

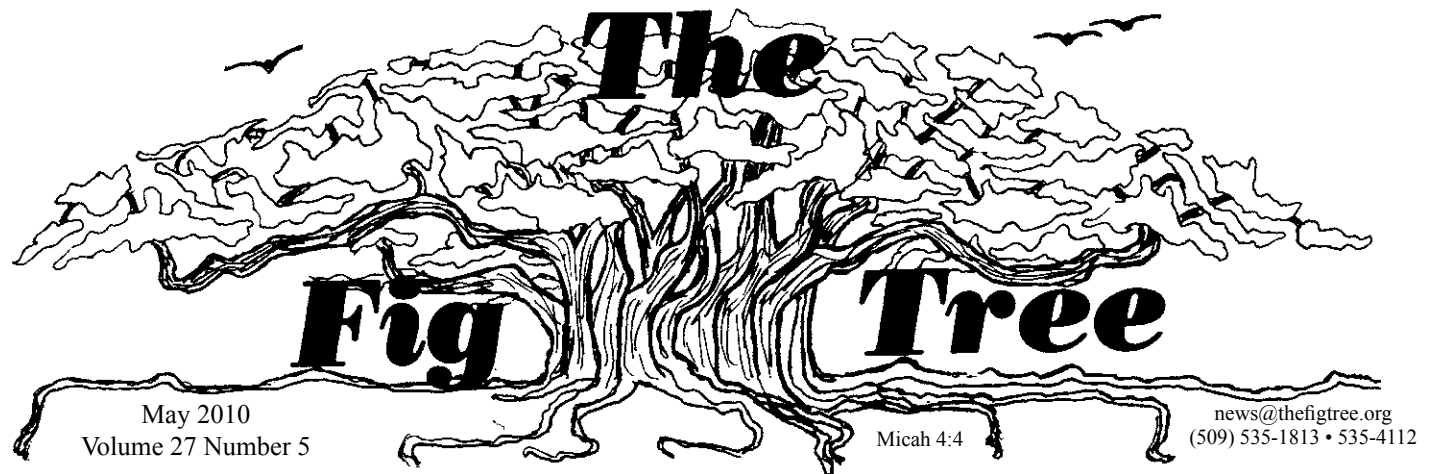
## STORIES INSIDE

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American pastor** - p. 12



Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest

online in color at [www.thefigtree.org](http://www.thefigtree.org)

# Local folk experience odyssey here

By Mary Stamp

Karen Morrison invites people into an odyssey—a world travel adventure—to learn about the subtleties of the cultures represented by immigrants and refugees who have resettled in Spokane.

As coordinator of Odyssey World International Education Services (OWI) she volunteers her time to recruit volunteers to befriend not only the newcomers but also anyone in the community in need.

At OWI, she said, the people who serve and are served are friends and family in long-term relationships, not short-term client relationships through which some agencies provide services.

She is also sensitive to building awareness in the community about subtle and overt ways people feel unwelcome because of their cultural and social traditions.

For example, sitting with legs crossed and the sole of the shoe pointing to someone is a sign of disrespect to a Muslim woman from Iraq. Because people in the community may not be aware that they are acting in ways that make someone feel unwanted, OWI helps inform them.

When African men stood on the street socializing as they would in



Karen Morrison introduces people to other people and cultures.

their homeland, police mistakenly saw them as gang members. The African men ran from men in uniforms with guns, who seemed like those who had oppressed them in the homeland they fled.

When Karen heard about it, she contacted V. Anne Smith of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Police Chief Anne Kirkpatrick.

To reduce refugees' fear, Karen asked the police chief to meet them wearing street clothes rather than a uniform. In addition, Karen said, the police academy now teaches officers to learn "Stop!" in different languages and about the African customs of socializing.

OWI and the NAACP are working to give the refugees cards that indicate their language and English-speaking abilities. They can give them to police with their ID.

In a case of mistaken identity, a police officer threw a 60-year-old Eritrean man walking from school to the ground and handcuffed him, thinking he was a criminal. The former Eritrean farmer, who had fled oppression, thought he would be taken and killed. Despite an official apology from police, he was

*Continued on page 4*

## Brewster returns to growing fruit after upheaval from layoffs at orchard

The city of Brewster has returned to normal since facing an upheaval after Gebbers Farms, the Okanogan's largest orchard and packing warehouse, laid off about 550 workers in late December.

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had notified the farm that it would audit their employees' documents and it would be fined \$10,000 for any employee with improper documents.

Families, schools, merchants, churches and the food bank had to adjust.

Brewster, a community of about

2,190, was founded in 1910 at the confluence of the Columbia and Okanogan rivers. The first settlers were cattle and sheep ranchers, followed by miners and loggers. With dams and irrigation, the fruit industry developed.

One orchardist described ICE's action.

"Instead of doing a raid in the fields, ICE went after employers. Gebbers was one of five in Washington and 300 across the country that were challenged," said a Brewster orchardist who runs a small orchard with her husband.

"ICE looked at their books and

documents and gave the names of those who had improper documents. It gave Gebbers a month to lay them off.

"It made a big splash, but things have not changed," she said.

The orchardist, who attends St. James Episcopal Church, explained the dilemma orchardists face in hiring workers: "We are limited in what we can ask applicants. We can't ask them if their documents are fake. If they appear good, we hire them.

"We can call Social Security to verify their social security numbers, but it's hard to reach anyone on the phone," she said.

With 75 percent of the students in school being of Mexican heritage and with many Mexican merchants, she noted, "when they are in trouble, we are in trouble."

Farming there more than 50 years, the orchardist and her husband began when Brewster was a white, rural community with few Mexicans. At first, many who worked on the farms were transients. Then young college people came to live off the land.

*Continued on page 6*

## Tibetan Buddhist monk calls for compassion

Human rights and economic security are like a person's left and right foot, needing to be valued in balance, said Geshe Thupten Phelgye, a Tibetan Buddhist monk in the tradition of the Dalai Lama, speaking recently at Gonzaga University.

"Both protect happiness, peace and security," he said, "but overemphasis on economic resources causes suffering."

He believes that emphasis has led to heavy investment in weapons, "chemicalization" of foods, "hormonization" of animals and mass production of chemicals that poison the air, water and soil.

"Now effects of global warming are in front of our eyes with changes in weather and melting glaciers," he said.

When he was three, Geshe, now 59, walked over the Himalayas with the Tibetan government-in-exile. He began studies to become a monk at the age of 17. He has founded the Universal Compassion Movement, an organization that seeks to raise awareness and engage people in compassionate practice towards those who suffer and cannot speak for themselves.

He was in Spokane and Newport in March giving presentations at Whitworth University, the Unitarian Universalist Church, Unity Church and the Svasti Abbey in Newport, and working with local people who are promoting the Universal Compassion Movement in this region.

"There is too much concern about and hunger for material things individually, nationally and globally. Believing advanced countries are advanced in everything, people in poorer countries try to follow westernization," he said.

*Continued on page 6*

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## Religion News Briefs

### Around the World

Full reports and videos are available from the Religion Communication Council online at [www.rccongress2010.net/live/index.shtml](http://www.rccongress2010.net/live/index.shtml)

#### Religion communicators consider new media and dynamics of communicating in pluralistic society

By Deb Christian of the United Methodist Reporter

More than 500 communicators shared in skill-building workshops, heard plenary speakers and networked with other professionals during April at the once-a-decade Religion Communication Congress in Chicago. Below are insights from some speakers on "Embracing Change: Communicating Faith in Today's World."

**"Pluralism begins with difference.** Religious pluralism means our engagement with one another requires building sturdy relationships," said Diana Eck, developer and director of The Pluralism Project at Harvard University, in a keynote address. Noting challenges faced in the complex U.S. religious landscape, she said that, "religious faith is a powerful force in people's lives and choices. We must find new ways to spread the message of hope through new communication venues in our world." She also said: "Pluralism requires we know something of others. Religious identity touches all parts of life. We must ask ourselves what human capital do we need to bridge our differences."

**Change involves communication,** said Ingrid Mattson, director of Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary. Using the example of a film documentary planned to explain Muslim beliefs, she described the difficulty of using a medium requiring images, when Islam forbids the creation of images of the prophet Mohammed. She suggested the best way to represent the prophet was to look at the life of his followers. The first woman and first convert to serve as president of the Islamic Society of North America, Ingrid also spoke of the effects of the 9/11 attacks on American Muslims: "How do you respond to injustice when you are persecuted because someone hijacked your religion? We had to divert money, human resources, creativity, thoughts, strategy to keep the Muslim community safe." It led more Muslims to understand the need for interfaith involvement, which now is part of mainstream Muslim life.

**Suggesting communicators remix their message,** the Rev. Otis Moss, pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, seeks to develop a new generation of prophetic leaders and bridge the generation gap. He used Moses and Joshua to exemplify that gap: "Moses was a pastoral leader, had a hymnbook and was building a church," Otis said, "Joshua was a military man, had a radio and was building community. Moses was doo-wop, Joshua was hip hop. They had the same values, but different methods. The same is true for us today," he said. "Take tried and true values and remix them for the new generation."

By Melodie Davis of Third Way Media

**Wrestling with difficulties wrought by the social media** revolution, Kevin Eckstrom, editor of Religion News Service, said truth, objectivity and credibility suffer because of the speed at which information now moves through tweets, blogs and other new media. "I can't write as fast as I need to," he noted, adding that social media pages offer writers direct contact with spokespersons—religious leaders to politicians and celebrities—without having to rely on public relations agents.

**Telling of wading through a mountain of materials** as religion reporter for National Public Radio, Barbara Bradley Hagerty said she recently was asked to skim 10,000 pages of court documents in 45 minutes for a story. Her best, most unique story ideas, however, still come the old fashioned way: from talking to people about their ideas and experiences and finding a unique or interesting angle. A recent story that explored the question, "Which is more violent, the Bible or the Koran?" drew 1,000 online comments.

