003 Southern Africa gender-and-media study found that men are 83 percent of media sources, and women—52 percent of the population—are 17 percent of sources. Of the men speaking in 25,000 news items in 12 countries in one month, 89 percent were in positions of prominence, reported the writer, Patricia Made, an editor and media trainer in Zimbabwe.

To what extent is that still true in the U.S. media? What does that unbalanced visibility and credibility do to images and expectations of women and men? How often are women shown related to beauty, sex and homemaking? How visible are older women? What does this censorship mean economically and politically? Is there

so much coverage of sex abuse of boys, because it's unusual? Is sex abuse of girls less "news" because it is more common? Expectations and definitions of news can skew perceptions of reality.

The WACC journal article suggests that women sources may "recede," because they are socialized not to be "too visible or talkative." Should media merely accept and reflect such attitudes? How can media establish trust to draw out stories and perspectives of women—and ordinary men?

If media ignore ordinary people, is news a mirror, as is claimed, or is it an instigator of inequities and prejudices?

Patricia proposes in the article on South African media that "news" might be "a new perspective on an issue," not just the usual unusual perspective.

She advises media to develop gender training that moves from "gender equals women" and creates awareness of the influence of gender and prominence "in news

gathering, editing and packaging."

Part of our role with *Fig Tree* interviews is to help people surface and tell parts of their stories they may not discuss with media. Perhaps they do not trust themselves to explain the issues or do not trust media to understand and communicate them. Does the lack of public discourse on some issues lead to an inability to discuss them?

If sources fall in line, giving only expected answers and sound bites they think will be reported, sources also need retraining. If people omit certain aspects of life from public discourse, such as religion, are those ideas and concerns lost?

Through our coverage, we seek to model what is possible, to challenge media and sources to bring issues into the mainstream vision and awareness. Our modeling hopefully brings credibility to voices previously hidden, whether by shyness or neglect—to restore diversity to the media menu.

Mary Stamp - Editor

## Some campuses offer a venue creating respect for religious diversity

In a world rent with war, violence, terror and poverty—yes, and hypocrisy both nationally and locally—good news is as welcome as dew on roses.

A Los Angeles Times newscast recently reported that today's college students are overwhelmingly choosing world religion courses with a focus on diversity. This trend in academia is replacing economics, business, education, American studies and other disciplines, the report said.

A whopping 400 percent growth in studies of various world religions has been noted in some areas.

Why is this happening now? One explanation is that college enrollment has dramatically changed in character in our American institutions of higher learning.

It is now multi-national, multi-racial and multi-cultural.

In the faith category, it represents Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelicals, Jewish, Native Americans and a sizable segment professing to be secular in quest of meaning in a complex and often turbulent society.

Defining priorities presents a conundrum. American students are now rubbing shoulders with many faiths, moral certitudes and cultural behaviors. Whether a student has a religious background, there is a persistent craving among college youth to find understanding of people unlike themselves. What better place than a college campus?

Reality and necessity take over when students are together in classrooms, dorms and washrooms. Diversity is no problem.

Another reason for the surge toward religious studies is that young people tend to distrust the opinions of their parents—the entrenched biases of past decades. Where does the latent hatred originate? Why are Muslims, Buddhists, Taoists, Hindus, Native Americans and Jews sometimes classed as "the enemy"? Are we practicing exclusion in the name of national security or patriotism?

William Scott Green, the associate editor of a new college dictionary, reflects on these attitudes. In his 1,000-page "Dictionary of Religion," he addresses "bite-size" facts on the history, biography, psychology and sociology of world religions.

It presents the values of many world religious backgrounds in a concise, 21st-

century-relevant style.

In the sphere of war and peace, many college students seem to be anti-war—especially opposing pre-emptive attacks—but their opinion may not be the popular stance. Seeking understanding triggers peace. It does not trigger a weapon.

Something about the college atmosphere is conducive to peace and acceptance—diversity at its best.

