The Fig Tree

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Monthly newspaper covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest

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Education impacts generations

By Mary Stamp

After more than 20 years helping people in crises as a way to promote her commitment to tikun olam—healing the earth—Adie Goldberg wanted to walk with families through the ongoing cycles of life.

Having advised other people to follow their dreams, she decided to leave her practice as a psychiatric social worker to become education and youth director at Temple Beth Shalom three years ago, shortly after the temple's Cowen Education Building was completed.

Last October, the Temple's Sunday school and Hebrew school were recognized among the top 50 of 620 U.S. and Canadian Conservative Jewish affiliated schools for meeting "rigorous standards" in curriculum development and family education.

When Temple Beth Shalom formed as Spokane's two synagogues merged in 1966, it contin-

Continued on page 4

Adie Goldberg left counseling to help families in ongoing cycles of life.

Special section reviews Fig Tree

In recognition
of its 20th anniversary,
this issue of *The Fig Tree*
includes a special section on
pages 7 to 10
that covers
the history and life
of this publication:

- **Coverage challenges conventional wisdom**
- **Editors find work a multi-faceted ministry**
- **Fig Tree demonstrates the power of words**
- **Coverage addresses—without feeding—conflicts**
- **Paper steadily grows, technology helps process**

Four events mark 20th anniversary May 20-21

Thursday
7 p.m. - St. Mark's Lutheran - Poverty
Friday
• 7:30 a.m. - First Presbyterian - Media
• noon - St. Paul United Methodist - Dialogue
• 7 p.m. - Highland Park United Methodist - Diversity/Peace

Bob Edgar concurs with *Fig Tree's* focus on hope and humane side of life

The Rev. Bob Edgar of the National Council of Churches comes to *The Fig Tree's* 20th anniversary May 20 and 21, sharing "its focus on the humane side of life" and its mission to "give hope for the future."

As general secretary, he travels and speaks on issues he will address in Spokane—poverty, communications, dialogue, diversity. He urges people of faith to care about the fragile planet, to register poor people to vote and to promote international peacemaking.

True to its function over the years, *The Fig Tree* will connect him with local leaders in an interchange of resources.

An ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, Bob came to the Council from Claremont Theological School, Claremont, Calif., where he was president from 1990 to 2000, bringing the school from the brink of collapse to institutional health. An optimist, futurist and coalition builder, he has similarly brought health to the National Council of Churches, which connects 36 Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox member communions with 140,000 congregations.

National Council of Churches leader will discuss poverty, communication, dialogue, diversity and peace.

The anniversary plans include:

• **"The Mobilization to Overcome Poverty"** will be the focus of Bob's presentation at 7 p.m., Thursday, May 20, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 24th and Grand. Representatives of the Spokane Alliance, the Valley Center and VOICES will discuss local efforts.

• **"Credible Religious Communication"** is the theme for *The Fig Tree's* benefit breakfast from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., Friday, May 21, at First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar. Bob will discuss *The Fig Tree* as a model of ecumenical and inter-religious communications. Local readers will share its impact on their lives and ministries. Table hosts are being recruited. People may call to reserve seats. Christ Kitchen will cater the benefit breakfast.

• **"Progress in Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogue"** is the topic at noon, Friday, May 21, at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 1620 N. Monroe. Bob will report on the new shape of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue nationally, and will hear from Bishop Walt Mize of Christ Holy Sanctified Church, the Rev. Randy Hyvonen of the Pacific Northwest United Church of Christ Conference and Bishop Martin Wells of the Eastern Washington Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Women's and Children's Free Restaurant will serve lunch. Reservations are needed for the $7 lunch.

• **"Overcoming Violence: Celebrating Diversity"** is the theme for the 7 p.m. gathering Friday, May 21, at Highland Park United Methodist Church, 611 S. Garfield. Bob will report on national efforts to overcome violence and racial injustice. He will hear from representatives of Gonzaga University's Institute for Action Against Hate and learn about the work of the Interfaith Council and Camp PEACE.

This intercultural dessert gathering will feature music by the Covenant United Methodist Marimba Band and an invitation to join the Africa Support Group in dancing to the music.

For information, call 535-1813 or 328-0822.

Religion News Briefs

Around the World

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Mel Gibson's The Passion a hit in Arab world

Jerusalem (ENI). Mel Gibson's film "The Passion of the Christ" has become a surprise hit in the Arab world, among both Muslims and Christians, who often have different motivations for viewing the movie. While Christian Arabs, including Palestinians, are examining questions of faith, many Muslims are interested because of an upsurge in hatred against Jews.

South Africa and its churches face challenges

Cape Town (ENI). South Africa celebrated its 10th anniversary of democratic rule on April 27 in a spirit of triumph. Once one of the world's most divided countries, it dismantled the official racist policy of apartheid to avoid civil war. It now lays claim to Africa's most robust economy. Church leaders who denounced apartheid now feel sidelined, sometimes even pitted against the new South African government, as they address new problems and concerns, such as the AIDS epidemic and the political crisis in neighboring Zimbabwe.

Church aid agencies in Iraq scale back

Geneva (ENI). Church aid agencies working in Iraq are pulling out international staff, reviewing their programs in the face of continuing violence and, in at least one instance, considering suspending operations altogether, the Geneva-based Action by Churches Together International (ACT) alliance has announced. "The hostage taking in Iraq and an escalation of hostilities in general have compelled DanChurchAid to seriously re-consider its international presence in Iraq (Basra)," said Lennart Skov-Hansen, relief coordinator of the Danish aid agency, which belongs to ACT.

Ask society before running up debt, say churches

Lusaka (ENI). Zambia Jubilee, a church-sponsored debt cancellation project is calling on the Zambian government to involve the church and civil society when taking out international loans so as to avoid another debt crisis. "Why get more loans when you have a huge debt at hand which is unsustainable?" said Jack Zulu, Zambia Jubilee policy analyst. "The Zambian government is irresponsible in the manner it is contracting and spending them on non-productive issues."

Churches acknowledge inaction in genocide

Nairobi (ENI). Political leaders and representatives of Christian denominations acknowledged their past inaction and urged strong support for a healing process in Rwanda, that had suffered the trauma of a genocide in which up to one million people were killed over 100 days in 1994. Churches said in a document entitled, "The Kigali Covenant," produced at a workshop in the Rwandan capital from April 16 to 19, they would "stand up and speak against behavior, pronouncements and practices that have the tendency to set one group of people against another." The covenant was read at a Sunday service in the Kigali Stadium to mark the 10th anniversary of the massacres.

Survey finds religion strong for arts students

New York (ENI). Does spirituality animate U.S. college and university students in the arts and humanities more than those in science or business? Apparently yes, says a survey by the University of California-Los Angeles. It concluded religious commitment is strongest among students majoring in fine arts (62 percent), education (59 percent) and humanities (57 percent) and lowest among majors in biological science (43 percent), history or political science (41 percent), and sociology (37 percent).

WCC continues to deepen ties with Catholics

Geneva (ENI). The World Council of Churches will continue to deepen its relations with the Roman Catholic Church, said the WCC's general secretary the Rev. Sam Kobia from the Methodist Church in Kenya. He said bilateral attempts at church unity are growing as "the ecumenical movement is confronted with a changed reality."

Regional Ecumenical & Interfaith News

Association promotes concern about uninsured

The Washington Association of Churches (WAC) in Seattle is promoting the national "Cover the Uninsured Week: A Call to All to Care for All" May 10 to 16.

They believe renewed concern and commitment are needed to assure that all Americans have health care coverage. The week draws attention to needs of nearly 44 million people—half a million in Washington alone—without health care coverage.

The religious community has long been an advocate and a provider of care and comfort for people, said the Rev. Tom Quigley, acting executive minister.

Faith communities care about people's physical, mental and spiritual wholeness and well-being, praying for the sick and dying, visiting people in hospitals or homes, founding hospitals and promoting health care for all.

Last year, Cover the Uninsured Week raised awareness about struggles of Americans who lack health care coverage. Rising costs make it difficult for individuals, businesses and governments to purchase health care coverage, putting more people at risk.

"People without coverage live sicker and die younger because they are forced to go without medical care they need. They are less likely to receive preventive care, annual checkups or tests that can discover serious illnesses," Tom explained.

Eight in 10 uninsured Americans are in working families. Either their jobs provide no health coverage or they cannot afford the premiums.

More than 8.5 million children are uninsured. During the most crucial years of brain and body development, uninsured children lack consistent access to health care when they are sick and preventive care to keep them healthy, Tom continued. Undiagnosed and untreated illnesses and condition such as ear infections, eyesight problems and asthma, hinder children's ability to learn.

An interfaith guide for discussion and reflection is available at www.CovertheUninsuredWeek.org or at (206) 352-8528.

The WAC invites faith communities to plan events to share information about how the problem affects everyone and to urge community conversations to find solutions. For information, email jackieoryan@msn.com.

National Day of Prayer events scheduled on May 6

Greater Spokane Association of Evangelicals (GSAE) will join people across the nation in holding prayer vigils, services, conferences and community gatherings for the National Day of Prayer from 11:30 a.m. to 1: 30 p.m., Thursday, May 6 at the Red Lion Inn at the Park, 303 W. North Drive.

Featured guests are Jason Hansen of the Detroit Lions football team and Jena Johnson, the 2004 Lilac Festival Queen.

Since 1952, the nation has observed the first Thursday of May as a day to stop and pray for wisdom, guidance and moral direction, said the Rev. John Tusant, director of the GSAE. President Harry Truman established the day for prayer. Since then, hundreds of thousands have gathered in various locations to remember "that national leaders are desperately in need of prayer," John said. "What more could we do at a time such as now? We can make a difference in the direction of our nation."

For information, call 487-7429.

Global Folk Art celebrates World Fair Trade Day

"Small Change, Big Difference" is the theme for World Fair Trade Day on Saturday, May 8.

People around the world will celebrate by calling attention to the connections and benefits that have resulted from fair trade.

In Spokane, Global Folk Art will host a celebration from 10: 30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., at the Community Building, 35 W. Main.

"Every year the awareness of the benefits of fair trade grows and more people become supporters of the artisans and producers in third world countries," said Stacy Ott, manager of Global Folk Art.

She added that "the celebration at our store will be to thank our many customers who support fair trade and honor the producers who work so hard and deserve our respect."

Festivities will include guest vendors offering items from around the world, samples of fair trade coffee and food, art projects for children, and some African style drumming.

For information, call 838-0664.

California bishop speaks at St. John's

The Right Rev. William Swing, Bishop of California, will speak at 9 a.m. Saturday, May 22 and will preach at all the services on Saturday and Sunday, May 23, at St. John's Cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave.

His presentation is part of the Cathedral's 75th anniversary celebrations throughout the year.

Bishop Swing is described as the "founding spirit" behind the United Religions Initiative (URI) and serves on URI's Global Council as president and founding trustee.

The organization's vision is to create an initiative whereby people of diverse faiths can work daily for peace.

For information, call 838-4277.

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Yakima, Benton and Franklin counties form new organizing effort

A new, 17-member tri-county community organizing alliance will hold its Founding Assembly at 7 p.m., Monday, May 17, at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Sunnyside.

Yakima, Benton and Franklin counties are forming a broader alliance with Russell Shjerven in Yakima serving as the organizer.

About 20 organizations will attend the event as observers, considering membership.

Russell has been involved with Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) efforts related to the Spokane Alliance since 1996—except for a year from 2000 to 2001 spent in Mexico with the family of his wife, Conchita Mayo.

He became involved when his parish, St. Aloysius Catholic Church in Toppenish, participated in a Leadership Institute training. From that, a core of leaders in the parish developed, ready to take roles on the parish council and in stewardship development.

The initial issue the parish addressed was citizenship.