**In the age of the 20-second deadline,** Kenneth Irby, pastor and founder of the Poynter Institute's photojournalism program, said the role of journalists is to be "sense makers." He believes community building happens through social networks but the danger lies in users accessing *only* links connected to Facebook friends, not taking advantage of a wider diet. Finding a balanced view requires some work, Kenneth said.

## REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

### Evangelical group holds City Wide Prayer

The Greater Spokane Association of Evangelicals (GSAE) is holding the City Wide Prayer at 7 p.m., Tuesday, May 4, at Southside Christian, 2934 E. 27th Ave.

The GSAE, which has previously organized the National Day of Prayer in Spokane, chose to plan the City Wide Prayer instead, so it is encouraging congregations

to hold a National Day of Prayer events for their own fellowships on Thursday, May 6.

For information, call 487-7429 or visit [gsaesokane.org](http://gsaesokane.org).

### Letter carriers, Second Harvest collect food

The 18th Annual National Association of Letter Carriers "Stamp Out Hunger" food drive will be held Saturday, May 8, with Spokane County letter carriers and Second Harvest volunteers collecting nonperishable food donations along local postal routes.

The food donated will help stock the shelves for Second Harvest's core network of 20 emergency food outlets in Spokane County.

People throughout Spokane County are encouraged to leave a sturdy bag containing nonperishable food—canned soups, vegetables and fruits, plus pasta and cereal—next to their mailbox before their mail is delivered on May 8.

Founded in 1971 as a central warehouse for emergency food pantries in Spokane, Second Harvest leads the fight against hunger in the Inland Northwest,

said Rod Wieber, director of donor and community relations.

It distributes more than a million pounds of donated food each month through 275 neighborhood food banks and meal centers to provide food to thousands of hungry people each week.

Second Harvest's network covers 21 counties in Eastern Washington and five counties in North Idaho.

For information, call 252-6259.

### World Fair Trade Day Festival is May 8

The World Fair Trade Day Festival from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, May 8, at Kizuri, 35 W. Main, will feature workshops, a slide show and a photo contest.

Fair trade vendors will offer

their wares. There will also be a demonstration of making healthy fudge by Moria Felber at Wild Thyme Kitchen, slides of Nebal and the Besari Health Clinic by Ganesh Himal, a demonstration

of back-strap weaving by Maria Cuc of Maya Color, African crafts from Liki Tenderheart and a workshop on sarong and scarf tying by Maureen English of Koi Salon.

For information, call 464-7677.

### Providence executive speaks at city forum

Andrew Agwunobi, chief executive of Providence Health Care for Eastern Washington, is the Spokane City Forum speaker at 11:45 a.m., Wednesday, May 19, at First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar.

He will speak on "The Ministry of Providence Health Care in Spokane and Eastern Washington."

Because health care affects everyone, forum planners realize that many people wonder how the recent passage of health care

reform legislation will affect day-to-day practice and delivery of medical services.

Andrew, a physician who is responsible for Providence Health Care's 11 health-care ministries in the Inland Northwest, will speak about the organization's delivery of health care services in Spokane at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center and Children's Hospital, Providence Holy Family Hospital, Providence Associates Medical Laboratories, Providence

Visiting Nurses Association and Providence Emile Court Assisted Living.

Born in Scotland, he immigrated to the United States in 1992, completed pediatric residency at Howard University in Washington, D.C. and was a pediatrician. After receiving his master's in business administration from Stanford University in 2001, Andrew focused his career on the administrative side of medicine.

For information, call 777-1555.

### PJALS offers variety of auction items

Along with offering items such as rafting, cabin getaways, dinners, picnics and haircuts, the Annual Auction of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane will also celebrate the organization's 35th year.

The event will begin at 5:30, Friday, May 21, at Mountain Gear headquarters, 6021 E. Mansfield.

"It's not all about money," said director Liz Moore. "It's a time we gather to celebrate each other

in an atmosphere of merriment and camaraderie."

Larry Bernbaum, auctioneer, will entertain with his banter, and there will be a finger-food potluck.

For information, call 838-7870.

### Methodists host 'RethinkChurch' workshop

The Inland District of the United Methodist Church is sponsoring a RethinkChurch Workshop on Saturday, May 22, at Spokane

Valley United Methodist Church, 115 N. Raymond.

The event will consider such questions as: What if "church" is a verb? What if there is a way to understand, appeal to and engage 18- to 34-year-olds who are seeking God but not comfortable in settings currently considered to be church? What if there is a venue

to help people reach outside the church doors in mission?

The day-long experience will connect people inside and outside church walls, said Jean Harvey Duncan of Central United Methodist Church, one of the planners.

For information, call 800-755-7710 ext. 302.

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## Unity in Community sets benefit

Unity in the Community is planning a fund-raising event, "Up on the Roof: A Taste of Unity," at 6 p.m., Thursday, June 3, at the second floor rooftop of the Saranac Building, 25 W. Main.

There will be a silent auction, entertainment and food. "2010 Ways to Celebrate Diversity" is the theme for the 2010 Unity in the Community Celebration on Saturday, Aug. 21.

The event that celebrates diverse cultures began in 1995 when Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church planned a lower South Hill neighborhood event in Liberty Park.

Now the event draws more than 8,000 families and children to Riverfront Park for a cultural village featuring many countries, a resource fair with interactive activities, a career and education fair, a health fair with information on health care options, vendors sharing information on community services, and entertainment from various cultural groups.

AHANA—the African-American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American business and professional association—headed by Ben Cabildo took over planning the event for several years ago, and now AHANA is part of Community-Minded Enterprises.

For information, call 209-2602 or visit [brownpapertickets.com](http://brownpapertickets.com).

## Interfaith Council reorganizes

The Spokane Interfaith Council is reorganizing with a new mission and is seeking individual and organizational members.

The vision, according to their new brochure, is "to celebrate the depth of spiritual diversity, building community and supporting understanding among all ages and faiths."

The former Interfaith Council of the Inland Northwest formed in 2003 out of the Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries, part of the ecumenical movement in the Spokane area since the 1940s.

The brochure for the new group says members will grow in faith as they explore other faiths and cultures, and join with people of diverse faiths to serve the community. The organization seeks to help people discover commonalities and universal aspects of their faiths, while building a model of peace and cooperation.

For information, call 723-0205 or email [spokaneifc@gmail.com](mailto:spokaneifc@gmail.com).

## NW Harvest opens warehouse

Northwest Harvest of Seattle recently opened a warehouse at 3808 N. Sullivan Rd. in Spokane Valley to serve 12 county food banks it has provided food since 2005.

In 2009, it served 10,875 clients through its partners, distributing 324,830 pounds of food in Spokane and 215,707 pounds in Chewelah and Colville. Its partners report a 40 percent increase in demand since 2007.

Northwest Harvest, which began in Seattle in 1967, works statewide to feed hungry people through food banks, meal programs and elementary schools. It also has warehouses in Seattle, Kent and Yakima. For information, call 294-2172.

## Lapwai church celebrates 100 years

Lapwai United Methodist Church will celebrate its 100th anniversary at its 10 a.m. worship service on Sunday, May 16, with Bishop Grant Hagiya preaching on "Being an Acts 2 Church."

After worship, there will be a complimentary lunch at noon at the Clearwater Casino Event Center, featuring a wall of photos, music, the Nez Perce Tribe flag and drum ceremony, and an opportunity for people to share their memories.

## VOA Thrift Store opens in new location

Volunteers of America's Thrift Store is back in business after the roof of its former store on North Atlantic collapsed under the weight of snow in the winter of 2009.

It has reopened in a new location at 6206 E. Trent Ave. in Spokane Valley.

Marilee Roloff, executive director of VOA Spokane, said many have asked her when the store would reopen. It held a grand opening on April 30 and is now open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Mondays through Saturdays.

Proceeds from the store support the work of Volunteers of America in housing and support programs for homeless and vulnerable

people—including the Crosswalk teen shelter and the Hope House women's shelter.

Bill and Theresa Mitchell have managed the store since 1978 and have nearly a century of second-hand industry experience between them. They knew the condemned building and total inventory loss meant a long journey.

It took 16 months to find the new location. They spent most of the spring renovating the 21,000-square-foot space, rebuilding their inventory and calling loyal customers.

During the past year and a half, the store has received inquiries from around the region and as far away as Minnesota from people

wanting to know when the store was reopening.

"People love this store," said Theresa. "They come from all over because it's not just a way to find bargains. It's entertainment. It's therapy. We have regulars who come every day just to see what's new."

Bill said that the thrift store needs "a little bit of everything, every day."

The store carries antiques, art-work, baby items, bicycles, books, children's goods, clothing, DVDs, furniture, housewares, jewelry, musical instruments, plus-size clothing, rugs, shoes, toys and vintage items.

For information, call 327-4112.

## Kinderchor plans a Haiti benefit concert

Desire by members of Spokane's Kinderchor to raise funds for post-earthquake recovery in Haiti led to planning a Haiti cultural diversity benefit concert at 7 p.m., Saturday, May 22, at Opportunity Presbyterian Church, 202 N. Pines Rd.

Sharon Smith, director of Kinderchor's two choirs, decided to introduce the 62 children to music of other ethnicities in Spokane while raising funds for Haiti.

The concert will also feature the Spokane Community Gospel Choir, a choir from the Korean Presbyterian Church, the Haran Dancers, Kosher Red Hots, African drumming and Native American drumming.

Spokane's Kinderchor, which was begun in 2003 at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, consists of two groups, the prep choir for second to fifth graders and the concert choir for fifth graders through high school seniors.

"It's important to broaden children's musical horizons, so I expose them to various ethnic music forms," she said.

For the concert, the Kinderchor will sing "Give Us Hope" by Jim Papoolas, a Maori song and the Hebrew song, "Bashana Haba-a."