Much as we may talk about diversity in community organizations and churches, there is a "clannishness" we do not find in colleges. The college crowd, in seeking courses on diverse religions, may offer new possibilities for peace, harmony and understanding in God's world.

Jo Hendricks - Contributing editor

Letter to the Editor

## Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

**Sometimes it seems God plants** philosophical questions in our heads for us to ponder, but often we don't share them. Why is it so difficult for us to share those thoughts? Everything around us belongs to God as part of God's creation. We are merely caretakers. As parents, we often emphasize to our children the importance of learning to share with each other.

As we mature into adulthood, however, the temptation to establish ownership grows. Perhaps it's our mortality laced with a desire to leave behind something that identifies us when we are gone. I, too, struggle with the desire to *have* things and I have to back off and realize that *things* will never be worth what they cost my spirit.

The greatest legacy left by anyone that walked the earth was Christ's lesson of giving all he had, including his life. Christ came as an example to humankind that possessing things was a waste of time and energy, because the material things of our existence are temporary. Only God's love is eternal. Christ demonstrated that by giving to glorify God we actually receive far more than we give away.

Don Miller - board director  
Opportunity Christian Church

**At its root, the word "religion"** means "to re-link." Some of us have re-linked in such a way that we have become acutely aware that we are One creation, One people, One planet. The language that will allow us to comprehend this as fact is just now coming to light. I am firm in my belief that the Christ became Jesus—"the Word became flesh"—to prepare the way for God's spiritual community that is the whole earth. Jesus' lessons of love, forgiveness, accountability and identification with the poor and oppressed will be integral to the global language of compassion, a language

that will help us learn to live with each other as well as pave the way for a planetary consciousness and community.

The Rev. Michael (Redhawk)  
Rice-Sauer - Covenant Christian

**There is diversity** in our congregation. It may not be as visible from the side, but the view from the top reveals a variety of theological opinions, political preferences, income levels, faith experiences and personality types.

This harmonious blend of liberals and conservatives, rich and poor, evangelicals and charismatics is unusual. We are not just tolerating each other, but constantly reaching out in love and praying for one another.

We have made an art of backing off and agreeing to disagree in love. This uncommon spiritual maturity has contributed to a broad, well-supported worship and mission. Our country, our denomination and the world could learn from such interactions.

Pastor David Strickland  
First Presbyterian - Clarkston

**Sometimes there are moments** of power and presence and at other times there are moments of weakness and abandonment. Such is the experience of God often recorded in the Psalms. Left on our own, we might collapse in the sense of aloneness, but in bodies of faith, there is *hesed*.

*Hesed* is a Hebrew word that means steadfast. It is a common descriptor of the nature of God, but it is also descriptive of Christian communities. The body of Christ proclaims abiding steadfastness of faith, even if individual members, from time to time, cannot.

Without the strength of the believing community, few of us could endure the despairing and crushing experiences of

life. Where two or three are gathered, *hesed* is to be found.

The Rev. Deborah Allen  
United Church of Christ - Newport

**It amazes me each day** how strong the temptation is to give in to the daily, the secular, and move throughout the hours as though God never existed. Through my practiced effort and God's patience, it doesn't take many steps and I am reminded of the One who is willing and quite able to carry the full plate with me, to help me prioritize and do only that which is truly important in the moment. How many times have we allowed our bodies to suffer and sacrifice for our busy lives and our resistance to let Christ help carry the load? It is a common ailment in our society. We need to keep learning that to slow down in God is to maximize the moment and truly live.

The Rev. Karen Martin  
Manito United Methodist Church

**The wisdom of Native American** people reminds us that we should make our decisions, above all those about land—or "environment"—with the following seven generations in mind.

A Yakama tribal elder recently spoke of that with regard to the Yakama wilderness, which was set aside by the tribe seven generations ago, and today provides many blessings for the Yakama people. She spoke of the tribe's resolve to make decisions today about that land with the next seven generations in mind.