In 1997, Russell was hired as organizer in Yakima County.

Six of the 17 members are churches: St. Aloysius and Faith Lutheran in Toppenish, St. Joseph Catholic and Christ Lutheran in Yakima, First United Methodist in Pasco and Community Unitarian Universalist in Kennewick. There are also labor unions and education associations.

Their five issues for action are:

• voter education and registration;

• urging local school boards and city councils to hire local workers and use apprentices for local projects;

• research in rural and agricultural communities to keep family farmers and agricultural industries in place;

• cooperation with the Spokane Alliance and Portland's Metropolitan Allliance for the Common Good to reduce the prices of pharmaceuticals, and

• involvement with local school districts to create parental participation in reducing the high dropout rate and improving WASL test scores.

Another recent project has been to create a community-based food bank. St. Aloysius parish has long been the sole food bank for Toppenish and Buena residents.

"The financial burden on our parish became such that we were unsure if we could continue it," Russell said.

Through the alliance relationships, leaders developed an effort to save the food bank, shutting down the one at St. Aloysius and restarting it as the Community Food Bank with 14 sponsoring agencies—including the Lions Club, Public School Employees, the Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, Sisters of the Holy Names and six churches: St. Aloysius, Faith Lutheran, Toppenish United Methodist, Cristo de Valle Assembly of God, Evangelical Christian and Grace Brethren.

They are raising pledges of $3,000 a month to cover costs of running it and $100,000 in donations to construct a building with the assistance of Job Corps apprentices and free labor from local sheet metal workers, electrical workers and carpenters unions.

"Food bank use in this agricultural area is seasonal. It feeds 30 to 120 families a week. When farm workers are not in the fields, it is used more," Russell said.

This spring, less asparagus has been cut than usual, because producers are importing more asparagus, so there has been more demand for assistance from the food bank.

"A greater percentage of people in rural areas, in contrast to urban areas, rely on food banks," he said.

Russell, whose father's family is from Norway, grew up Lutheran and became Catholic after he was married. Going to Spanish Mass and following the liturgy, he finds the Gospel readily connects with what he does outside the church.

"After Mass, we are responsible to make the world a better place," he said. "That's why I taught English for two years at Heritage College to Hispanic and Native American women, the first generation in their families to earn college degrees.

His first organizing project was to work with immigrants on citizenship education.

Engaged with people of different faiths and different social and economic backgrounds, Russell believes "our job is to be in the world and among the people God created."

"The liturgy and communion connect me with the community through the concepts of body and blood, resurrection and promise. The liturgy gives me a sense of hope," he said. "From the Old Testament times, we see God caring about the physical wellbeing of people on the planet. Our responsibility is to emulate that."

For information, call 945-7343 or contact rshjerv1@earthlink,net.

Interfaith representatives lead CROP walkers from Spokane and Cheney

About 225 walkers in the combined Spokane-Cheney CROP Walk on Sunday, April 25, raised $23,456 in pledges for the walk that supports Church World Services hunger and development projects and for local food banks and Meals on Wheels.

Representatives of local Episcopal, Unity, Baha'i, Presbyterian, Jewish, Catholic, United Church of Christ, Buddhist, Hindu, Lutheran, Disciples of Christ, Unitarian, Methodist, Community of Christ and Friends congregations, and the Interdenominational Ministers Fellowship led the walkers into Riverfront Park and then back along the Spokane River to Greene Street Bridge, returning to Gonzaga's Martin Centre.

The Rev. Brian Prior, left, was one of 31 walkers from the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection in Spokane Valley.

Sponsored by Gonzaga University students, several boys from Morning Star Boys' Ranch walked. There were also several students from Spokane Falls Community College.

Dennis Hession of the Spokane City Council applauded the effort to overcome world and local hunger and poverty.

Marie Cuc, a Guatemalan living in Spokane who has lived among the poor, reported that hunger is growing in Guatemala since the "bottom fell out of" the coffee market: "I am grateful to see so many people concerned about hunger and to see your energy to walk for people in need."

Representatives of recipients of the 25 percent of funds for local hunger action also spoke, inspiring walkers to know:

1) that Spokane Valley Meals on Wheels delivers more than 100,000 meals a year, keeping people in their homes;

2) that Interfaith Hospitality Network organizes churches to house and feed homeless families, and

3) that the Second Harvest Food Bank serves more than 7,000 people a month through its emergency outlets.

Cheney walkers' funds will go to the Cheney Food Bank.

In a send-off prayer, the Rev. Kristi Philips expressed hope that the walk would open eyes of walkers to people's needs.

For information, call 329-1410.

Religious education provides a legacy, a safety net and community

Continued from page 1

ued Temple Emanu-El's confirmation school run by volunteers. That school now has 11 paid teachers teaching 150 students and accountable to an education board.

Adie, who has a master's degree in social work from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and another master's in education from the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, has been taking refresher courses with the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies distance-learning program out of Chicago, while she works.

Living in a large Jewish community in a suburb of St. Louis in the 1950s and 1960s, she didn't have to think about being Jewish. In contrast, she said Jewish people in the Inland Northwest have to be more conscious and make a decision to be Jewish.

Being in the first generation born after the Holocaust—having lost great-grandparents, great-aunts, great-uncles and cousins who did not come to the United States—she wants to focus on the joys of Jewish culture she knew in St. Louis with delis, activities, plays, concerts and other events.

"In a community where the Jewish population is small, like many faiths or minorities in this area, we need to seek out people to be together. It's a gift, because our children have to consciously choose to be Jewish, rather than having it be the 'thing to do,'" Adie said.

As a result, Jewish young people are choosing to be involved.

Three high school students are spending part of a year in a high school in Tel Aviv. Three to five students go each summer to programs in Israel. Fifty go to a Jewish camp in Olympia for three to five weeks. About 30 are in the junior high group and 40 in the high school group, in a congregation with 275 member families, she said.

"Teens stay involved in high school and mentor or tutor younger children. Rather than leaving their faith at 'pediatric Judaism,' they stay after their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs at 13. After that, they are not required to go to Sunday school or Hebrew school, but choose to attend, despite the array of activities in the community," said Adie.

Her belief in tikun olam drew her into the Peace Corps in Togo, West Africa, where she was a midwife and women's health extension agent. Then she moved to Alaska where she worked with battered women's programs and programs for abused and neglected children, married and went to graduate school in Canada.

Adie Goldberg shows bulletin board lessons.

She came to Spokane and worked two years with Group Health and then for Woman Health.

"In education, we see people from births to Bar Mitzvahs and Bat Mitzvahs, from weddings to funerals. It's a privilege to follow families through life, rather than just to see people while they are in crisis. I never knew the rest of their life stories and could not apply spiritual insights," she said.

The mother of a sixth grader, a high school sophomore and a college student, Adie wants to impart the joyful side of faith along with the serious post-Holocaust-survival side. She introduces children to Jewish rituals, gratitude, humor, music and dance.

Her background in psychology gives her understanding of children's developmental needs, so she knows, for example, that it's appropriate to introduce the serious aspects of faith in early adolescence when abstract reasoning begins.

The Sunday school for preschoolers through seventh graders meets 9:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The curriculum introduces children to history, culture, ethics and values, laying the ground for social action or tikun olam.

For Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, 13-year-olds are expected to do community service. Several helped serve the Kosher Dinner in March.

On Tikun Olam Day, Sunday, April 25 this year, kindergartners to second graders played bingo with residents at the Waterford Retirement Community. Third and fourth graders painted playroom windows and played with children at the Children's Hospital at Sacred Heart Medical Center. Others helped plant flowers along the Centennial Trail. Sixth graders prepared and served a meal at the Crosswalk program for street youth. Seventh graders served a meal at Union Gospel Mission. Adults did repairs at the temple.

"We also teach about 'tzedeka,' which means righteousness. It is conceptually different from charity and is required. There are different levels of tzedeka, the highest being to create a job for someone," Adie said.

Classes save money and at the end of the year vote where it will go—such as SpokAnimal, the Red Cross and its counterpart, the Magen Adom (Red Star) in Israel.

From 4 to 6 p.m., Wednesdays, third to seventh graders attend Hebrew school. Sunday evenings eighth to 12th graders study with the rabbi. Adult education includes basic Judaism and Hebrew. There are Bar and Bat Mitzvah classes. A "Reel Theology" group meets to watch and discuss films related to Jewish topics—and eat bagels. There are women's retreats, adult retreats, scholars in residence for family education, and youth groups.

"Children are forced to make difficult decisions every day, exposed to problems and choices my generation encountered only as adults. I would like to provide them with a safety net as a point of reference, when they try to make sense of issues. When they face loneliness and isolation, I want them to know they have a legacy of wisdom to draw on when they must make tough decisions," Adie said.

"Religious education provides a legacy, safety net and community. I cannot promise that if I give children those, life will be easy, but I hope it will less difficult," she said.

Every week, Jews around the world read the same section of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible—a different one each week. A bulletin board in the hall of the education wing has reflections on the text related to plot, the big idea and the mitzvot or law coming from it.

Adie pointed to the lesson on the golden calf and a drawing of Moses' tablets with the 10 commandments broken.

"The big idea," she read, "is the sin of the golden calf despite all God had done for the Israelites, and yet they needed more evidence of God. What does this say about our behavior as people? Would you have gone along with friends and danced around the cow or would you have walked away from the camp to wait for Moses?" the lesson asks.

The law requiring people to "give a half-shekel" is based on taking a census by having everyone give the smallest coin. Why did the rich and the poor give the same? We are all the same value before God, she explained.

On the wall in the stairwell of the education wing are human-sized paintings of Jews around the world—in Italy, China, Spain, Turkey and Poland—to remind the children that they are not alone. There are Jews all around the world.

Adie hopes simply that the school is a "place where our students can see their buddies, have fun and experience the joy and wisdom of a legacy that is thousands of years old."

For information, call 747-3304.

Kathleen Norris believes words have power to change lives

Kathleen Norris' books and poetry exemplify her belief that poets and Christians believe in the power of words to change human hearts.

After graduating from high school in Honolulu and college in Bennington, Vt., Kathleen, the author of *Dakota* and *The Cloister Walk*, became arts administrator for the Academy of American Poets in New York City.

Her grandfather's death drew her back to the family home in Lennon, S.D., where she put in roots for the next 30 years, as an art teacher, librarian, writer and Presbyterian oblate with a Benedictine monastery.

"With a living God, there's no getting it right," said Kathleen as she began to tell of her journey from college to work, marriage, family and back to work. She spoke in April at Whitworth College.

"Christians insist God is part of it all, in continual dialogue with us," Kathleen said. "I realized God was close to me when I wasn't thinking about God at all."

In retrospect, she realizes from years, when she was outside church life and faith, that when people seek knowledge, truth, self-confidence or a job, they seek God.

So she advises people to listen to the three books of God: 1) the book of Scriptures, 2) the book of nature and 3) the book of each encounter with another human life.

Reading Scriptures aloud at the monastery, she finds an inexhaustible resource, a rich book transcending other literature—and not intended for five verses to be quoted as a weapon.

Taking nature seriously, the monastery weighs the value and potential damage of each new technology, using an answering machine that values both callers and those at prayer.

By the book of each person, she means each human life is a story: "If we are part of Christ, we elevate human stories to the holy."

Kathleen finds people look for ways to ignore God's voice.

"We distract ourselves from the spiritual and the real," she said, related to her theme, "Spirituality in the Real World."

"We are tempted to drown out our souls. We are culturally conditioned to fear silence. Who has patience to listen to the still small voice?" she mused.

"People are afraid to be alone and available to God. We turn to a vast array of distractions, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It works. We are numb. We lose our ability to listen to God and develop a realistic faith," Kathleen said. "It's easy to forget we have souls. If we forget we have souls, it's easy to seek to be invincible rather than vulnerable.