Funds will be split between

the American Red Cross and the Presbyterian Disaster Fund.

When Sharon moved back to Spokane in 2006, the former choir director Lynn Brinkmeyer was moving away. Sharon had directed the Nebraska Children's Chorus and taught music for 28 years in the Omaha school system after graduating from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma.

She is also choir director at Bethany Presbyterian Church.

The prep choir practices at 5 p.m., Tuesdays, at St. Stephen's, 5720 S. Perry, and the concert choir practices from 5:30 to 7

p.m., Mondays, at Knox Presbyterian, 806 W. Knox.

For information, call 325-0193.

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# Gentle education helps to break through walls and stereotypes

Continued from page 1

so shaken that he left Spokane.

Along with intervening in such misunderstandings, Karen seeks to improve people's lives by connecting them with community resources, advocating for them, educating the community, connecting volunteers with people and teaching life skills through practical activities that foster independence.

"All I do is ask," she said of visiting retailers and hotels to help them find ways to help by donating school supplies, diapers, sheets, soap and other necessities.

After rearing her children in Montana, where she grew up, Karen moved from experiencing economic hardship and domestic abuse to gaining skills as an apartment manager, a tutor, a home-health aide for autistic people, an airport security worker, and a suicide and rape-victim counselor. She graduated from the University of Montana in 1999 and came to Spokane in 2001 to work on a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies at Eastern Washington University.

In 2006, she founded Odyssey World International and worked from her home. She also works part-time with Spokane public schools in cultural education and English language development.

Karen now coordinates OWI's volunteers and services from an office in East Central Community Center, 500 S. Stone, where she helps link people with the food bank, SNAP, the WIC clinic, the jobs bulletin board and other resources.

While Odyssey World International works with anyone—walking people through steps to make a budget and other practical skills—its 30 volunteers from colleges, senior groups and the community work primarily with refugees,

immigrants and single parents trying to establish themselves in the community.

"We work with people on an individualized basis with no time limit," she said.

**Karen, who also travels to Kenya, Tanzania and Germany, gives presentations on cultures at a Whitworth University African culture class, and recruits volunteers at Gonzaga University, at Spokane Falls Community College and at churches.**

From July 6 to 20, she will take three District 81 employees to visit El Shaddai Center for Hope for Children with HIV and AIDS in Kiambu, Kenya.

She also connects teens here to the children there, to help the teens learn about children in another part of the world and focus less on themselves. The teens are raising money to send sheets, school supplies and other items for the group to take to El Shaddai.

"We seek to break down walls and stereotypes through educating people in the community about people of other cultures and countries," said Karen.

For example, once after a grocery store clerk learned a refugee woman was from Baghdad, and asked, "Aren't we at war with you?" Karen turned it into a "gentle education" moment. She spoke to the manager, who spoke to all of the staff.

"Shopping alone is stressful, shifting from kilos to pounds and reading signs about prices," she said.

OWI also arranges educational events and celebrations featuring cultures of different people in the community—such as introducing Iraqi, Nepali, Burmese, Russian, Asian and African cultures. Odyssey World International plans a cultural program to introduce Marshall

Islanders in May.

"At an event, people meet people, learn about a country's history. They share in a meal, music and dancing," she said. "These are non-intimidating ways to meet and learn about people.

"It's sad that immigrants may not feel welcome," she said. "It's mostly because the community is not aware. Generally, the community is kind, loving and generous once they know.

"We teach volunteers how to make refugees feel valued and respected so they stay," she said. "The refugees need time, patience and compassion. They have a right to be here, and we are responsible to help them.

OWI screens volunteers, learns their skills and trains them. Some know other languages.

"By volunteering one hour, community people may gain a friend," Karen said. "Volunteering is an opportunity to embrace people who are different and learn how to make life here easier for them as they start over."

The immigrants need to learn when to dial 911 and what to do if they don't speak English. They learn how to use the bus system, navigate the medical system, order a salad with dressing, read a map and fill out applications. They need to know to be at work on time, what daylight savings time is, the need to call the school when a child is sick, what to wear to an interview and the importance of making eye contact. They need to learn how to use a dishwasher, refrigerator, smoke detector or circuit box, or what to do if the toilet is clogged.

**Behind smiles of people trying to adjust and survive here, Karen said, are stories of people who have been trauma-**

tized and fled their homelands.

She also connects some with counseling, so they can deal with traumas and reduce the effects on their children.

**Karen brought one family into her life. Two years ago, she went to the airport to meet a 60-year-old woman from Congo who came via a refugee camp in Tanzania with her 13-year-old granddaughter, Angie.**

"I decided they could be my family, because I have no family here," said Karen, whose daughter teaches English in Germany and whose son is in Montana.

"I became Angie's parent, going to parents' night at Lewis and Clark. I have become immersed in their lives, teaching them about life here, teaching English with songs and by watching PBS news."

She recently helped them bring Angie's aunt, uncle and their six children here. After they arrived in December, 30 volunteers helped them settle into their new home.

When Angie found it hard to make friends, Karen asked her hairdresser to urge her two daughters to befriend her.

By involving volunteers, she hopes people will become aware of their neighbors. As refugees adjust, they return to volunteer to help the next group, said Karen, who attends Ready to Serve Ministries and has a Catholic background.

**She attends many churches, Baptist to Life Center to non-denominational, often going to recruit volunteers.**

"Most people in churches have a heart to help," she said.

Karen said OWI has helped about 590 people improve their lives.

For information, call 625-6958 or visit [www.odysseyworld.org](http://www.odysseyworld.org).

## Congregation plans interfaith worship service

Bethany Presbyterian Church and the Presbytery of the Inland Northwest are organizing an interfaith worship service on "Compassion: How Your Faith Tradition Understands, Uses, Values and Prays with It" at 11 a.m., Sunday, May 16, at 2715 S. Ray.

The Rev. Paul Rodkey is inviting people of different faiths—Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh and others—to come and share how their faith views compassion.

Participating groups may share talks, songs, readings, art or other offerings from their traditions.

Following worship, there will be a potluck, in which participants will share foods from their cultural traditions.

For information, call 534-0066.

## Riverfront Farm planting begins, Green Collar jobs start in June

Riverfront Farm in West Central Spokane is emerging from hibernation and gathering volunteers to prepare neighborhood garden beds from 3 to 6 p.m., Thursdays, and 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturdays, meeting at the Riverfront Farm/Eco House, 2605 W. Boone.

The urban farm will prepare three lots to be worked by young people involved in the Green Collar Job Corps that starts in June. Along with gardens, there will be some chicken coops.

They are also raising funds for summer-training stipends of \$500 to \$875 for 11- to 19-year-olds who will learn farming/gardening skills in West Central and Emerson Garfield neighborhoods as part of creating "Jobs Not Jails," said Connie Malone, one of the organizers.

For information, call 434-8160.

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# 90-year-old retired pastor's sedentary life leads to 'armchair ministry'

By Brenda Velasco

At 90 years of age, Pastor John Van Ens prays daily for people and places that graced his life during his active years of ministry.

Now living a sedentary life because of chronic health problems, he continues ministering to people through his "armchair ministry."

"I call it 'armchair ministry,' because I use my laptop to communicate through email and Facebook, and my cell phone to talk to people who need my prayers," said John, who has served as a Christian Reformed church pastor since 1952.

"I receive calls and emails from people I've know for years," said John, who worships at New Hope Christian Reformed Church. "Some live in Sri Lanka, London, Australia and Florida to name a few. I pray with them or listen to many each week. Sometimes people share that a loved one has passed away or is ill, and I give them support. It's a form of ecumenical outreach."

John met many of his armchair ministry contacts in places he served, such as Germany, Sri Lanka, Guam and Los Angeles.

"I've been blessed to see places and meet people with diverse backgrounds," he said.

John and his identical twin brother Clarence were born in 1919 on a dairy farm near Grand Rapids, Mich., and grew up active in the Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, Mich.

"Clarence is five minutes older than me," he said, noting that his parents were not anticipating twins.

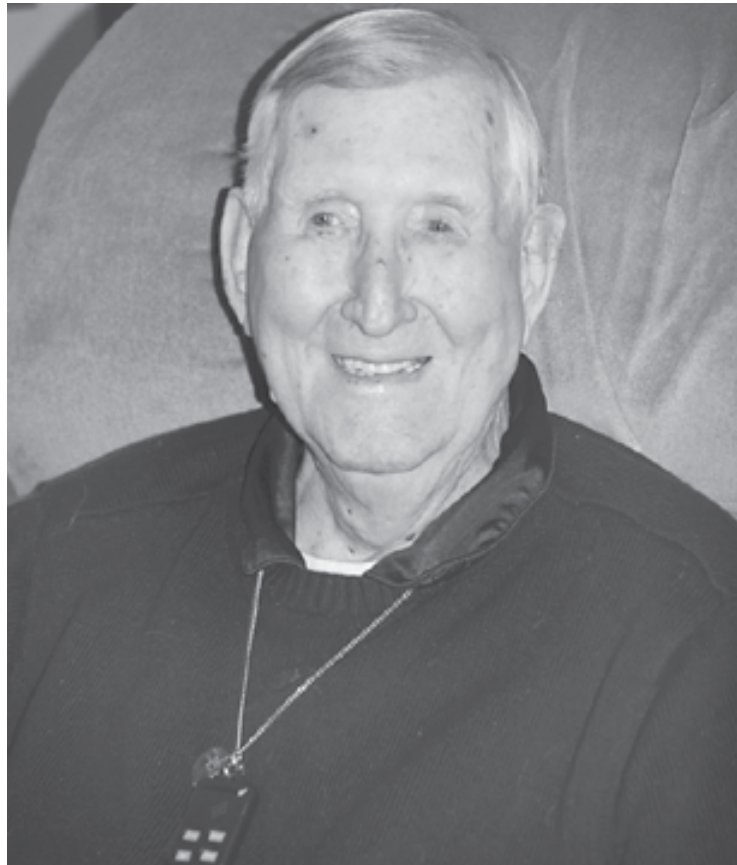
John again followed his brother 30 years later, choosing to enter seminary to become a pastor. Clarence had gone into seminary right after college, while John explored other options.