After a winter of uncertainties, we know that spring will come again.

The Rev. Tom Soeldner  
Salem Lutheran Church

**We are on a journey** toward a fuller living into the realm of God—a journey

of growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ and what that means for our lives.

This journey is one that lasts a lifetime. While we live on this earth we never fully arrive. Hopefully, we are constantly learning and growing. There are days or periods of time when we feel like we are not getting anywhere or that we are sitting still. Then there are other times when we find ourselves sailing along with a breeze at our back.

Eternal life is not something that takes place when we die but something we begin to experience now. The focus of the Christian life should not be about getting to heaven but on living the Christian life here and now. Eternal life is a gift from God. The joy of that life is living into it in this life.

The Rev. David Helseth  
Greenwood Christian - Yakima

**God's call to each of us** will likely never be written in anything comparable to Holy Scripture, but that doesn't make it any less a reflection of the nature of God. Nor does it diminish in any way the reality that God relishes finding people at all ages and stages of life whose spiritual "ears" are tuned to the frequencies and experiences through which God speaks.

God's calling process is counter-cultural. Scripture and, hopefully, our own life experiences make it clear that God tends to call people into God's service whom society would judge to be too young—Samuel or the boy David—or too old—Abraham and Sarah—to be chosen. God tends to call those who are seemingly too poor, insignificant, unattractive or inarticulate to be plausible candidates.

The Rev. William Peterson  
Pullman Presbyterian Church

## Interfaith Council sets Annual Meeting

The Interfaith Council's Annual Meeting and Ethnic Potluck from 6 to 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 7, at St. Ann's Parish Hall, 2120 E. First, includes an interfaith panel discussion.

Panelists will be Prakash Bhuta, Hindu; Elliot Fabric, Jewish, and Steve Rorie, Buddhist.

The council brings together Inland Northwest people of Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Native American, Sufi, Unitarian and Unity faiths, and people of no faith affiliation to build safe communities and end violence. Its programs include Camp PEACE, Circle of Caring, Advocacy Action and Darfur Genocide Education.

For information, call 329-1410.

## Jubilate offers worship resources

The "Jubilate!" ecumenical festival and retreat of worship and the arts will be held July 18 to 23 at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma.

Participants will choose from morning and afternoon workshops on ABCs of choir, African religious songs, heartfelt drama, instruments in worship, multimedia, Taizé and contemplative prayer, worship signing, movement in worship, instrumental music, Scripture and prayer, visual environment and new music.

Jubilate chaplain, Tori Hicks, pastor of the United Methodist Church in Colfax, is preparing worship experiences.

The Jubilate Choir, directed by Karin Shovic of ChoralWeb Publishing, rehearses every day and sings for each service.

David Valera, director of connectional ministries for the Pacific Northwest United Methodist Annual Conference, will lead a class on "Instruments of Worship," inviting participants to explore use of new technologies in worship, Bible study and story sharing.

For information, call (208) 596-1496.

## Baha'is in Idaho celebrate diversity

Baha'is are holding a "Race Unity Celebration" from 1 to 5 p.m., Saturday, June 11, at Coeur d'Alene City Park.

People of many ethnic and racial backgrounds will gather to celebrate the diversity in the community, said George Mack.

For information, call (208) 664-5410.

# Catholics consider World Council an essential partner

A Vatican official affirms that Catholics are in the ecumenical movement to find answers to questions of Christian unity, recognizing the World Council of Churches as "an essential partner."

"We are here to listen," said Bishop Brian Farrell of the Vatican delegation to the 13th Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, "and as we listen, we have to reflect and then respond. We are in the ecumenical movement to clarify the questions before us, and to find answers. A meeting like this stimulates us to want to find answers together."