"Spirituality and poetry are often considered sentimental and suspect, but they help us go to the heart of emotion, life and death. Belief is a basic human need, like air, food and water. Faith helps us understand contradictions of life. Before we die, we will suffer and experience pain and loss, but that's not the complete story. When we comprehend life has meaning, we can experience joy in face of our mortality," Kathleen said.

While belief can be narcissistic, faith helps when people suffer and religion helps people persist and serve in face of evil.

"Faith says evil is not the last word," Kathleen continued. "Spirituality helps us incarnate the belief that good will prevail. When people say with a tinge of self-righteousness: 'I'm spiritual, but not religious,' they mean they are not part of organized religion.

"If you think religion is organized, you are not paying attention. If you know the body of Christ, you will find in each congregation disparate souls worshiping together. Sometimes I think people in my church are praying to different gods. It's a miracle any congregation, disorganized as it is, can worship or work together to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, minister to the ill, the young and the old. That people show up is a blessing," she said.

"Most religions have people of different spiritualities. Opting for spirituality over religion means, 'I want to do my own thing, not be bothered with other people or opinions.'

"Christians recognize we are weak souls and need each other for moral support," she said. "Christian heaven is like a city, interdependent, but most Americans seek to be independent."

Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote from a prison cell that Christian community is a source of incomprehensible joy. With Christians polarized by the myth of the "self-made" person, she calls for responsibility and recognition that God created people to make a difference in each other's lives.

Kathleen considers church communities happenstance, not a basis for acting holier than others.

"We come to church because God calls us. We should be asking each other: 'What is your story? What is your calling? What are you meant to be?'"

Adrift after college at the literary agency in New York, Kathleen was challenged by her boss to start thinking about what she might do in the next 10 years.

"Who do I want to be in 10 years?" she urges people to ask, recognizing that circumstances—like marriage, death and returning to South Dakota—may change the vision, so it's a question to keep asking. Health problems, the dot-com boom and bust, parents' deaths, divorce and other factors can "leave us feeling unsure," Kathleen said. When she cared for her aging father and her dying husband, it was hard to think of herself as a writer.

"When what once worked no longer works, we find new avenues," she said, telling of an attorney who became a Peace Corps teacher, a banker who became a Benedictine monk, and a woman with a corporate career who became an Episcopal deacon.

"Once we develop our God-given talents, we age and have to give them up," Kathleen said.

Her father, a cellist, had to give up playing cello. Fiercely independent, he had to accept help from others. Some become cranky and make it hard on those caring for them, she said.

"When my father lost his ability to drive and walk, he did it with grace, without making life miserable for the rest of us," she said.

"St. Benedict advises us to keep our death daily before our eyes so we keep reality in perspective, especially when we are angry.

"Why develop talents if we will lose them and die? God did not create us to be slaves of wages or consumption," she said. "We are meant to be friends of God and prophets, to fulfill our vocations, callings and the purposes for which God created us. Each day, we are to floss, brush and tell others we love them.

"We need to think of the people in our lives who have blessed, encouraged and helped us with their spirituality for the real world. We need to ask God to help us become those people for others.

"Poetry has power to reflect spirituality in a real sense," Kathleen added.

Its introspection often has "short shrift," she said, as media focus on war, crime or what celebrities eat for breakfast. Despite that, mega churches are growing and monastery retreat houses are booked years in advance.

"I can be in despair about much in our culture, but I take hope in the culture of God, realizing from 3,000-year-old Psalms there has always been evil. What went on then goes on today. People continue to do the same things to each other.

"We are to offer our concerns to God in prayer as the psalmists did," she said. "Prayer is warfare to the last breath. Poetry helps bring us back to reality. The poet makes us laugh, weep and explore language."

Exchanges in South Africa expand perspectives about race and tribes

Participation in recent exchanges at the University of Pretoria in South Africa challenged two Gonzaga University faculty with insights from the struggle for change there that are helpful is developing strategies for better race relations and tribal understandings in the United States.

Bob Bartlett, director of Unity House, went as a visiting lecturer from Aug. 8 to Sept. 14, 2003, expecting to make a spiritual connection with his African-American roots—the land and the people. He was surprised that South Africans saw him through their racial lens as "colored," rather than black, questioning his identity as African American.

Raymond Reyes, vice president for diversity who went from Sept. 15 to Oct. 31, 2003, sought to learn what tribal cultures have in common. He found similarities and differences between South African and Native American tribes.

"Once Africa touches your soul and heart, you will never be the same. I am still trying to process and integrate what happened to me spiritually there," Bob summed up the impact.

Both are convinced that adding the South African university to Gonzaga's study-abroad programs would give students at both universities life-defining experiences like those they had.

"For our students to live as a minority would be a lesson in itself," Bob said.

The doctoral programs at Gonzaga and the 30,000-student University of Pretoria have a cooperative relationship that grew from Pretoria's interest in the ethics component of Gonzaga's doctoral program in leadership studies. Ties developed under a three-year grant for faculty, administrator and student exchanges.

While the university taught only white students under apartheid, blacks have become 31 percent of the students since 1995, Bob said, noting that 35 million South Africans are blacks; 4 million, colored or of mixed-race; 1.1 million, Indians and Asians, and 3.4 million, whites.

"It's hard to imagine that 10 percent of the people controlled so many for so long," he said.

"In Pretoria, which is 72 percent black, 43 percent are unemployed. In black townships, the percentage is higher. If you do not work or steal, you die. There is no safety net in townships," he said.

When Bob, who is writing a doctoral dissertation on black Catholics in Spokane, spoke in Pretoria on race and identity, he found South Africans puzzled that he considers himself African American or black, and that he visited Africa to learn about his past.

Raymond Reyes and Bob Bartlett tell of exchanges in Pretoria.

"South Africans had enslaved East Indians, so they did not grasp the significance of slavery for African Americans," said Bob, whose family has been in America for five generations.

In America, people with the slightest black color or heritage are considered black. To him, being "colored" seemed a throwback to the era when others "named" black people.

"I did not expect the tensions and limited relationships between black and brown people. Colored people are a higher class. In America, anyone with any black blood is considered black," he said. "There, complexion and language divide. 'Coloreds,' Indians and Asians, speak only English or Afrikaans—a combination of Dutch, German and English only spoken there. Because they do not speak black ethnic languages or their own native languages, they are aligned with whites."

When he sat between two black friends at a soccer game, some black people stared. He was told black and colored people do not mix. They have biases and stereotypes about each other.

"To be considered colored and aligned with the oppressors was a setback I did not expect. I expected to meet lost kin and be embraced by black South Africans," he said.

Historically in America, color differentiation also created tensions. Lighter-skinned blacks worked in the master's house and darker-skinned in fields.

"To unify and name ourselves in the 1960s—rather than have others call us Negroes or colored—we began using 'black' or 'African American.' Rather than focusing on slavery, we sought a positive identity turning to Africa's heritage of pyramids, science and discovery in the cradle of civilization. So 'African American' was chosen to honor our ancestors, to embrace our 'blackness' and to be inclusive of all shades of black—from hazel-eyed and light-skinned to those who are black as night," Bob explained.

Bob's experience in South Africa, which he shares with groups in a Power Point presentation, was for him transformative, so he not only *wants* to return but also believes he *must* return.

A week after Bob returned, Raymond replaced him, staying in the same motel and using the same office, but having other experiences.

Raymond observed that now the goal in South Africa is to become a multicultural society.

"They have a long way to go. On April 7, 2004, they ended their first decade outside apartheid, but unemployment is high, crime is high, and there is still inequality in jobs and achievements. There is more to improve than race relations," he said.

"Americans talk of blindness about privilege, but what you don't know *will* hurt you. In reaction to power and privilege, there is a renaissance of black pride," said Raymond, who also visited the University of Fort Hare. As the only university for blacks under apartheid, it was where the anti-apartheid movement was born.

Raymond reflected on indigenous wisdom as South Africa emerges as a multicultural democracy with 11 languages and nine ethnic groups. However, globalization threatens indigenous people, as many want to be like white Americans, dropping ceremonial practices, eating at McDonalds and wearing jeans.

By exploring cultural differences, he finds lessons for healing and reconciling the present and the past for the future.

Meeting poor South Africans stirred questions for him about happiness.

"I saw people who did not have much but were happy and without tension," Raymond said. "There is paradox about rich and poor, black and white, spirituality and materialism.

"My default setting is faith in God, so I ask faith questions about human rights, justice and our call to love our neighbors as ourselves. I observed what it means to be Christian in a society with extremes in human existence," he said.

Raymond found African tribal and indigenous people identified more by language than color. Many speak many languages—their "intercultural currency." For example, a woman who ran House of Hope for 137 AIDS-orphaned children had no formal education but was respected because she could talk to the children in their own languages.

"Belonging is about being grounded and having authenticity. Language is key to knowing a culture," he said.

He added that language "gives a cognitive map by which we make values and assume roles. In addition to language, soil or land has a role in identity. We are made in the image of God, who reached into the earth, the land, and created human beings. The Spirit was incarnate in flesh made from the soil."

He saw the interplay of language, soil and human connection to God in ceremonial life. He saw Coca Cola as a sign of people losing connection with their roots because of globalization.

It changed them from assuming abundance to assuming scarcity, believing that they are poor because they don't have something they now know others have.

Raymond said U.S. tribes like the Hopi live in areas of low rainfall but believe they live in a land of plenty, as they connect to the land, each other and their ancestors.

"To indigenize our future, I asked how we can move beyond the assimilation and acculturalization of globalization—colonizers and colonized—to become bicultural or multicultural," he said.

He found African and Native-American interconnections in people's lives, beyond borders, race or cultures. They led him to ask: "How do we plan social and economic systems? What do we learn from wise people today and from ancient civilizations and cultures?"

Despite the unemployment, Raymond saw people in relationship with God having a sense of purpose and destiny.

"People who do not draw monthly paychecks creatively honor God and love themselves and others. They care for the earth as a subject, not an object to use and abuse," he said.

Native American languages have no possessive pronoun, because they do not see the things of the earth as their possessions.

"While other places are running out of space, Africa has much space and is still rich in natural resources," said Raymond.

He wonders: Who will lead the continent's development? Will they use the wisdom of the past or will they *use* the earth and consider the health and wellbeing of people a low priority?

Recognizing that relationships are more important than efficiency, he asked: "Can we use reason and technology without destroying the values of tribal cultures?"

While Raymond also experienced stereotypes, he observed that people connect with tribal differences more than with race or ethnicity, so he found connection despite the racial difference.

For information, call 328-4220.

This section offers an overview of the history, editorial approach and people that make The Fig Tree.

People and their stories are the paper

Front pages of the last two years of 20 years of *The Fig Tree.*

MANY THANKS

to all the people who make The Fig Tree possible!

Advertisers
Sponsors
Major donors
Congregations
Nonprofits
Readers
Volunteers
Board
Writers
Staff
Interviewees
EVERYONE!

Coverage challenges conventional wisdom on what people will read

While conventional media wisdom says subtle and overt sensationalism, conflict, negativity and violence attract readers, *The Fig Tree* finds readers hungry to know about the balance of reality in everyday life.

Readers relish learning about people relating with each other, caring, acting on each other's behalf and organizing to improve the lives of people in their communities and around the world because of their faith.

While some media emphasize stereotypes and polarization, *The Fig Tree* breaks through barriers, finds common ground and builds understanding that will encourage common action.

Reports on Latin America, Europe, Central Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific through church and nonprofit channels provide insights into the impact of government, corporate, non-governmental and religious policies that are not within the vision or scope of many corporate-run media.