"After high school, Clarence and I attended Calvin College in Grand Rapids. He studied for ministry, and I studied education. During World War II, I enlisted as an Army Cadet in 1943," John said. "I married in 1944 and went to Germany to work with the United States Constabulary Forces and as an editor for the Intelligence Department."

While in Germany, John felt called to pastoral ministry.

"I remember standing in one of the cities in Germany, looking around, and seeing this once beautiful place in ruins, all bombed out and thinking to myself, there must be a better solution," he said.

John also visited the Buchenwald Concentration Camp near Weimar, Germany, which he said



The Rev. John Van Ens ministers from his armchair.

was a moving and emotional experience.

"I immediately thought, what we need are Bibles instead of bombs," he said. "I heard the inner voice of the Spirit calling me and I needed to respond to it."

After leaving the service in 1947, he returned to the United States, where his wife Sylvia arranged for him to teach math at a high school in Chicago.

After two years of teaching, he and his wife returned to Grand Rapids so that he could study at Calvin Seminary. After graduating in 1952, he heard from a Sri Lankan pastor at the seminary about a Dutch Christian Reformed Church in Sri Lanka, then called Ceylon, which was seeking two pastors.

John told Clarence, who was interested, so the twins answered the call to head overseas together, stopping enroute in Europe to visit their ancestral land of the Netherlands, and also to visit France and Monte Carlo.

"Sri Lanka, known as the Isle of Eternal Sunshine, the Pearl of the Orient, and the Gem of the East, has vast tea and rubber plantations," John said.

John and Clarence served 16 years in Sri Lanka, working as pastors in seven churches and teaching at the Christian Reformed Seminary.

"When we arrived we found

a struggling, drifting Reformed Church," he said. "Our mission was to reform the church from within and call the people back to the Gospel of forgiveness of sins as taught by John Calvin."

The brothers preached at five worship services on Sundays and encouraged outreach ministry to the Tamil and Sinhalese communities.

"To work side-by-side with my brother was a form of encouragement and challenge," John said. "As the old proverb says, iron sharpens iron."

They ministered to people who were mostly Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and English-speaking Dutch Burghers. They worked with both Sinhalese and Tamil people who have a history of conflicts and tension between them because of religious and ethnic differences. The Sinhalese are predominantly Buddhist, while the Tamil are Hindu.

"The people were accepting of us, and treated us with respect," John said. "We would praise God in all languages. The people had so much vitality and faith in God."

The brothers organized a church youth federation, a youth choir, a music guild, a new church and distribution of Bibles.

John and his wife, who had no children of their own, returned to the United States to adopt their

first child, a daughter. They later adopted three more girls—one Sinhalese and two Dutch Burghers—from a Sri Lankan orphanage near their home.

The night before they left Sri Lanka, he ordained three young men into the ministry. Two of them have served for 40 years.

In 1968, John headed to Los Angeles as pastor of an inner-city Christian Reformed Church. Five years later, he went to Vermillion, S.D., as campus pastor at the University of South Dakota. His pastoral work later took him to Florida, then Guam, where he spent four years as pastor of the Faith Presbyterian Reformed Church.

After retiring in 1982 from full-time ministry, he and his wife settled in Long Beach, Calif., where he served 12 years as part-time pastor of evangelism of a Christian Reformed Church. In 1995, they moved to Apopka, Fla., near Orlando, where he served as part-time minister of visitation at a Christian Reformed Church.

In 2000, because of declining health, he retired. John and Sylvia moved to Wichita Falls, Tex., where their daughter Jillian was stationed with the U.S. Air Force. Sylvia moved back to Orlando two years later. John stayed with Jillian, who is his primary health provider. In 2007, he moved with her to Spokane when she became a nurse at the Spokane Veterans Administration Medical Center.

John regularly phones his wife, who stayed in their home in Or-

lando, as well as his other children and his brother in Florida.

John is content that his "armchair ministry" leaves him time for his grandchildren.

"My grandchildren are the joy of my life," John said. "I enjoy every moment of the day with them and am proud of what they have achieved."

His granddaughter, Haley, is active in music ministries at New Hope Christian Reformed Church.

John was surprised to learn that the pastor there, the Rev. Perry Tinklenberg, was a former student of his at the University of South Dakota.

"Recently I sent a prayer booklet to a friend who's daughter-in-law died suddenly," John said. "I continue to be amazed that God will use an old man to minister the gifts of the Spirit to those in need. It gives me a deep sense of humility that God uses me even as I head into my 91st year."

John also works on his memoirs so his grandchildren will remember what he accomplished and the people he met.

"God has been good to me," John said. "My motivation for everything that I've done has been through the sinless life of Jesus and that my life is in God's hands. I have a great sense of freedom and joy. The life and resurrection of Jesus assures me that the best is yet to come."

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# Use of Brewster's food bank more than doubled during orchard layoffs

Brewster's food bank, housed at St. James Episcopal Church, went from feeding about 100 families a week to 250 families by February, said Mike Lundstrom, the food bank's director and a member of St. James.

Two days after Gebbers Farms laid off 550 employees, Mike saw Catholic Bishop William Skylstad in town.

Soon the food bank received funding from Sacred Heart Parish in Pullman and food donations from other Catholic parishes in response to the bishop's Lenten appeal.

Despite the increased demand on the food bank, its 12 volunteers met the need during regular hours from 9 to 10:30 a.m., Thursdays, Mike said. Family representatives came and picked up one bag of food for each four members.

"We served 3,500 individuals in February," said Mike, an artist, photographer and musician who moved to Brewster 15 years ago from Ontario, Ore., when his wife, a certified nurse-midwife, came to work at the migrant clinic. She later started the Main Street



Volunteers sign up food bank recipients.

Photo by Mike Lundstrom

Health Associates there.

The food bank, supplied by Northwest Harvest in Seattle,

Department of Agriculture commodities and Federal Emergency Management Authority funds, is

more than 40 years old. Private donations also provide support.

A high school current world problems teacher also has students do odd jobs and give the money to the food bank. They also do a community food drive.

"Recently, the food bank had seen increases in demand when the economy tanked and fuel prices rose," Mike said. "We ran out of money last summer."

During the layoffs, Mike said food bank volunteers noticed a new demographic trend. They discovered that instead of there being two adults and three children per household, there were often four adults and six children per household, as families shared housing to help each other.

"Most in the Latino community stayed in town because jobs were unavailable elsewhere. Practically none of the laid-off workers went back to Mexico. People from other areas of the country with intensive agriculture experience heard about the layoffs and came to town to apply for those jobs," he said. "Of course we immediately saw them at the food

bank because they had been unemployed even before they made the move to Brewster."

Mike said that some of those people filled jobs and some of those who had been laid off updated their IDs so they were acceptable and could be rehired.

Counter to the concern often repeated in media that Mexican workers are "taking our jobs," he said the orchardist reported that no white members of the community, which has 10 percent unemployment, applied for the jobs.

Mike has empathy for young people who crossed the border with parents when they were babies or toddlers and lack legal status. One teen picked up for a traffic violation was deported to Mexico. He did not know the language or know anyone there. He has since returned to his family.

Mike said the community's experience is an example of why the United States needs a guest worker bill.

"It has to happen or we—white middle-class Americans—will not be eating," he said.

For information, call 455-4960.

# Monk encourages believers to live faith; inspires universal compassion

Continued from page 1

Coming to the United States, however, he finds that is not true, because many people are poor, homeless, out of work, obese, lack access to health care and suffer cancers because the food they eat is full of chemicals and hormones. Organic foods are too expensive for poor people.

Too many food producers "are only conscious of money," he said. "Poor people have no choice but to buy and eat it."

"In this world of economic capitalism, the one who has the capital has the power and controls policymakers who rule the country," he said.

Geshe thinks overemphasis on meeting economic needs to bring happiness is misdirected. He calls for raising awareness and raising voices in this democratic country that respects human rights, so people take their power back.

"Freedom of expression and equality before the law are beautiful to read about," he said, knowing that in some countries people are tortured and systematically denied those rights.

Geshe appreciates the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to bring attention to violations, but also urges governments to live up to the "beautiful words in their constitutions."

Believing that the United States will continue to lead the world in this century, he said it doesn't



Geshe Thupten Phelgye

need to fear other powers.

The monk sees the recent economic downturn in light of the Buddhist philosophy that "we need to know that until we taste the bitter, we will not appreciate the taste of the sweet," he added.

Geshe calls for Americans to do more than vote to choose people for Congress. He challenges them to keep an eye on those they send to represent them to be sure they do represent them.

"Americans need a sense of universal responsibility for their communities, their society and humankind," he said. "We need to brainstorm in these times to protect the wellbeing and prosperity of this country and the world."

"Compassion and ethical values

are key. Too often people lose human and ethical values while running in the race of the material world," he explained.

Geshe believes people can change if they understand that "what is good for you is good for me and for society." He sees that the root of all problems is that too much self-concern makes people insecure and fearful.

"When we take away a focus on self and fear, nothing can stop us," said Geshe.

Knowing Buddhism teaches vegetarianism, but few Buddhists are vegetarian, he wants to inspire people to live the teachings of their faiths.

"It's a common problem in all religions. We talk of love and compassion, but do not practice the religion we believe in," he said. "In Tibet, we lived in a high altitude and were unable to grow vegetables, so we ate meat. Now with technology, we can grow vegetables in greenhouses, so more are vegetarian."

As a Buddhist monk, he knows that living one's religion means people raising their voices around the world to make a difference.