Following the Second Vatican Council and its opening to "separated brethren" and sisters of other Christian communities, Catholics began to attend WCC events as observers. Soon, the Catholic Church became a full partner in the Faith and Order commission, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and the Joint Working Group between the Catholic Church and the WCC.

For a decade, the WCC and the Vatican worked jointly in devel-

opment and peacemaking through a joint commission for society, development and peace.

Each relationship has experienced highs and lows.

"For us," asserts Bishop Farrell, "the WCC is an essential partner in the ecumenical movement. Nowhere else do so many strands of the modern ecumenical movement come together."

"When Faith and Order was central to WCC life, we believe it was a more effective instrument in the quest for Christian unity. We continue to urge strengthening Faith and Order as key to the WCC and its member churches, as well as to the council's understanding of other issues, such as justice and peace."

The bishop, a member of the Joint Working Group, is secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. He has been cheered by ecumenically minded pronouncements made by Pope Benedict XVI since last month.

"We are full of hope in everything we've heard about ecumenical relations. The pope is totally

supportive. He has been involved in dialogue since he was a young theologian in Germany engaged in discussion with Lutherans, and he has been a prominent figure in dialogue with Orthodox theologians."

WCC general secretary Samuel Kobia is visiting the Vatican in June to review the relationship and pinpoint areas for working more closely.

Some dimensions and intersections change over time. The increased representation at the mission conference of Pentecostals and Catholics suggests a change in the ecumenical configuration. The bishop said Catholics and Pentecostals are coming to know each other better, especially in Latin America, where Pentecostal churches are thriving and the

number of Catholic charismatics is also rising, despite an overall drop in Catholic membership.

Latin America will be the venue of the WCC's 9th Assembly, to be convened in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in February 2006. The Brazilian national conference of churches, which includes the Catholic and assorted Pentecostal churches, will act as co-host on the campus of the Pontifical Catholic University.

Bishop Farrell reflects, "Personal contact is important. It's a profound theological truth that must not be forgotten. Everything worthwhile in the church is personal."

By Theodore Gill - senior editor of WCC Publications in Geneva and a minister ordained by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

## Calendar of Events

- June 1-22** • Habitat for Humanity-Spokane Blitz Build, see p. 12
- June 3** • Fig Tree Deepening Our Roots Breakfast and Faith in Action Dialogue, see p. 2
- June 3-5** • ArtFest 2005, Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 W. First - call 456-3931
- June 6** • Spokane Citizens for a Living Wage, 35 W. Main, 5 p.m.
- June 7** • Interfaith Council Annual Meeting and Ethnic Potluck, St. Ann's 2120 E. First, 6 p.m.
- School of the Americas Watch , 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m.
- June 7-8** • Caregiver Retreat: "Caring for Ourselves as We Care for Others," Sister Celeste Crine OSF, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd. - call 448-1224
- June 8** • Fig Tree Website Team meeting, Gonzaga University Journalism and Broadcast Building, 205 E. Boone, 7 p.m.
- June 9** • Fig Tree Annual Meeting, Manito United Methodist Church, 3220 S. Grand, 1 p.m.
- June 11** • Spokane RiverFest—music, speakers and displays on the Spokane River and Spokane's ecology, culture and economy—High Bridge Park, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Race Unity Celebration, Coeur d'Alene, see this page
- June 16** • VOICES, Salem Lutheran, 1428 W. Broadway, 5:30 p.m.
- PeaceWorks, Resist Now, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m.
- June 23, 24** • "Side by Side" performances, see p. 3
- June 25** • Senior Services and Health Fair, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., St Paschal Parish, 2523 N Park Rd. - call 924-4871
- June 26** • "Celebration of Musical Gifts" Concert, see p. 13
- July 7-9** • Whitworth Preaching Conference, see p. 3
- July 11-15** • Whitworth Institute of Ministry, see p. 2
- July 16-17** • Festival of the Arts on the Shadowy St. Joe, St. Maries
- July 18-23** • Jubilate! - see this page
- Aug 6** • Unity in the Community, Liberty Park, see p. 2
- Hiroshima Remembrance Day - 60th year
- Nagasaki Remembrance Day - 60th year
- Aug 9** • Fig Tree distribution, St. Mark Lutheran, 24<sup>th</sup> and Grand, 9 a.m.
- Aug 31** • Fig Tree board meeting at Manito United Methodist Church
- Sept 1** • Fig Tree board meeting at Manito United Methodist Church
- Tues-Sats** Habitat for Humanity work days - call 534-2552
- Fridays** Colville Peace Vigil - call 675-4554
- First Sats** Minister Fellowship Union - call 624-0522