When media label people as terrorists, insurgents, guerrillas or other combatant or extremist label, readers may readily dismiss their humanity and assume they should be eliminated, despite the admonition of most faiths against hatred and killing. As a result, innocent people are slaughtered, cultures are eliminated, societies are devastated, and infrastructures are destroyed.

The Fig Tree investigates some of the stories behind stories and headlines in other media.

Its global news coverage comes through the experiences of Inland Northwest people who go abroad and observe life first-hand through opportunities provided by their faith communities. It also comes from interviews with people from other countries living in the region and from news briefs reported and distributed through Ecumenical News International. Such global coverage brings global awareness and insight to local matters.

The experiences and information shared through *Fig Tree* articles have a cumulative effect. One article may raise questions that are pursued in future articles.

Theology, belief and actions interweave. When someone is involved in an act of charity, justice, solidarity, compassion, caring or advocacy, *Fig Tree* interviewers ask why, exploring how the person's action expresses his or her faith and values, and how faith makes a difference in their lives.

In interviews, reporters help people verbalize their thoughts, connect the personal and political, reflect on their pilgrimages of faith and life. Sometimes questions spark interest in a new avenue of action or an opportunity to connect with someone who shares their concerns.

Through the voices of concerned people of faith, *The Fig Tree* challenges congregations to be the communities they profess to be, mutually accountable to each other, rather than going through the motions of the "business" of being a church and promoting their beliefs and institutions as if they are in isolation.

In the selection of articles and themes covered, *The Fig Tree* offers a variety of perspectives as writers probe for commonalities beneath surface differences to help counter polarities.

Spreading awareness of what people of faith are doing—often behind the scenes—to improve life in their communities, society and the world breaks down the hopelessness, helplessness and isolation that alienate people.

Despite its being on paper

Editor finds *The Fig Tree* a multi-faceted, direct-service ministry

Writing and editing *The Fig Tree* has been a ministry of pastoral care, Christian and interfaith education, stewardship awareness, mission outreach, justice advocacy, worship experiences, global ties, art education and musical inspiration.

For editor Mary Stamp, it has been more than a job using professional journalism skills to make a living. It has influenced her life and faith journey.

Over the years, a web of relationships and direct services has emerged from this publication, making it more than an educational, communications ministry.

"My life is touched by each person I interview and encounter," Mary said. "My questions are to learn, challenge, explore and share in the others' perspectives. Often replies have been gifts, insights and inspiration for me, both keeping me committed and inspiring others into action."

Mary's path to *The Fig Tree* originated in work on her high school newspaper and grew through studies at the University of Oregon School of Journalism, from which she graduated in 1967. The emphasis in both was on ethics in journalism.

In 1969, she audited the graduate studies program of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical

Mary Stamp

Institute at Bossey, near Geneva, Switzerland. Living in that community of 60 people from 40 countries and from the various expressions of Christian faith, she recognized the need to listen to people, setting aside pride and agendas, to discover who they are, beyond barriers of language, culture, nationality, economic status or religious tradition.

"Sometimes I'd ask a question in several ways, to be sure that I heard correctly what they meant, speaking in a second or third language," Mary said. "I transferred that skill to interviewing and writing human-interest feature articles about the history, issues and people of Astoria, Ore., for the *Daily Astorian.*

"My excitement and curiosity were tempered in Fresno, where my freelance articles were rewritten," she continued. "I later realized it was not because of quality, but slant. *Fresno Bee* editors sought a trendy, faddist approach. Not wishing to follow the popular, secular mode, I began a bi-monthly publication, *InterChurch,* with Fresno Metropolitan Ministry."

From 1976 to 1984, Mary lived in Tekoa, 45 miles south of Spokane, writing freelance articles for *The Standard Register*, a local weekly.

"I covered a wealth of stories about people's lives, local issues, farming concerns and Palouse history—the roots of my commitment to cover rural and urban communities of the region," said Mary, who is active in the United Church of Christ (UCC) and also edits the Pacific Northwest UCC Conference's edition of *United Church News*.

A friend on the then Spokane Christian Coalition board told them about *InterChurch,* and the board asked her to start a similar publication—with no guarantees of income or compensation.

The board and the coalition's director, the Rev. John Olson, gave her names of people who might be interested.

One was Sister Bernadine Casey, SNJM, who as Mary, worked as a semi-volunteer, "forgiving" salary owed when income fell short of budgeted amounts.

Until John, a Lutheran, retired in 1999, he wrote editorials that challenged the faith community to care about the region, to stretch beyond their congregations' walls and to address poverty, injustice, prejudice, isolation, alienation and loneliness.

Editorial writer Jo Hendricks, a Presbyterian, has written editorials through the 20 years. Mary describes her as a modern prophet challenging people of faith from life as it is in society or in faith groups to a vision rooted in biblical understanding.

Over the years, various writers—students, pastors, lay people, Jewish and Christian—have contributed articles, expanding their insights and those of readers. Lynn Swedberg, a physical therapist and a United Methodist, and Katie Krauss as a parish nurse wrote about health care and accessibility issues. Betsy Rosenberg not only wrote about various expressions of her Jewish tradition of *tikkun olam*, but also helped *The Fig Tree* continue to publish during three of five months Mary worked as communications director for the national Church Women United office in New York City from July to December 2000.

"I decided my roots were in Spokane and this unique communications ministry*,"* Mary said.

Local bishops and executives of churches have written editorial columns.

Deidre Jacobson, a Lutheran involved with the Women's Drop In Center; the Rev. Hugh Magee, communications officer for the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane, and Nancy Minard of the Veradale United Church of Christ serve on the board and contribute articles.

Carl Milton assures bulk deliveries occur each month, contacting with board chair Marilyn Stedman a team of volunteers.

"Along with having an ingrained approach to this journalistic endeavor, my primary goal in knowing the people and organizations of the region is to empower them by connecting them," Mary said.

Associate editor carries out her community's mission

Holy Names Sister Bernadine Casey has found her role as associate editor of *The Fig Tree* an opportunity to carry out her community's mission to educate people in faith and to work for social justice.

Assisting since 1984 with editing, proofreading and distribution—and for more than 10 years with writing and ad sales—she has "sought to acquaint readers with injustices and oppression to open for them ways of being socially responsible Christians."

Growing up in a Seattle neighborhood where Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, African-American and Euro-American children played together and where their families knew and cared for one another, she learned early that people are people.

"I also learned to value those ethnically or religiously different from me," Sister Bernadine said. "Through *The Fig Tree,* I have come to know and appreciate an even wider ethnic and religious divergence of people, all with wonderful, positive gifts to offer their churches, faiths and communities. I realize how similar our faiths are."

She has also learned about the work done by many social agencies and has worked on projects with dedicated persons living their faith.

Sister Bernadine Casey

During interviews with ordained and lay men and women, she said, their stories have showed her what a variety of gifts there are that go into God's creation.

"They have inspired me and enriched my life. Indeed, God often touched me through the wonder and goodness of the subjects of feature stories," she said.

She has also found inspiration in work on the advisory committee, on the board, with volunteers and with the editor.

"The Fig Tree has contributed to the development of my own social conscience and my call to responsibility. It has broadened my horizons."

Copies of issues in 1999 and 2000, above, cover foster care, sacred dance, farm issues, domestic violence, Islamic faith, fire recovery, church helpers, street kids and civil rights march.

The Fig Tree demonstrates the power of words to make a difference

The Fig Tree demonstrates the power of words formed into stories of people's lives, caring and action to empower other people to make a difference in the lives of more people.

It is more than ink on paper. Editors craft words and images to remind readers that they are to live in relationships, in solidarity, in compassion and in advocacy for each other.

Divided by denominations and faiths, people become lost, searching for institutional identities that are but part of understanding faith and life.

The Fig Tree explores nuances of real and assumed differences, guiding people to awareness that "every encounter with another human being is an encounter with the Source of all being; every encounter with another seeker of truth is an encounter with the Source of all truth." These were the words of BBC journalist and Anglican leader Pauline Webb at the sixth assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, B.C.

As a monthly publication, *The Fig Tree* provides content for reflection. To keep up with the ever-changing dynamics of the local-to-global conflicts of life would be difficult and diverting.

The Fig Tree begins with the recognition and acknowledgement that there are conflicts in the world, in relationships, in communities, in nations and in churches/faith communities. So this publication wonders about and investigates what people do about those conflicts—one-by-one, in groups, in congregations, in nonprofits and in regions.

"Who cares?" *The Fig Tree* finds that many people care and have unique ideas, fed by their faith journeys as individuals and parts of institutions, to respond in creative ways that make a difference in the lives of individuals, families, neighborhoods, communities, regions, states, the nation and the world.

Local people experience life-changing insights when they participate in tutoring refugees at local churches, in resettling refugees, in hosting international students, in joining two-week local or global house-building missions, in youth urban involvements, in camp and retreat settings, in visiting the elderly or homebound with or without meals, in cooking for street teens, in sorting food in a food bank, in helping shelter homeless families, in leading music for worship, in challenging bigotry, in marching for peace and justice or in walking or rocking or fasting to raise money for hungry people.

These are but some of the many themes of articles in the past 20 years.

Because of *The Fig Tree*, many who once claimed to be in congregations or programs that were "the best kept secret" in their communities have had to drop that claim.

As people have connected with people, picking up the phone to contact someone who shared his or her story, ideas have spread, relationships have formed, programs have found volunteers and funds, new initiatives have taken root faster.

The Fig Tree is about words becoming translated into direct services, acts of caring.

Communication is key in all forms of outreach, ministry, social service and social justice action. It's key in social, religious, economic, environmental and political movements.

New communications technologies have made *The Fig Tree* more effective and opened the door to the vision of connecting faith and nonprofit organizations in the Northwest through an interactive website infrastructure.

Divisions keep people suspicious of each other, isolated, vulnerable to propaganda, lies and power games that alienate them and lead to hopelessness. Some political, religious, economic, social entities—individuals and institutions—manipulate divisions and fears so that people mistrust each other and avoid associations that could make a difference in their lives.

Communication breaks through barriers, opening windows and doors, so people see each other as inter-related human beings, brothers and sisters, partners, created and loved by God. They learn to open doors to talk, to engage in discussions and to enter into dialogue for expanded understanding.

Often words become roadblocks. "Buzz" words may become the basis for fear or hatred. Once people learn the stories behind words, translating them into their own language of comfort, their own cultural viewpoints, they may find common ground.

Coverage addresses conflicts in life and world without feeding them

Fighting terror with terror
fear with fear
hate with hate
hurt with hurt
begets more of the same.

Many media profit
by luring readers
with the tit-for-tat
playing conflicts
as if they were solutions.

How can we discover
the power of trust and risk
of hope and love—
tools of faith
for understanding each other
as people and nations?

Are we incapable
of self control needed
to live
in families and communities
in societies and nations
in the globalized world?

Do all people
just want what they want
when they want it?
Reading, watching and hearing
the daily fare and scores
often give that impression.
Because conflicts make news,
it seems that's all that happens.

Church conflicts
make news disproportionately
to the rest of church lif
tends to discredit
all leaders because of a few
all church life because of some.

For years, religion news was not "in." It was shirked either as too controversial or too petty for many in media.

Some media could not understand the quarrels within and among churches, which were contrary to the faith itself. Church attendance began to decline for some and grow for others. While sports reporters have continued to cover winning and losing teams, religion became touchy and questionable.

For many in the faith community, it became clear why they needed to be respectful of each other in their diversity and to find common action and mutual accountability beyond their varied flavors and emphases.

From years of non-coverage, the impression was that religion was not important in daily life. Yet recent articles now are "rediscovering" the value of religion in people's lives.

A recent report from the *Washington Post* said that "it may seem crazy," but despite TV, toys, team sports and technologies to educate and engage today's children and youth, the most assured way to improve the quality of life for children and youth is for them to be involved in a faith community.