"In Buddhism, war and killing are never justified, no matter what the cause," he said. "Many peoples, not just Tibetans, suffer and are oppressed."

He believes when people's suffering makes them more conscious of the suffering of others—from

human-rights abuses and economic struggles—they become more ethical and compassionate.

"The world's citizens need to awaken and raise their voices," he repeated. "We can achieve world peace so we are not at war with ourselves, our families, our communities and our countries. We can bring the world to a better place through awareness, ethical action, education and values that awaken our compassionate nature

as sentient beings.

"According to Buddhist teaching, no sentient being is inherently evil. Each has some good qualities," Geshe said. "We need to bring their compassion to their consciousness, so we can make positive changes."

"We need to both protect human rights and develop the economy to bring peace, happiness and prosperity to everyone," Geshe challenged.




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# Catholic Charities says Brewster layoffs demonstrate need for immigration reform

When Catholic Charities staff in Spokane heard in early January from a deacon candidate at Sacred Heart Parish in Brewster about the needs arising because 550 employees were laid off at one orchard, Scott Cooper, director of Parish Social Services said he worked with others in the diocese and Catholic Charities to respond.

He and Greg Cunningham, director of the Refugee and Immigration Program, went there Jan. 26 to learn about the needs. Then they and Rob McCann, Catholic Charities Spokane director, mobilized the diocese's response.

"About 17 percent of all the apples in the United States go through the packing houses in Brewster," said Scott.

They learned that the orchardist needed to hire people to prune trees in March.

Given that Gebbers is the largest orchardist and packinghouse in the Okanogan, Catholic Charities knew the effects would be broader than those workers, one orchard and one community.

By the end of March, most of the workers were rehired.

The diocese's response had three elements:

First, they helped meet the initial needs of people. Rob authorized a grant of \$10,000. Another \$4,000 came from the Catholic Charities' Okanogan Emergency Assistance Fund. The bishop and diocese appealed to parishes for donations of foods, clothing, diapers, toys and cash.

Catholic Charities' donations for people's needs went through Sacred Heart parish and through the food bank at St. James Episcopal Church.

Second, they expanded efforts to help people gain legal status.

Third, they consider it a tangible example of the need for immigration reform.

Greg's job includes helping people gain legal status. He already goes each month to Okanogan or Brewster to meet with immigrants to help them apply

## Orchardist describes farm labor changes

*Continued from page 1*

During hard times, senior citizens came and lived in trailers. During the Boeing strike, Boeing workers came.

"Mexicans have been steady, good workers, coming to support their families in Mexico," she said. "In 1985, many gained legal status through an amnesty and settled, but many of those are now older. Orchard work is skilled labor, requiring long hours of hard work, so we pay them well."



Greg Cunningham and Scott Cooper, beside an icon of San Juan Diego in the Catholic Charities chapel, told of this peasant, canonized in 2002, to whom Mary appeared several times outside the Aztec capital in 1531. In the winter, she gave him roses in bloom. Juan put them in his cape to take to the bishop. When he arrived, an iconic image of Our Lady of Guadalupe—now in a Mexico City basilica—had replaced the roses. She is patroness of the Americas, and of refugees and migrants.

for visas and permanent residency working toward citizenship. He also helps women at Okanogan's domestic violence shelter, who endure abuse because they are dependent on their abuser for their immigration status.

"Many people have lived here for years—three generations—and have family members buried in the cemetery," said Scott.

"The first generation was migrant and moved with seasonal work, but Brewster has more long-term jobs with pruning and packing houses," he explained. "Many in the second generation were born here, but some had crossed the border as children. The third generation were born here and are students in elementary, junior and senior high schools."

Under the U.S. family reunification program for immigrants, it takes about 15 years for a Mexican brother or sister to gain legal status, about five years for a spouse or minor child in some cases, and 12 years for a child over 21. Some filed 14 years ago and have a year to wait.

Most Mexican families come and stay together rather than living separated while waiting.

"How long would anyone want to wait separated from their families?" Scott asked.

While ICE may consider challenging employers "more humanitarian" than raiding fields to pick up and deport people, Greg said

both disrupt families, the community and the economy.

When Brewster's largest employer laid off employees, the "rug was pulled out from under their families," Greg said. "There is no safety net for them—no unemployment or food stamps, because they are undocumented and can't apply for those services."

Scott said only a few single men returned to Mexico. A few moved to other parts of the state or country. Most stayed and waited. Some found day labor for cash.

"ICE's pressure on employers to cut the market for undocumented workers did not address the reality of the labor market, that no one else is available, willing or has the skills to do the work," he said. "Despite 10 percent unemployment, no white Americans showed up to take the jobs."

Greg then countered the assumption that undocumented workers receive benefits from tax-supported programs.

"In fact, they pay into the public social safety net by having taxes, Social Security and Medicare withheld, but they cannot access unemployment, Social Security or other benefits if their documents are false. The employer pays into the system assuming the Social Security number is accurate."

Brewster's experience demonstrates the need for immigration reform, Scott pointed out.

"What is accomplished by

ally," said Greg.

He summarized five areas the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops believe need to be addressed by immigration reform:

1) Poverty drives people to leave their homelands, so immigration reform needs to address the causes of global poverty.

2) The limited number of visas for reunifying families needs to be lifted to eliminate the backlog in processing.

3) A temporary guest worker program would meet the need for seasonal workers. Increased border security has meant more who come to the United States stay, so more are here illegally.

4) A path for more immigrants to gain legal status would allow more to settle and work toward citizenship.

5) Restoring due process in law enforcement would stop police from asking people—without cause—for IDs. Few who are here illegally know that, without due cause, they do not need to reveal their status or waive their right to a hearing.

Greg said that some people may want to stop the growth in the Hispanic population, but that growth is inevitable.

For information, call 358-4273 or email gcunningham@ccspokane.org.

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# Cup of Cool Water helps teens survive downtown, change their lives

By Janae Cepeda

Welcoming youth aged 22 and under with the “betterment-to-development” model of Christian social service, Cup of Cool Water (CCW) helps youth on the streets or at its downtown Spokane center with survival and basic needs before helping them change their lives.

Many youth who drop in are homeless and on the streets, said founder Mark Terrell.

“They are human beings created in the image of God, people deserving respect, love and honor,” he said.

He said that the “betterment to development” model comes from Christian community developer Robert Lupton of Focused Community Strategies Urban Ministries in Atlanta, Ga.

To clarify the model, Mark said the center may welcome youth by “giving a fish”—food, clothing, laundry, showers or shelter—but then “teaching them to fish”—through workshops, Bible study and mentoring relationships.

The next part of Cup of Cool Water’s vision includes an education center, alcohol and drug recovery, its new Cool Water Bikes and other small business and job opportunities.

The final goal would be for youth to be able to “buy a pond,” meaning that they would live independent lives away from the streets, perhaps coming back to volunteer or serve on staff.

The Cup of Cool Water’s bike ministry provides youth who come an opportunity to learn skills so they can move into the job market sooner rather than later, he said.

Through “Earn a Bike,” each young person works for 10 hours learning mechanics and then receives a bike, helmet and lock.

Noah Sutherland, who began as a volunteer 10 years ago and has been on staff seven years, took a three-week training in Oregon on professional bike repair before becoming coordinator for the program.

“We have set it up as an official business so we can sell bikes,” said Noah, who earned a bachelor’s degree in computer science in 1996 at the University of Idaho.

He and two volunteers work with one to five young people at a time.

“In this work, I can be free to be who God created me to be, to have relationships,” he said.

CCW hopes to further develop the program with job training and life skills, as well as one-on-one relationships.

Because some who come through their doors have criminal backgrounds, it is difficult for them to find employment or housing. If they have work for the program on their resumes, it gives them an edge, Mark said.

In the spring of 1995, he kept



Through the Cool Water Bikes job-training program, Noah Sutherland, right, helps Andrew Jackson Palmer repair the bike he has earned, so he has transportation around town.

thinking about and praying for two homeless youth he met while he was a psychology student at Whitworth University.

Soon, praying for them didn’t seem to be enough, and he knew they needed something more tangible. The idea emerged to share the love and hope of Christ with street youth through developing healthy relationships and providing services.

The Cup of Cool Water ministry started out of the back of his car and transitioned through partnerships with several churches, moving into the building at 1106 W. Second Ave. in 2002.

He initially drew the name from the Sermon on the Mount in Matt. 25, in which Jesus says, “When I was thirsty, you gave me a drink.”

Now the ministry refers to Psalm 107:35 to define its ministry as “turning the desert into pools of water and the parched land into springs of water.”

The CCW wants the teens to come away “having their shame lifted, replaced with truth and hope,” said Mark, who believes shame is the primary issue facing teens in Spokane today.

“Youth embody shame from head to toe, not like we feel it when we make a mistake. It kills them inside and in turn causes the other issues,” Mark said.

During drop-in hours from noon to 2 p.m., Monday and from 1 to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Thursday, with dinners 7 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, teens from many backgrounds come together to connect and develop their lives.

The youth have a place to hang

out, eat food donated by individuals and groups, work on hobbies, have haircuts, do laundry, find clothing in a clothing bank and visit with other teens.

A young woman involved in prostitution once commented that when she comes to Cup of Cool Water, it’s the only time in her day when she feels peace.

Program leaders relate to the youth by offering listening ears to hear their personal struggles.

“Ministry is not “something you do to someone. It’s not negative or asset based,” Mark said. “We are not here to home in on someone’s flaws and hurriedly convert someone to our way of thinking. We gain nothing except the joy of seeing them grow and the assurance they are in God’s hands.”

The Cup of Cool Water website, ccw.synodnw.org, describes the philosophy of ministry as one of grace over law, relationship over program, empowering over enabling, long term commitment over short-term, community over isolation, equipping over hindering, acceptance over discrimination, unconditional love over rejection.

Mark gave two examples to ponder on the power of listening.