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## After years of working with volunteers, Donna Hanson will become one

**A**s Donna Hanson prepares to retire after 27 years as director of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Spokane, about one-third of the 180 diocesan Catholic Charities directors are lay women.

When she started in 1978, she was the only lay woman director. About 80 percent of the other directors were priests.

When Catholic Charities began nationally in the early 1900s, all directors were priests. Now most are lay men and women, because directors now are expected to have at least a master's degree in social work or a related field.

Gender and racial inequality framed her early years in Kentucky, and continue to frame her commitment to equality, justice and peace. With the support of family, Donna pursued her dream to become a social worker and to call for equality. She said support of the Catholic Charities community and from attending daily Mass at St. Augustine's Catholic Church sustain her commitment.

"We have come a long way, but we have a long way to go," said Donna, who will continue to promote gender equality and peace as a volunteer with Caritas International.

In her 41 years with the Diocese of Spokane's 93-year-old Catholic Charities, the largest private charity in the Inland Northwest, she has learned "of people's goodness and generosity" in her role of connecting "givers and receivers." She draws on the assistance of many long-term volunteers.

"When I ask them to help, they say, 'Yes! What can I do?' People are good and want to help and be part of making the world a better place. They just need to be invited and asked to do something specific and manageable," said Donna, offering some examples.

- In April, she was at St. Ann's Home when 50 Gonzaga University students were there scrubbing windows and sanitizing toys.

- In March, 12 people at an Immaculate Heart retreat on "Following in the Footsteps of St. Francis" spent a day at Cathedral Plaza Apartments washing windows, vacuuming and turning mattresses for elderly residents.

- Father Mike Kwiatkowski, pastor at St. Joseph's Church in Colbert, invited parishioners to do a work day rather than spend money on him for the 25th anniversary of his ordination.

More than 120 went to Summit View Apartments from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. They installed a bench and a garage door, jack-hammered an old concrete container, power-washed part of the building, weeded, planted



Donna Hanson

flowers, and washed windows and floors.

- Marge McFaul asked family and friends to bring coffee for the House of Charity to her 80th birthday party at Sacred Heart Catholic Church. They brought nearly a truckload. While many sources donate enough food to feed 200 people a day there on less than \$5,000 a year, the House of Charity has to buy coffee.

"I have learned: 'Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened,'" Donna said. "Our mission is to create and constantly expand a network of individuals, institutions, parishes and congregations to provide social services in Eastern Washington based on need, not creed."

Such volunteer efforts coordinated by staff provided services through 15 programs in 50 locations to more than 44,000 homeless, hungry, hurting people in 2004, according to the annual report. About 85 percent of the people Catholic Charities helps are not Catholics—consistent with this region's figures on church affiliation, she said.

Low-income and senior complexes house about 1,800 people in Othello, Walla Walla, Colville, Clarkston, Pullman and Spokane. Throughout the diocese about 1,700 volunteers help 2,600 seniors and disabled people through Volunteer Chore Services.

In recent years under Donna's leadership, Catholic Charities has built new facilities in Spokane for St. Margaret's Shelter, the House of Charity and the St. Anne's Chil-

dren and Family Center.

Because about 85 percent of those employed and served by Catholic Charities and Caritas International are women, while 95 percent of the international organization's leadership are men, Donna will continue her work for gender equality.