Dartmouth Medical School found "People who are religious are better off in significant ways than their secular peers" in that they are less likely to smoke, drink, commit crimes and be depressed than their peers.

A University of Virginia sociologist found that low-income religious teens fared better than non-religious middle-class peers.

***Fig Tree* readers learn** about the many opportunities for teens to do community service, build houses and participate in mission trips. Children and youth active in their faith communities see their lives as part of more than their own needs and wants.

With that the case, it would seem that religion news coverage would increase, and there would be daily commitment to cover the positive, as well as the negative aspects of religion.

With more than enough stories to cover, *The Fig Tree* continues its coverage, modeling what is possible.

Recently a big city daily newspaper reporter advised church writers and editors that the trendy themes to cover are sex abuse in the Catholic Church, "The Passion of the Christ" and same-sex marriages.

When media of the faith and nonprofit community simply follow the "trends" set by the "popular" media, they may lose the many stories there are to cover and uplift from the faith perspective. At *The Fig Tree,* we avoid the lead of the mass media and set our own pace and news definitions.

Media do play a crucial role in investigating what happens and why, in finding the problems and corruption in governments, businesses, schools, churches, neighborhoods, families, police reports and more.

From the viewpoint of "alternative" media, we in turn challenge other media to think beyond their usual "news" definitions. We also challenge media of religious institutions to think outside the box of corporate communications and pursuing media attention on their terms.

At a recent gathering of church journalists, we learned what a unique model *The Fig Tree* is in providing independent coverage of faith and nonprofit communities. We provide an interconnective service among congregations, judicatories, agencies, ministries and the *people* involved with them to nurture awareness and action by reporting the unique stories the faith community can access.

Mary Stamp
Editor

Publication's growth has been steady, opening new ventures

From 37 inches of ads in the first eight-page issue, *The Fig Tree* has grown to an average of 200 to 250 inches of ads, with December issues in 2001 and 2002 near 370 inches. Gross income has grown from about $19,000 in 1986, averaging $23,000 in the first 10 years, to $30,000 in the late 1990s, nearly $45,000 in 2002 and about $61,000—including $8,000 of in-kind gifts—in 2003.

With the Rural-Urban Connections Project and the Interactive Website Project, the hope is to expand funding to involve more writers and the new media format.

Started in 1984 under the Spokane Christian Coalition—later renamed the Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries—*The Fig Tree* became an independent nonprofit organization in 2001.

Since then, its role has more clearly been to provide independent coverage of faith and nonprofit news for the region.

Rural-Urban connections

Circulation has grown from about 3,000 in the early years to 6,000 during the 1990s to about 8,000 through the Rural-Urban Outreach Project, expanding circulation and coverage throughout the Inland Northwest.

There are bulk distribution routes to Colfax, Moscow, Pullman, Lewiston, Clarkston, Pomeroy, Newport, Walla Walla, Lind, Ritzville and Yakima.

Five to 10 copies are mailed—instead of just one—to many congregations in outlying communities, supported by funds from their regional denominations that see the value of this publication and its role in involving readers in outreach.

A few 1995 and 1996 issues

The goal is to recruit editor-writer correspondents in areas of the Inland Northwest to develop more local pages.

Local interest draws and holds readers. Coverage is about neighbors and their everyday efforts to find solutions to the problems that mass media dwell on as they focus on conflict, celebrities, crime, consumption and crises.

Interactive website for region

Starting a website at the recommendation of regional bishops and church executives, *The Fig Tree* has moved from a presence on the web pointing to the publication to plans for an interactive website to connect the faith and nonprofit communities in the Northwest, bringing full and edited video and audio coverage of interviews, educational events, speakers, interviews and people putting their faith into action—as well as the articles and photographs in *The Fig Tree*.

With 12 to 16 pages about the maximum for most readers to absorb in this era of information overload, the website will allow for expanded editorial content based on browser interest.

A digital version of the full publication will be available online once we expand our space. While some people want a paper newspaper to read, others prefer to access information online, clicking to various links to find specific pieces of reports or whole documents based on their needs or interests.

The online readers, viewers, listeners and browsers will be invited—in public broadcasting tradition—to join regular readers in donating to support the venture, to keep up the access to information, connections, ideas and resources.

Half-hour TV interview show

In 2003, Dave Noble, who volunteers with Comcast Community Access, offered to prepare a promotional video for *The Fig Tree*. Later, he suggested doing "The Fig Tree Show" regularly on Comcast. So now Fig Tree interviewers conduct half-hour interviews aired each month. Programs will be at 5 p.m., May 11, 19 and 25 on channel 14.

With more outlets, *The Fig Tree* seeks more donations to help support the increased work load.

"*The Fig Tree* offers advertisers a means to reach people of conscience and caring, people who are involved in faith communities and nonprofit organizations; people interested in cultural, civic and educational events; people seeking to live responsible lives, and people exploring issues in order to move beyond polarities some media foster," said editor Mary Stamp.

Keeping up with technology has made editing and production more efficient

Computer technology makes *The Fig Tree*'s continual growth possible.

For the first three years, typesetting and printing were done at the *Valley Herald*, with the two staff persons submitting edited copy double-spaced on typing paper, retyping each article with each round of editing and then proofreading galleys. Corrected galleys were waxed and pasted on layout pages at *The Inland Register* office.

The first step to computer production started when Walt's Mailing, which prepared address labels from card files, computerized their labels. Mary Stamp trained to put address changes in and learned the ease of preparing mailing labels with the computer.

Before then, she had resisted entering the computer age, but soon realized the time-saving advantages of word processing for writing, editing and formatting copy; a page layout program to design the pages, and data processing to keep accounts, mailing lists, and other necessary files.

In fall 1987, Mary purchased a computer and software. She ran camera-ready pages at Spokane Imagesetting, a computer service bureau, and later with the *Journal of Business*.

By 1990, purchase of a faster computer and laser printer for tabloid-size pages improved efficiency, giving *The Fig Tree* the production capabilities of a small-town newspaper.

Then *The Fig Tree* switched to the Cheney *Free Press* for printing and mailing services. In the late 1990s, it used Spokane Print and Mail, which helped improve photo reproduction. When Spokane Print and Mail changed owners, *The Fig Tree* continued, but eventually moved to the current printer, Griffin Publishing, owned by George Griffin, Jr., son of former owner of Spokane Print and Mail.

With use of a newer press and capability to make negatives for the pages from a digital file, the quality of reproduction has improved, so photos are closer to the quality of the originals.

Since 2000, *The Fig Tree* has also developed a website that includes the lead and a few paragraphs of the feature stories, plus a page for news items and calendar. The website—at www.thefigtree.org—gives access to color photographs and grapics.

Based in St. Pius X Parish in Coeur d'Alene

Holy Names Sisters nudge people to find values, wisdom

In Coeur d'Alene, two Sisters of the Holy Names formed Wisdomworks, a nonprofit, non-sectarian organization providing retreats and workshops for retirees, women and business people to integrate their spiritual longings and give meaning for everyday life.

Retreats for "seasoned" adults—the fastest growing population in society—help people face ageism and isolation.

Retreats for women provide tools to recognize their gifts, and time for personal reflection, small group sharing and large group prayer and ritual.

Workshops on corporate spirituality and spirituality in the workplace help people find meaning in life where they work.

Sister Rosemary Thielamn and Sister Roberta Lamanna

Roberta Lamanna, SNJM, who taught at parochial schools in Spokane, Richland and Seattle, became interested in adult formation through the international spiritual renewal program, RENEW, working from its Seattle and Newark offices in the late 1980s and traveling in the United States and to Cameroon, Guam, England and the Philippines.

She then did parish education in Puyallup and then at St. Pius X in Coeur d'Alene, returning to be near her family when her father died and be her mother's caregiver from 1991 until her death 10 years later. That experience gave her insights for Wisdomworks.

Rosemary Thielman, SNJM, taught elementary school and music in Spokane and Everett, was a principal at two schools and associate superintendent of Archdiocese of Seattle schools.

She was in New Jersey in the late 1980s, transitioning from education to social ministry with the New Community project to rebuild a city after the 1960s riots that drove out businesses. She became assistant director of RENEW in Plainfield, N.J., before returning to work in parish outreach at St. Pius X in 1991.

"I began to yearn for time to hear what was going on in my life, to integrate spirituality so it is relevant in daily life, not pie in the sky," she said.

Rosemary and Roberta went on separate retreats in 1999 to discern what they were hearing and if they wanted to work together on integrating spirituality. They each felt called.

Rosemary said "seasoned adults" have wisdom and experience to offer if they take time to deal with the challenges of this stage of life. Senior adult and midlife workshops honor what is happening in the aging process to help people confront ageism in society and church life.

"Too often they play bingo or go on trips rather than grappling with the essence of spirituality and critical decisions they need to make about living, health and using their resources to honor this stage of life," she said.

Roberta said stereotypes about aging—like images of people in rocking chairs—make some older people feel inadequate or less valued. This society values people for productivity.

Wisdomworks suggests 12 keys to explore how to live more fully as seasoned adults, such as:

• Look at the present rather than the past or the future and to live well in the present.

• Look at "what you carry, like anger, that holds you back" and could be lifted by forgiving.

• Use leisure time to volunteer, explore spiritual growth and build relationships with family and friends.

"The challenge as people retire is to stay connected because families live far away, friends die, coworkers lose contact and health problems isolate," Roberta said.

People connect by email, volunteering in hospitals and soup kitchens, and finding activities that fit their physical limits.

"Senior adults who keep busy by volunteering break stereotypes," said Roberta.

"They can be terminally ill but well. Wellness is about interior life and relationship with God and others," said Rosemary.

Roberta assisted her mother as she became home bound by illness, wheelchair bound and lost her hearing. Her mother set up a bird feeder and watched birds. She also studied current issues and raised challenging questions about politics.

"Healthy senior adults give us hope and power," Roberta said. "They are a resource in our churches. In the workshops, I love to hear their stories and help them tap their strengths.

"People in their 40s to 60s benefit by integrating what is important in life and by dropping what is not important," she said.

Wisdomworks' budget has scholarships, so people can attend regardless of ability to pay.

The sisters lead workshops at retirement homes, churches, the St. Francis of Assisi Convent Sabbath Space on N. Jefferson and throughout Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

Workshops for women fit their community's thrust, focusing on deepening awareness of the sacred, "stirring the fire within" and living simply on earth.

They guide women to reflect on and celebrate who they are, their inner strengths and the beauty of gathering to pray and share in simple, feminine rituals and language. They help mothers who focus on meeting needs of their children and husbands by giving them time away to reflect.

Businesses put up their signs that say: "This business supports all efforts to build community in our area. This month, we recognize and honor the parish nurses (senior adults or other group) in our community. We hold them in respect and reverence."

When business managers found the sisters were not asking for money, they readily agreed to post signs to build awareness of people in the community.

"Managers said the signs changed the work environment, giving people a sense of connection with something broader than the day's work," Rosemary said. "The goal is to move them from being isolated groups to becomingaware of the community."

In addition, the businesses offer Wisdomworks workshops to help workers find meaning and value in the workplace.

With people spending so much time at work, the sisters believe they need to discover spirituality there and to address how to live their values in the midst of the challenges to be productive and successful.

Rosemary's "encounters with the Divine in sacred movements" help her realize people are motivated by Christian or human values to seek justice, be peacemakers, be honest and act in integrity.

People have common values. Some use faith language. Others talk of values, goodness or what is life-giving, Roberta said.

Business and church people list the same qualities: compassion, caring, justice, passion about people, doing right.

Rosemary said "spirituality is broader than faith or religion. We use every resource to tap into the sacred without negating any faith or any belief system."

Through workshops, they open people to opportunities to serve, finding that many people want to help the poor, work on social justice issues and promote peace.