“The first is of a man on the street who is an alcoholic with one arm. One response can be to refer to him as the one-armed drunk. Another response is to ask questions to learn about his life, understand him and love him without bias,” Mark said.

“The second story is one from a few years back where I met a homeless man on a street corner.

ing them from shame so they can “be alive.”

“This is what the Cup of Cool Water ministry hopes to do,” he said.

Mark said that the volunteer and staff leaders have learned about themselves as a result of working there, finding that the teens often teach them and that their own faith has grown.

He believes that their ministry makes Jesus real to youth—more loving, caring and gentle.

Staff and volunteers, he said, can see through the youths’ feelings of being “slime balls,” helping them become aware that “Jesus sees the better parts of us and draws those out, so that we can experience him together,” he explained.

Cup of Cool Water continually seeks volunteers and offers training.

The nine staff members attend Vintage Faith Community, New Community Church, Manito Presbyterian Church, Valley Calvary Chapel and a Catholic church.

Each week 20 to 30 volunteers, who come from a variety of churches, help during the afternoons.

The ministry served more than 500 in 2009, up from 429 in 2007.

For information, call 747-6686 or visit [www.cupofcoolwater.org](http://www.cupofcoolwater.org).

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# Franciscan sister incorporates variety of healing arts in spiritual direction

Through spiritual direction one-to-one and in retreats, Franciscan Sister Celeste Crine incorporates healing arts that integrate body and spirit to help people discover God in their lives, deepening their relationships with God and their awareness that God loves them.

Franciscans believe "we each are a reflection of God's loving goodness when we discover that we are loved," she said.

"My stance is holistic. From my early religious life, I felt it was important to integrate body and spirit, to use the body to go deeper into healing. The more balanced our mind, body and spirit are, the more whole and holy we become," said Sr. Celeste.

While many equate St. Joseph's Family Center at 1016 N. Superior with its counseling and classes to enhance family relationships, she said the center also offers healing arts and meeting spaces for people of all faiths and traditions.

Its 25 staff members serve more than 1,400 people each year.

Along with helping people develop to their potential, the center, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, has a tradition of hospitality, welcoming everyone in the belief that each is "God's special handiwork" who has a "right to be fully alive" and is "capable of growth."

She describes St. Joseph Family Center in Spokane as "an oasis of spiritual serenity and beauty," and as a place to come, meditate and pray. The Franciscan Place at SJFC identifies the services of spirituality, retreats, hospitality and healing arts as distinct from the counseling at the center.

People seek spiritual direction, she said, for many reasons: to deepen their relationship with God, discover faith, find meaning in life, reignite the faith they once abandoned or be silent in the midst of the world's busyness.

Some who come are in their 30s and others in their 70s. Sister Celeste said some come for only six months to deal with a specific question. She may journey with others for several years of their spiritual quest.

Although she did not go to Catholic schools and was not sure what it meant to be a nun, she realized as a junior in high school that she was called to be one.

She found the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia in a ministries catalogue and was drawn to pictures of sisters who ran schools and a hospital in Trenton, N.J., where she lived.

After studying elementary education for a year in college, Sister Celeste entered the congregation and earned a bachelor's degree in history at Our Lady of Angels in



Sister Celeste Crine at St. Joseph's Family Center.

1971 and a master's in Christian spirituality in 1985 at Creighton University.

Sister Celeste taught nine years at a parish in Lincroft, N.J., and two years in Massachusetts before studying at St. Louis University to prepare her to train the congregation's novices.

For seven years, she was an associate pastor for a parish. After serving from 1982 to 1991 at St. Leo's in Lincroft, she went to the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston, N.J., where the congregation's college and mother house are located. She was there until 2004, doing spiritual direction and retreats.

Seeking a change, she learned about the opening in spiritual direction at St. Joseph's in Spokane.

Sr. Celeste works primarily with women, beginning "where they are and helping them go where they want to go in their spiritual development."

"Some come into their own identity and come from their own

spirituality to growth," she said. "Many women seek deeper intimacy in relationships, connecting with people.

faith life and spirituality for people busy with family life, work and balancing both, keeping centered to grow deeper," she said.

Describing spiritual direction as companionship with someone on a journey, Sister Celeste explained that it involves three characters—the director, the directee and the Holy Spirit.

"I listen with the Spirit to what is happening in the person's life and discover with them where the Spirit of God is leading them. As each deepens her spiritual journey it usually leads her to become more active in the community—the general community or a faith community, moving beyond a 'me and God' mindset," she said.

The healing arts offered at the center include listening, prayer, Tai Chi Chih and Christian-Buddhist meditation.

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In a Buddhist-Christian meditation series she and a colleague Dori Langevin led, they shared the common ground of the faiths, "areas we share, as well as how we differ," she said.

Sister Celeste describes Tai Chi Chih as healing energy and meditation in movement.

"Movement helps a person become centered, aware of feeling grounded, aware of breathing and focused on energy flowing through the body," she said. "It helps people feel rooted like a tree and flowing like water. That way of being can take over, giving us rooted strength and spiritual energy. It helps our energy, circulation and balance."

The center also offers yoga, massage and reflexology as ways to help people become more integrated in their spiritual, physical and emotional lives.

Sister Celeste also offers peer supervision for other spiritual directors as mutual support and to help them improve their skills.

She lives in community with four sisters in the area across the street on Sharp St.

"Being a woman religious now is about constant change," Sister Celeste commented.

Having entered the congrega-

tion at the time of Vatican II, she knew changes were ahead.

Change came gradually and included shifting from wearing habits to clothing like everyone else wears; shifting from just teaching and hospital work to various ministries, and shifting from living in large communities to living in small groups, connected with the larger community through gatherings several times a year.

"Some live alone because of their ministry and need to make an effort to connect with the larger community," Sister Celeste said.

In earlier years, there was more silence, but now there is more sharing about faith experiences, ministry insights and community involvements, plus a more collaborative leadership style, she said, noting that the women religious celebrate each other's gifts, talents and ideas.

For information, call 483-6495 or email [sjfc@stjosephfamilycenter.org](mailto:sjfc@stjosephfamilycenter.org).

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**RETIREMENT & ASSISTED LIVING**

## Dialogue raises issues about how faiths and media help shape reality

Who speaks about community and justice concerns for the faith community in Spokane and this region? That question was one of many that emerged in The Fig Tree's April 27 dialogue on "Wisdom and Media." Media, education and faith community leaders—Steve Blewett, Susan English, the Very Rev. Bill Ellis, the Rev. Happy Watkins, the Rev. Scott Kinder-Pyle and the Rev. Joyce O'Connor Magee—each raised issues about limited media coverage of religion. Less than one percent of news, Bill reported, is about religion.

Without a religion reporter who understands nuances and dynamics of the faith community, it's easy to miss the influence of faith on lives and in moving people to act out of compassion and justice.

Steve pointed out from his years of teaching journalism at Eastern Washington University and working with media, that "media never were perfect."

He reminded, "media" is plural, not a

monolithic, one-minded entity.

Early U.S. media were inflammatory, propaganda tools, supporting causes and evolving into the party press, he said. The Industrial Revolution brought a shift to professionalism and into media being businesses, but still there was "yellow journalism" and anti-Semitic hate promoted on radio for 13 years beginning in the 1930s by Father Charles Coughlin. With the advent of TV, news was packaged into what would sell and edged into peep-show journalism chasing celebrities.

Journalists' training to be objective, to present news in a balanced way, evolved into turning issues into two polar opinions. As one participant noted, no one is "objective." Every reporter brings his or her background and bias. News articles written by different reporters on the same story are different.

Steve said Internet offers the same impact as movable type and the printing press—an

opportunity to wrest power from the dominant coalitions and have a voice.

Bill suggested that a weakness of "freedom" on the Internet is that there are now 11 million "crazy aunts and uncles—like we all have—who can spout their views with no way to analyze how fringe they are." He wonders if faith organizations control can their message in any media. "No major media cover a marvelous social outreach or religious education program," he commented.

The 2003 Episcopal General Convention consented to having an openly gay Episcopal bishop. There were scores of TV cameras on the floor for that, but the next day, none were there when delegates supported the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations. Reporters were gone, and we were the "gay church," Bill said.

Susan gave examples of the mob mindset in instant media, noting that people on the web have not demonstrated the care jour-

nalists take to write stories that reflect the day's events. "People have power to create news, but without the ethics journalists have. They may add entertainment, but not wisdom," she said.

Happy referred to a New York Times report that prematurely declared that "the black church is dead." That's not his experience of Spokane's 18 historic black churches, still intent on challenging racism in a time when blacks are the last hired and first fired, when 41 percent drop out of high school and while blacks are 2 percent of the state population, they are 18 to 25 percent of the prison population. "The black church is still a force crying in the wilderness to make a difference," he said. Later he asked the faith community to speak out on behalf of Police Chief Anne Kirkpatrick, who stands for justice, but has faced challenge from the Spokane Police Guild.

Scott likened current media to a recent *Continued on page 11*

## If adults understood dominos, they might understand interrelation of issues

Watching a four-year-old and his grandfather arranging dominos in increasingly complex patterns so that they may tip one and watch the growing domino effect, we realize that some connections are simple and direct and others are less obvious. When there's a two-year-old present we will see a simple but dramatic effect as she merrily sweeps all before her and enjoys the racket.

Immigration policy, health care, high unemployment, food insecurity and increasing demands on food banks are all problems currently facing this country.

Unfortunately, they also have become hot button issues. Our increasingly complex life bears some resemblance to the domino game: a jiggle of one small element in one area affects the workings of another.

In this issue, the story about Brewster and the effects of an ICE raid on an orchard shows how closely these issues are related.

Immigrants have often been blamed for "taking jobs away from real Americans". When immigration from Ireland was heavy because of the potato famine, a Help Wanted sign in a store window might also advise, "No Irish need apply." Repeated studies have shown that immigrants usually fill low-paying or dirty jobs that most people don't want, but the myth persists with the same tenacity shown by the trickle-down theory in economics.