When the National Association of Diocesan Social Action Directors honored her for her social justice work at a recent gathering, she expressed concern that exclusion of women from decision-making is one reason many women live in poverty and need assistance.

She also expressed that concern in several audiences she had with the late Pope John Paul II.

Not until after her 12 years of education at St. Mary's Academy in Paducah, Ky., did she fully realize the school was segregated. Now it welcomes children of all ethnic backgrounds. She hopes for similar progress for women.

Donna grew up in a culture that expected women to be secretaries or nurses and marry businessmen or doctors. Then, professional jobs were for men, and women were expected to be at home.

She wanted to be a social worker, because she saw traditional family roles being "unmasked when husbands and fathers died, deserted the family or divorced their wives. I realized many other women had desires beyond the kitchen or bedroom."

In 1958, encouraged by family, she enrolled in a women's Catholic college in Louisville and on graduation entered the St. Louis University School of Social

Work. In her practicum at the city hospital, where 98 percent of staff and patients were African American, she listened to their stories, visited public housing complexes and learned how racism destroyed their lives and communities.

Seeing the struggles of women Catholic Charities serves, she says sexism must join racism as "an insidious evil we must eradicate from our church and world."

Because most cultures assume men care for women, she said that women experience discrimination and die at disproportionate rates.

"Men cannot protect women from suicide bombs, 30-foot walls, bigotry, genocide or disasters like the tsunami," she said.

Considering the thousands of women religious who run hospitals, schools and social service agencies, she said it is crucial for "women to make decisions that dramatically impact our lives."

In 1991, the Catholic Charities USA president invited her to attend the Caritas International General Assembly in Rome, as one of a few women decision-makers.

Seeing that the imbalance cannot improve on its own, she continues to ask, "How might we bring inclusiveness into our structures, given that gender has been a priority of Caritas for the past six years?"

In 1999, Donna helped organize the Caritas General Assembly Gender Forum, so that delegations from 184 countries could have three representatives instead of two if one was a woman. Following the forum, the General Assembly established the Gender Working Group.

As a regional coordinator, Donna helps the group find ways to engage more women in leadership around the world.

Her participation in the 1995 United Nations' Women's Conference in Beijing furthered her commitment to work to open doors in decision making to women. She sees progress as women come into solidarity with vulnerable women around the world.

While in the early years people argued whether Catholic Charities should focus on charity or advocacy, she said both are important. Advocacy reduces need for charity. Direct service informs

advocacy for public policy.

"As always, we are about both charity and justice," said Donna. "We have credibility when we advocate about policies because we are doing the day-to-day work with people needing child care, mental health care, shelter and other services. We know what we are talking about."

She told of a parish that collected coats for migrant families in Brewster and Twisp. The third year, one parishioner asked: "Will we continue to do this or make the changes needed so these people can have decent wages and buy their own coats?"

When people make such connections, come together and say "no more," Donna said, significant changes occur.

For gender equality to be realized, she believes people of faith must strategize, take risks and make it a priority.

"Then women will be at the table to bring our wisdom to solve challenges in our church and world," she said. "We need to challenge the U.S. government about spending too much on the military, rather than spending enough to educate, provide medical care and assure social services for people."

"Women will leave public assistance when they have jobs that enable them to earn a reasonable living," she said, repeating, "We have come a long way, but we have a long way to go globally and locally."

In retirement, Donna plans to pursue her commitments as a volunteer, spend time with grandchildren, do some home improvements and care for her health.

Diagnosed with peritoneal cancer in March 2004, she celebrated remission in November following treatment. A routine exam in February, however, found that the cancer had returned, so she began chemotherapy again.

Donna and her husband, Bob, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary in July.

Catholic Charities' board has a search committee that will do interviews for her successor in the summer. Donna plans to assist the new director and complete her responsibilities by Oct. 31.

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