"We need avenues for action always kept in front of us in simple ways, so spiritual renewal is about more than self care. It's about moving people to care for others," said Roberta.

Another workshop Wisdomworks offers is "God's Nudging: Beauty and Creative Aging, Creative Living."

"God nudges us," said Roberta, "to see the beauty in aging, in hungering, thirsting and longing to change what can be changed. God calls me to go beyond where I am, to respond to the call to do more.

"We help people look for little and big nudgings in their experiences," said Rosemary. "As we grow older we can look back and see patterns, times we heard our hearts and God was with us and holding us. Looking back, we can see clearly."

For information, call (208) 667-7562 or email wisdomwork scda@hotmail.com

125-year-old church—Spokane's oldest—celebrates its role in city

Banners on the bell tower of Spokane's oldest Christian congregation, Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, 411 S. Washington, proclaim the church's belief that "God is still speaking."

As it celebrates its 125th anniversary with a May 16 organ concert and historic tour, and a May 23 worship service, luncheon with chamber orchestra concert, art show and historic exhibit, Westminster reaffirms its legacy as a church serving the city.

First Congregational Church—which changed its name when it merged in 1893 with an earlier Westminster Presbyterian Church and again in 1961 when it voted to become part of the United Church of Christ—was chartered May 22, 1879, in the home of Henry and Lucy Cowley.

They came from New York State to Lapwai as missionaries among the Nez Perce Indians along with Henry Spalding.

While many missionaries fled the region after the Walla Walla massacre, the Cowleys moved to Spokane Falls to work with the Spokane Indians, arriving in 1874 and setting up a school for children of the Spokane and of settlers.

One of seven plaques at Inspiration Point, established in 1974 in Riverfront Park to commemorate Christian pioneers in the area, records that this was the first church organized in Spokane.

A report on the church's buildings written by James Montgomery for its 100th anniversary history said the organizational meeting included H.G. Atkinson, general superintendent of Homeland Missions for the Northwest. Henry was to serve two years as acting minister, and R. G. Williamson was to be the deacon of the church, which had 10 charter members, including Enoch Selquawia and his wife from the Spokane tribe.

In 1968, Mrs. Richard Hunner captured the Westminster Congregational UCC's early commitment to involvement with the community and the world in a memorial painting that for many years has hung in the fellowship hall. It shows two white settlers and two Spokane Indians with symbols of their daily lives, homes and surroundings, and a dove descending into a triangle.

The congregation met in the school for two years and then built a church at the corner of Sprague and Barnard.

Availability of land and property at Fourth and Washington for a low price led them to sell the first property and build the present gray stone structure between 1890 and 1893. The panic of 1893 led to financial strain and the decision to unite with the Presbyterian church, taking the "Westminster" name but staying in the Congregational denomination.

Hannah Joss and the Rev. Andy CastroLang converse

According to the Rev. Albin Fogelquist, priest at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church on West Dean, his congregation's building—completed in 1885—and Westminster Congregational UCC's building are the two oldest church buildings in Spokane still used by the congregations that founded them.

Other early congregations in Spokane include Central United Methodist, November 1879; Our Lady of Lourdes**,** 1881**;** First Presbyterian, 1883; Salem, Emmanuel and Our Savior Lutheran churches1888; Holy Trinity and St. David's Episcopal, 1890, Grace (formerly North Side) Baptist, 1890.

When the Rev. Andy Castro-Lang came to the then 123-year-old congregation two years ago, she was drawn because it was "old and established, but with a tradition of reaching out to the city, and with a rigorous intellectual culture of challenge and openness," she said.

As in other churches in the Inland Northwest, many members switched denominations or faiths when they settled here.

"We see Christian believers as participating in a growing faith, on a journey, so we do not push people into a theological mold. We respect different backgrounds and perspectives. People bring their questions and strengthen us with their traditions as we learn to pray and serve with one heart," she said, to explain what the church means by proclaiming that "God is still speaking."

Andy grew up Roman Catholic in Colorado, attended the Jesuit Regis College and worked in campus ministry at Fort Collins, where she met her husband, Jim, then a priest and now also a UCC pastor serving as interim minister of First Congregational in Walla Walla—founded in 1865. When they moved to Olympia after marrying in 1985, they found a new church home at United Churches in Olympia in 1989.

Andy attended San Francisco Theological Seminary from 1995 to 1998 and served two small churches in Nebraska before being called to Westminster.

She finds enthusiasm for the congregation "to rebuild itself as a church for the city of Spokane."

Among Westminster's long-time East Coast transplants is Hannah Joss, who began attending after moving to Spokane in 1946. Her husband, Alexander, was Congregational. Born on a farm south of Ticonderoga, N.Y., she grew up Presbyterian. She met Alexander, who grew up on a wheat ranch south of Wilbur, while at Cornell University. They lived in Rhode Island, California and Idaho before settling here.

Hannah, who was the first woman moderator when the church was 100 years old, said what draws her to the church are the people, the "tradition of musical excellence" and the tradition of outreach to the community. The church has had food and clothing banks, participates in Meals on Wheels and sponsors the Tree of Sharing at Christmas.

From 1920 to 1946, the now 195-member church grew to 2,000 members. They built the Cowley Memorial Youth Building on Fourth and Bernard in 1958 to accommodate programs for the "baby boom" generation. As the number of children and youth declined, the building took on alternative outreach uses, housing the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane offices, Conference offices, the Emmanuel Metropolitan Community Church, a Spokane Food Bank outlet, other programs, and until recently, Discovery School. Now the building is for sale.

In the 1950s, troubles in the congregation fed by the McCarthy-era hunt for communists divided church boards, fellowships, friends and families, reflecting divisions in the city.

"Criticism was leveled against churches," especially those concerned with "the betterment of society" and caring for people "regardless of economic status, race or class," reports the centennial history. "Westminster, having defended the disadvantaged and forgotten, was a target."

The merger of the Congregational Christian and the Evangelical and Reformed denominations in 1957 led some to fear a presbytery or synod would supersede congregational decisions, even though the plan guaranteed congregations would be self governing.

The 800 who voted on participation in the United Church of Christ approved the decision by 22 votes. Westminster joined 5,000 other Congregational churches in the new 2-million member national United Church of Christ. The vote again divided families, boards, fellowship groups, the church school, the youth and friends.

In 1961, half of the congregation left and formed Plymouth Congregational Church, which later split to form Heritage Congregational. They joined 350 churches that remained with the continuing Congregational Church.

In those years, Westminster expressed its commitment to outreach by raising funds for African American colleges, new church starts, Camp N-Sid-Sen, overseas missionary education, minority student scholarships, the food bank, women's material aid and ecumenical involvement.

The church's doors are open at no charge or low charge for community groups such as Tai Chi classes, 12-step programs, On Stage for developmentally disabled adults, Children's Chorus, Youth Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra, the Christian Northwest Men's Chorus and other arts and social organizations.

"We continue to do that even though we have a big plant needing much maintenance and a small congregation to support it," Hannah said. "It is our gift to the community."

When Lewis and Clark High School next door was rebuilding, Westminster provided some rooms for classrooms.

Renovations in 2000 added an elevator to make the building more accessible.

Today, the church expresses its commitment to ecumenical and interfaith action through participation in the Interfaith Council

Continued on next page

Search for 'oldest church' finds near tie and older ones in region

The region has many "First" churches and many without "first" in their names.

When Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ said it was the "first" congregation organized in Spokane, *The Fig Tree* did some research. A survey of the region puts "firsts" in a wider perspective.

Westminster's claim is verified in bronze at "Inspiration Point" beside the Howard Street Bridge in Riverfront Park.

The spot established 30 years ago for the World's Fair commemorates the contributions of Christian pioneers on seven bronze plaques in the sidewalk.

Predecessor congregations of both Westminster Congregational UCC and Central United Methodist were established in 1879—Westminster in May and Central in November.

Mel Finkbeiner, archivist, found in the Methodist archives at Central United Protestant Church in Richland, that Central United Methodist Church was established as First Methodist Episcopal Church in November 1879.

The Rev. Samuel Havermale, presiding elder of the Walla Walla District, came to Spokane in 1875, lived in a house on what is now Havermale Island in Riverfront Park and by 1879 started the first Methodist church in Spokane.

According to an article by Hazel Barnes in the Nov. 22, 1969, *Spokane Daily Chronicle,* eight to 10 people gathered in a one-room frame building on the corner of Sprague and Washington to form the church at Spokane Falls in the Washington Territory. Brother Havermale had preached his first sermon here to a white congregation Nov. 14, 1875.

Central United Methodist later developed from the merger of First Methodist Episcopal and Vincent Methodist Episcopal churches.

In the Inland Northwest, there were other, earlier congregations established.

Before them, there were many followers of Native American spirituality—who had no necessity for founding dates. The faith of many of the indigenous people led them to see similarities with the imported Christian faith in its varied styles and to welcome its representatives—or not.

Where adherence to faith became confused with power and relationships failed, divisions took their toll in real and spiritual religious conflicts. Congregations have come and gone.

Information gathered in a quick survey of regional offices provided some pre-1890 founding dates for congregations:

Catholic:
- 1840s – Cataldo Mission established along the St. Joe River and later moved to the Cataldo site in 1848. In 1887, the mission moved to DeSmet.
- 1859 – St. Patrick's, Walla Walla
- 1861 – Immaculate Conception, Colville
- 1878 – St. Patrick's, Colfax
- 1881 – St. Rose of Lima, Cheney
- 1881 – Our Lady of Lourdes, Spokane
- 1890 – St. Aloysius and St. Joseph's on Dean, Spokane

Baptist
- 1890 – North Side Baptist, (Grace Baptist), Spokane

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- 1880 – First Christian, Yakima
- 1883 – Waitsburg Christian
- 1886 – Cheney Christian and Central Christian, (now Covenant Christian), Spokane
- 1887 – Rosalia Christian

Episcopal
- 1864 – Church of the Nativity, Lewiston and St. Paul's, Walla Walla
- 1873 – St. Peter's, Pomeroy
- 1877 – Church of the Good Samaritan, Colfax
- 1883 – Grace Episcopal, Ellensburg
- 1885 – St. Michael's, Yakima
- 1889 – St. Mark's, Moscow and Holy Trinity, Wallace
- 1890 – Holy Trinity and St. David's, Spokane

Lutheran (ELCA)
- 1878 – Genesee Valley Lutheran
- 1886 – Troy Lutheran
- 1887 – Trinity, Endicott
- 1888 – Emmanuel Lutheran in Walla Walla, Salem, Emmanuel and Our Savior, Spokane
- 1889 – St John, Genesee
- 1890 – Emmanuel, Reardan and Christ Lutheran, Egypt

Methodist
- 1859 – Pioneer Methodist, Walla Walla
- 1873 – First Methodist, Dayton
- 1879 – First Methodist Episcopal (Central United Methodist), Spokane
- 1884 - Rocklyn Zion United Methodist in Davenport
- 1887 – St. Paul United Methodist in Spokane

Presbyterian
- 1871 – First Presbyterian, Kamiah
- 1872 – Federated, Lewiston
- 1873 – First, Spalding
- 1880 – First, Moscow
- 1883 – First, Spokane
- 1884 – First, Davenport
- 1888 – Knox, Spokane

United Church of Christ
- 1865 – First Congregational, Walla Walla
- 1877 – Plymouth Congregational, Colfax and First Congregational, Dayton
- 1879 – First Congregational, (now the United Church of Christ), Chewelah and First Congregational, (Westminster), Spokane
- 1881 – Congregational Church (now United Church of Christ), Cheney

Temple Beth Shalom has roots in Temple Emanu-El, a Reform Temple, incorporated in 1891 by German Jews who settled in Spokane in 1879, and Knesset Israel, a group of Orthodox Jewish settlers that formed in 1901. The two synagogues merged in 1966 to form Temple Beth Shalom.