Even though there were jobs open in Brewster's orchards after immigrant labor had to be let go, there was no flood of applications for those jobs despite the high

rate of local unemployment.

One of the jobs available was pruning fruit trees in March to maximize the growth of quality fruit that would be attractive to buyers. The consequences of not doing the pruning would all have been negative.

People want good food for low prices. To disrupt otherwise self-sufficient families, who grow our food supply, so they have to double up on housing and use a food bank seems inconsistent with the needs of the market.

When the economy goes sour, food bank services are more in demand, while sources of funding for them are less available.

People who are not well nourished are subject to more health problems than the well fed. A healthy worker is a more productive worker than one who goes to work

sick, but health insurance is too expensive for low-wage workers, and many businesses operate on too slim a profit margin to afford it. The recently passed health-care law should alleviate these factors gradually, but not completely.

When a worker becomes too sick to work at all, training a replacement is expensive.

The widespread consequences of the ICE manner of dealing with suspected illegal immigrants demonstrates a need for a better approach to immigration.

As several pointed out in this issue, if we don't sort this issue out, everyone's food supply will be affected. We need policies that reflect the scope of the realities.

Everything is connected, and we need to see and feel the connectedness.

Nancy Minard - Editorial Team

Letter to the Editor

## Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

**Marilynne Wilson brought balance** with her observation that her Witness for Peace health-care trip to Cuba may have been "slanted" and her noting "worn out facilities." On Presbyterian mission trips to Cuba in 2000 and 2002, working with the main church in Havana and a church youth camp in Santa Clara in central Cuba, we were not allowed to visit medical facilities because we had a religious visa.

Having spent 34 years selling medical equipment, I was determined to see hospitals inside. Our hosts set up visits to two facilities under the pretense of visiting church members who were patients.

On Sunday in a rural sub-clinic at Vinales, the cigar region, only one doctor was there. Chickens and dogs walked the hallways. The lab was closed. The few pieces of equipment were covered, so I did not detect what kinds they had. The "patient" was checked and released without a bill.

At the hospital outside of Santa Clara, a church member just had a baby. We brought gifts. A retired doctor from Port Townsend and I went into the maternity ward. Three families were shouting and praising their newborn relatives. We gave the church member some gifts, oohed the baby and then sneaked out for a look.

In the shower and toilet area by the maternity room, the showerhead was missing and just a pipe stuck out of the wall. The toilet had no seat, and there was no privacy. Walls were shabby and needed paint. Chickens and dogs wandered around. Dirt roads meant dust everywhere. I did not find the lab and saw little medical equipment.

It was not a nice visit to see the famed Cuban medical facilities. Later, we were taken to a tourist facility for "Europeans" only and told to spend some American

money. Dollar stores in Cuba took only American money. Money from Miami helps the economy. Everything is for sale. In the facility I visited, the doctor who catered to European visitors told me and my translator that the American embargo was hurting average Cuban citizens. Although Canada, Germany and Spain had big interests in Cuba, they honored the U.S. embargo on drugs and electronic items to a point, said the doctor, who was paid more than most doctors. His most cherished privilege was "permission to leave the island for Europe!"

Later, the Havana church pastor pointed to a street vendor who was giving away the people's daily ration of bread. He said there is excellent health care for the well off. In West Havana, there were top-notch facilities for people who can pay, but one church member died because she could not get the asthma medicine at the free clinic. The pastor said next time he would go to West Havana and buy medicine, rather than lose another member over money.

Thanks for the walk down memory lane when I entered another world and came back a changed man. Perhaps like me, the Cuban health care system has changed, too.

Joe Kramar  
Whitworth Presbyterian

**The buttercups are blooming.** Each year they appear under the trees at the back of the church lot. This year I saw them again, but differently. I saw them with my grandson who was seeing the splotches of bright yellow for the first time. Sometimes I wonder how wild flowers are doing with all the development that has gone on over the past 60 years. Perhaps that is why I am so glad to see the buttercups appear on the

back of the church lot each spring.

Nature's ability to renew its elements is breathtaking. Every time I drive or ride my bicycle, I remember springtime kite flying in what was an open field in the 1950s. Today it is covered with young pine trees determined to reclaim a bit of forest land.

Sometimes, our developments are so intense that the reset button is broken. Houses stand where orchards grew. Rich farmland has been transformed into strip malls and fancy condominiums. We humans have learned much about urban development. It is hard to imagine apart from catastrophic change how such areas could ever be "reset." We have much to learn. "Dominion" over God's creation must come to mean more than just domination.

Rev. Dan Berg - Open Door  
United Church of Christ - Deer Park

**The Old Testament book** of Lamentations is what it says: a collection of lamenting and grieving, but 70 percent of the way through, the author writes these words of faith: "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for God's compassion never fails. It is new every morning: Great is your faithfulness."

I must confess that my own self-centered nature doesn't often proclaim a personal understanding of faith while I'm in the middle of my pious pity party. So I am gently reminded by the words in Lamentations to stop whining and start winning. If I am lying down, start looking up. If I am drowning in sorrow, start swimming in gratitude. If I am feeling like no one cares about me, start caring for someone else.

Because of the Lord's amazing grace I will not be burned out. God's cooling compassions don't run out. Every day is a

brand new day. Your faithfulness oh God is fantastic. To remain faithful, I have to remind myself every morning "Jesus has my back. So just keep waiting for him to come." If I trust him, that shows I know his power and love. If I expect to see him, that shows I know he is real.

Rev. Mark Wheeler  
Lidgerwood Presbyterian

**I am not quite sure when** it happened, this business of getting old. It occurred during the night. I was quite young as I remember; able to take brisk walks without tiring. Then all at once I found myself repeating old tales people had heard a dozen times, my naps became longer and some well meaning souls offered to steady me as I stepped off a curb. It was my look in the mirror that convinced me. Staring back at me was not the young alert swain of my youth but a wrinkled old lizard of a face that looked like the surface of a pineapple. I was old. It was a rude awakening.

Jonathan Swift said, "Every man desires to live long, but no man would be old." Despite the euphemistic designation of "senior citizen" and regardless of laudatory allusions to "experience" and "wisdom," society has as much use for old age as Fed Ex has for the Pony Express. So what do I do, feel sorry for myself? I think not. Perhaps I need to say with Ralph Waldo Emerson, "It is time to be old, to take in sail." Or the Psalmist, "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent." (Ps. 71:9) That is a prayer God honors, for God's presence is not dependent upon my good looks, my mental acumen or the sharpness of my vision.

Rev. Wilber Rees - Shalom United  
Church of Christ - Richland

## Participants discuss need to develop critical judgment

Editorial continued from page 10  
 experience having the haunted house ride in Disneyland break down in the middle of the gizmos, ghosts and goblins. He said that many media seek "to entertain, distract and appeal to the lowest common denominator" rather than deal with the relational dynamics of truth. "Serious journalists" and faiths are about finding what is "really real."

He referred to the Barmen Declaration before World War II in Germany, when clergy and theologians called into question what was promoted as truth. He referred to Scottish ecumenical theologian Lesslie Newbigin's challenge to "unmask false concepts of freedom as doing what we want" rather than a faith that sees reality in terms of relatedness.

Joyce spoke of being shaped by media, being the one in her family by age 12 to watch TV news, read the newspaper and write the President. Coverage of the Vietnam War and Civil Rights Movement informed her. After Watergate, she began to question institutions—the government, the media and the churches.

Recalling a theologian entreating pastors to read with a newspaper in one hand and the Bible in the other hand, she said she finds that hard to do that today with "news so fragmented." There are by 26 ads in a news broadcast, let alone real news is interspersed with reports on infidelity of a sports star and on celebrities.

"Where is the depth so my faith can dialogue with information? Where can I find information? What is trustworthy?" she asked, adding the note that people often know about the Bible only in a piecemeal way, too. "We can't dialogue with sound bites and we can't read the Bible by picking one verse here and there."

Joyce believes people need to take responsibility and say they expect quality journalism that goes deeply into issues: "Consumers need to demand quality. I need the depth The Fig Tree gives on topics of today. Unlike texting today, I need vowels, full sentences and big words."

Steve added some of his concerns: need for transparent criteria for what is news, need for accountability on the internet, the dwindling newspaper news hole, people who will subscribe to media that offer accountable voices, the repetition of "moronic" voices on internet to 10 million viewers

creating their version of truth.

One participant expressed concern about hate and divisiveness in media at a time when there is need to work to reconcile.

Scott commented on his fear that the so-called "mainline" churches might try to reclaim power and a return to the center, rather than value the opportunity they have to speak with a pro-

phetic voice from the sidelines.

Another participant asked: "How do I find real stories and truth?" Still another wondered what "we are doing as society, churches and parents help young people develop critical judgment" as her father did, commenting on hate on the radio in the 1930s.

More discussion will be online at [www.thefigtree.org](http://www.thefigtree.org).