Old building welcomes city groups

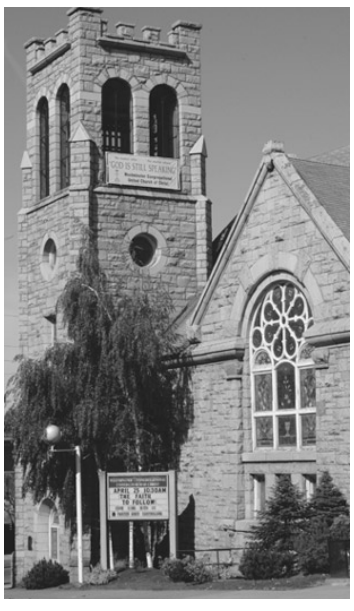
Continued from previous page
and the Spokane Alliance.

Karen Hyvonen, a member who is active with the Spokane Alliance, said the alliance is widely supported. From 40 to 50 people in the congregation gathered for a weekly Lenten Series on connecting faith to affecting change in the community.

"The approach resonates with our congregation. We value working collaboratively with other churches and organizations, strengthening leadership in the church and helping people see community issues as faith issues, not just political issues," Karen said.

"As a downtown pastor, my role is beyond serving just my flock. It is also important for me to connect with downtown pastors and to work with city leaders, the business community and the medical community. I bring to them concerns of the church," said Andy, who has participated in Leadership Spokane.

"As a downtown church, we need to know what is happening in the city council, the university district and at Lewis and Clark. We are a neighbor downtown," she said.



"God is still speaking" sign hangs on Westminster's tower.

They are also a global neighbor. In July, seven teens and four adults from the church will go to Managua, Nicaragua, to volunteer for two weeks.

In preparing for the 125th anniversary, the congregation is sharing oral histories to compile a memory of the times the church has lived through and the dreams of its members.

For information, call 624-1366.

Editorial Commentaries

Concern about genocide requires ongoing attention and action

"If Jesus were walking among us today, what issues would be on Jesus' radar screen?" James Waller asked an audience at Whitworth College on April 21.

Jim thinks genocide and the church's part in it would loom large.

When we think of genocide, we usually think of the Holocaust. However, according to Jim, the 20th century was the Age of Genocide, and it continues in Chechnya, Ethiopia and Sudan.

The roll call is horrifying: the Hereros of South West Africa, now Namibia, in 1904; Armenian Turks, 1915-23; a human-caused famine in Ukraine, 1932-33; the Holocaust, 1939-45; Indonesia, 1965-66; Bangladesh, 1971; Burundi, 1972; Cambodia, 1975-79; Guatemala, 1980s and 90s; the former Yugoslavia, 1992-95; Rwanda, 1994.

Jim is one of a growing number of genocide researchers. A social psychologist and a professor at Whitworth, he is interested in group behavior and what leads people to participate in genocide. His first book on the subject was *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing.* The title is self-explanatory. It is chilling reading, in part because in it we encounter thinking that we can recognize.

Information in his recent presentation, "Deliver Us from Evil: Genocide and the Christian World," was overwhelming.

Genocide is not on our radar screen. An internet search reveals that before Genocide Watch put the massacre of more than 400 Anuak in Ethiopia on its list of ongoing genocides, *The Fig Tree,* two daily newspapers and a progressive magazine were the only American publications to cover the atrocity.

The road to genocide is gradual, folding together tribal or national identity with belief systems. To paraphrase theologian William Sloane Coffin, we can become unaware that *godandcountry* is not one word. This results in out-group and in-group thinking. People outside our group are simply *them*—all alike in negative ways, faceless, not individuals, lacking normal human feelings and values, certainly not like *us*.

Faced with the "faceless other," we find it easy to reduce any sense of moral obligation toward *them*. Sins of omission follow as people remain silent or compliant as *they* are restricted. When personal responsibility is relinquished to outside authority, people become ready for the next step: active participation in demonstrations, riots and killings—sins of commission.

Too often, Christian churches participated in the process. German churches integrated Nazi ideology with Protestant teachings, developing the idea that Germanness and Jewishness were racial identities.

The killings in Rwanda in 1994 had roots in the missionary teaching of tribal identities, which the tribes had not previously known. In the most Christianized country in Africa—65 percent Catholic and 15 percent Protestant—there were 800,000 victims in 100 days, and the worst massacres took place in churches and missionary compounds.

"How can we not be concerned?" Jim asked. We are not helpless.

Information is a weapon against such doings. Most government and denominational officials do not know about the Anuak massacre because no major newspaper has reported it. Our role is to do research on that and on ethnic cleansing in the Darfur region of Sudan and then tell others.

Nancy Minard – Editorial Team

Social action stems from biblical roots and lies at heart of faith

In making the case for social action in 21st century churches, we begin by recognizing that social action is biblical.

It is an overpowering Judeo-Christian tradition from prophets of old to the heart of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord of all life—spiritual, physical, social and political. This idea is a hard sell in some churches. Social action has declined on the agenda of some denominations.

It may be tested in this century by examining the moods of congregations. Three common moods appear when congregations are confronted with social concerns: apathy (indifference), sympathy, and empathy. All three have Greek derivations. Apathy means "without feeling," sympathy means "feeling for" and empathy means "feeling with." The last requires action.

Social action moves a church body from a sense of caring to a deeper response of direct involvement. Herein lies the rub. Some congregations consider "involvement" divisive. It is, however, the business of the church, along with saving souls. Social concerns advocates insist it is the church's business to work with community organizations in feeding the hungry, providing adequate housing for the poor, addressing environmental causes and advocating for health care at every level.

It means working locally, statewide and federally for jobs in our country and for free and fair trade in workplaces and multinational negotiations. It may mean taking a stand on the issues of war and peace. The mood of empathy inspires both social and political action, even when addressing corporate abuse and military actions. Involvement is seen as "a slippery slope" for many in the faith community.

Some opposition to church involvement in social concerns dates to the European model of the church/state relations, which our founders rejected in the policy of separation of church and state. In a growing nation, new concerns required some changes and, thus, the amendments to the Constitution were adopted.

Was the church involved? Yes, and rightly so. It took the form of advocacy for child labor laws, women's voting laws, an end to discrimination and laws to protect the rights of all minorities. The church has been in the forefront of all those great reforms. With social advocacy, social justice is a key factor.

What is justice? In the Bible, it is often termed "righteousness" and it means fulfilling the demands of a relationship. In simple terms, it means getting for the other person what you already have for yourself.

The just person advocates for the poor and defends the oppressed. Justice is often aggressive. It weighs scales so that one side is equal to the other. It is easy to comprehend on a personal level.

Today, we speak in terms of government injustice and actions to address global hunger and poverty. Will the churches of the 21st century cooperate with the United Nations and other great institutions, under and outside the church umbrella, to work faithfully for a more humane and righteous world? Our times are in our hands.

Jo Hendricks - Contributing editor

Lecture Report | **Sounding Board** | **Reflections**

Men must join women in challenging violence in media and in life

A former athlete believes women benefit when men join them in efforts to end the culture of violence, because "most violence stems from men."

Jackson Katz motivates boys and men to recognize the violence they perpetrate against women. He spoke recently at Gonzaga University in the "Thinking out Loud" series on media by the Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media.

John Caputo, communications professor, described him as a "tough guy," a play on words related to Jackson's film, "Tough Guise: Violence, Media and Masculinity."

Jackson believes images of masculinity and sexism in media—from video games, to toys, to TV, to movies—perpetuate violence by men against women.

"Imitation is less the issue than desensitization," he said. "Men's violence against women is a public health issue."

He minored in women's studies at Amherst University as part of a major in sports and society. His studies led him to develop gender violence prevention for Marines and to serve on the Task Force on Sexual Violence in the Military.

With Jean Kilbourne, who did a 1970s film, "Killing Us Softly," on gender images in advertising, he has done a video, "Spin the Bottle," on alcohol use and sex.

He showed a clip from "Spin the Bottle," showing men pressured to drink to be tough, and women pressured to drink to be attractive and to share men's power.

Jean speaks of the double standard: When men drink they are held less responsible and when women drink they are held more responsible.

"Exposure to massive fictional violence on TV and to real violence in the news numbs Americans to violence," he said. "We should be ashamed of the level of violence in media and in society."

Jackson considers the term, "men's violence," redundant because, even though a few women may abuse children or be violent against other women or men, 99 percent of the violence is from men, he said.

"It's long past time for men to stop the violence. Women have been fighting it for a long time, setting up battered women's shelters, participating in self-defense programs, creating rape hotlines, becoming trained professionals to deal with abuse, challenging sexual harassment, working to change laws and seeking to put it on society's agenda," he said.

"Despite their hard work and success at providing services, the rate of violence has not changed. Our culture produces abusive men," Jackson said. "Until men say 'enough,' challenge sexist talk, jokes and behavior, and make it clear what is unacceptable, we will not prevent rape, harassment, assaults or domestic violence."

To protect themselves, women learn risk-reduction behavior: not to set down a drink or ride an elevator alone with a man, to check the back seat before getting into the car, to carry keys as a weapon and to know warning signs when a relationship becomes abusive.

"We need to find out why so many men are abusive," Jackson said.

He is hopeful, because a growing number of men across races, cultures, and classes are asking questions, speaking out and beginning on the road from the historical grip of patriarchal institutions and practices.

Media, he said, are one place to start, so he promotes media literacy. He first saw "Killing Us Softly" in 1979, and believes no one should graduate from college without seeing it and discussing issues about how images of women and girls in media affect women, girls, men and boys.

"Millions of women have body image problems, as the ideal for women has gone from the curvy, voluptuous Marilyn Monroe in the 1960s to thin, little-girl-like models today," he said.

As a consumer and a critic, he developed a slide show during graduate school in Boston in the 1990s on how images of men in media affect men and boys. He finds a reverse in the change in body sizes from slim action figures in the 1960s to overmuscular, huge action figures.

He showed images of Humphrey Bogart, Sean Connery, Clint Eastwood and Sylvester Stallone—progressively larger movie idols.

"The epitome is Arnold Schwarzenegger, whose whole body is a killing machine, and who now mixes politics and entertainment," Jackson said. "Most men are not big and strong. Athletes compensate by steroid abuse. Other men use firearms as 'prosthetic masculinity' to scare others."

Jackson also showed clips from a film, "Wrestling with Manhood," which shows big hunk wrestlers tossing small women around and beating them, normalizing gender violence.

"Violence is learned behavior," he said. "Mainstream media, especially Hollywood, TV and sports, teach violence, normalizing it, but not causing it."

After two high school killings, he and Sut Jhally at Amherst media education turned his slide show into the film, "Tough Guise," in 1999. They used the metaphor of Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz" pulling back the curtain hiding the tough-sounding wizard to find a meek older man, a fake.

"Men put much energy into constructing their self images without much honesty about the complexity of their lives," Jackson said.

When he critiques men, no one says he is "male bashing," but that's often said of women who try to hold men accountable.

"To bash is to hit. The phrase is used to put down women speaking against violence, to keep them silent about the outrageous violence they live with. It's as if women are the bashers and male perpetrators are the victims," Jackson said.

While male culture says it values straight talk, he finds that far from the truth and that men don't want to hear what women say about their behavior.

"Femi-nazi" is another putdown, likening feminists promoting anti-violence to Nazis who embodied hyper-masculine cruelty and violence for power, he said, noting in contrast that "men's deep desire to maintain masculine power is part of the white, radical, right-wing extremism today.

"When men raise the charges, they are not thought to hate men, but to hate injustice and violence. We can say things women can't say, and can call men to responsible use of power out of concern for them and their sons," he said.

Jackson knows what it is to be among the walking wounded, having grown up with an abusive stepfather. He finds many boys in the juvenile system and men in prison are acting out pain from abuse.

Families are not the only source of violence. The chain from generation to generation is normalized when media emphasize male power, dominance and control. Life experience is also an influence, he said.

He urges men and women who are aware of violence against co-workers on the job or in families to speak out: "If they are silent, they are complicit, consenting to the violence," he said.

"For corporate media, the bottom line is the bottom line. It's about profit, so news becomes entertainment. If there is no local murder, a report is brought in from a city where there was one. It's about ratings and dollars. Journalists are good people trying to do good work, but need to be challenged," Jackson said.

For information, see www.Jacksonkatz.com

Students fill bags of potatoes at food bank

Three high school students plunged into a bag of potatoes, helping the Second Harvest Food Bank in Spokane sort food during the April 4 to 7 spring break Plunge Inn of the Catholic Charities and the Diocese of Spokane Parish Services Office.

They spent three hours two afternoons bagging more than 2,000 pounds of potatoes into five-pound sacks, said Marian Taylor, assistant volunteer manager at the food bank.

Plunge Inn provides students a chance to experience and understand life for low-income people in Spokane. Participants from Eastern Washington parishes stayed overnight at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes adult education building.

McCormick Anger, Rochelle Brodeur and Mark Burgaard are from St. John Vianney in Spokane Valley; Jill Cain, from St. Agnes in Ritzville; Katie Sharkey from St. Patrick's in Walla Walla and Lisa Trenter from St. Mary's in Spokane Valley.

Mornings and afternoons, they worked at St. Margaret's Shelter, the House of Charity, Habitat for Humanity, Second Harvest Food Bank, Volunteer Chore Services, St. Vincent de Paul and Spokane AIDS Network.

Evenings they discussed causes of poverty and homelessness and imagined possible solutions.

Jill Cain and Rochelle Brodeur stuff potatoes in sacks at Second Harvest Food Bank.
Photo by Kathleen Hedgcock

'Soul of Mexico' opens at the MAC

Devotional art created and used by Mexican people reveals religious beliefs and practices from ancient to present times. Pieces in the permanent collection of the Museum of Art and Culture will be on display in "The Soul of Mexico" exhibit from May 22, 2004, to Jan. 9, 2005.

Among the pieces are turn-of-the-century retablos, colorful art on sheets of tin showing images of faith and belief. Originally they were illustrated screens behind altars in Catholic churches, created to teach illiterate people. Later retablos were individual paintings associated with the larger pieces.

The Cristo Cana de Mais, a crucifix made of corn and orchid resin, recently returned after four years of restoration work, will debut. Dating between 1650 and 1750, the MAC's Cristo is one of few in the United States.

The exhibit includes Mexican dance masks blending Spanish and Catholic influence.

There are also pre-Columbian figurines kept on private altars, left on mountains, in fields and at burial sites.

A Family Day will offer Latin American entertainment at 2 p.m., Sunday, May 23, at the MAC's Cheney Cowles Center, 2316 W. First.

For information, call 456-3931.

Calendar of Events

May 6
- Jewish-Muslim Peace Dialogue, Unity Church, 7 p.m.
- Colville Veterans for Peace, Café Al Mundo, 7 p.m.
- National Day of Prayer, p. 2

May 7
- "In Faith Women Shape the World through Friendship," May Friendship Luncheon, Church Women United, Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Pullman, 11:30 a.m. - call 334-3929

May 7-21
- Contemplative Prayer, Mary Jane Yassick, OSF, St. Joseph Family Center, 1016 N. Superior, 7 p.m.

May 8
- World Fair Trade Day, Global Folk Art, p. 2

May 10
- School of the Americas Watch, 35 W. Main, 6 p.m.
- United Nations Association, Bart Haggin on "Globalization: International Corporate Rule," Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Fort George Wright Dr., 7 p.m.

May 11
- "The Fig Tree Show" on Gonzaga University's Institute for Action Against Hate, Comcast Channel 14, 5 p.m.

May 13
- VOICES, Salem Lutheran, 1428 W. Broadway, 5:30 p.m.

May 14
- "The Spokane River: Treasured Resource or Industrial Sewer?" Gonzaga School of Law, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. - call 323-3704 or jwasson@lawschool.gonzaga.edu
- Leadership Prayer Breakfast (formerly Mayor's Prayer Breakfast) with Tom Flick on "Growth and Recovery," DoubleTree City Center, 7 a.m.

May 15
- "Magical History Tour: Spokane's Radical History," Thin Air Radio Benefit, 35 W. Main - 747-3807, www. kyrs.org

May 16
- Planetary Refugees benefit for Veterans for Peace, Café Al Mundo, Main St., Colville, 7 p.m. - call675-3551
- Premier of "Five Little Pieces for Flute and Piano," with composer-performer Michael Young - benefit for mission in Africa, St. John Orthodox Church, 4718 Horsehaven, Post Falls, 5 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. - call (209) 665-1910

May 17
- Founding Assembly tri-county organizing, p. 3

May 18
- "Getting SMART: A Sensible Multilateral American Response to Terrorism," Ira Shorr, national director of Physicians for Social Responsibility, 35 W. Main, 7 p.m.

May 19
- 10th Annual "Taking a Bite out of Hunger," food and beverage tasting and auction for Second Harvest Food Bank, Spokane Arena, 5-9 p.m. - reservations 534-6678 or shfoodbank.org.
- "The Fig Tree Show" on The Fig Tree Story as it celebrates its 20th anniversary, Comcast Channel 14, 5 p.m.

May 20-21
- Fig Tree 20th Anniversary events, featuring Bob Edgar, p. 1

May 24
- Institute for Extended Learning's ChangePoint! for women in transition, 3305 W. Fort George Wright Dr., 279-6065

May 25
- Veterans for Peace/Women in Black video series, Colville Library, 7 p.m.
- "The Fig Tree Show" on Martin Luther King, Jr., Comcast Channel 14, 5 p.m.

June 2
- Fig Tree distribution, St. Mark Lutheran, 24th & Grand, 9 a.m.

June 3
- Fig Tree Board, 1323 S. Perry St., 1 p.m.
- National Hunger Awareness Day - shfoodbank.org

Mondays
- PEACH Safe Food Orientation - call 455-2552

Tues-Sats
- Habitat for Humanity work days - call 534-2552

Fridays
- Peace Vigil at Army Recruiting Office, Colville - call 675-4554

1st Sats
- Interdenominational Ministerial Fellowship Union, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, 312 E. 3rd, 10:30 a.m.

Green Sanctuary Congregation finds kitchen waste hardest part of effort

Starting with a nucleus of people interested in environmental issues, the Unitarian Universalist Church in Spokane progressed through its denomination's process to become a Green Sanctuary Congregation.

That national program grew out of the Association of Unitarian Universalist Churches' seventh principle: "respect the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part."

"Our concern is not just for our physical environment, but also for our social and spiritual environment," said Stan Grant, who helped organize the Green Sanctuary project to make the congregation more aware and involved.

Drawing people with a range of beliefs, he said the congregation includes many political, social and environmental activists.

The church organized programs, speakers and workshops and studied practices related to waste, recycling and utilities.

"We worked hard, but since becoming a Green Sanctuary congregation, we have sat back a bit, perhaps relaxing more than we should. If we do not keep informed and involved, it's easy for such a project to fall by the wayside," said Stan, who has been in the congregation for five years.

About 15 years ago, the Rev. Bill Houff, now retired as pastor there, was a leader in the Hanford downwinders and cleanup advocacy efforts.

Other members, Julian Powers and Jane Cunningham, who are environmental activists, started an environment group in the church about 10 years ago.

In 2001, the Unitarian Universalist Church started a course on environment, cosmology and ecology led by Glen Cosby, an instructor at Spokane Community College.

In the process, participants learned about the national Unitarian Universalist Seventh Principle Program for congregations to attain status as Green Sanctuary Congregations. A manual described the process that required a vote of the congregation, not just to have an active committee.

The Environment Committee, which was renamed the Green Sanctuary Committee, began presenting information to the congregation, reviewed the church's mission and covenant statement, and helped develop a new one.

The new mission and covenant statements both call for members to support environmental stewardship.

Next, the committee prepared a survey to find the top three priorities for the congregation in terms of spiritual, social and physical environmental stewardship.

Jane Cunningham adds to the compost bin which is outside the kitchen door. Compost is used in the church's memorial garden.

Photo by Stan Grant

"Congregations had to vote and complete 12 elements to show they are serious," Stan said. "The requirements, however, met with resistance in the congregation.

"So we wrote the national church to say we objected and were not following the manual. We learned we were not alone, and the national church revised the manual, "Creating a Green Sanctuary."

The new approach was more flexible. When suggested actions were completed, a congregation could apply.

The Spokane church's 11-page application included a 70-page notebook documenting their activities.

In May 2003, the congregation voted without dissent to seek accreditation as a Green Sanctuary Church. At the General Assembly in June 2003, they were one of nine churches receiving accreditation. Five were approved in 2002, and there are 21 candidates for 2004.

They focused on four elements: 1) worship and celebration, 2) religious education, 3) environmental justice action and 4) sustainable living. The program included about 80 activities in the first two years.

The congregation has committed to offer at least two worship services a year focused on environmental issues.

"Part of our regular worship includes a candle kindling, when a member presents a concern on an issue and lights the chancel candle. The candle kindler can bring in an environmental element more often," Stan said.

"Our music director, who is attuned to the environment, selects with the minister anthems and hymns that promote environmental concerns."

For education, the committee established a green sanctuary library to help tie religious education for adults and children to environmental issues.

Sunday mornings 20 to 40 of the 350 members attend the adult classes.

Last fall, the first program in the Wednesday evening "Faith in Action" series was on "Sustainable Living." About 60 attended, and packets were made available for 75 people.

It gave ideas and ongoing reminders for the members both at church and at home to "rethink, reduce, reuse, recycle and restore," Stan said.

In the beginning, the hardest part of the effort was to eliminate use of disposable plates, cups and utensils, particularly Styrofoam cups. The next effort was to educate people to separate kitchen waste for recycling and to use the compost bin outside the kitchen.

"The compost is fantastic for the memorial garden," he said.

"When we started, we had a large dumpster, but now we use one can, because we separate and recycle cans, glass, plastic and other items, and because we use and wash dishes," he said.

"Someone from the Green Sanctuary Committee works with the kitchen crew on every activity to be sure that they separate composting, recycling and trash. If people who have weddings or other programs at the church want to use disposables, we ask that they pack them in and pack them out."

On first Sundays of each month, people bring their recyclables to church—plastics, steel and aluminum cans, glass, batteries, paper, cardboard, cell phones and other items. The Green Sanctuary Committee has a team that takes the items to recycle.

Cell phones can be reused, reprogrammed for abused women to dial 911.

Stan, who lives near Deer Park where there is no recycling at the curb, appreciates being able to take recyclables to church.

"We have reduced church trash by nearly 85 percent over two years," he said.

Payments from recycling cover the cost of doing it.

"In addition, we use fair-trade, shade-grown coffee. It costs more, but it's economically and environmentally better. So we take a freewill offering to help cover the costs," said Stan.

The church also has given training for about 80 people to compost at home.

The church also arranged an energy audit by Avista and made changes to its heating and air conditioning system. Members are reminded to be sure to close windows when they leave, open blinds and turn off lights.

"We have reduced our energy costs by 15 percent, even with using the dishwasher," he said.

"By the time the General Assembly approved us as a Green Sanctuary Congregation, many on the committee were exhausted," Stan said, "but we continue our efforts."

Regular reminders and new ideas are posted on a bulletin board, in the newsletter and on the website.

For information, call 325-6383.