## Calendar of Events

- May 4** • **City Wide Prayer**, Southside Christian, 2934 E. 27th Ave., 7 p.m., 487-7429
- **Community Summit**, 1522 N. Washington Ste 208, 4:30 p.m.
- May 6** • **"Deslenguados: An Ethnography of Language Loss**, Cultural Identity and Chicana Pedagogies," 207 Monroe Hall, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, noon, 359-6146
- **PeaceWorks**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- **"Espías Mujertas: The Role of Women in Clandestine Operations in the Nicaragan Revolution,"** 207 Monroe, EWU, Cheney, noon, 359-6146
- May 7** • **"Archie Bunker Goes to El Salvador: A Teatro Chicana Play,** EWU PUB Multipurpose Room, noon, 393-1132
- May 7-8** • **Annual Spirit of the Eagle Pow Wow**, EWU Reese Court Pavilion, Grand Entry Friday 7 p.m. and Saturday 1 and 7 p.m., 359-6660
- May 8** • **World Fair Trade Day**, Kizuri, 35 W. Main, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 464-7677
- **Spokane Valley Heritage Fair**, 12114 E. Sprague., 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., 922-4570
- **National Association of Letter Carriers Food Drive**, 534-6678
- May 9** • **Mothers Day Historic House Tour**, noon to 5 p.m., 363-5315
- May 10** • **Women Helping Women Fund luncheon**, Spokane Convention Center Group Health Exhibit Hall, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 328-8285
- May 11** • **"Contemporary Issues in Feminist Research,"** EWU, Monroe Hall 207, Cheney, noon, 359-6146
- **Spokane Falls Community College International Film Festival, "Le Grande Voyage,"** Garland Theater, 924 W. Garland, 7 p.m., 533-3597
- May 12** • **MusicFest Northwest Festival Youth Artists Concert**, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague Ave., 7:30 p.m., 327-3455
- May 13** • **Police Accountability Coalition**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- May 14-16** • **Breast Cancer Survivor Retreat**, St. Joseph Family Center, 1016 N. Superior St., 7 p.m. Friday to 1 p.m. Sunday, 483-6495
- May 15** • **Spokane Falls Community College Pow Wow**, SFCC gymnasium; 3410 W. Ft. George Wright Dr., Grand Entry 1 and 7 p.m., 533-4331
- **Spokane Lilac and Armed Forces Torchlight Parade**, downtown Spokane, 7:45 p.m., [www.spokanellacfestival.org](http://www.spokanellacfestival.org)
- May 16** • **Interfaith Service**, "Compassion: How Your Faith Tradition Understands, Uses, Values and Prays with It," Bethany Presbyterian Church, 2715 S. Ray, 11 a.m., 534-0066
- **Lapwai United Methodist 100th anniversary**, 10 a.m., 208-758-8995
- **Holy Names Music Center Legacy Concert**, Convent of the Holy Names, 2911 W. Ft. George Wright Dr., 2 p.m., 326-9516
- May 18** • **Leadership Forum for High School Seniors with Disabilities**, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 209-2736
- **Spokane Falls Community College International Film Festival, "Water (2005),"** Garland Theater, 924 W. Garland Ave., 7 p.m., 533-3597
- May 19** • **"The Ministry of Providence Health Care in Spokane and Eastern Washington,"** Andrew Agwunobi, M.D., Spokane City Forum, First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar, 11:45 a.m., 777-1555
- May 20** • **PeaceWorks**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- May 21** • **Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane Auction**, Mountain Gear, 6021 E. Mansfield, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- May 21-23** • **Regional Assembly for Disciples of Christ**, North Hill Christian Church, 4620 N. Post, [disciplesnw.org/whats happening/regionalassembly.html](http://disciplesnw.org/whats happening/regionalassembly.html)
- May 21-30** • **Christian Youth Theater's "The Legend of Pocahontas,"** Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague Ave., 325-7328
- May 22** • **Kinderchor Haiti Benefit Concert**, Opportunity Presbyterian Church, 202 N. Pines, 7 p.m.
- **"RethinkChurch Workshop,"** Spokane Valley United Methodist, 115 N. Raymond, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 800-755-7710 x 302
- May 25** • **Unity in the Community Committee**, Community Minded Enterprises, 25 W. Main St., Suite 310, 5:30 p.m., 209-2602
- June 2** • **Fig Tree distribution**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th., 9 a.m., 535-813
- June 3** • **Fig Tree Board Annual Meeting**, Manito United Methodist Church, 3220 S. Grand Blvd., 1 p.m., 535-1813
- **Unity in the Community "Up on the Roof" Benefit**, Saranac Rooftop, 25 W. Main, 6 p.m.
- June 4-6** • **ArtFest**, Museum of Arts and Culture, Coeur d'Alene Park in Browne's Addition, 456-3931



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# Mentoring by mother and other pastors sustains the Rev. Eugene Singleton

By Yvonne Lopez-Morton

The people who have mentored Pastor Eugene Singleton—from his mother to fellow pastors—inspire his determination to continue his ministry at the age of 70, despite challenges of sustaining a small congregation.

As pastor of St. Matthew's Institutional Baptist Church for more than 16 years, Eugene led his church a few years ago from a 1918 deteriorating building at Hartson and Arthur to a new location in West Spokane at 2815 W. Sunset Blvd.

"We had more pigeons in the church than members," Eugene quipped.

The four local pastors who mentored him informed him of the challenges of ministry—letting him know that being a pastor would not pay much, that he would have to be self sufficient and that he would often be called to hold onto his faith.

Prepared for doing ministry with limited funding, he and the congregation reach out, seeking partners to serve people coming for food, referring people seeking gas money or a place to sleep, finding ways to help underprivileged people and visiting people in nearby prisons.

"As a small, older, not-very-prosperous congregation, we never have enough hands to do everything," he said, "but it doesn't take many people to do good things. Where Jesus is there is power."

While it was clear that St. Matthews needed to move, expenses kept them from finding a new church building.

Help came from a ministry on the West Plains. Pastor Dale Jenkins of the Airway Heights Southern Baptist Church came to him with an offer he could not refuse—the donation of a church building at no cost.

After speaking to Dale, Eugene informed his trustees and congregation, who came to a consensus to accept the offer.

The church moved into the building in November 2006

"Thanks to the generosity of the faith community, our church did not spend a penny out of church pockets for our new church," Eugene said. "It is amazing how God works."

In addition to the building, the donation included an inspection and fees related to turning the building over to St. Matthews.

An only child, born in Alabama and reared as a Southern Baptist, he moved from Jefferson to Mobile, Ala., and to Vaden, Miss.

"Mother was a great influence and my primary mentor. She was firm, but she loved me," he said.

Their life centered around church. Not having a car, they rode in a mule-drawn wagon that picked them up for church.

His mother worked in a restaurant from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., walk-



The Rev. Eugene Singleton received a new robe at a service honoring his 16 years of ministry at St. Matthews.

ing to work through the woods, sometimes returning with her legs bleeding from the branches.

Every Saturday, he helped his mother hunt and bag red clay, which was eaten for its nutritional and mineral value. Neighbors would give them donations for the clay.

Eugene said that today people in the South still eat the red clay. Sites on the internet sell red clay and speak of its health value.

Telling of the resourcefulness needed for his early years, Eugene shared a story of finding a discarded TV, carrying it home three miles to discover it had no sound. Two weeks later he found another TV that had no picture. Between the two, they had both sound and a picture.

At 16, he drove a bus part-time to earn money to pay tuition at a Presbyterian school.

At 19, he joined the army and served for two years. In 1960, he enlisted in the Air Force and first came to Spokane in 1961. He was stationed at Fairchild Air Force Base until 1966.

While here, he met his wife, Clementeen, and they married in 1962. She had two children, and they had a son, Tracy Singleton, who died at the age of 42.

His Air Force career included a short tour in Germany, returning to Fairchild and then serving a year in Vietnam, where he said he was exposed to Agent Orange.

His last assignment was at Malmstrom AFB in Montana, where he attended a business college.

Returning to Spokane in 1969, Eugene began 18 years of work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. While there, he earned an associate degree at Spokane Falls Community College and a bachelor's degree from Eastern Washington University.

His ministerial journey started in 1962 when he began attending

the New Hope Baptist Church. Its pastor, the Rev. Jim Sims, became his spiritual mentor.

Eugene returned to worship there in 1969 and continued to be mentored by Jim. He taught Sunday school and served as deacon and trustee board chair.

For two years, he studied intensively under the guidance of Jim and Pastor John Echols, also at New Hope. He also studied under the Rev. Happy Watkins for five years.

Ordained in 1988, he became assistant pastor of New Hope. After Jim retired in 1990, he served

as the interim pastor.

Eugene was still interim pastor in the early 1990s when Happy became New Hope's pastor.

"Happy continued to guide and support me," Eugene said.

In addition to Jim, John and Happy, Eugene said another mentor has been the Rev. C.W. Andrews, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church.

"Chet and Happy trusted in me and encouraged me in many ways and led me to seek the leadership of St. Matthews. They still support me," Eugene said.

Eugene said the four pastors instilled in him his desire to mentor others and to reach out to his congregation and those in need.

He also attended classes in biblical studies at Whitworth University, but was unable to complete his degree because of open-heart surgery in 1992.

His outreach through St. Matthews includes his commitment to work with inmates in correction facilities in Airway Heights and Medical Lake.

Prisoners' stories about their lives inside and outside prison have inspired him as he builds relationships with them.

He also coordinates a program to transport eligible inmates each Sunday in a van to church services and then back to their facilities.

Eugene relies on his congregation and on pastors Kay and Doug Perry, to support the church's programs.

"I am obedient to God and have a mission to complete," Eugene said. "While many of the historical founders of our church are no

longer living, I have faithful people in my church today."

Because people often stop by the church looking for food, he is working with Second Harvest to establish a sustainable food bank.

To meet the need of hungry people, the church also offers a walk-in dinner and Bible study at 5:30 p.m., Wednesdays.

Eugene aims to help his congregation grow, encouraging younger members to help ensure the church's future for a new generation.

Church activities include choir rehearsals, trustee meetings and a women's support group that meets at the church to talk about women's issues, pray and study the Bible.

Eugene also refers people seeking assistance to local resources that provide shelter, gas money and other needs.

The church has also raised and sent money to Haiti to support relief efforts after the recent earthquake. It also helps support the Lottie Moon Mission, a program of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in China.

While finances remain a problem that could limit expanding the church's programs, Eugene is identifying grants and other resources to help the church serve underprivileged people.

Despite the challenges of leading a small congregation, Eugene said he has faith that he will find strength in his commitment to his church as long as God keeps him on this earth.

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